



Health *capsule*



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How to Boost Your Immune System

Your immune system is in place to defend you against disease-causing micro-organisms. However, it's not an impenetrable system and sometimes germs are able to invade successfully. If your immune system is healthy, it has a better chance of defeating invading pathogens.

Your immune system is a vast network of white blood cells, chemicals and organs that work together to recognize millions of potentially harmful invaders and destroy them before they injure healthy cells, deplete the body's nutrients, or damage vital organs.

If your immune system is weak, the threat posed by an invader is greater. There are a number of factors that can weaken your immune response, like tobacco smoke, air pollution, sunlight, antibiotics, and ageing.

Boost your immune system

The best way to boost your immune system and stay healthy is to develop a healthy lifestyle. Use these guidelines as suggestions to help your immune system get into shape.

- Don't smoke
- Eat a diet high in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, and low in saturated fat
- Exercise regularly
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Control your blood pressure
- If you drink alcohol, drink only in moderation
- Get adequate sleep
- Apply a sunblock with an SPF of 15 or more
- Take steps to avoid infection, such as washing your hands frequently and cooking meats thoroughly



The Power of Food

The old adage "you are what you eat" rings true when it relates to how your immune system functions. A well-balanced diet rich in immune-boosting foods is essential to achieving maximum immunity, protecting yourself from illness, and improving your overall health.

If you eat a variety of foods across all four food groups, you will meet your immune system's daily nutritional requirements. Follow Canada's Food Guide to find out how many servings of vegetables and fruit, grain products, milk and alternatives, and meat and alternatives you should be eating every day (accessed through www.hc-sc.gc.ca).

There are many ways you can give your immune system a boost in order to stay healthy and live well. Try to adapt as many as possible into your life. With cold and flu season upon us, it's time to be vigilant!

(Source : [Cover me](#))

Benefits of Volunteering

The science behind the benefits

The term "helper's high" was coined to describe the powerful physical feelings people experience when directly helping others. Research has shown that regular helpers can actually have better health than people who don't volunteer. There's a biochemical explanation for this.

When you are helping others, your brain releases feel-good hormones and small proteins called peptides like endorphins, dopamine, oxytocin, vasopressin, and nitric oxide. They can cause you to experience pleasurable sensations and positive emotions, help to turn off the "fight or flight" response induced by stress, create a state of relaxation, and promote better health.

Endorphins can create the sensation of euphoria, relief from pain and greater clarity.

Dopamine opposes the effects of fear and improves your circulation and mood.

Oxytocin lowers blood pressure, lowers stress hormone levels and has an overall calming effect. It also enhances social attachment.

Vasopressin and nitric oxide regulate your blood pressure and circulation.

When you have a positive emotional state, as can be produced through volunteering, you are more likely to experience good health, including lower cortisol levels, less inflammation, and better immune responses. Volunteers may also have a longer life expectancy.

(Source : [Cover me](#))