

## STAYING HEALTHY DURING THE COLD AND FLU SEASON

No doubt this year has been difficult for nearly everyone. The Covid-19 pandemic has forced people to be extra aware of the ways in which we can protect ourselves from the virus. The cold and the flu viruses can be transmitted similarly to the Covid-19 virus. Since the cold and flu season is upon us, it is important to continue to follow all the precautions that we've learned to practice to protect ourselves from Covid-19. These precautions include frequent handwashing, avoiding touching one's face, avoiding large gatherings, wearing a protective face covering, and staying home when feeling unwell. But how about the immune system? The immune system is our strongest line of defense against all viruses. Since any of us might be exposed to the cold or the flu virus, here are some tips that we can follow to keep our immune system strong:

### SLEEP



To stay healthy, especially during the the flu season, it is important to get the recommended seven to eight hours of sleep a night. If your sleep schedule is interrupted by a busy workweek or other factors, try to make up for the lost rest with naps. Taking two naps that are no longer than 30 minutes each—one in the morning and one in the afternoon—has been shown to help decrease stress and offset the negative effects that sleep deprivation has on the immune system.

<https://www.sleepfoundation.org/articles/how-sleep-affects-your-immunity>

### HYDRATE



“Hydration is a key element to maintaining a healthy immune system.” Says Dr. Maggie Quinn, ND. Dr. Quinn recommends people to drink a minimum of half their body weight in ounces of water. “This means that if you weigh 150 pounds, you need to drink at least 75 ounces of water daily. If you are super active – you may need more water. Staying hydrated ensures that all the nutrients that we take in when we eat, get properly transported to our organs.” Dr. Quinn adds that, “Your total water consumption can include purified, still water and herbal teas. Adding in electrolytes is also a good way to ensure your body is staying properly hydrated. A low-sugar electrolyte powder or coconut water can be consumed 1-2 times daily.”

<https://ssihi.uci.edu/tip/hydration-for-immune-system/>

### RELIEVE STRESS



It has been proven by research that prolonged exposure to stress can undermine the immune system. To manage stress, it can be helpful to take a break and go for a walk, exercise, listen to relaxing or upbeat music. Laughter releases endorphins that improves mood and decreases levels of the stress-causing hormones cortisol and adrenaline. Watch a comedy as a family or talk about humorous events that you've shared together. Go for a walk in a park or make a day trip to a historic town, to the beach, or just take a stroll around in your neighborhood. Getting your blood moving releases endorphins and can improve your mood almost instantaneously. Avoid sugary snacks since they can exacerbate the symptoms of stress. Fruits and vegetables are always good, and fish with high levels of omega-3 fatty acids have been shown to reduce the symptoms of stress. A tuna sandwich really is a good brain food!

<https://www.healthline.com/health/10-ways-to-relieve-stress>

### EAT IMMUNE BOOSTING FOODS



Eating a nutritious meal is very important in making sure that the stress levels are maintained at a healthy level. Additionally, certain foods have immune boosting properties. Vitamin C is thought to increase the production of white blood cells, which are key to fighting infections. Almost all citrus fruits, such as oranges, grapefruits, tangerines, lemons, and limes, are high in vitamin C. Garlic has been found to have antibacterial and antiviral properties. Garlic's immune-boosting properties seem to come from a heavy concentration of sulfur-containing compounds, such as allicin. Spinach and other leafy green vegetables are also great because they are packed with numerous antioxidants and beta carotene, which may both increase the infection-fighting ability of the immune systems. Lastly, probiotics such as the ones found in yogurt that have the phrase “live and active cultures” printed on the label, like Greek yogurt are wonderful at helping our bodies develop a strong immune system.

<https://www.healthline.com/health/10-ways-to-relieve-stress>