

Boosting Your Immune System



While there are some specific vitamins and minerals associated with immune health, an overall balanced diet and a healthy lifestyle are the keys to a strong immune system. Include a variety of fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, whole grains, low-fat dairy, and heart-healthy fats in your diet to ensure that you are getting a wide variety of nutrients. These nutrients are essential in keeping immune cells healthy and creating an environment in which the immune system can work most effectively. Specific nutrients of importance in immune health include:

Vitamin C

- Vitamin C is a nutrient commonly associated with immune health. It is an antioxidant, which means that it protects cells from damage. Vitamin C also plays a role in the development of blood vessels, cartilage, and collagen.
- Sources: citrus fruits, strawberries, kiwi, broccoli, bell peppers

Vitamin A

- Vitamin A is an antioxidant and plays a role in enhancing the production of new cells
- Sources: squash, carrots, sweet potatoes, dark leafy greens, cantaloupe, grapefruit

Vitamin E

- Vitamin E is another antioxidant. This nutrient involved in the formation of red blood cells and has been shown to increase the levels of certain immune cells.
- Sources: nuts, seeds, avocado, fish & shellfish, plant oils

Zinc

- Zinc helps magnify the response of immune cells. It is also essential in the production of collagen, which is the main structural part of the skin and tissues.
- Sources: lean meat, seafood, milk, whole grains, beans, seeds, and nuts

Protein

- Protein is essential for repairing tissues and making new tissues.
- Sources: meat, poultry, fish, yogurt, milk, beans, legumes

Prebiotics & Probiotics

- Most of the immune cells in the body are found in the GI tract. The GI tract contains both good and bad bacteria, and the amount of each is heavily influenced by a healthy diet. A healthy GI, full of good bacteria, creates an environment where the immune system works best. Prebiotics feed the good bacteria already in our gut, while probiotics are foods that contain good bacteria.
- Prebiotic sources: fiber-rich fruits, vegetables, and whole grains
- Probiotic sources: yogurt, kefir, fermented foods such as sauerkraut, kimchi, kombucha

Immune Boosting Smoothie

- 1/2 cup frozen berries
- 1/2 cup Greek yogurt (plain or vanilla)
- 1/4 avocado
- 1 cup spinach
- 3/4 cup milk
- 1/2 cup ice
- 1 Tbsp. honey (optional)

Combine all ingredients in a blender and blend until smooth
Add more milk to thin out smoothie as desired