

Wellness Advocate

Pump Up Your Immune System!



It's a daily battle, but there's a lot you can do to build up your resistance to colds, the flu and even some diseases. Here are seven ways to maintain your health!

1 Reduce Your Stress

Some stress can be a good thing. It's your body's way of preparing for a challenge, such as giving a presentation. But a steady stream of stress can be bad for your health. Studies show it can even weaken your immune system — your body's system for fighting off disease and illness. Reduce your stress by avoiding whatever stressors you can. Take the time to relax and do things you enjoy.



2 Take Your Vitamins

If you have a feeling your diet is lacking, consider taking a multivitamin. It will help ensure that your body is getting all of the building blocks for a healthy immune system. Some nutrients that may be especially important for immune system health include vitamins A, C, D, E as well as zinc, magnesium and selenium.



3 Consider Herbs and Supplements

Many people take herbs or supplements to improve their overall health. Some supplements have been shown to positively affect the immune system. These include garlic, ginseng, and probiotics, among many others. However, more well-designed studies are needed to learn more about their beneficial effects. Talk with your doctor if you have questions about which supplements may be good for you.



4 You've Got to Move It!

One simple way to strengthen your immune system is by exercising. Getting regular exercise can also reduce stress and help lower your risk of osteoporosis, heart disease, and certain types of cancer. You get the most benefit when you exercise at a moderate level a few times a week. Any type of movement is helpful, including bicycling, walking, yoga, swimming or playing golf.



5 Avoid Empty Calories

Processed foods such as fast foods, snack foods, candy, and soda don't provide much in the way of vitamins, fiber, or other nutrients. And they often contain other additives and chemicals that may not be good for your body. When you choose these foods over more nutrient-rich foods such as vegetables, fruits, and whole grains, you risk depleting your body of essential nutrients.



6 Get Your Daily Fiber

The average American only consumes 10-15 gram of fiber per day. However, the American Dietetic Association recommends the consume 38 grams per day. According the National Institutes for Health, prebiotic fiber (such as asparagus) can enhance immune function.



7 Wash Your Hands

One of the easiest ways to help your immune system fight illness is to wash your hands regularly. It's also one of the best ways to keep yourself and others healthy. Be sure to use soap and clean, running water, and wash for at least 20 seconds. If you don't have access to soap and water, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that has at least 60% alcohol.



Is the Flu Shot Right for You?



Wondering how you can protect yourself from seasonal flu? Or just weighing the pros and cons of the seasonal flu vaccine? Here are some fast facts about flu prevention.

- ▶ Influenza causes more than 200,000 people in the U.S. to be hospitalized every year. Up to 49,000 people die each year from flu-related causes. Prevention is key.
- ▶ Ideally, you should get the seasonal flu vaccine by Thanksgiving. However, getting vaccinated with the flu shot makes sense any time during flu season, which may last from September to May.
- ▶ Think the flu vaccine can give you the flu? It can't. The vaccine is made with a killed (flu shot) or weakened form of the flu virus (nasal flu vaccine), which can't give you influenza. The nasal flu vaccine has caused transfer of the virus to others, but the risk of this happening is extremely low.
- ▶ Stuck on the fact that you need to get vaccinated every year? There's a good reason. Flu viruses change, so flu vaccines must change, too. Each year's vaccine is unique, cultivated from the flu strains health officials believe will be most menacing that year.
- ▶ If you have a severe egg allergy (anaphylaxis), talk to your doctor before getting the flu vaccine. Also, a flu vaccine that is not made with the use of eggs is available. The vaccine, called Flublok, is approved for use in those 18 to 49 years old.

Recipe: Apple Crisp

This easy to make and healthy dessert is perfect for cool autumn nights. You can garnish it with low-fat vanilla frozen yogurt!

INGREDIENTS

6 macintosh medium apples
1/2 tsp. cinnamon
1/4 cup rolled oats
1/3 cup light brown sugar
1/4 cup all purpose flour
1/4 tsp. nutmeg
1 1/2 Tbsp. whipped butter

PREPARATION

1. Preheat the oven to 375 F
2. Spray an 8 x 8 baking pan with non-stick cooking spray
3. Slice and core the apples, then layer them in the baking pan
4. Add all of the remaining ingredients in a mixing bowl and crumble over the apples
5. Bake for 30 minutes, or until the apples are tender

NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION

(Makes 8 servings) Calories per serving: 146 | 34 g carbohydrates | 4 g dietary fiber | 25 mg sodium | 22 g sugar

An Apple a Day...

Packing in quite a bit of soluble fiber (4 grams per medium apple) for a modest amount of calories (95) makes apples a filling, sweet snack. Plus, a medium apple counts as 1 cup of fruit, so after eating one you're well on your way to meeting your daily fruit quota (around 2 cups for adults on a 2,000-calorie diet). They are also a good source of immune-boosting vitamin C (providing 14% of the Daily Value).

