

How to Have A Strong Immune System

In any group of people, there are some who are more likely to get sick with whatever is going around, and some who seem to never get sick, or bounce back quickly if they do. Wouldn't you like to be in the second group?

"It's the Terrain!" As Louis Pasteur discovered long ago, staying healthy has to do with your "terrain". Pasteur is the microbiologist best known for first identifying the existence of germs and their capacity to make us sick, back in 1862. However, Pasteur said it was the strength, vitality and resilience of our bodies, or the lack thereof, that determined whether we got sick or stayed well, not simply the germs to which we are exposed. A recent University of Calgary study on colds confirms that it is how we respond when infected that determines whether or not we get sick - not simply exposure. Here's how to develop and maintain a healthy "terrain."

Note: specific information on how to obtain all products mentioned below follows at the end of this article.

1. Nutrition

Biochemist Harold Simpson says "There is starvation in America. This type of starvation is not due to insufficient food but deficiency of needed food elements in food." We are over-eating in terms of calories, but not getting the nutrients adequate to maintain good health. Here are some pointers to help you get the nutrition you need to stay healthy.

- As one of my heroes, author Michael Pollan, says: "Eat real food. Not too much. Mostly plants." Real foods are foods our great-grandparents would have recognized, rather than the processed, formulated, and packaged products that fill 80% of today's supermarkets. Try to minimize processed foods, including sugars.
- Use natural **Xylitol** or **Stevia** instead of sugar whenever possible. Apart from empty calories, sugar presents two problems for us. First, sugar is acidic, causing breakdown of tissues. Second it is pro-inflammatory, and inflammation causes disease. Xylitol is not only alkaline, it is actually anti-microbial, so it is good for your health. It also has the advantage of being identical in taste and texture to sugar, and can replace it 1:1 in recipes.
- **Balance your macronutrients** for the best hormonal response. That means always eating carbs, protein and a little healthy fat together, every time you eat. Never eat carbs alone or protein alone.
- **Alkalinize**: improve your pH. pH is a measure of whether your system is alkaline or acidic, which in turn is a good overall indication of whether your body is breaking down or building up. Fruits and vegetables help make us more alkaline. Grains and animal foods (both meats and dairy) tend to be more acidic. Sugar is extremely acidic. Many microbes can not grow in an

alkaline environment, so if you keep yourself alkaline, you are less likely to get sick, and less likely to stay sick if you get sick. It is especially important be more alkaline at night, when your body needs to repair and rebuild. Plus, studies show that a more alkaline diet strengthens bone health. If you don't eat a lot of green veggies, or if you eat a more animal-based diet, it is helpful to supplement with a daily green drink.

- **Identify and Eliminate Food Sensitivities, and Heal the Gut.** Did you know that 70% of your immune system is located in the intestinal tract? So are many neurotransmitters and hormones. It is hard to stay healthy if you continually eat foods your body reacts to as toxins, causing a chronic stress response. This wears down your internal resources and produces symptoms of its own that can make you feel ill. Plus an unhealthy gut can't absorb nutrients from food, no matter how healthy the foods are. Eliminating food sensitivities from your diet and healing your gut takes a huge load off your immune system
- **The most important meal of the day...** We all know it's breakfast, and yet so many people still skip or skimp on this essential meal. Eat a balanced breakfast (protein, carbs and a little healthy fat) within one hour of waking up, even if you're not hungry. If you have the time to cook and sit down to eat, eggs with some non-starchy veggies or berries, plus a small portion of starchy carbs, such as brown rice, or a piece of fruit, make a great breakfast that should keep you full and focused for 4-6 hours. If you're on the run, a protein shake fortified with berries (rich in fiber and anti-oxidants) and a healthy fat such as cod liver oil or chia seeds, will give you quality nutrient-dense fuel to start your day. If you eat dairy, whey protein is the best choice. Otherwise, consider protein from rice, pea, hemp, or a combination of all three. I do not recommend soy protein as it can be suppressive to the thyroid, and has estrogenic effects. See *also my article on breakfast as a Health Essential*.
- **Eat from the Rainbow.** Try to eat fruits and vegetables of at least several different colors every day to ensure a broad spectrum of vitamins, minerals and other nutrients.

