

ADVERTISING PROMOTION



Boost your immunity *before winter hits*

By Dr Cris Beer

Come winter do you always get sick? Well, you are not alone with studies indicating that the average adult has 2-3 upper respiratory tract infections per year, while the average child has 6-10 a year.

Not only is getting sick an inconvenience, but the economic cost is huge when you consider time off work and medical costs. But you do not have to succumb to getting ill this winter if you put into place the below tips to safeguard your immune system.

The following strategies have been proven to be beneficial in boosting our immunity.

- **Reduce stress levels** – chronic high-stress levels have been shown to impair both short and long-term immune-cell defences making us more susceptible to infections. Consider taking a holiday and resting if you find that you are recurrently sick this winter.
- **Reduce sugar** – sugar intake can inhibit immune-cell function, particularly phagocytes which are involved in engulfing invading bacteria and viruses. Consider limiting the amount of hidden and processed sugar you consume, such as that found in breakfast cereals, muesli bars, biscuits and lollies.
- **Increase vitamin C** – vitamin C is a key nutrient that facilitates immune cell function. Many fruits and vegetables these days do not contain the required daily amounts of vitamin C due to food-processing practices. Consider taking a vitamin C supplement up to 1000mg a day in the winter months.
- **Increase zinc** – likewise, zinc is also a key ingredient required for immune facilitation. Zinc is found in animal products, beans, nuts and certain types of seafood. In winter months consider taking a zinc supplement containing 25-30mg a day.
- **Boost omega 3** – omega 3 fish oil has been shown to boost immune function by activating B-cells, which are a key component involved in forming long-term immunity. Consider supplementing your family's diet with a good-quality omega-3 fish oil, especially if your family does not regularly consume omega 3-rich fish like salmon, tuna, herring, sardines or mackerel.
- **Take probiotics** – a large percentage of our immune defence lies in our gut and this immune response depends on the presence of beneficial bacteria that live in our gut; namely the lactobacillus and bifidobacterium species. The numbers of these beneficial bacteria can be reduced due to lifestyle, stress, medication and other factors making us more susceptible to infections. Try taking a good-quality probiotic daily if you are experiencing recurrent infections.
- **Consider herbal medicine** – if you find that you just cannot seem to shake an infection you can try herbal medicines containing astragalus and/or echinacea. Astragalus is commonly used in Chinese medicine and has been shown in several studies to help modulate immune function. Echinacea has been shown to be helpful in the early treatment of the common cold reducing its severity and duration. Always choose good-quality, pure products due to the effects of unknown additives in poorer quality products.

Also consider speaking with an integrative doctor who specialises in optimising your health and immune system if you are susceptible to infections or simply cannot afford to get sick this winter.

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