

[IMAGE]

Give Yourself an Immunity Boost

By Dr. Michon Hawkins

Can't shake that cold or flu? Stress, lifestyle habits and structural imbalances may be spoiling your body's ability to fight infection or illness. Give yourself an all-natural immunity boost by learning the warning signs of disease and ways to build your resistance.

Do you know if your immune system is healthy? If it's not, what can you do to give it a boost? The body's powerful immune system is designed to protect you from almost everything harmful - if you don't interfere with its functioning!

A Healthy Immune System

You have two types of immunity - innate and acquired. *Innate* immunity comprises white blood cells, stomach acid, skin resistance (such as the natural oil that covers the skin to keep invaders out) and various chemicals in the bloodstream. This immunity is automatic and normally takes care of small invaders.

Acquired immunity offers more serious protection. It's like an army of Pac-Man "T cells" ("T" from the thymus gland) and "B cells" (from bone marrow) that consume whatever they are programmed to destroy.

Woman leap-frogging over a kneeling man. - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark A healthy acquired immune system works like this: When you are exposed to a virus, for instance, you feel discomfort as the immune system's T and B cells recognize the viral enemy and begin to fight it. The good news is that the clever Pac-Man cells now are tipped off to this enemy and will preemptively fight it (with no discomfort for you) for the rest of your life - which, of course, is the theory behind vaccinations.

You need to be exposed to the invading agent and experience the uncomfortable symptoms only once. During subsequent exposure, you will not feel the "fight" process which, like exercising a muscle, actually strengthens your immunity. Unfortunately, the immune system does not recognize and kill cancer cells, because cancer is not actually a foreign object, but a cluster of one's own specific cells reverted to a primitive state.

Take Caution With Antibiotics

Caution: Taking antibiotics indiscriminately destroys the immune system's ability to function normally.

Only take antibiotics for serious illnesses!

Chiropractor Denean Lodestro had many respiratory allergies, which she decided to treat naturally. In the spring, she went out and sat in the fields, reading a book, sneezing and coughing, until her symptoms disappeared; she had no further symptoms that season. When fall came with different allergens, she repeated the process, was uncomfortable for two or three days, and again had no further allergic reactions.

Like Dr. Lodestro, let yourself be sick for a few days after exposure to allergens. Use natural remedies and rest, and when you recuperate, your immune system will be that much stronger!

Supplements that help immune function include the antioxidants A, E and C, elderberry concentrate, CoQ₁₀, green tea, dark green vegetables, as well as grape seed extract. Yoga stretching, massage, exercise, meditation and prayer also have been shown to boost the immune system.

Healthy Eating

Processed foods have been stripped of their natural nutrients, which are replaced with fewer, less effective synthetic ingredients. Unfortunately, the body considers most synthetic ingredients toxins. This means the organism doesn't get essential nutrients to function and regenerate.

When processed foods are combined with pesticides and genetically altered foods, like wheat and corn, the body tries to subsist on a diet of toxins. Factor in food additives and environmental pollutants, and the diet becomes a volatile chemical cocktail of interacting toxins. These foreign substances not only pollute the body, but also rob it of essential nutrients. To process toxins, the body pulls nutrients from its stores, leaving it with a deficiency.

Refined white sugar immobilizes the protective T and B cells for two hours after it is eaten. If you eat refined white sugar daily - or worse, more than once a day - your health is at risk. For two hours after ingesting sugar, you have no defense against germs. A virus can get a stronghold in your body before the immune system activates again.

It also is wise to avoid low-fat and artificial foods in favor of *real* food: raw vegetables and fruit (it is easy to grab an apple or banana for a snack), whole grains, fish and preservative- and hormone-free meat. And eat real butter. Research shows that butter is still superior to any artificial spread. Our bodies are mostly saturated fat; we need a balance of saturated and unsaturated fatty acids, rather than eliminating any particular food group.

And now a word about raw cow's milk. It is much healthier than pasteurized and homogenized milk, which lack enzymes necessary for good health. Many states need to change their laws and certify raw milk, as health-conscious California does, so we can purchase it easily at health food stores. Dr. Jordan Rubin, author of *The Maker's Diet* and *The Great Physician's Rx*, says the absence of raw milk is one reason our society is getting sicker. (The book contains sources for raw milk, if it is unavailable in your area.)

The Role of Exercise and Sleep

Everyone wants to be physically fit, but pushing oneself to the limit can raise the level of the hormone cortisol. One of its jobs is to regulate sleep by awakening you in the morning and lulling you to sleep at night. A cortisol imbalance can suppress the immune system, and sleep problems are an early sign of this.

