

HEALTHmatters

Keep Your Immune System Strong

by Robin Thomas



Iwish you all well during this extraordinary spring. Please remember that we are all connected throughout our community, and that the very best course of action to protect your health as well as the health of others, is to limit physical contact outside of your own home during this pandemic. You will also want to keep your immune system strong now and into the future. Taking key steps to protect and build your immune system is as important as it gets when it comes to your health and longevity. If epidemic diseases like diabetes, and heart disease left any doubt about that, the COVID-19 pandemic has silenced those doubts.

As I'm writing this, my family is in our third week of sheltering at home—a full two weeks longer than the public mandate to #stayathome. We started this self-quarantine because my husband, trained in public health, came home from work with a dry cough. Now, three weeks later, we suspect that his cough was due to allergies, but we can't be sure. Fortunately my son and myself have remained symptom-free.

The immune system protects the body like a guardian from harmful influences from the environment and is essential for survival. Using diet and lifestyle modification, you can support your immune system and create a strong, resilient internal environment. If you care about your health, you'll want to nurture this important protection system.

10 TIPS TO KEEP YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM STRONG

If you read my column regularly, you will recognize many of these tips, but there may be surprises here!

REDUCE STRESS When we are stressed, our bodies produce more cortisol. Cortisol interferes with immune function. When we feel like we don't have control over our circumstances, of course we are stressed. We DO have control over our reactions to stress, though. Deep breathing, meditation, and time spent in nature have helped me reduce my own stress level this year.

COMMUNITY I do hate the words "social distancing" as they make no sense. We all need a community of support, and thanks to technology, we are able to stay socially connected through our phones and our computers. Helping our neighbors, especially those who are older or immune compromised, brings us together as a community. Let's not become socially distanced, but stay connected safely!

MUSIC LISTENING or playing music actually boosts your immune system. Research has shown that music listeners have higher numbers of an immune cell type called "natural killer cells," whose job it is to attack bacteria and infected cells. Listening to music also reduces levels of the stress hormone, cortisol, in the body.

...you can create a strong, resilient internal environment.

HYDRATE Water allows your kidneys to remove toxins from your body. It allows your cells to take in nutrients, and it also allows them to expel waste products. If you don't drink enough water, toxins will build up, weakening your immune system. Hydrating regularly also helps to keep those mucus membranes moist.

SLEEP WELL Making sure we consistently get a good night's sleep is one of the best ways we can improve our immunity and defend against viruses and disease. Sleep is a natural immune booster. Research shows that well rested people have stronger immune systems.

EXERCISE Regular aerobic exercise increases the body's ability to deliver and use oxygen and has been shown to increase the "T-cells" or immune cells in the body. It also boosts the immune systems by decreasing the stress hormones in the body and increasing insulin sensitivity in the cells that lowers blood sugar.

GUT HEALTH A healthy gut flora supports a healthy gut, a major barrier against pathogens and integral to the immune system. 75-80% of your immune system resides in the microbiome in your gut and maintaining the right balance of beneficial gut flora is critical for these immune cells residing in your gut. Eat fermented sauerkraut and pickles (I like Bubbie's) and take a probiotic supplement daily. (ask me for my favorite)

LAUGHTER Some studies have shown that the ability to use humor may raise the level of infection-fighting antibodies in the body and boost the levels of immune cells as well. (I'd love for you to share your favorite comedies with me)

EAT WHOLE FOODS I doubt I have a single article that doesn't mention the value of eating fresh, local foods. Buy from your local farmers! A diet high in processed foods just sets you up for a poor immune system. Reduce sugar! Refined sugar suppresses your immune system for hours after eating it.

HELPFUL SUPPLEMENTAL SUPPORT Eating a healthy diet is of prime importance, however the addition of certain supplements is prudent to support a strong immune system. What I recommend: a quality, broad spectrum multivitamin and mineral supplement, Vit D3 based on your blood level of 25-OH vitamin D (optimally 50ng/dl) and Vit C. I take vit C ascorbates combined with quality grape-seed extract. Vitamin C plays a role in the normal production and function of white blood cells and antibodies. You need to keep those abundant if you want a strong immune system. Grape-seed bioflavonoids can help support your cells' ability to communicate with each other for healthy immune responses.