2. Sleep We seem to pride ourselves, in this culture, on going non-stop and getting by with as little sleep as possible. It's not good for our health! Sleep is when our body repairs and rebuilds, and when catabolic hormones, like adrenaline and cortisol, take a break. It is important both to get enough hours of sleep (most adults need 8, and kids need more) and to get good quality sleep. If you are not able to sleep through the night, it is important to find out why, and correct it.

- Many studies show that TV or computer time before bed does not promote sound and restful sleep. Let yourself **wind down** rather than winding up. End your day with calming music, a book, prayer or meditation.

- **Hot baths** are great too, especially with a handful of epsom salts and baking soda thrown in for detox and alkalization, and a few drops of lavender for relaxation and pure pleasure. Little children are not the only ones who benefit from having a bedtime ritual!
- **Turn out the lights!** It hasn't been very long, in terms of human history, that electricity has given us the option of staying up when the sun goes down. Even when we turn out the lights, we are bombarded: clocks, charging cell phones, computers, etc. We sleep more deeply if we **sleep in darkness**. If you can't eliminate all light sources, both inside and outside your bedroom, consider wearing a sleep mask. They are inexpensive and you might be surprised what a difference it makes in the quality of your sleep and, in turn what a difference sleep makes in your health. See *also my article on sleep as a "Health Essential"*.

3. Hydration You know you're supposed to drink a lot of water, but do you know why? it helps flush toxins from our system, and keeps protective mucous membranes (our immune system's first line of defense) moist and lubricated. Though the best solution is to drink enough water every day, if you feel your nasal membranes getting dry, try using a neti pot, or just sniff up some salt water. Staying hydrated is also essential to a healthy metabolism. Being just a few per cent under-hydrated can slow your metabolism markedly.

4. Find the Rhythm There is a natural rhythm to life, and we need to find it each and every day: a time to work and a time to play, a time for effort and a time to relax. We can't circumvent it, and if we don't respect it, our bodies have a way of forcing us to slow down. Why wait until you have no choice and are sick in bed? Make time to slow down before you crash.

5. Indoor/Outdoor In the winter, we tend to be indoors more, and to keep the doors and windows shut tight. It's beneficial to get at least some fresh air and daylight every day, regardless of the weather. And when the weather gives us a little respite and the temperature warms up, even briefly, open the windows and circulate some fresh air.

6. Move! You don't need to run a marathon or bench press 400 pounds, but you do need to move your body in order to stay healthy. Take a walk with a friend, or a dog, make time to stretch, practice yoga, join a class, but do *something* to get your circulation flowing. It's what our bodies are designed for, and they work better when they're used! You can buy an inexpensive pedometer to gauge how much you are moving; try to increase it by 10% weekly. Ideally, include some high intensity activity (20-60 second bursts) to increase HGH (human growth hormone - a building and repair hormone) and some resistance training to work the major muscle groups.

7. Hygiene Wash your hands using regular soap (not anti-bacterial!) when you are exposed to others who are sick, or in public places. Ten seconds takes care of most germs to which we're exposed.

Maintenance and Prevention

A healthy diet is essential, but unfortunately, it's difficult these days to get enough nutrients through food to maintain optimum health and immunity. RDAs, the Recommended Dietary Allowances used in labeling, are designed to prevent major deficiency diseases, but not to attain, or sustain, optimal health. Here are some additional ways to boost your immune health.

