

## Healthy Eating to Fight the Flu and Cold

Waking up with a cold or the flu is not fun. Sometimes it makes you want to be more proactive about your health. Giving your immune system a boost can help prevent viruses from claiming you as a victim, but have you ever wondered how effective they are? A healthy diet can help you fight colds and flu.

**Vitamin D** plays an important role in the immune system and studies have found that people with low vitamin D levels are at increased risk for colds and upper respiratory tract infections. To make matters worse, our exposure to the sun which produces Vitamin D may be limited during the winter months. Less Vitamin D can make a person more susceptible to a deficiency. You can increase your vitamin D by consuming more fatty fish such as salmon and tuna and consuming Vitamin D-fortified milk, yogurt and orange juice.

**Vitamin C** is popular, but it has been documented that vitamin C does not prevent colds, except in some people who are physically stressed such as marathon runners. However, there is evidence that extra vitamin C during the first stage of a cold can help shorten its duration and intensity. Vitamin C is a powerful antioxidant, which enhances immune defense and lowers the risk of infection. Good sources of Vitamin C include citrus fruits such as grapefruit, oranges, and tangerines. Berries such as strawberries and raspberries are also good sources of Vitamin C. Also deep colored vegetables such as spinach, broccoli and red bell peppers are good sources of Vitamin C.

**Protein** is an essential nutrient as it provides a building block of immune molecules. Include protein sources of food on a regular basis. These sources include animal protein found in eggs, lean beef, pork, poultry, fish and lamb. These foods also contain iron and zinc that are two important immune system minerals. Almonds and sunflower seeds are good sources of protein and are high in vitamin E which is another immune-boosting vitamin.

**Probiotics** are good bacteria that strengthen the immune system and keeps bacteria that can make you sick in check. Some research shows probiotics may reduce respiratory infections. Your best sources include yogurt that contains live, active cultures, Buttermilk, soy milk, olives, sauerkraut, Kombucha Tea (fermented tea)Kefir, Miso soup (an Asian soup), and tempeh (a soy protein).

**Liquids** are key to keeping your body hydrated, which helps your immune system keep viruses at bay. If you drink juice, limit it to 4-6 ounces of 100 percent fruit juice per day so that you don't get excessive calories and sugar. Also include black and green tea that contains many antioxidants. Water, which is pure, simple and inexpensive, is a must. Keep a cup or water bottle with you and drink it throughout the day. Squeeze in a lemon or lime wedge for an extra antioxidant boost.

Overall good nutrition is also important, so be sure to eat a variety of fruits and vegetables every day. There is scientific evidence that what you eat and drink can affect your immune system.