



Immune Health *Guide*

TOP TIPS TO SURVIVE &
THRIVE THROUGHOUT
COLD AND FLU SEASON

IMMUNE HEALTH 101

The basics

With cold and flu season around the corner, immune health is top of mind for many. And if the pandemic taught us *anything*, it's the importance of keeping your immune system healthy.

What is the Immune System?

Your immune system is a **complex network of cells, tissues, and organs that help your body fight off infections**. It acts like a castle, defending your body from harmful invaders viruses, bacteria, fungi, and parasites.

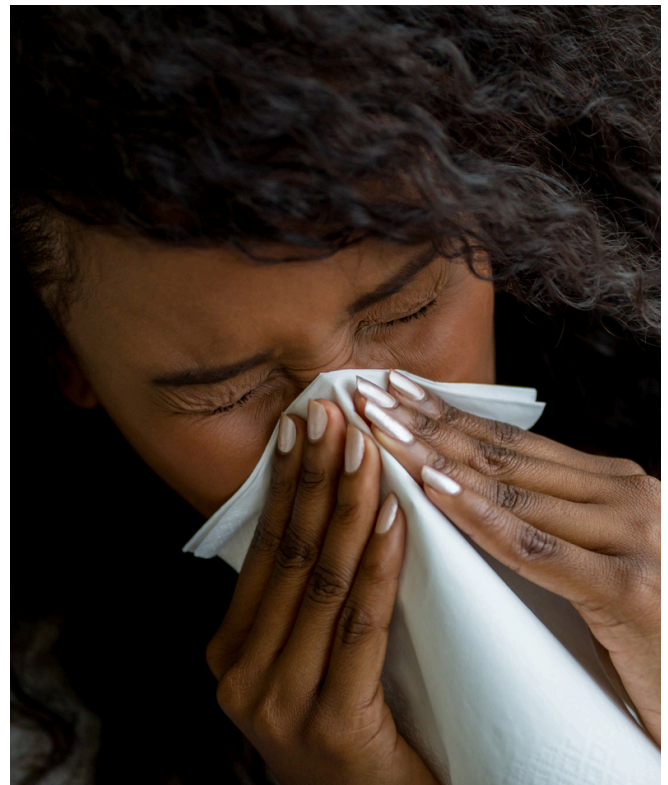
When your immune system senses danger, it launches an attack. It releases white blood cells and antibodies to protect you from external intruders.

Prevention is the Best Medicine

While it's impossible to avoid germs altogether, you have more power over your immune system than you think.

Many simple daily habits can give your immune system the edge. And that's exactly what we'll cover in this guide.

Keep reading for healthy habits, supplements, immune hacks, and other helpful tips to keep your immune system strong, throughout cold and flu season... and all year long!





HABITS FOR IMMUNE HEALTH

Below are some healthy habits that'll help keep your immune system in tip-top shape. These habits benefit your health year-round. But they're *especially* important during cold and flu season:

- 1 - **Eat a healthy diet.** What you put on your plate matters. Eating a diverse range of colorful fruits and veggies floods your body with vitamins and nutrients to keep your immune system strong. On the flip side, sugary foods, processed foods, fried foods, and refined grains can compromise the immune system. So choose wisely. Opt for wholesome, nutrient-dense foods like fruits, veggies, nuts, seeds, legumes, fish, poultry, and healthy fats like avocados or olive oil.
- 2 - **Get plenty of sleep.** During sleep, your body produces cytokines, proteins that help mount an immune response. When you skimp on sleep, it weakens this response. Research shows people who don't get enough sleep are twice as likely to catch a cold compared to those who get at least 7 hours of shuteye. To keep your immune system strong, aim for 7-9 hours of sleep every night.
- 3 - **Exercise regularly.** Exercise is one of the best immune boosters. It increases circulation, which allows immune cells to do their job more efficiently. But it's best to not overdo it. Overexertion can actually weaken the immune system. Aim for 20-30 minutes of moderate exercise you enjoy most days. Walk, bike, swim, dance, lift some weights, or do some yoga.

HABITS FOR IMMUNE HEALTH

Continued...

- 4 – **Don't smoke.** Smokers are more likely to catch colds and flu than non-smokers. This is because nicotine weakens the immune system.
- 5 – **Limit or avoid alcohol.** Alcohol also weakens the immune system, making you more vulnerable to illness. When you drink, your body makes breaking down the alcohol its the top priority. This takes energy away from other body functions, like fighting infections.
- 6 – **Drink plenty of water.** Staying well hydrated helps your kidneys flush toxins from your body. Less toxins mean less work for your immune system. That way, it can focus its energy on fighting pathogens. Steer clear of sugary beverages like soda and energy drinks and aim for 64 ounces of pure water each day.
- 7 – **Wash your hands frequently.** Cold germs can live on your hands for up to an hour. And flu germs can survive on hard surfaces for up to 48 hours. Washing your hands prevents the spread of these germs, so you're less likely to come down with bugs in the first place. To send germs down the drain, wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- 8 – **Keep stress in check.** Chronic stress weakens immune function. It suppresses white blood cells like T-cells and natural killer cells that help fight off infections. So to keep your immune system healthy, find ways to manage your stress. Slow down, meditate, practice deep breathing, get out in nature, take a break from the news, connect with others, or try some yoga.

