

LIVE WELL TIP: IMMUNITY BOOSTERS



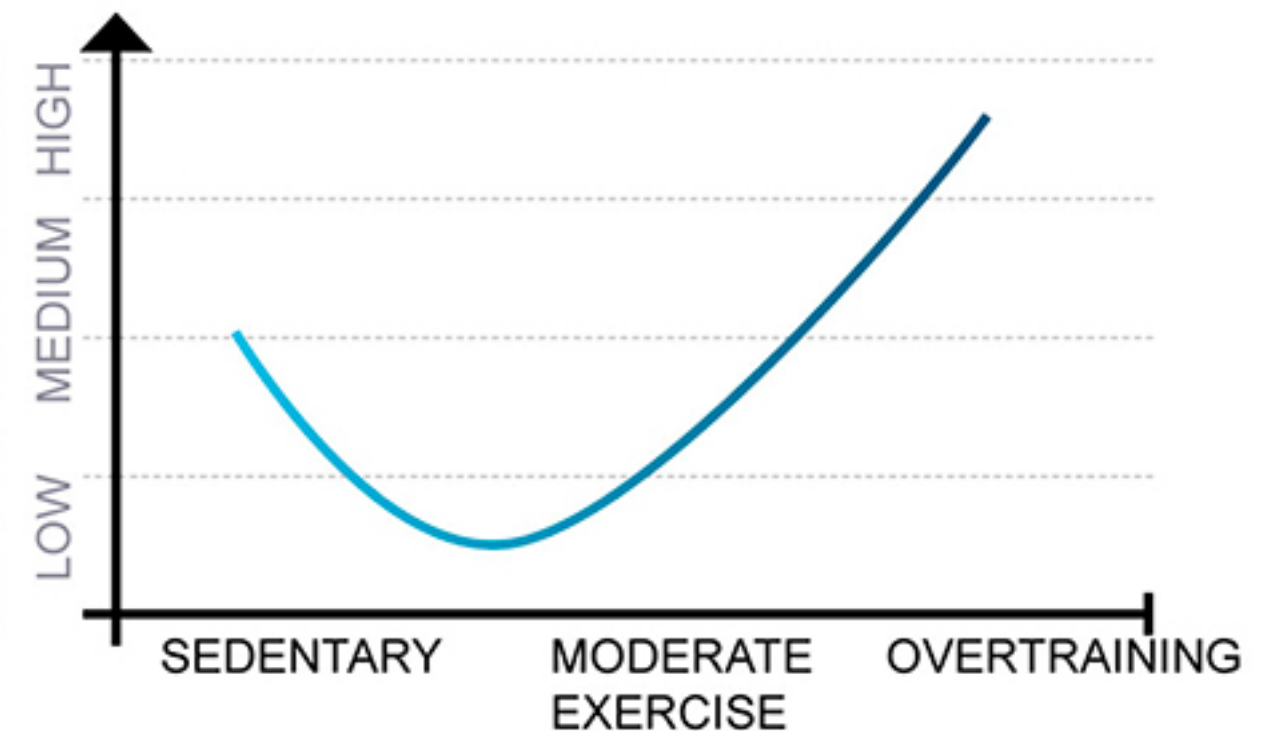
The best defence against COVID-19 and other seasonal viruses is practising good hygiene habits and social distancing. Additionally, taking steps to keep your immune system strong and healthy will help you to be in the best possible condition to fight off these viruses and infections.

Move your body for a stronger immune system.

Immune cells can be quite sedentary.

Moderate physical activity mobilises them by increasing your blood flow, so they can do their surveillance jobs and seek and destroy viruses and infection in other parts of the body.

UPPER RESPIRATORY INFECTION RISK



Source: Journal of Sport and Health Science, May 2019.



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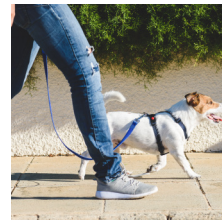
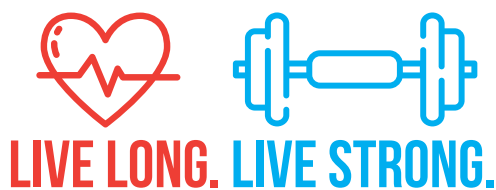


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70–80% of the body's immune cells are found in the gut. A less varied gut microbiome is linked to low immune response.

