



5 Ways to Boost Your Child's Immune System With School Back in Session



The kids are back in their classrooms, and life is already bustling with after-school activities. In addition to homework, they may be bringing home coughs, colds and other maladies.

Obviously, there's no convenient time to get sick. So I'm all about making easy but impactful shifts to help families address food and health challenges. And as germs descend upon us, I've got plenty of simple ideas for naturally supporting your child's immune system!

1. Crack the code for hand-washing. This is one of the simplest ways to ward off colds. The secret to getting the job done is to make it fun. Try equipping your kids' bathroom with foaming soap, or soap bars in kid-friendly shapes. Or, make hand-washing a game by teaching your kids to blow bubbles through their fingers.

2. Prepare your natural medicine cabinet. Be ready at the first sign of a cough or sniffle. Here are five immune-supporting items I keep in my cabinet at all times:

-- **Black elderberry:** Take this at the first sign of a stuffy nose or scratchy throat. The antioxidant-rich black elderberry is a

real immune health hero. It's been used since ancient times in remedies for colds, coughs and upper respiratory infections.

-- **Vitamin D:** D3 is a natural flu fighter, so getting enough of this becomes even more important as days grow shorter and there's less sunshine. Parents and kids can either take vitamin D3 supplements, or make sure you're eating plenty of wild Alaskan salmon, which is a rich source of D3.

-- **Zinc:** Liquid zinc boosts white blood cell production to kill off viruses; take the ionized form with food for best absorption.

-- **Probiotics:** Since most of the body's immune cells line the intestinal tract, keeping the gut microbiome healthy and populated with friendly bacteria helps the immune system stay strong and fight bacteria and viruses.

-- **Omega-3s:** Also found in wild Alaskan salmon, omega-3s boost mental focus, as well as gut and immune health.

3. Sweeten their lunchboxes without sugar. Refined sugar has a negative impact on the immune system. So instead of sweets or even processed chips, which may be loaded

with hidden sugars, pack thinly sliced cucumbers with a side of hummus. Toss in fresh fruit slices to quell a sweet tooth.

4. Tempt them with nutritious afternoon snacks. Red apples are in season. They help clean up the liver and support the immune system. Serve them sliced with nut butter or sprinkled with cinnamon. Kids also love pears dipped in chocolate hummus, and cascava tortilla chips cooked in avocado oil with a side of guacamole. Quench their thirst with smoothies or coconut water instead of sugary, caffeinated sports drinks.

5. Take advantage of opportunities to serve healthy meals at home. I know all about a packed schedule once school starts. But when meals are prepared in your own kitchen, you have more control over what goes into them. When the weather turns cold, I get excited because it's bone broth season. Genuine, homemade bone broth helps us recover from colds, and it's my go-to afternoon pick-me-up. Pomegranates are also in season right now, and they're antioxidant bombs! Carrots and sweet potatoes support respiratory health, and they are freshest in the fall. And be sure to watch for seasonal heirloom tomatoes. They not only taste great in tomato sauces and gazpacho, but I pack them like candy into lunchboxes.

Making positive changes is a process. It takes time. Make it your goal to adopt one of these tips each month. Start now, and by mid-winter, you may notice fewer sniffles and coughs around the family dinner table.

MONTHLY RECIPES



Grandma's Six-Layer Dinner

- 1-1/2 pounds ground beef
- 2 medium onions, thinly sliced
- 3 medium potatoes, peeled and thinly sliced
- 1 large green pepper, chopped
- 2 celery ribs, chopped
- 1 can (14-1/2 ounces) stewed tomatoes
- 1-1/2 teaspoons salt
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon dried basil

1. In a Dutch oven, cook beef over medium heat until no longer pink; drain. Layer beef with onions, potatoes and green pepper, seasoning each layer lightly with salt and pepper. Top with celery, tomatoes and basil.
2. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and simmer for 1 hour or until vegetables are tender.