TOP NUTRIENTS

For immune health

Certain nutrient have superpowers for immune function. Here are a few:

Vitamin C

This antioxidant is best known for its immune-boosting benefits. It stimulates white blood cells helping them protect your body from foreign invaders. It also neutralizes free radicals, which can damage immune cells. You can get your fill of this nutrient by eating vitamin C-rich foods like:

- Strawberries
- Citrus fruits
- Bell peppers
- Kiwi fruit
- Broccoli
- Tomatoes

Vitamin D

This fat-soluble vitamin enhances the function of immune cells. That's why people who are low on vitamin D face an increased risk of infections. Nicknamed the "sunshine vitamin", vitamin D is made when you get direct sunlight on your skin. It's also found in certain foods including:

- Salmon
- Sardines
- Trout
- Egg yolks
- Mushrooms

Zinc

Your immune cells need zinc to work properly. It helps your body make helper T cells, which activate other immune cells. Studies show zinc deficiency can increase the risk of pneumonia. Here are a few foods high in zinc:

- Oysters
- Beef
- Chicken
- Pork
- Lentils
- Pumpkin seeds
- Oatmeal

Selenium

This trace mineral acts as an antioxidant. It protects your body from oxidative stress and lowers inflammation, which enhances immune function. Research shows selenium deficiency weakens immune response. Selenium rich foods include:

- Brazil nuts
- Yellowfin tuna
- Oysters
- Pork
- Beef liver
- Chicken
- Turkey
- Eggs

GUT HEALTH & IMMUNITY

Why it's important

Seventy percent of your immune system lives in your gut. Because of this, your gut health has a *huge* impact on your immune health.

Your gut is home to over 100 trillion bacteria, known as your gut microbiome. Some of these bacteria are “good,” while others are “bad.” **Your gut bacteria communicate with your immune cells, and can influence how your body responds to infections.**



That’s why having a balanced gut is key to a healthy immune system. Here are two ways to love your gut:

Probiotics

Probiotics are foods or supplements that contain live beneficial bacteria. Consuming probiotics helps replenish friendly microbes to help keep your microbiome balanced.

Here are some probiotic rich foods that can help restore your friendly flora:

- Yogurt
- Kefir
- Kombucha
- Miso
- Sauerkraut
- Kimchi
- Tempeh
- Natto

You can also take probiotic supplements to repopulate your gut with good bacteria.

Prebiotics

If you want your friendly flora to thrive, you need to feed them well. And that’s exactly what prebiotics do. Prebiotics are a special type of fiber that acts as food for your gut bacteria.

Here are some foods that are high in prebiotic fiber:

- Chicory root
- Jerusalem artichoke
- Dandelion greens
- Burdock root
- Green bananas
- Asparagus
- Leeks
- Garlic
- Onions
- Apples
- Oats
- Flaxseed
- Barley



TOP SUPPLEMENTS

For immune health



Andrographis

This herb has anti-inflammatory and antimicrobial properties and hails from South Asia. Research shows it may reduce the severity and duration of cold symptoms.



Echinacea

Also known as purple coneflower, this herb is a popular remedy for colds and flu. One study found echinacea reduced the risk of developing an upper respiratory infection by 22%.



Elderberry extract

Elderberry comes from the *Sambucus* tree. It has antiviral effects and is shown to reduce the severity and length of cold and flu symptoms. Elderberry comes in many forms, including lozenges, liquid, capsules, and gummies,



Astragalus

This herb is best known for its immune enhancing effects. Research suggests it may increase your body's production of white blood cells, which help your body fight off infections.

COLD & FLU TOOLKIT

Helpful hacks

Sometimes, no matter how hard you try to avoid it, you're hit by a nasty cold or flu.

Whether you have a sore throat, runny nose, hacking cough, fever, (or all of the above) -- being sick is no fun.

The tips we've covered so far can help get your body back on track. But here are some other hacks to offer some soothing relief:



Rinse your sinuses

Runny nose driving you bonkers? Try using a neti pot or nasal rinse. They rinse your sinuses out and clear mucus so you can breathe more freely. If you're new to nasal irrigation, [this video](#) will walk you through it.

Try a steam shower

Steam showers help reduce inflammation in the nose and throat and clear congestion. This may help you cough up any loose mucus. Using a humidifier can also help moisturize your nasal passages and thin out mucus.

Gargle with salt water

Gargling with salt water is a simple way to soothe a sore throat and loosen and clear mucus. To do this, simply dissolve 1/2 tsp of salt in 8 oz of warm water. Take a sip, tilt your chin up, and gargle for 15 seconds (or as long as you can). Then spit it out and repeat with the rest of the salt water.

Sip a cup of tea

Warm liquids soothe sore throats and break up congestion. Fresh [ginger tea with honey and lemon](#) is a popular choice for colds and flu. [Throat Coat tea](#) is also good to have on hand. It contains herbs like slippery elm that support throat health.