

Antibiotics

Antibiotics are well known to significantly disrupt protective intestinal and vaginal microbiota, reducing bacteria considered to have health-promoting properties such as *Bifidobacterium* spp. and *Lactobacillus* spp. Antibiotics, as with any medication, can cause side effects such as nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. By altering the microbial balance within the gut, further pathogenic bacteria are able to selectively overgrow increasing the risk of developing a further intestinal infection; the main symptom of which being antibiotic associated diarrhea (AAD).

During antibiotic therapy extra protection could be provided by consuming a probiotic supplement at the same time as antibiotic therapy. I recommend taking a probiotic at least 2-4 weeks after completion of the antibiotic course at a dose of around 5 billion CFUs a day.

Prevent the Need for Antibiotics

The immune system can need some extra help during the colder months if busy fighting off all those extra winter bugs. Up to 70% of our immune cells are located in the gut, and supported by a strong microflora. Therefore, one strategy to support the body's natural immunity in order to prevent initial infection and reduce the need for antibiotics, is to consider regular consumption of fermented foods or probiotic supplements.

Keep Hydrated

Drink plenty of water especially when you know you are going to be out late or perhaps overindulging at a party. Not only will this keep you well hydrated it will also reduce the effects of a potential hangover!

Don't Actively Request Antibiotics

Most illnesses that occur during winter periods tend to be due to viruses. The flu and cold are viral infections; sore throats and even chest infections are also mostly due to viruses and therefore antibiotics will not help. Only take antibiotics if recommended by the doctor and you will avoid serious side effects as well as help to combat the emergence of resistant strains.

Get Some Rest

Sleep patterns can go awry with the hectic schedule and whilst partying and dinners may be more enjoyable than a hard day's work they can still take it out of you affecting physical and mental performance as well as the body's immune system.

Consider a probiotic supplement

Probiotic supplements, especially ones with multiple strains of bacteria, could aid digestion, improve bloating and abdominal cramps and even boost the immune system.

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