Feed your gut microbiome with the food it loves: **fibre, fruits and vegetables, pulses, legumes, and fermented foods.**



TIPS FOR STRENGTHENING YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM.

The best defence against COVID-19 and other seasonal viruses is practising good hygiene habits and social distancing. Additionally, taking steps to keep your immune system strong and healthy will help you to be in the best possible condition to fight off these viruses and infections.

Eat a diet high in fruits and vegetables.

The immune system relies on white blood cells that produce antibodies to combat bacteria, viruses and other invaders. Vegetarians have been shown to have more effective white blood cells when compared to non-vegetarians, due to a high intake of vitamins and low intake of fat. Studies have shown that fruits and vegetables provide nutrients—like beta-carotene, vitamin C, and vitamin E—that can boost immune function. Because many vegetables, fruits and other plant-based foods are also rich in antioxidants, they help reduce oxidative stress.

To maximise the beneficial nutrients and antioxidants in fruits and vegetables, make sure you eat a variety of them. Try green leafy vegetables, red strawberries and capsicums, orange pumpkin and citrus fruit, yellow lemons and squash and berries. Nuts and seeds also provide a range of immune boosting vitamins and minerals.

Prioritise your sleep.

Studies show that people who don't get quality sleep or enough sleep are more likely to get sick after being exposed to a virus, such as a common cold virus. Lack of sleep can also affect how fast you recover if you do get sick. So, your body needs sleep to fight infectious diseases.

During sleep, your immune system releases proteins called cytokines, some of which help promote sleep. Certain cytokines need to increase when you have an infection or inflammation, or when you're under stress. Sleep deprivation may decrease production of these protective cytokines. In addition, infection-fighting antibodies and cells are reduced during periods when you don't get enough sleep.

The optimal amount of sleep for most adults is seven to eight hours of good sleep each night. Teenagers need nine to 10 hours of sleep. School-aged children may need 10 or more hours of sleep.



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Move often.

Just like a healthy diet, regular activity can contribute to general good health and a healthier immune system. To be immunologically fit, you need to be physically fit. Activity directly helps by promoting good circulation, which allows the cells and substances of the immune system to move through the body freely and do their job more efficiently.

Regular activity is particularly important as you age. Studies show that if you exercise as you get older, your ability to fight infection and disease at the age of 80 is the same as someone half, or even a quarter, of your age. Why? Exercise reverses age related muscle wastage and new immune cells are created by muscles. So an aging runner or cyclist who's maintaining muscle with regular exercise is making lots of the immune hormone that keeps the thymus - the area responsible for the hormones that control the immune system - working optimally.

How much activity should you be doing? You don't need to go overboard! A 20 minute walk on most days of the week, going for a bike ride with your kids a few times a week; just aim to be physically active in some way everyday.

Reduce your alcohol intake.

Physicians have long observed that excessive alcohol consumption can lead to increased illness and death from infectious diseases, such as pneumonia. Studies have suggested that the first-line-of-defence macrophages (large white blood cells) are not as effective in people who have consumed a lot of alcohol. There has also been research that indicates that high alcohol consumption can lead to a reduction of the lymphocytes (immune system cells) as well. So if you contract a virus, your body won't be as good at containing and fighting it off.

So do you have to give up alcohol? No, recent studies have shown that one standard drink does not appear to bother the immune system, but three or more drinks in one sitting do. Ensure you include at least two alcohol free days each week.

Focus on stress management.

Stress hormones such as cortisol can compromise immune function. Stress causes your body to produce greater levels of cortisol. In short bursts, cortisol can boost immunity by limiting inflammation. But over time, stressed people's immune cells become less sensitive to cortisol. They are unable to regulate the inflammatory response and therefore, when exposed to a virus, they're more likely for it to develop.

In addition, stress also lowers the body's lymphocytes - the body's white blood cells that fight off infection - the lower your lymphocyte level, the more at risk you are for viruses.

Tame your stress levels by taking time out to engage in relaxation activities and hobbies that you enjoy.



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