

## 9. DIETARY HAZARDS

AS THE FOCUS HERE IS ON the elements which you need to *include* in your diet, rather than those that you should *exclude*, we are only going to take a brief moment to look at some of the most important dangers to avoid in order to make sure that you are not taking one step forwards and two steps back - just through not realizing the detrimental effect that certain everyday factors may have upon your general state of health.

The purpose of this diet, as emphasized throughout, is to aim towards better anti-viral protection through the foods that you eat, but also significantly through what you do not eat and by avoiding certain behaviours. In particular, those daily activities that are most likely to decrease your immunity, are obviously ones to be avoided. I am only going to mention five dietary dangers to stay away from - and when I use the word 'dietary' here, it is meant more in terms of an overall way of life and not just relating to what you eat and drink.

*Firstly*, in terms of what you do consume, it is important to underline the importance of not eating too much of the **wrong fats or oils**. Detailed advice on this is indeed recorded in the WHO guidelines, with their key recommendation being that: "*the intake of saturated fats be reduced to less than 10% of total energy intake and trans-fats to less than 1% of total energy intake*". This is important because it has been shown, in a sizeable amount of research, that obesity - even being over-weight - decreases effectiveness of the immune system. When that happens, you are more prone to viral infections.

*Secondly*, in a related point, as **excess sugar intake** is also a determining factor in weight gain and obesity, it is vital that you do not exceed the WHO recommendations which are that: "*In both adults and children, the intake of free sugars should be reduced to less than 10% of total energy intake*".

The reason for this is the same as in the previous case - that an excess of fat in the body results in a decrease of immune response. WHO adds that: *“A reduction to less than 5% of total energy intake would provide additional health benefits”*.

In the *third* place, **alcohol** must be mentioned as a factor that can impact the functioning of your immune system. This is not to say that a single drink will suppress your level of immunity. However, research confirms that even three alcohol-containing drinks per day will affect the ability of your white blood cells (which are responsible for fighting off illnesses and infection) to respond in the best way to pathogens. An article such as ‘Alcohol, Immunomodulation and Disease’ published in *Alcohol and Alcoholism* (1994) confirmed this early on.

*Fourthly*, one obvious additional danger to add to this short list is that of **smoking**. Cigarette smoking, as is well established, has harmful effects on the lungs. This includes affecting the macrophages there (a type of white blood cell), which become unable to fight off viruses, bacteria and cancer cells. As in the case of alcohol, this danger has been known of for decades. A valuable article entitled ‘Cigarette Smoking influences Cytokine Production and Antioxidant Defences’, confirming this danger, was published in *Clinical Science* (1995).

And *lastly* - though this does not mean there are no more dangers to mention - almost all **recreational drugs** do suppress immunity in one way or another. Cocaine has been shown to cause lack of immune system response and the inability of certain white blood cells to kill pathogens. Heroin, morphine and methadone all cause malfunctioning of the immune system; while marijuana, though less immunosuppressive than all the other mind-altering drugs, does diminish the ability of Natural Killer Cells and decrease Interferon levels.

For more details on all the above dietary dangers and a number of others, visit: [www.theantiviraldiet.com/hazards](http://www.theantiviraldiet.com/hazards).