

## HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM

*By Chantal Guillaume, RN, MSN, ED*

The world we live in has been turned upside-down since the pandemic began. In this era of Covid-19, immunity is everyone's concern. Our immune system is our first line of defense in preventing the invasion of bacteria and viruses in our bodies, yet an unhealthy lifestyle most often inhibits the mechanism of that system to accomplish what it was designed to do naturally.

It's important to understand the complex immune system's mechanism. According to the NIH (National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases) and the NIH (National Institute of Health), our immune system encompasses tissues and cells designed to work together, and its overall function is to prevent or limit infection. When the immune system first recognizes danger cells sending signals about unhealthy cells, it responds to address the problem. If an immune response cannot be activated when there is sufficient need, problems like infections arise. On the other hand, when an immune response is activated without a real threat or is not turned off once the danger passes, different

problems arise, such as allergic reactions and autoimmune disease.

Some factors affecting the immune system are sleep deprivation, lack of exercise, stress, and unhealthy eating habits. Consequently, exercise, proper sleep, stress management, and a healthy diet are our best tools for maintaining a healthy immune system.

Following, you'll find the best nutrients to include in your diet to maintain a healthy immune system:

- **Vitamin C** helps in the production of white blood cells which aid in fighting infections.  
**Foods:** citrus, strawberries, kiwi, bell pepper.
- **Vitamin E** acts as antioxidants and helps widen the blood vessels and prevents the formation of blood clots.  
**Foods:** nuts such as peanuts, hazel nuts, almond, green vegetables, broccoli, spinach.
- **Vitamin A** is known as an anti-inflammation vitamin because of its role in enhancing immune function.

**Foods:** dairy products, liver, fish, fortified cereals.

- **Vitamin D** has both anti-inflammatory and immunoregulatory properties.  
**Foods:** oily fish such as salmon, sardines, herring and mackerel; egg yolk, soy milk, almond milk, mushrooms.
- **Zinc** activates enzymes that break down proteins in viruses and bacteria. It also increases the activation of cells responsible for fighting infection.  
**Foods:** beans, chickpeas, lentils, tofu, walnuts, cashew nuts, chia seeds, ground linseed, hemp seeds, pumpkin seeds, whole meal bread and quinoa.

**For further information, visit the following pages:**

**Immune System Research**

<https://www.niaid.nih.gov/research/immune-system-overview>

**How to strengthen your immune system this winter**

<https://www.usatoday.com/in-depth/graphics/2020/12/17/how-to-build-strengthen-a-strong-immune-system-and-deal-with-stress/6475272002/>

Source: *Adventist Review* Online | COVID-19 Vaccines: Addressing Concerns, Offering Counsel