



SUPER CHARGE YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM

Living Well with Papakura SDA

01.



GET ENOUGH SLEEP

Winter is a season when nature pauses to rest - think hibernation!

Did you know that not enough sleep can affect our immune system?

Studies show that if we don't get a good quality sleep or don't get enough sleep, we are more likely to get sick - and it can affect how quickly we recover as well.

Sleep deprivation and too much stress can increase how much of the hormone cortisol is made; and when we have increased levels of cortisol for a prolonged time, it suppresses immune function.

So, it is best to ensure to always get the level of sleep that is needed... and if you are starting to feel a bit flu like, have an early night or two.

Research has shown that certain hormones, chemicals and proteins that fight off infection are released while we sleep.

So, stick to a sleep schedule and have the same sleep and wake times daily - ensuring you get eight hours of quality shut-eye.

If you have trouble falling asleep, don't drink tea or coffee beyond midday, and avoid bright lights in the evening - blue light can reduce your production of melatonin, which can make getting to sleep difficult.

02.

KEEP MOVING

It is tempting to hibernate and stay inside when it is cold... but, to stay well we need to keep moving.

There are many reasons why exercise is important, and it is also good for our immunity.

Keeping active is important for circulation and the lymphatic system – the lymphatic system needs movement to keep flowing. It looks after our immune cell responders; and allows for them to move freely around our whole body... which then makes sure they are alerted to any pathogens and toxins – and they can remove them from our system.

Researchers have found that 20-30 minutes of regular movement results in a stronger immune system, especially through winter - so, it doesn't have to be grueling.

Of course exercise is also going to help us sleep better and it will help to slow down the release of stress hormones too.



03.

EAT FOR WELLNESS

What we choose to eat will make a difference... did you know that almost 80% of our immune system is in our gut?

So, our gut is the gateway to health – focus on eating a wide variety of wholefoods, and limiting highly processed foods, this will help our immune system. These foods contain immune-boosting nutrients, like vitamin C, B6, B12, beta carotene and D, plus minerals such as folate, zinc and iron.

Eating too much sugar can affect the immune system - it affects the way the white cells attach bacteria. Suppression of the immune system starts as quickly as 30 minutes after eating a high sugar food, and can last up to five hours.



Our immune system is more likely to be functioning at an optimal level if we choose to eat a wholefood, unrefined diet with mostly vegetables and some fruit, grains, legumes and healthy fats too – these foods contain many immune-boosting nutrients.

Orange foods and leafy greens give us the really important carotenoids, that improve our vitamin A levels - which are beneficial to the immune system and important for healthy skin and mucus production - which is first line defense.

Healthy fats are beneficial for immune cell functioning and decreasing inflammation - foods like flax seed, hemp oil, nuts and seeds.

Vitamin C rich foods from fresh fruits and vegetables help ensure the immune system is functioning as it should be.

Sulfur foods like garlic, onions as well as strong foods like ginger and peppers help with circulation and improve mucus flow plus help digestion.

“ POOR DIGESTION PUTS YOU AT A DISADVANTAGE ”



04.



LOWER STRESS

We all get stressed, small bursts of stress may actually help immune system!

However, long-lasting stress hampers our immune system. It is important to look for ways to help our body produce lower levels of stress hormones, so that the immune system isn't compromised. The more stressed you are the less effective our natural killer cells will be.

Positive thinking has a huge effect on health – so spend a few minutes daily to think of something to be thankful for; also try some deep breathing ... it will lower stress levels and help with sleep.

It was also found in research that writing in a journal about stresses and emotions helped strengthen the immune system.

Additionally, being positive increases our health and reduces our chance of getting sick from a virus. Finding things to be grateful for or having an attitude of gratitude will help increase our immune health too.

05.

STAY HYDRATED

Drink plenty of water, as it helps in the production of lymph, as well as flushing out the toxins.

Lymph is the fluid that carries immune white cells around our body to help fight the bacteria and viruses.

