



BOOSTING YOUR IMMUNE HEALTH

Twelve Tips to Avoid Getting Sick

Stephen Sinatra, M.D.

BOOSTING YOUR IMMUNE HEALTH— Twelve Tips to Avoid Getting Sick

Remember Louis Pasteur, the 19th century chemist and microbiologist known for fathering the “germ theory” (i.e., that microorganisms cause diseases)? While on his deathbed in the late 19th century, Pasteur is said to have declared, “the microbe is nothing, the terrain is everything!”

Although many conventional practitioners today still blame microbes for infectious diseases, including the viral cold or the flu, Pasteur’s final theory helps explain why some people who are exposed to microbes get sick while others do not; his “terrain” describes the relative integrity of our immune systems.

Imagine your “terrain” as a well-tended garden...if you plant it in mineral-rich soil, and provide it with plenty of sunlight, water, and care, it will probably grow lush vegetation that can easily fight off invaders (insects). Plants in a poorly tended garden, on the other hand, which don’t get much light and water and are rooted in rocky soil, will not thrive as easily.

How we nurture our nature, then, affects our immune system strength. If we optimize our immune system with whole and unprocessed foods (a good rule of thumb is those containing less than 5 ingredients), rest, stress reduction exercises, hydration, vitamins, minerals, herbs, and hydrotherapy treatments, our bodies will fight off infection much more efficiently.

Read on as I share my top cold and flu prevention and treatment recommendations, which also go a long way toward immune system support and can significantly affect your overall health.



1. Make sure you get plenty of zzzzzz's. Sleep is the time when our bodies do the hard work of detoxifying, restoring, and rejuvenating. Try for at least 7.5 to 9 hours of sleep per night.



2. Avoid sugary / processed foods, wheat and dairy products, as these “comfort” foods can suppress the immune system in some individuals. By eating less processed food, you will hopefully consume more fruits, vegetables and other whole foods¹ like quinoa, lentils, beans, grass-fed beef, or wild salmon. If there's one dietary recommendation you choose to follow, make it elimination of refined sugar.



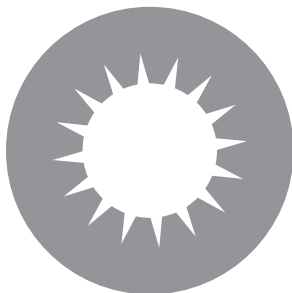
3. Try to relax and de-stress as much as you can. It is well understood that stress has a negative impact on both mental and physical health. Chronic stress has been shown to negatively impact the gut microbiome partly due to the existence of the gut-brain axis. Some examples of calming activities include meditation, yoga, Tai Chi, Qi Gong, or whatever feels relaxing to you. Personally, I go for a walk in nature to help calm my nervous system. I also find it helpful to meditate in the morning. One of the best antidotes to stress is meditation. You may be surprised to learn how much chronic stress may be negatively impacting your gut and therefore your overall health.

¹For more information about whole foods, read *In Defense of Food: An Eater's Manifesto*, by Michael Pollan (Penguin Group, 2009)



4. Fight microbes with microbes:

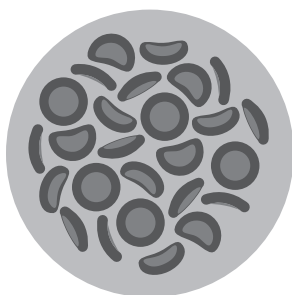
take probiotics to help populate your gut with health-promoting bacteria. Probiotics help support digestion as well as your immune system. You can also eat lots of fermented foods like unpasteurized kimchi, sauerkraut, and miso.



5. Get enough vitamin D. Our bodies need sunlight to make vitamin D, which is crucial for immune system health. Those living in the Northern U.S. or Canada usually don't get adequate sun exposure during the winter months, and need to supplement. Taking 2,000 IU a day of Vitamin D (especially throughout the winter season) is generally a safe and effective way of priming your immune system.



6. Blow your nose... that is, with the help of a Neti pot. Washing out your sinuses daily with a Neti pot will help keep your nasal passages clear of microbes. Add $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp of sea salt to the Neti pot, top with warm water, and irrigate each sinus by pouring the water through each nostril. Then, blow your nose to expel excess mucous and water. Repeat if necessary.



7. Regularly use castor oil packs.

Castor oil is a powerful anti-inflammatory that, when absorbed through the skin, promotes increased circulation, elimination of toxins, and healing of organs. Double blind studies conducted by the Association for Research and Enlightenment show that castor oil packs increase the production and level of activity of white blood cells (lymphocytes) that help fight infection.



