How to boost your immune system through diet and lifestyle changes

The immune system plays an essential role in helping us fend off attacks from viruses and bacteria. Here's how diet and lifestyle can maximize your immune system's ability to protect you from foreign invaders.

How diet can boost the immune system

Get enough vitamins: Nutrition is our primary protection in the battle against infection. Key soldiers in the fight include vitamins like A, C, E, B6, D, and minerals like zinc, iron, and selenium. Some foods that are rich in these vitamins include carrots, sweet potatoes, bell peppers, strawberries, almonds, avocados, salmon, oysters, tuna, lean chicken breast, and beef.

Eat protein: According to Harvard Health Publishing, you should be getting a minimum of 0.8 grams of protein per kilogram of body weight in order to avoid getting sick. Not enough can have detrimental effects on your T-cells., which dispatch disease-fighting antibodies to viruses and bacteria and is an essential part of the immune system.

Consume prebiotic foods: Prebiotics are found in foods such as onion, garlic, banana, and asparagus. They assist in maintaining a balanced gut microbiome, which is a vital player in how your immune system functions. Prebiotics work by increasing the population of "good bacteria" in the gut which in turn sparks the production of anti-inflammatory cytokines, which are tiny proteins that help the immune system function.

Test and know which foods are good for you before making any changes to your diet or else you may worsen your immunity.

This article was medically reviewed by Tania Elliott, MD, who specializes in infectious diseases related to allergies and immunology for internal medicine at NYU Langone Health.

How lifestyle changes can boost the immune system

Exercise, sleep, and keeping smoke-free are also ways you can give your immune system a better fighting chance at fending off invaders.

Get sufficient sleep: If you lack restful sleep, you will be more susceptible to infections since sleep is when your body works its hardest to combat inflammation and infection. "While at rest, the body is quite busy. Those that practice irregular sleep patterns may struggle with their health simply due to lack of sleep, which could be due to food intolerance," says Ballehr. This inflammation can overstress the immune system making it less effective at fighting viral or bacterial infections.

Quit smoking: "Smoking increases the risk of developing infections by destroying antibodies from our bloodstream" says Ballehr. Antibodies are the proteins produced by the immune system to fight foreign infections. "Smoking cigarettes also damages our lung's ability to clear infection as well as destroying lung tissue."

Exercise: Starting and staying active has been shown to help immune health.

With all this in mind, it is also important to remember that hand washing is one of the best ways to prevent infections from viruses or bacteria. It won't boost your immune system, but it can help keep you protected, "You should wash your hands for 20-second duration before and after any risky exposure or when you have an active cold, sneezing, coughing, or runny nose,"

1. You can boost your immune system by making sure to get enough of vitamins like A, C, E, B6, D, and minerals like zinc, iron, and selenium.
2. It is also helpful to eat enough protein, consume prebiotic foods, and eat brightly colure fruits and vegetables which contain immune-boosting antioxidants.
3. You should also get sufficient sleep, quit smoking, and get regular moderate exercise.

So, before deciding what to eat get your FIT analysis done and eat the right food to boost your immunity without any medicine.

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