

Foods that can boost your immune system

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There's no magic pill to protect you from the new coronavirus (COVID-19). But there are real ways you can take care of yourself and give your immune system the best chance to do its job against a respiratory illness.

If you're not in the habit of eating a variety of fruits, veggies, and lean sources of protein, now is a good time to start. Healthy eating is especially important for keeping your immune system in top condition. From vitamin-packed fruits to the benefits of bone broth, here are the foods and ingredients that are believed to improve your body's natural defenses.

The healthiest meals emphasize whole grains, vegetables, and fruits — serve them in the greatest amounts. Feeding your body certain foods may help keep your immune system strong.

Most people turn to vitamin C after they've caught a cold. That's because it helps build up your immune system. Vitamin C is thought to increase the production of white blood cells, which is key to fighting infections.

Raw apples, carrots and oranges are packed with vitamin C, fiber and antioxidants. Other foods rich in vitamin C include lemons, broccoli, kiwi, papaya, and more. Focus on whole foods as juicing makes for a huge nutrient loss.

If you think only citrus fruits have the most vitamin C, think again. Red bell peppers contain twice as much vitamin C as citrus. They're also a rich source of beta carotene. Besides boosting your immune system, vitamin C may help maintain healthy skin. Beta carotene helps keep your eyes and skin healthy.

Vitamin B-6 is an important player in many of the chemical reactions that happen in the body. It's also vital to the formation of new and healthy red blood cells. Chicken stock, or broth made by boiling chicken bones, contains gelatin, chondroitin, and other nutrients helpful for gut healing and immunity.

A lack of zinc can make a person more susceptible to disease and illness. This essential nutrient helps maintain the body's ability to make new cells and enzymes, process carbohydrate, fat and protein in food and increases the speed of healing muscles and wounds.

If you're a meat-eater, good news: red meats are particularly high in zinc, as are shellfish and eggs. Vegans go for nuts, whole grains and legumes (chickpeas, lentils, beans).

Ginger is a magical ingredient; the antioxidant is believed to fight off cold and flu symptoms, combat nausea, and is full of iron, zinc, calcium and magnesium. However, it's worth noting that a study from 2013 showed that while fresh ginger may help boost the body's respiratory system, dry ginger did not show the same results.

Research has shown that

the immune system needs vitamin D to fight off viruses — while it won't protect you from getting the virus if you're exposed, it could reduce the severity of the illness and help make recovery easier.

You can get vitamin D naturally through sunlight. It's also found in some foods, including fatty fish like salmon, tuna and mackerel, and in small amounts in beef liver, eggs, cheese, and mushrooms.

While more study is needed on the link between vitamin D and immune health, some promising research suggests that checking your vitamin D level — and taking a vitamin D supplement — could help your body fight off respiratory illness.

Yogurt can also be a great source of vitamin D, so try to select brands fortified with vitamin D. Vitamin D helps regulate the immune system and is thought to boost our body's natural defenses against diseases. Plus, it's an easy way to boost your probiotics and help support your microbiome. Yogurt can help support the good bacteria that live in your body, which help to fight bad bacteria or viruses.

Other foods that can help

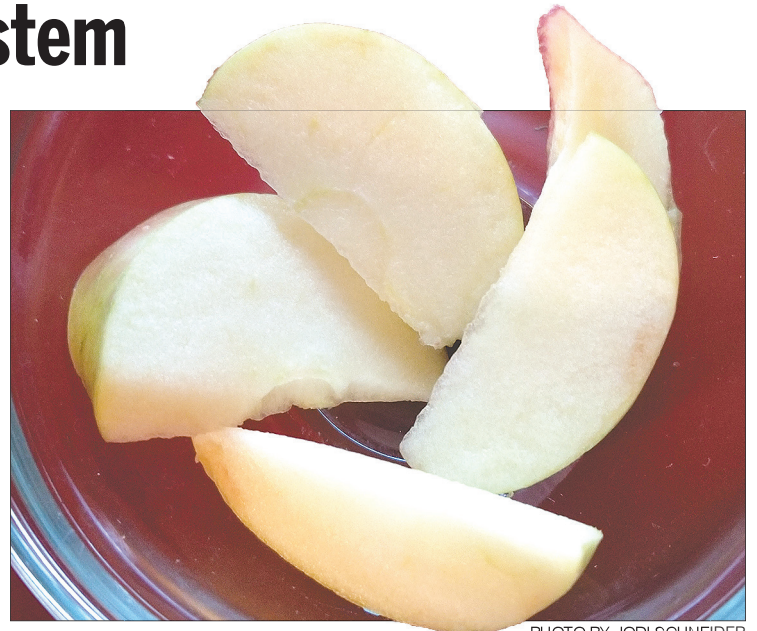


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Apples are a great source of vitamin C.

support the microbiome include garlic, onion, sauerkraut and fermented foods.

Feeding your body healthy foods can help keep your immune system strong.

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