

STRENGTHENING YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM

The immune system can be weakened by any of the following stressors. Even the best nutritional supplementation or herbal medicine will not be effective without taking care of the stressors that have weakened your immune system.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Malnutrition• Stress• Toxicity• Heavy metal exposure• Age• Radiotherapy• Smoking• Sugar	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Low protein• Food sensitivity• Chronic illness• Grief or depression• Liver dysfunction• Coffee• Under-active thyroid• Obesity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Malabsorption• Overexercise• Medication• Marijuana• Fatigue• Anaesthetic and surgery• Alcohol
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Which nutrients will help your immune system?

Vitamin A and Beta-carotene:

Essential for healthy mucous membranes, which is the body's first line of defence. Cod liver oil is a fantastic source of vitamin A, hence its' popularity. Luckily it is now available in capsule form! Sources of vitamin A and B-carotene include cod liver oil, egg yolk, tomatoes, broccoli, carrots, parsley, sweet potato, mangoes. Or try the supplement Adalase by Phytocare.

Vitamin C and bioflavonoids:

Vitamin C protects the immune system in many ways but its main effect is to improve resistance. The common mistake with vitamin C is not taking enough of it. At the first sign of a cold an adult can take 1000mg every hour until bowel tolerance is reached (this means having a loose bowel motion) (Note that those with kidney or liver disease should seek advice before taking high doses).

Zinc:

Is critical for immune function. Many Australians are deficient in zinc because Australian soils are old and deficient. It is closely linked to vitamin A. There is an increased need for zinc with puberty, the oral contraceptive pill, pregnancy, alcohol, drinking tap water (copper pipes), HRT, and frozen food intake. Young children and the elderly are often zinc deficient.

Zinc lozenges are particularly effective at the first sign of a cold. Natural sources are oysters, eggs, red meat, sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds. Supplementation is often required initially.

Vitamins B5 & B6:

These two B-group vitamins are very important for good immune function. If both are deficient there will be no antibody response at all. They are lost from the body with stress, excess protein intake, alcohol and the pill.

Iron:

Should not be supplemented during acute infection as bacteria thrive on it, however iron deficiency can cause immune deficiency, so may need to be supplemented once the infection has been resolved.

What to do during an acute infection:

- **Rest** and keep warm.
- Drink large amounts of **fluids** preferably vegetable juices, lemon juice, soups and herb teas.
- **Fever** is an important defence mechanism and most naturopaths would suggest working with the fever to approximately 38.5 degrees, rather than suppressing it, so try to go without the paracetamol. To break a fever take clothes off, have cool drinks, tepid bath, and place cool wet washers around the pulse points at wrists and on crown of head. A terrific herb tea for managing fever contains elderflower, peppermint and yarrow. Of course if the fever persists, see your medical practitioner.
- **Avoid sugar**, sweets, lollies, jams, as sugar slows the immune system down to half strength.
- Crush **raw garlic** into soup or on toast with hummous.
- **Vitamin C** – 1000mg every hour until you reach bowel tolerance. (a loose bowel movement). Vitamin C slows the virus spreading from cell to cell, and it has an anti-histamine action.
- **Zinc lozenges** – Strepsils have now introduced a zinc lozenge. Slowly suck 3-4 lozenges per day at the first sign of a cold, and it will significantly shorten the length of the cold.
- Supplements for immune support including my herbal immune mix, *Defence Support* by *Nutrimedicine*, *Imucare* and *Adalase* by *Phytocare*, *Sinulin* and *Bronchilin* by *Flordis*. Essential fatty acids are useful for their antiinflammatory action.
- **Echinacea** – has its strongest effect at the beginning of an infection. Dosage is 5ml every 2 hours at the first sign of infection. Taking Echinacea on its own once the infection has taken hold won't give such a noticeable effect.
- Other useful herbs that may be prescribed are eyebright, andrographis, golden seal, picrorrhiza, thyme, licorice, cayenne, ginger, calendula, and poke root.

Remember, a day or two of treating yourself with nutrition, can prevent two weeks of suffering with bronchitis or infected sinuses!