Robin Thomas worked for 25 years in Medical Research at UNC studying inflammation in chronic and autoimmune diseases. She left UNC to start her own Wellness Business in 2004 and founded Living Well Connections, a community for people whose passion is healthy living, in 2015. Learn more at <https://robinthomas.biz>

The Secret Weapon to Fight the Coronavirus?

by Tim Keim



The most effective strategy for avoiding this infection is not being discussed on any media I've heard or seen, and I'm a news junky.

I'm continually shocked by how health professionals are ignoring what seems to be some kind of secret, forgotten, but fundamental method for staying well. It's a simple behavior that gives the individual the power to stay well from all kinds of illness not just exposure to viruses. What could this powerful tactic be?

PROTECTING OUR IMMUNE SYSTEMS

This goes back to the argument between 19th century scientists Louis Pasteur and Antoine Béchamp. Pasteur is the guy who developed the germ theory of disease causation and rabies, chicken pox and anthrax vaccines. He also gave us pasteurization, the method that kills micro-organisms in our food that contribute to infection. Who wouldn't listen to this guy?

His less celebrated opponent, Béchamp, had a different view. Béchamp observed that micro-organisms are always present in the human body and that they caused infection when the immune system was compromised by poor lifestyle choices, poor diet, and lack of fresh air and proper exercise.

Pasteur was accused by The French Academy of Sciences of plagiarizing and then suppressing Béchamp's pioneering work. The medical community adopted Pasteur's germ theory anyway and it predominates to this day. Béchamp receded into obscurity and few even know his name today.

While a vaccine for corona virus is perhaps many months away, are we left to feel helpless against the spread of this disease? Certainly not!

It's clear that people who are infected with the coronavirus are immune-compromised no matter their age. In Chinese cities like Wuhan, where this outbreak began, people have been breathing severely polluted air their whole lives, making them prime candidates for lung infection just like the SARS epidemic. Children and the elderly, who also bear the brunt of the flu, are susceptible to the coronavirus because of either underdeveloped immune systems or poorly functioning immunity, respectively.

AMERICANS ARE VULNERABLE FOR DIFFERENT REASONS

Why does the flu season peak in January and February? America goes on a four-holiday sugar and alcohol binge annually between Halloween (when we addict our children to sugar) and new

year celebrations. Couple that with less sleep, broken health routines, travel et cetera, American immune systems are seasonally depressed because of this toxic onslaught. It should not surprise us then that influenza runs rampant killing thousands of our friends and family every year.

The flu vaccine is only partially protective in the best of years (50% effective for kids this year). The rest is up to us. If our immune systems are not able to mount a defense assisted by vaccines because we are already immune-compromised by our poor lifestyle choices, then the vaccines are of limited value. The fundamental and most effective strategy to stay well is wholesome, daily self-care.

Béchamp was right, and he was also confirming what Ayurveda and other traditional medical systems have always known: that protecting our basic vitality, or ojas, as Ayurveda would say, will give us the best chance to stay well and living without fear of infection.

Staying well is a simple formula: eat real food like lots of organic vegetables, fruits, nuts, whole grains, legumes, and beans. And add delicious culinary

spices that are brimming with antioxidant/anti-inflammatory compounds that boost immunity. Avoid pesticide-laced and processed foods that suppress immune function.

If you don't cook, begin. It's easy, and soon you'll be making really delicious, satisfying, immune-boosting food that will produce vigorous health and relieve your fears of acute or chronic diseases.

Finally, if you do begin coming down with something, the

antimicrobial plant medicines are highly effective against a broad spectrum of viruses and bacteria. Herbs like turmeric, ginger, oregano, horse radish, cayenne and garlic and other plants are effective agents at stopping infection fast. See the studies about these plants at PubMed under their Latin names. The science is there, and it proves that our ancient ancestors were right when they passed down their knowledge about these plants to us.

My recipe for what I call "Flu Shot in a Cup" is the following. In a small saucepan combine 8 oz. of any kind of milk you like, 1 teaspoon of powdered turmeric, ¼ to ½ teaspoon of powdered ginger. Add a sprinkle of cinnamon for some great flavor, heat to steaming, stir often, and pour into a mug and sweeten to taste with honey. Use several times per day if you're already infected. Also, refer to recipes for "fire cider" on the internet. It's a powerful tincture to fight infection.

To your health!

Pittsboro resident, Tim Keim, is an IAYT certified yoga therapist, Ayurvedic health counselor, author and speaker.

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