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How to boost your immunity for a bug-free winter



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Clinical Nutritionist, Suzie Sawyer, shares her top tips

Is your immune system ready for winter? A change in seasons, wintery darker days with less sunlight creates an ideal backdrop for the perfect storm! Colds and infections are always much more prevalent at this time of year and there are a number of reasons for this. Indeed, lack of sunlight and the consequential loss of vitamin D being produced on the skin has significant detrimental effects.

Researchers writing in the British Medical Journal found that higher levels of vitamin D helped provide protection against acute respiratory tract infections, as just one example. They noted additional benefit to those who were severely deficient in vitamin D and those receiving daily or weekly supplementation.

Facts!

Having a fever or very high temperature is common during an infection and it's the body's way of dealing with a 'foreign' invader (virus or bacteria) that caused the problem. A high temperature uprates the phagocytic activities of white blood cells which help kill the cause of infection. Fever also increases the heart rate which means infection-fighting white blood cells are delivered to the sites of infection more rapidly.

As we age, we become more susceptible to all types of infections. There are many reasons for this but it's partly because the body produces autoantibodies which prevent the immune system from doing its job properly (antibodies are an essential part of the immune system). Plus, fewer cells that help to fight infections are produced generally, hence it's even more important to help support the immune system with every passing year.

The major gland and very important part of the immune system is the thymus; people who have impaired thymus function are often more susceptible to infections. Ensuring good intake of a variety of antioxidant nutrients such as vitamins A and C and selenium is one of the best ways of ensuring good thymus gland function.

How to stay bug-free this winter

So, what's the best way of ensuring a bug-free winter? Clinical Nutritionist, Suzie Sawyer, provides her top tips on how to avoid any 'nasties' this autumn!

1. **Eat green!** The more green foods you can pile onto your plate the better. Broccoli, apples, kale, spinach, courgettes, avocado, peas, limes the list is endless. Green foods are packed with immune-boosting vitamin C, iron, vitamin E, carotenoids and zinc. Try to include at least one green food with every meal. Think spinach omelette, smashed avocado with sourdough bread and a stir-fry using chicken, broccoli, peas and mange touts (plus all the trimmings!).
2. **Drink green!** That's tea! We know that mint tea is high in immune-boosting nutrients such as vitamin C, the carotenes and iron. However, spearmint tea also contains anti-viral, anti-fungal and anti-bacterial compounds. According to the Journal of Chemistry it also contains antioxidants which protect the body against degenerative diseases as well as supporting the immune system.
3. **And even more green!** Think spirulina and wheatgrass. Both are little powerhouses of immune-boosting nutrients! Spirulina is a blue-green algae which is often used in powdered form or as a supplement. It's especially high in vitamins A, C and E, plus minerals such as zinc and selenium – all great for the immune system. Additionally, wheatgrass is rich in chlorophyll, the green food of life, together with many vitamins and minerals. Keep some wheatgrass 'shots' in your freezer and add them to your daily juice for a nutritional punch!
4. **Not keen on green?** If upping your 'green' intake is just not your thing, then try NEW Alive! Ultra Wholefood Plus – a range of high-quality multivitamin and mineral formulations with enhanced levels of nutrients plus added botanical ingredients. Packed with high levels of B-vitamins for increased energy, and our unique dried blend of 26 whole fruits and vegetables, these specially balanced wholefood solutions provide superior levels of tailored nutrients to reflect the specific needs of women, men, and women & men over fifty. Each Alive! Ultra Wholefood Plus product also contains a bespoke range of botanical blends including Daily Greens (with spirulina and kelp), Digestive Enzymes and Citrus Bioflavonoids. And what about children? Try Alive! Immune Support Soft Jells – a specially balanced multi-vitamin and mineral supplement for adults and children from 3 years. This delicious natural berry flavoured soft chew contains 6 essential nutrients to support immunity plus Black Elderberry as well as our unique dried blend of 26 fruits and vegetables.
5. **Say yes to sleep!** Many of us know how 'under par' we feel when we're not getting enough sleep. Indeed, sleep experts generally recommend seven to nine hours per night. A recent study found increased incidence of upper respiratory tract infections when British Army recruits slept less than six hours per night. The fact is, the body needs sleep to repair and regenerate and the immune system can become weakened when it doesn't get enough. If you're having broken nights, try going to bed earlier so that you're actually in bed for longer; sleep needs to be prioritised if you're going to stay bug-free!
6. **And no to sugar!** Sugar suppresses the immune system by down-regulating the white blood cells that help kill bacteria. What better reason to say no to sugar in all its forms! That means sugar-laden cereals, sugary drinks, alcohol, cakes and pastries, and in foods where it's hidden. It's not easy to cut sugar out of the diet completely. However, make a conscious effort to say no to additional sugar in the diet.

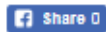
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