



## Ways To Keep Your Immune System Healthy

How many of us actually care about making our body healthy? Nowadays, we are very conscious about our body image and people are living with the misguided concept of “the slimmer, the healthier”. While it is good to stay fit and lose weight, however one should not eliminate nutrition which will result in break down of the immune system. To start with, let us comprehend what immune system is and how nutrition affects our immunity.

Immune system is a means of shielding ourselves from any foreign body (like micro organisms and viruses) which causes infections. Hence, immunity is nothing but a defence against these organisms. One of the elements that can affect this defence or resistance is “nutrition”. It follows that an undernourished person’s immune system is easily smothered. Dietary factors that can oppress immunity can be from deficiency of either macro nutrients (carbohydrates, protein and fat) or micronutrients (vitamins, minerals) and water. Now that we understand the factor that can either increase or decrease immunity, let’s look at a few steps to ensure a strong immune system.

- **Protein:** One should have an acceptable amount of protein (dairy products, whole cereals, pulses, eggs, seafood, lean meat) since it’s the building block of our body. Adults with a sedentary lifestyle should opt for low-fat dairy products.
- **Antioxidants :** Antioxidants are an absolutely necessary part of the



meal. These include foods rich in vitamin C, E, beta-carotene (green leafy veggies, bell peppers, tomatoes, pumpkin, carrot, cabbage, broccoli, citrus fruits, berries, almonds, walnuts, sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds, etc). They act as the first line of defense against free radicals which damages our body and increase susceptibility to degenerative diseases like cancer, diabetes, inflammatory joint diseases, asthma and so on. Not to mention, these antioxidants are the one which prevents fats from getting oxidized. So next time when you purchase cooking oils, look for physically refined ones as they hold progressively natural nutritional values.

- **Vitamin D :** Once believed as a vitamin for healthy and strong bones, innumerable studies have proved that Vitamin D is additionally an important nutrient that can

modulate our immune response. One of its main function is to activate T cells otherwise known as “killer cells” in the body which scrutinize and eradicate pathogens. Low levels of this vitamin increases your susceptibility to infections. It’s a well-established fact that India is a hot tropical country; however, over 70% of Indians have vitamin D levels below 20 ng/mL. Therefore one should incorporate foods rich in vitamin D since just sunlight exposure won’t assist to reach normal levels. These include fatty fish, vitamin D fortified breakfast cereals, soy milk, egg yolk, raw maitake mushrooms, raw white mushrooms.

- **Zinc :** It is the 2nd most abundant nutrient in our body, generally ingested from breast milk or foods such as meat which is a rich source. Other sources include fortified breakfast cereals, chickpeas, lentils, wheat germ, low-



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fat yogurt, tofu, cashews, pumpkin seeds. Most of the older adults have shown to have a marginal intake of zinc, deficiency of which leads to impaired immune system, loss of appetite delayed wound healing and much more.

• **Probiotics** : They are live organisms such as yeast and bacteria, which when consumed in an adequate amount, will confer benefits to our bodies. They are naturally present in fermented

foods and may be incorporated in other foods. Having said that, not all fermented products containing bacteria are probiotics; for example Apple cider vinegar. Supplements are also available, but not all supplements marketed as probiotics have proven health benefits. One of the ways probiotics improve human health is by inhibiting the growth of harmful bacteria. Rich source of probiotic which is commonly available is our

“homemade dahi” or yogurt.

Therefore, by following a dietary plan which incorporates the above nutrients, along with sufficient sleep and stress management, we can strive towards a strong immune system.

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## ADVICE ON WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE SUSPECTED COVID-19

### HOW DO I KNOW IF I NEED TO GO TO HOSPITAL OR SEEK MORE ADVICE?

Most people will recover by themselves



#### ISOLATE, ISOLATE, ISOLATE

If you believe you have contracted the virus

- \* Stay at home.
- \* Stay at least 2m away from others.
- \* Don't share towels, bathrooms or utensils.
- \* Stay in different rooms.
- \* Keep wiping surfaces clean.
- \* **Everyone you live with also needs to self-isolate and STAY AT HOME**



**“Youngsters especially, please stay at home. You are not immune. You can catch the disease. You can spread the disease. Don't be careless!”**

There are 3 main symptoms of the CoVID-19 illness.

(Loss of smell and muscle pains are not dangerous).  
\* **There is no need for random testing\***

**Fever** - Normal body temperature is 36.5 to 37.2°C (97.7-99°F)

\* A raised temperature will make you feel unwell, but in most cases is not dangerous.

\* If you do have a temperature above 37.8°C (100°F), you can take some paracetamol.\*  
\* If your temperature is above 39°C (102°F), please **PHONE** for medical advice.

\* Paracetamol is also known as acetoh or acetaminophen



**Cough and sore throat** - the most common symptom of CoVID-19 is a new continuous dry cough.

\* This may cause a **severe sore throat**.

\* Whilst very irritating, is not a reason to attend hospital.

\* Paracetamol may help with the soreness, and you can take alternative sore throat remedies from your local pharmacy.



**Breathlessness** - a feeling of shortness of breath.

\* You may breathe faster and harder than normal.

\* Ask someone to count how many times you breathe in in a minute.



You may **need more oxygen**.

**PHONE** for **urgent medical assessment** if:

- Breathing more than 25 times a minute
- You are unable to complete a full sentence in one breath.
- You are unable to hold your breath for 10 seconds

**Things you can do when you are at home with possible CoVID-19 infection;**

- Try breathing a steam bath regularly
- Sipping hot drinks (eg water with lemon and honey)
- Paracetamol helps with fever and pain
- Eat and drink normally
- Regular exercise - fresh clean air is good for you
- Take rest
- Avoid medicines with ibuprofen if you have CoVID-19

**Be cautious of remedies suggested on WhatsApp and other media streams. Only follow official advice.**