1. A good **multi vitamin** is an inexpensive nutritional insurance policy, filling in any nutrients that might be missing from your diet. Look for one that is food-based, and avoid one-a-day tablets: though more convenient, they are less assimilable, meaning your body can't use what's in them, so you don't get as much benefit from taking them.
2. That old standby **Vitamin C** is still worth using daily. For adults I recommend 3 or 4 grams daily, spread out in several doses. Taking a vitamin C with bioflavonoids mimics the way it is found in nature, and bioflavonoids are natural antihistamines.
3. Adequate **zinc** levels are essential to every cell in our body, and are vitally important to the immune system. Zinc is active against several viruses that cause colds. Stress lowers zinc levels and leaves us more vulnerable to immune weakness. The **Zinc Challenge** is a simple, quick way to assess whether or not you have adequate zinc levels. Swish a spoonful of liquid zinc sulfate in your mouth. If it tastes like water, your zinc levels are woefully low, and you should probably supplement 25 mg of zinc twice daily. If there is a slight fuzzy taste, sort of like hydrogen peroxide, you are deficient, and need to supplement approximately 25 mg daily. If it tastes like rusty nails, and you immediately want to spit it out, well done! You have adequate zinc! Re-test periodically to see if your levels have come up.
4. It's hard to get enough **Vitamin D** (the sunshine vitamin) in the northern half of the country, and it's impossible in winter. Every cell in the human body has a receptor for Vitamin D, and more benefits are being discovered almost daily. Recommended allowances have recently been increased. Vitamin D is protective against many autoimmune diseases, helps with hormonal balance and insulin sensitivity. Yet blood tests show that many of us are well below optimal levels. 2000 ius of D3 is a good maintenance amount for most adults, but you should have your levels tested periodically during long-term supplementation.

5. You can get a mild but effective detox by putting a handful of **epsom salts**, a little **baking soda**, and a tablespoon of **MSM powder** in a hot bath and soaking at least 20 minutes. For even more immune stimulation, try rinsing off afterward with cool water.

6. **Tea** contains the amino acid l-theanine, which has been shown in a Harvard study to boost natural virus-fighting interferon, and promote healthy mental and physical stress levels. Either green or black will do, although green contains more theanine and anti-oxidants, and less caffeine. (Yes, there is caffeine in tea, but far less than coffee, and it is metabolized much more slowly and gently, without the stress on your adrenals or the spike and aftermath let-down in blood sugar.)

What To Do When You're Sick

- Start with the basics: **Rest, Sleep, Hydrate**. You will recover much more quickly and thoroughly than if you suppress symptoms with medications and try to push through. Let your body work the way it was designed to, and you will feel better after recovery than you did before.
- One of my favorite home remedies is **herbal tea** with local, raw **honey**, a few thin slices of fresh **ginger**, a pinch of **cayenne**, and a squeeze of fresh **lemon**. It creates a healing heat in the body, and breaks up congestion.
- **Take a bath** with epsom salts, baking soda, and MSM, as above, and then wrap yourself up, get under the covers and sweat it out. Be sure to have a pot of herbal tea or a big glass of water nearby to so you don't dehydrate.
- Yup, **chicken soup** really does have therapeutic benefits, but so would any broth made with fresh ingredients, including a simple **vegetable broth**. Use whatever root vegetables you have on hand, like carrots, parsnips, turnips and potatoes, along with greens, herbs, onions and garlic. Just throw everything in a stock pot, cover with water and simmer for at least a few hours. Adding sea salt will help thin mucous, and be generous with the **garlic** to power up the immune support. Garlic has been used as a medicine for thousands of years, and there have been thousands of pharmacological studies done on its benefits. It needs to be cut or crushed to release its healing compounds. You may be surprised to find how sweet garlic broth tastes after simmering for a few hours.
- **Honey** has been shown to be more effective in reducing coughs than many popular over-the-counter medications. This is particularly important as many of those OTC medicines are no longer deemed safe for children. Buckwheat honey was used in the studies. Do not give honey to children under one year of age.
- **Eliminate dairy** and other mucous-producing foods until you are better, especially if there is phlegm or congestion.