Water helps remove the toxins from the body, which can have a negative impact on our immune system.

Also, dehydration reduces the function of the protective barrier in your nose, which is the first line of defense against a cold.

It can be hard to drink enough water in winter, so try drinking herbal teas or popping some lemon slices in warm water to make water drinking more appealing in the cold weather!

Oh, and the other important use of water is to wash our hands, even more so if you or someone in our house is ill - wash to the tune of happy birthday!



06.



LOOK AFTER OUR MICROBIOME

As 70% of the cells that make up the immune system are found in the gut, it is a great idea to support it so we can have great immune function!

Gut microbiome is the trillions of bacteria and microbes that live in our stomach. These play an important role in the bodies immune response to infection and are the key in determining our overall health.

To feed your gut microbiome and help it thrive, it is important to eat a variety of prebiotic and probiotic foods.

Prebiotics are the non-digestible part of plants that help the growth of the friendly bacteria in the gut - so eat more whole plant foods. Probiotics are the live cultures of the bacterial found in your gut.

We can eat foods rich in probiotics, like fermented foods or take some probiotics to promote good bacteria in your body, which will assist our immune system.

Research shows that when our levels of bad bacteria outweigh the good bacteria, our immune system is weakened.

The gut microbiome “trains” our immune system by communicating with the cells about how to respond to infection, so having a healthy gut is imperative to overall immune system health.

SOME MORE TIPS...



07

LAUGH A LOT

Laughing is such an easy way to boost our immune system!

A good giggle or hearty laugh gives our immunity a leg-up, by boosting antibody production and activating important protective T cells.

Studies found that laughter increased production of antibodies and activation of the body's natural killer cells'.



08

SOAK UP SOME SUN

Vitamin D is an immune system super-charger, and it is mostly synthesized from sunshine on our skin - so soak up some sun when you can... of course making sure not to over do it. In winter months, 20 minutes outside will make a difference.

Vitamin D is a nutrient that has been shown to be particularly beneficial for people who are prone to respiratory infections & asthma.



09

DRINK HERBAL TEA

Not only is a cup of herbal tea warming and relaxing, research has also shown that the naturally occurring chemicals in tea called alkylamines strengthen the immune system to help it fight off infection.

Many of the herbs are calming, so that can help with relaxing and slowing the production of the stress hormones too.

10.

SUPPORT HEALTH

Zinc - is an essential mineral and is found in every cell of the body and is important for immune function - it is directly involved in the production of some immune cells, and one to be easily deficient in. Increase some of the foods that are high in zinc like pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, cashews, tahini, flax seeds, spinach, egg yolks, cacao and chickpeas.

Vitamin C - is a potent antioxidant, and very beneficial for the immune system. Antioxidants help fight free radicals, a type of unstable molecule known to damage the immune system. Increase fresh fruits and vegetables to get adequate amounts of vitamin C.

Manuka honey - it contains strong anti-bacterial properties that are effective against infections, especially digestive, skin and throat. If you get a sore throat, a spoonful of honey doesn't just make the medicine go down, it is the medicine!

Herbs - there are many herbs that are fantastic for the immune system; herbs like andrographis, echinacea, elderberry, withania, astragalus, thyme, ginger, yarrow, mushrooms and more - depending on your symptoms

CHOOSE IMMUNE STRENGTHENING FOODS



VEGETABLES

- garlic
- onions
- dark green vegetables
- shiitake and all mushrooms
- celery
- kumara
- carrots
- cauliflower
- tomatoes
- beetroot
- salad greens
- bean sprouts
- pumpkin
- leeks



FRUIT, NUTS & SEEDS

- blueberries
- raspberries
- strawberries
- lemons
- limes
- kiwi fruit
- oranges
- apples,
- pomegranates
- pumpkin seeds
- brazil nuts
- almonds
- sunflower seeds.



HERBS

- turmeric
- ginger
- chilli
- basil
- oregano
- thyme
- rosemary
- parsley
- mint