

ASK THE NUTE GURU

THE NUTE (NUTRITION) GURU IMPARTS WISDOM ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF NATURAL, WHOLE-FOODS NUTRITION FOR MIND/BODY WELLNESS.

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Hey Nute Guru, I'm not sure if it's just me, but I seem to get sick more frequently than any of my friends or coworkers. Frankly, I hate it! Is there anything in particular that I can eat to help boost my immune system?

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Of course there is! It may be impossible to change your genetics, but you can certainly make the best of what you have. Here are a few tips to boosting your immune system:

9 Steps to an All-Natural Immune System Makeover

1. Sleep more than you ever have.

I am talking 10 hours. This is my number one secret – even when you already sick. Seriously, this season, before you go out and buy products, pills, medications and so on – start with giving yourself 10 hours of sleep for three to five days. Repeat this once every month. Ten hours (or something significantly more than you're used to) is great way to give your cells extra repair time and your immune system enough time to recharge. Studies clearly show that sleep deprivation weakens your immune system.

2. Shelter yourself.

If you're starting to feel run down or sick from stress, crawl into your turtle shell and opt out of all stressful situations for a few days. This holds true for work, home, or physical stress. Your body is telling you that you need to take some time for yourself. The world will not fall apart, and you'll be stronger and ready to take on more once you're well. There's both animal and human studies that show that stressful situations can lower the various arms of the immune system.

3. Eat an anti-inflammatory diet.

Eating a better diet not only helps your body recover faster- it helps build up your immune military so it's more resilient and dynamic. Specifically, the things that make the most difference: eat more cruciferous vegetables, cut out the processed foods (although it's still unclear at this point which additives might be the culprit). Last, but most important: cut the sugar.

4. Eat – don't buy – your micronutrients.

There's little evidence that popping a bunch of vitamins or supplements with micronutrients helps boost your immune system. I recommend eating micronutrients in whole food form, meaning a lot of vegetables and fruits, or a vegetable juice.

5. Nurture your microbiome.

Good bacteria can be the immune systems best friends and allies in helping protect you from invaders. They work symbiotically with your own immune system.

So please refrain from antibiotics (good bacteria killers!) unless it's absolutely necessary. Eat probiotic foods (but again, supplements have mixed results). Remember, probiotics aren't only in live culture yogurt; they're also in kimchee, kombucha tea and natural pickled veggies.

6. Take vitamin D.

This is the one supplement I actually do think has good evidence to help boost immunity. This is helpful in people who are deficient in vitamin D, which is most of us. Vitamin D3 at doses of 1000 IU to 5000 IU is what I take.

7. Consider herbal remedies with evidence supporting their use.

There is ongoing research on vitamin C, aloe vera, astragalus membranes, echinacea, ginseng, Glycyrrhiza glabra, Chinese herbal remedies and many other concoctions that claim to improve immune functioning. If any of these worked for you or your family, go for them, but be aware that although I wish it were as easy as purchasing a magical herb, this shouldn't be your first line of treatment. This philosophy is supported by research, which has shown that it's wise to remain skeptical of herbs.

8. Exercise less.

As a self-professed cardio junkie, I hate to admit this, but it's true – when you exercise too much, especially hard or long cardio-based exercise, you actually weaken your immune system and you're more susceptible to infections. Combine that with sleep loss and poor diet, and your immune system becomes impaired. The idea is that your body is repairing the inflammation in your muscles, joints, elsewhere instead of doing what it's supposed to. That's why taking a rest after intense exercise is necessary.

9. Know when to go to the doctor, and when to stay home.

I know it sounds counterintuitive, but when you're sick, it's sometimes better for your immune system if you don't visit the doctor. Why? When you go to the doctor, you often get antibiotics or prescription meds that may not even be necessary (and could be harmful to your immune system in the long run.

<http://www.mindbodygreen.com/0-16638/9-steps-to-an-all-natural-immune-system-makeover.html>

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