- **Arabinogalactans** derive from the larch tree, and work similarly to echinacea, but are more potent. A bland-tasting powder that is safe and effective for both kids and adults, arabinogalactans can be easily disguised in a little applesauce. It can be used for prevention as well as acute care.
- **Quercitin, N-Acetyl Cysteine, and Oil of Oregano** can all be helpful in upper respiratory infections.
- For diarrhea, try **Florastor**, a probiotic. It comes in fizzy packs for kids, or tablets for adults. And don't forget to replace healthy intestinal flora with probiotics any time you take an antibiotic.
- **Olive Leaf** is a very effective anti-viral. I have recommended it for years for chronic systemic viral conditions such as herpes, but it can also be used for acute viral infections. Olive Leaf is also useful for hypertension, at levels of 1000 mgs daily, and is protective against heart disease and "bad" cholesterol. Lastly, it has been shown to lower blood sugar levels.
- **Green Drink Powders** I was once stuck at a five day seminar where everyone was getting sick, and I started to feel awful. I was sure I was going to be the next one down. I had nothing with me but my green drink powder, but drinking a glass every few hours was enough to alkalinize and cleanse my system and I never did get sick. In fact, I felt great!
- **Zinc lozenges** soothe the throat while boosting the immune system. There are many different formulas, each of which add different healing and soothing nutrients.

So What Should I Have In My (Non-)Medicine Cabinet?

Raw local honey

Green, Black and Herbal Teas

Fresh Ginger Root

Cayenne Powder

Fresh Lemons

Garlic

Epsom Salts

Baking Soda

Vitamin C & Bioflavanoids

Zinc, Zinc Lozenges, Zinc Challenge

Food Based Multi Vitamin; Chewables for Children

Vitamin D3

MSM Powder

Arabinogalactans

Quercitin, N-Acetyl Cysteine, Oil of Oregano

Florastor

Olive Leaf

Powdered Green Drink

Below are some of the products I use and recommend for immune support. I recommend these specifically, because I know the companies: the quality of their raw materials and the quality of their manufacturing standards. News reports are filled with stories about supplements that are contaminated, or don't contain what the labels say. With these supplements, I know they will do what they're supposed to do because they are what they say they are.

Of the supplements below, MicroNil can be picked up or mailed from my office. All other products listed can be ordered either from me or from Moss Nutrition (800-851-5444 or <http://www.mossnutrition.com>) . You can also find more product information on their website. Just tell them I sent you. Of course, I am happy to help you customize an immune support program for you or your family, if you would like assistance.

Xylitol: While both xylitol and stevia are natural sweeteners that have little to no impact on blood sugar, only xylitol has so many therapeutic benefits. Also, xylitol is identical in taste and texture to sugar. I am glad that Xylitol is becoming more widely available but the commercial products are often made from corn stalks rather than birch bark, and I find that some people do not tolerate the corn-derived product as well. Birch xylitol also tastes better, according to general feedback. *See also my article on xylitol's many therapeutic benefits.*

Alkalinize:

PaleoGreens is the only powdered green drink I have found that actually tastes good, and it is mostly organic as well. For a different alkalinizing drink with all the beneficial nutrients of fruits and berries, try **PaleoReds**.

pH Strips These are inexpensive and simple to use. A roll has enough paper for over 100 individual tests. Test mid-stream first morning urine after a minimum of 6 hours sleep for most accurate results. The test strip should turn green, not yellow or blue.

Breakfast Shakes:

Whey Cool is pure whey, from grass fed cows on pesticide free pastures: comes in Vanilla and Plain.

PaleoMeal is a whey meal replacement, also from grass fed cows on pesticide free pastures, with additional nutrients. It comes in Vanilla, Chocolate and Strawberry.

Ultra Lean Vanilla or Chocolate is the best tasting meal replacement overall, great for finicky kids and teens; also whey-based.

MetaCore is a hemp-based powder, lower in protein but higher in fiber, antioxidants and healthy fats. It comes in Cacao Bean, Vanilla Bean, Berry Vanilla, and Cinnamon Chai.

PaleoMeal DF is a dairy free rice protein-based meal replacement in Berry Vanilla flavor.

SalbaRx is a great add-in for your shakes, a rich source of fiber and Omega 3s; Salba Rx is white chia seed fortified with organic maca root; high in calcium, potassium, and antioxidants.

Multi Vitamins

DFH Multi Complete comes with or without iron and copper. This is an excellent nutritional support for those who are still working on eating a healthier diet.

Innate Response makes a number of specialized multis that are 100% whole-food-based, which means you get all the synergistic co-existing factors, the way they are in nature, rather than isolated nutrients. I particularly like their formulas for Men over 40 and Women over 40.