It is through sleep that the immune system regenerates. If you consistently neglect rest and sleep, your immune system will suffer. This may not be immediately apparent; the body is wonderfully made and will find ways to compensate, for a time. But suddenly, years later, the exhausted immune system will cease performing, and you will wonder what happened to your health.

Dr. Phillip Maffetone coached world-class athletes, and those who followed his advice improved their performance beyond their dreams. All he said was, "Slow down." His heart rate formula was 180 minus the athlete's age. He started athletes at that number and had them maintain the heart rate while increasing performance, in a process of backing off and retraining. As a result, Dr. Maffetone enhanced the athletes' immune systems instead of breaking them down, as overtraining does. Sometimes pain doesn't mean gain!

The Body's Response to Stress

Quick weight-loss programs stress the immune system, especially if the program restricts calories, protein or fat so severely that nutritional imbalances occur. In contrast, the classic Mediterranean diet has been thoroughly researched and found suitable for both weight loss and disease prevention. Numerous cookbooks are available to guide you in this delicious and easy-to-prepare cuisine.

A pile of green vegetables including spinach, broccoli and asparagus. - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark Stress requires the body to utilize more nutrients than usual, which can lead to nutritional deficiencies and health problems. Dr. Candace Pert, author of *Molecules of Emotion*, describes emotions as particles called *neuropeptides*. Neuropeptides can cause or aggravate allergies, pain and other conditions. For instance, an emotionally stressed individual may simultaneously develop a stomachache and headache. Reduce stress and enhance your immune performance by creating a balanced life with adequate rest, relaxation, meditation or prayer, proper diet, exercise, stretching and massage.

Structural Imbalances and the Immune System

Nerve impulses communicate to the immune system the need for an immune response. When an invader enters your body, the first response is a nervous system signal. However, if spinal vertebrae are misaligned and pinching on a nerve, messages to the immune system may be impaired, and the immune system will not respond correctly.

In addition, malfunctioning muscles affect both body alignment and nerve signals to the immune system. When muscles, the main support for joints, pull with equal strength, skeletal alignment is straight. But if one muscle is "turned off," the related joint is wobbly.

Here's an example: Irene was suffering from pain and muscle spasms on the right side of her neck; this was also causing insomnia. Her right shoulder was higher than her left, indicating a possible weak muscle on the left side, which muscle testing confirmed. Exercising would not have strengthened this muscle; it needed applied kinesiological and/or chiropractic treatment. And if she had not sought treatment, the condition could have caused her joint to misalign and her sleeplessness to worsen, thus weakening her immune system.

When you are injured and use painkillers and muscle relaxants, you may feel better and return to normal activity. But numbing the pain does not correct the problem! Take a tip from professional athletes: When they are injured, they don't take a pill, say they feel better and go back to their routine. Instead, their trainers support the injury, use pain reduction and permit the athletes to continue playing *temporarily*. After the game, the athlete gets rest, treatment, rehabilitation and retraining before playing again.

Taking Back Your Immunity

By the time discomfort occurs, the immune system has *already* been breached. However, the diseased condition initially may have manifested as sleeping problems, food cravings, irritability, fatigue or joint pains - which many people dismiss as "normal." It is at that *early* stage of illness that preventive health practitioners can detect a problem and help prevent it from advancing into a serious condition.

Vertebrae stack up in a little row in the spine. Between each two vertebrae, a nerve emerges from the spinal cord. These nerves branch throughout the body to muscles, organs, tissue and the Pac-Man immune particles. It is believed that when a vertebra misaligns and impinges on a nerve, the nerve, and whatever it connects to, malfunctions; meaning the nervous system, the first response to an invader, cannot function. Keeping vertebrae aligned is the job of the chiropractor, and chiropractic should be a regular part of everyone's preventive health care throughout the life cycle.

It is recommended that adults undergo three to six weeks of initial chiropractic correction and then return every one to three months for maintenance. Babies should be checked after birth (they often undergo trauma during the birth process, and misalignments are a cause of many common conditions, such as colic). Children should return whenever they fall, which jars the body and causes misalignments, and when they start walking and playing school sports.

Maintaining a strong immune system is essential for your long-term well-being. With a better understanding of that precious system and what interferes with it, you can make the lifestyle choices and decisions to enhance it - and the rest of your life. Talk to your doctor for more information.

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