

10 Ways to Boost Your Immune System

With the winter coming to its end and spring coming up, it is a whole new season ahead—that is, flu and cold season. The good news is that I have compiled a list of 10 immune-boosting tips to help you combat the flu bug away.

Try incorporating these 10 tips in your daily routine and you'll be sure to welcome the cold and flu season with a smile.

1. Enjoy a good laugh. A variety of studies have concluded that laughing activates the body's protective T cells and induces increased antibody production. So give in to the guilty pleasure of watching your favorite sitcom, watching some stand-up comedy or maybe reading a book that leaves you cracking with laughter.

The more you laugh, the more your immune system will thank you for it. Who knew that laughter is the best flu shot around? Bonus is the fact that laughter is contagious, so you are not only making your body stronger but helping others too.

2. Give good bacteria a go. What? Welcome some bacteria? Yes! Contrary to popular belief, not all types of bacteria are harmful. In fact, a group of bacteria that are commonly called probiotics strengthens the GI tract and is directly related to the strength of your immune system. Probiotics are typically found in fermented food like miso, yogurt, sauerkraut, kefir and sourdough bread.

3. Load up on prebiotics. So we have probiotics, but what are prebiotics? Prebiotics are soluble fibers that are found in foods such as artichokes, leeks, onions and bananas. They help probiotics to do their function and thus help in strengthening the GI tract and the immune system too.

4. Munch on greens. Immune cells in your gut are ensured to be in their tip-top level of functioning when you munch on some green vegetables like kale, broccoli and bok choy, so load up on kale chips and have at least one glass of green smoothie a day to keep the doctor away.

5. Time to relax. Stress is the number one thing that weakens your immune system. When you are stressed, your body releases cortisol that then suppresses your immune cells. Any relaxing activities that calm you down and make you feel at peace and happy are a surefire way to a healthier immune system.

6. Engage in human touch. I have mentioned that cortisol weakens your immune system and relaxing strengthens it. What better way to relax than indulging in human touch? Be it getting a massage from your significant other, hugging your children or holding hands with someone special, all of these will effectively decrease your cortisol levels.

Research has shown that 45 minutes of massage increases your body's white blood cells, therefore strengthening your immune response and reducing inflammation-causing cytokines—but how? Touch makes your body release oxytocin, which causes the cortisol levels to go down. Experts even recommend an average of eight hugs per day for maximum benefits from oxytocin. So don't be shy—give out some hugs!

7. Connect with people. The American Psychological Association recently published research that says social isolation compromises the body's infection-fighting ability and weakens its immunity. Having and nourishing your social ties like marriage and friendship serves to strengthen your immune system. This gives a new meaning to the phrase “no man is an island” indeed.

8. Get enough restful sleep. Being deprived of sleep reduces your body's T-cell count that results in your body having a reduced ability to fight off disease-causing microorganisms. A

solid session of eight hours of sleep is what your body needs for it to be able to tap into its self-healing powers, so ensure to invest some time in getting quality sleep.

9. Sing your heart out. Who knew that your shower concertos are an effective immune booster? Research has shown that people who sing are less likely to catch the flu and cold bug, so sing your heart out in the home—and especially in church!

10. Meditate. A healthy body starts with a healthy mind, physically, psychologically and spiritually. Meditating positively influences your immune response. One study has shown that people who have engaged in meditation for eight consecutive weeks have an increased response to a flu shot. Even just three minutes of meditation as a part of your daily morning routine is enough to produce results. It is in moments of being still that we are truly one with God. No wonder it reflects back as the gift of better health!

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