

Stay well this winter – boost your immune system with good nutrition

This is the time of year when we can become surrounded by the sniffles and wheezes which mark the onset of winter. Good nutrition can help you to stay healthy by making sure your immune system is in top condition to fight back.



Friendly Foods

-Light, regular meals avoid putting too much strain on your digestive system while you are ill. You may find your appetite is reduced- don't force yourself to eat if you don't feel like it.

-Lightly cook food by steaming vegetables or stir-frying them in 1 tbsp of good quality olive oil or 2 tbsp water. Adding some grilled fish or white meat makes you feel full for longer and supports your immune system.

-Home-made soups are a warm and nourishing way of providing nutrients without making your digestive system work too hard.

-Including home-made smoothies with a dollop of plain, live yoghurt is an easy and light way of increasing your vitamin and mineral intake.

-Highly coloured fruit and vegetables as well as nuts and seeds are richest in vitamins and minerals A, C, E zinc and selenium, which are the main nutrients your immune system needs. Aim for a rainbow of colours on your plate to get a good variety. Eaten raw as dips or snacks is the best way to preserve their nutrient levels.

-Frozen vegetables have had a bad press, but are often frozen very soon after harvest so may retain more goodness than fresh, which may have travelled a long way, drastically reducing their vitamin and mineral content.

-Some foods are especially good immune boosters and also help reduce the excess mucus which often accompanies colds and flu. These are onions, garlic, carrots, oregano, thyme, watercress, beetroot, spinach, leeks, cabbage, peppermint, ginger, red berry fruit, apples, mangoes and cinnamon.

-Drink plenty of still, filtered or mineral water or herb teas. Total fluid intake for an adult should be 1 ½ litres per day, to include teas and any dilute fruit juices.

Ginger or peppermint teas are particularly good at settling upset stomachs which sometimes accompany cold and flu viruses.

Regular fluid intake helps your body flush away toxins and stops your throat from becoming too dry.

Warm water with a squeeze of fresh lemon and a teaspoon of honey is a traditional cold remedy.



Avoid

-Excess sugary foods which stop your body's defences working at their best. Limit cakes, biscuits and chocolate as well as refined carbohydrates, such as white bread, pasta, pizza and biscuits as well as white rice which turn very quickly to sugars and in excess can also be stored as fat. Instead, choose moderate portions of brown basmati rice or wholemeal bread and pasta. Fruit juices also contain far more sugar than beneficial vitamins, so dilute these by at least half with still water to boost your fluid intake.

-Alcohol depresses the immune system and should also be avoided.

-Some foods can in excess contribute to excess mucus formation. The main culprits are wheat and dairy products, as well as strawberries, bananas and oranges.

Lifestyle

-Stress also diverts the body's defences away from staying healthy, so that you could be more susceptible to colds and flu viruses. Limit stress where possible and take time out for some good quality sleep or relaxation. During deep sleep, immune-enhancing compounds are released, greatly enhancing your body's immune response.



Nutrition Consultation

If you would like to know more about how nutrition can help support a particular health concern, or if you would like to learn how to eat and shop better, please contact us on 01628 773 988 to arrange an appointment with our Nutritional Therapist, Vanessa Francesconi. She is happy to talk to you about what your consultation would involve as well as an overview of any supplements or tests she would recommend. This is totally free of charge.

Disclaimer

This is produced for information only and is not intended to replace medical advice. In any cases of illness, always consult your GP in the first instance.