Grandma's Chicken Zucchini Casserole

- 1 package (6 ounces) stuffing mix
- 3/4 cup butter, melted
- 3 cups diced zucchini
- 2 cups cubed cooked chicken breast
- 1 can (10-3/4 ounces) condensed cream of chicken soup, undiluted
- 1 medium carrot, shredded
- 1/2 cup chopped onion

1. In a large bowl, combine stuffing mix and butter. Set aside 1/2 cup for topping. Add the zucchini, chicken, soup, carrot, onion and sour cream to the remaining stuffing mixture.
2. Transfer to a greased 11x7-in. baking dish. Sprinkle with reserved stuffing mixture. Bake, uncovered, at 350° for 40-45 minutes or until golden brown and bubbly.

Hint: To save time, use pre-cooked chicken from the grocery store and add a little jalapeno pepper.

Grandma's Pizza Macaroni & Cheese

- 2 packages (14 ounces each) deluxe macaroni and cheese dinner mix
- 1/2 cup sour cream
- 1 can (14-1/2 ounces) petite diced tomatoes, drained
- 1 can (15 ounces) pizza sauce
- 1 small green pepper, chopped
- 1 small sweet red pepper, chopped
- 2 cups shredded Italian cheese blend
- 2 ounces sliced pepperoni

1. Preheat oven to 350°. Cook macaroni according to package directions for al dente. Drain; return to pan. Stir in contents of cheese packets and sour cream. Transfer to a greased 13x9-in. baking dish.
2. In a small bowl, combine tomatoes and pizza sauce; drop by spoonfuls over macaroni. Top with peppers, cheese and pepperoni. Bake, uncovered, until bubbly, 25-30 minutes.

Grandma's Cajun Chicken & Spaghetti

- 1 broiler/fryer chicken (3 to 4 pounds), cut up
- 1 to 1-1/2 teaspoons cayenne pepper
- 3/4 teaspoon salt
- 3 tablespoons canola oil
- 1 package (14 ounces) Johnsonville® Fully Cooked Smoked Sausage Rope, sliced
- 1 large sweet onion, chopped
- 1 medium green pepper, chopped
- 1 celery rib, chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 cans (14-1/2 ounces each) diced tomatoes, undrained
- 1 can (14-1/2 ounces) diced tomatoes with mild green chilies, undrained
- 1 package (16 ounces) spaghetti

1. Sprinkle chicken with cayenne and salt. In a Dutch oven, heat oil over medium-high heat. Brown chicken in batches. Remove from pan.
2. Add sausage, onion, green pepper and celery to same pan; cook and stir over medium heat 3 minutes. Add garlic; cook 1 minute longer. Stir in tomatoes. Return chicken to pan; bring to a boil. Reduce heat; simmer, covered, 1 hour or until chicken juices run clear.
3. Cook spaghetti according to package directions. Remove chicken from pan. When cool enough to handle, remove meat from bones; discard skin and bones. Shred meat with two forks; return to pan. Bring to boil. Reduce heat; simmer, uncovered, 8-10 minutes or until slightly thickened. Skim fat. Drain spaghetti; serve with chicken mixture.

GOV. JUSTICE ISSUES STATEMENT ON BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION ON FOUR-YEAR HIGHER EDUCATION

CHARLESTON, WV – Gov. Jim Justice issued the following statement today regarding his Blue Ribbon Commission on four-year higher education.

"In the Blue Ribbon Commission's process of reviewing, studying and assessing the four-year higher education institutions, some requests have been made to include our community and technical colleges.

"Once the Blue Ribbon Commission has progressed in its mission to establish efficiencies that ensure we are serving our students and have identified ways to make sure these four-year institutions can thrive and stay in the communities they are currently located in, at that time we will expand the scope to include our community and technical colleges.

"I thoroughly believe in increasing the opportunities for students that want to pursue the trades. We desperately need to train a larger and more skilled workforce."

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