

Nourish Your Fortress

Your body is like a castle. Your immune system is its security stronghold. Stronger defenses equal better overall health.

Stay Hydrated – Adequate hydration supports all of your body's functions, including your immune system. Keeping a bottle of filtered water with you at all times is a great way to remind yourself to keep drinking. Add nutrients to your fluid intake by making homemade soups and broths containing plenty of vegetables. Avoid concentrated juices and soft drinks as they are high in sugar and harmful to the immune system. The same goes for excessive consumption of alcoholic drinks, which have been shown to weaken immune function.

Eat Right – Consuming a nutrient dense diet can help you supply your body with healthy doses of antioxidants, vitamins and minerals. When it's time for your next meal, think about filling your plate with these types of foods that contain immune system-enhancing nutrients:

Citrus fruit and broccoli – Vitamin C

Nuts and whole grains – Vitamin E

Crab, oysters, beef, beans – Zinc

Tuna, sunflower seeds, chicken, eggs – Selenium

Flaxseed oil, hempseed oil, mackerel, salmon, tuna, nuts – Omega-3 fatty acids

You should also incorporate lean animal or plant based proteins into every meal. Proteins are the building blocks of the body, including immune and detoxification systems. Avoid processed foods, such as candy, soda, and fast foods as they are not only void of essential nutrients, but are also often filled with additives and other chemicals which can be harmful.

Exercise regularly – As if there aren't enough reasons to get moving...three separate studies performed by the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports found that women who engaged in 35-45 minutes of brisk walking, five days a week for 12-15 weeks experienced a reduced number of sick days compared to a controlled (sedentary) group. Regular exercise can also reduce stress and help lower your risk of cardiovascular disease, osteoporosis and certain types of cancer. So, get moving for better health!

Get Your Zzzzz's – No matter what kind of schedule you keep, aim for a good night of deep, restful sleep to stimulate your immune system. Deprive yourself, and you're looking at significant detrimental effects on immune function. According to the National Institutes of Health, the average adult needs between 7 and 8 hours a night, although some may need as few as 5 and others may need as much as 10. If you need help winding down at the end of the day, avoid caffeine and alcohol close to bedtime, shut down the TV and computer about one hour before turning in, and relax and unwind with some deep breathing and comfortable body stretches. This helps you shut your mind off from the stresses and demands of your day so you can fall asleep fast.

Keep a positive attitude – Positive thinking may actually boost your immune system. A study of law students found that their immune systems were stronger when they were feeling more optimistic. Yet another reason why it's better to see the glass half full.

Reduce stress – It's impossible to completely avoid stress, but how you deal with it is what matters. Problems that cause stress should be solved rather than avoided to prevent chronic stress, which can cause a host of health problems. According to the National Institutes of Health, hormones (like cortisol) that hang around during chronic stress can put you at risk for obesity, heart disease, cancer, and a variety of other illnesses. To avoid chronic stress, take time to solve problems rather than sweeping them under the rug, and take time for yourself a few times a week to relax and unwind, whether it's through exercise, meditation, journaling, or any activity you enjoy.

Sources

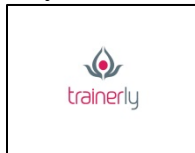
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