For kids, you need a chewable that passes both the taste test and the quality test. Two I like are **Rx Children's Chewable Multi** and **Pioneer Chewable Multi Vitamin & Mineral**.

Vitamin C:

Innate Response Vitamin C 400 includes the full network of enzymes, co-factors and bioflavonoid complex that is found in Vitamin C-rich foods, and that makes it more effective at lower doses. Made from Florida oranges, it is one of very few vitamin C products that does not come from China, and is not synthesized from corn syrup or other forms of refined sugar.

C+BioFizz is a fizzy, tasty powder that contains over 2.5 grams per teaspoon as well as the bioflavonoids quercetin, rutin and hisperidin. It is very kid-friendly, and can be mixed with water or into other drinks.

Klaire Lab's Multi-Element Vitamin C is buffered and includes bioflavonoids, as well as minerals to help maintain proper acid/alkaline balance.

Zinc:

To establish the need for zinc supplementation, use liquid **Zinc Challenge**, as described above. For regular supplementation, use **Zinc Supreme**. For acute illness, including sore throats, I particularly like **Perque Zinc & Throat Guard**,

which includes echinacea, slippery elm and vitamin C in a berry base, or **Rx Vitamins' Zinc Lozenges**, which contain zinc, vitamin C and honey.

Vitamin D Synergy contains 2000 ius of D3 as cholecalciferol. If lab testing validates the need for higher doses, **Vitamin D Supreme** contains 5000 ius. Both contain Vitamin K as well.

MSM is not only a great detoxifier, it is an excellent anti-inflammatory, helpful for joints, allergies, heartburn, muscle pain, fibromyalgia, acne and more. The plain powder can be used in a hot bath, and the flavored Raspberry or Lemon Aid for drinking. You can also use capsules. Because MSM can have strong detoxifying effects, it is important to build dosage slowly. Start at 1000-1500 mg daily and slowly increase to 3-10 grams daily. It is safe long-term and does not interfere with any medications.

Allicillin The most widely known and studied garlic compound is allicin, which ironically can not be obtained either by eating fresh garlic, or in most of the garlic supplements available. **Allicillin** is a true allicin garlic extract, and has been tested in double blind, placebo controlled studies of the common cold to be effective at "accelerated relief, reducing the severity of troublesome symptoms ...and recovery to full fitness" as well as "reduced likelihood of becoming reinfected with other viral strains". Allicillin is even effective against MRSA.

MicroNiI is an herbal "sledgehammer", a broad spectrum antimicrobial, effective against both viral and bacterial infections. It comes in tincture form and can be added to water, tea or juice.

ImmunoGalactans are an excellent arabinogalactan powder, especially useful for babies and children, although adults will find it effective, too.

Quercitin can be purchased as **Quercitin Ascorbate Powder** or as **Quercitin + Nettles** capsules. Both work as natural antihistamines and have strong anti-oxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. They are good for sinus and respiratory support. I have seen a dose of quercitin stop an asthma attack in its tracks. Nettles is a traditional cough remedy.

N-Acetyl Cysteine: Studies show that NAC can help protect against such respiratory ailments as bronchitis, bronchial asthma, emphysema, chronic sinusitis, and may even help defend against lung damage caused by cancer-causing chemicals in cigarette smoke. NAC has also been used effectively in treating inner ear infections.

Oil of Oregano is a strong anti-microbial that supports the respiratory and urinary tracts.

Olive Leaf capsules help support immune resistance, particularly in viral respiratory or intestinal infection. They are also useful in lowering blood pressure and cholesterol.

Immunitone is an excellent broad spectrum immune support safe enough for long term use in chronic immune conditions and strong enough for an acute illness. It can also be used as a preventive.

To order any of the products above (other than MicroNil), go to www.mossnutrition.com and use my name as the referring practitioner. For MicroNil, contact me directly and I can mail it to you or leave it in the waiting room. Of course, you can also get any of the other supplements directly from me, as well.

Information in this article is for educational purposes, and is not meant to replace consultation with a qualified health professional.

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Strengthening the Body Mind & Spirit Since 1993

May you be filled with loving kindness.

May you be well.

May you be peaceful, and at ease.

May you be happy.