8. Engage in light exercise daily.

Exercise has been shown to improve the diversity of the gut microbiome. This makes sense as blood flow is increased to the internal organs with physical activity. Activities like walking, swimming, Qi Gong, Tai Chi, and yoga all help support healthy immune system function. It doesn't have to be complicated or intimidating. Just a daily walk in your neighborhood can go a long way toward improving your overall health.



9. Drink anti-microbial tea. If you feel run down and/or susceptible to sickness, crush 3–4 cloves of garlic, grate a piece of thumb-sized ginger, and squeeze the juice from half a lemon into 6–8 cups boiling water. Simmer for 5–10 minutes, add 1 tsp of honey and stir. Drink up to 3 cups a day to fight off an infection and soothe a sore throat.



10. Try oscillocoquinum, an over-the-counter homeopathic remedy that helps prevent and/or temporarily reduce flu-like symptoms. Take $\frac{1}{3}$ of a vial every 4 hours for 1–2 days if you feel the flu coming on. As a preventive measure, take $\frac{1}{3}$ of a vial weekly throughout the winter season.



11. Treat your feet to warming socks. If you feel a cold coming on, thoroughly wring out a pair of cotton socks soaked in cold water. Soak your feet in hot water for 5–10 minutes, and then put the wrung-out cotton socks on. Cover these socks with another pair of dry wool socks and go to bed; the inner socks will be completely dry in the morning. Repeat for 3–4 nights. This form of hydrotherapy helps remove congestion in the head and upper respiratory tract.



12. Add immune-boosting foods to your diet. Several foods can help to keep your immune system strong, including pomegranates, spinach, broccoli, onions, garlic, and ginger. Plus, broccoli and onions have another important benefit. They contain quercetin, a potent flavonoid and antioxidant that has antiviral properties as well as histamine-regulating effects. In fact, you can think of quercetin as a “natural antihistamine.”

It's always good to support your body's natural defense mechanisms; this includes fevers, which essentially cook and destroy the microbes that are making you sick. Fevers also help you build natural immunity that protects you from future infections. Many doctors suggest taking Tylenol (acetaminophen) to reduce a fever; however, reducing your temperature will not help you get rid of the microbes wreaking havoc on your body.

The analogy I like to use is, “Would you rather cook your Thanksgiving turkey at 100 degrees for 5 days, or 350 degrees for 5 hours?” Cooking a turkey at a higher temperature makes more sense, and the same concept is true for our bodies when we support a fever to cook those nasty microbes. Please talk to your doctor first about supporting a fever, as this can be a challenge, particularly with young children and the elderly.

If you do end up sick with a cold or the flu during the next winter season, try soothing your upper respiratory tract by consuming Spicy Chicken Soup – see our family recipe on the next page.

SPICY CHICKEN SOUP

This immune-boosting spicy chicken soup helps you eliminate sinus and lung congestion, and tastes great, especially if you enjoy hot-n-spicy foods! You'll need:

CHOOSE ORGANIC ITEMS WHENEVER POSSIBLE

- 1 whole organic chicken or chicken parts (with bones)
- 1 medium to large onion, chopped
- 3-6 carrots, peeled and chopped
- 3-6 stalks of celery, chopped
- 2-3 Tbsp of olive oil or flavored olive oil + 2-4 Tbsp for drizzling
- Natural salt blend and whole pepper blend, to taste

OPTIONAL ADD-INS

- 2-3 cloves of garlic, minced
- 1-3 teaspoons of ginger root, peeled and minced
- 1-2 bell peppers, chopped
- 1 zucchini, chopped
- 2-4 cups of fresh spinach
- 1-2 Tbsp Tuscan Spice Blend
- fresh parsley or cilantro, chopped

In a soup or large sauce pan, sauté chopped onion and a few tablespoons of olive oil on low-ish heat until translucent. For added flavor, try using oregano, basil, garlic, or jalapeño olive oil! Add chopped carrots and celery, and optional garlic, until partially cooked. Add a small organic chicken or chicken parts, and at least enough filtered water to cover the chicken. Bring this mixture to a boil, then simmer on low-ish heat for about 45 minutes. Take the chicken out and let it cool, then remove the bones and skin, and return the meat back to the soup. Add any beans or fresh vegetables like sliced green peppers or zucchini, as well as sliced hot peppers, garlic, and/or ginger and continue simmering for 20 minutes or so. Add salt and pepper, to taste. Top with chopped fresh herbs, like parsley or cilantro and a drizzle of jalapeño-garlic flavored olive oil for a touch more heat!

Try experimenting with modest amounts of seasonings and spicy or pungent ingredients, then add more to taste. The hotter the soup is with volatile ingredients, the better it is as a cold- and flu-buster.

Dr. Stephen Sinatra

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6710A Rockledge Drive, Bethesda, MD 20817

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