



BOOST YOUR IMMUNE HEALTH THIS WINTER

As the cooler months roll in, so too do the bacteria and viruses that cause the common winter ailments like colds and the flu. It's almost impossible to avoid exposure to these bugs, which makes it really important to be keep your immune system in top shape going into winter.

There are many things you can do to keep your immune system healthy and reduce your risk of getting sick. I've listed below my top five food and lifestyle recommendations to embrace this winter.

Make vegetables and fruits the foundation of your eating, and you will be nourishing your body with the key nutrients it needs for a strong immune system. The key is to eat a wide variety everyday and choose as many different colours as you can. Vitamin C is a key nutrient as it plays an important role in the mobilisation of your immune system defences. Foods like citrus fruits, capsicum, broccoli, strawberries and kiwifruit are rich in Vitamin C.

Add in some special immune boosting foods like ginger, citrus, garlic, shiitake and reishi mushrooms and turmeric as they provide nutrients and compounds with amazing medicinal properties. For example Shiitake and Reishi mushrooms contain beta-glucans which are known for their immune enhancing properties while garlic has antibacterial, antiviral and antifungal properties.

Make sure you get enough zinc daily. Zinc helps infection-fighting white blood cells to be deployed at the first sign of a disease-causing invader, such as a virus or bacteria. Zinc containing foods include meat, eggs, seafood, nuts (especially cashews) and seeds (eg pumpkin and sesame)

Gut health is critical in maintaining a strong immune system. Your gastrointestinal tract contains approximately 70% of your immune system, so ensuring your gut is populated with plenty of beneficial micro-organisms ('good bugs') is central to maintaining optimal immune function. You can boost your gut health by including fermented or cultured foods like natural yoghurt, sauerkraut, kefir, miso and kimchi (that contain friendly live bacteria or probiotics) in your diet each day.

Sleep and rest is so important for preventing illness and helping the body to heal when sick. Make sure you are getting adequate sleep and when the first signs of a cold or ailment appear give your body time to heal by resting.

By Natalie Harms

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