

support your

IMMUNE SYSTEM

People often talk about having a strong or weak immune system, yet most of us find the concept of an immune system to be very vague and out of our control. In this guide we will look at the basics of how your immune system works and ways to keep you resistant to illness.

WHAT DOES MY IMMUNE SYSTEM DO?

Your body is constantly at battle. Thousands of bacteria, viruses and toxins are inhaled and eaten every day, others invade us through cuts and scratches. You don't notice this battle because your immune system is constantly fighting it for you, unnoticed and often unappreciated.

WHY IS IT SO IMPORTANT FOR ME TO HELP MY IMMUNE SYSTEM?

Your immune system is not just about fighting off a cold or flu. It is the mechanism which keeps you alive. Actively looking after it will help you to live a happier and longer life. You will be amazed at how much better you will feel just by taking a few steps to work with your immune system.

Prevention is the key to good health & a strong immune system is the key to prevention.

STEP 1: TREAT YOURSELF

If you feel like your immune system is in need of a bit of help then the best thing to do first is to kick start it with some natural treatments. After this initial boost, you can maintain your immune system with lifestyle changes.

ACUPUNCTURE & CHINESE MEDICINE

Acupuncture and Chinese Herbs have great success at treating the immune system by regulating QI imbalances in your body and stimulating hormone and neurotransmitters to bring your body back into good health. If your defences are too weak, then it can strengthen them, if your immune system is over reactive (in the case of allergies and psoriasis etc), then Chinese Medicine is able to regulate your body's reactions to a normal level.

Chinese Medicine theory views a weakened immune system as being a result of QI DEFICIENCY in the lungs and the spleen. This is caused by an inadequate diet, run down lifestyle and genetic predisposition. Therefore acupuncture treatment is focussed primarily on tonifying these organs. Over-reactive immune systems are caused by a QI IMBALANCE usually starting in the Kidneys. Acupuncture and Chinese Herbs are used to redress this imbalance so that your body recognises what is harmless whilst still attacking pathogens.

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MASSAGE

In order for your immune system to be working at full strength, your blood and lymphatic circulation must be working well. Your lymphatic system does not have a pump (like your heart). Massage is a great way to help lymphatic drainage and to increase blood flow, it also helps to de-stress which is fundamental to a good immune system.

Massage is not a luxury, it is an important way to maintain good health just like diet, exercise and sleep. Try to have a massage at least once a month.

TO BOOK A MASSAGE CALL 08700 100 023 OR EMAIL clinic@acumedic.com



SPEND TIME IN THE COLD

It might sound crazy but spending time outside in the cold actually stimulates your immune system. The worst thing that you can do when the cold weather sets in is to constantly stay next to a heater; this lowers your defences so that when you do go out, the cold really makes you vulnerable. Wrap up in warm clothes and go for a walk in the cold air or better still, go for a quick swim in cold water.

STEP 2: **EAT & DRINK FOR YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM**

what to enjoy

PROTEIN

Protein is essential for the production of cells in the immune system. Eat plenty of fish (especially oily fish like salmon and mackerel), lean meat and tofu.

VEGETABLES

Vegetables are the immune boosting heavyweights, full of vitamins, minerals and other natural chemicals to help support your immune system. Eat as much as you can and try to make them account for at least 50% of your diet.

Especially eat dark green brassica vegetables like broccoli, kale and spring greens as these contain a substance called Diindolylmethane (DIM which is a powerful immune system regulator). Sea vegetables like seaweed are also great because of their high zinc content.

Fruits should be eaten separate from other food (to stop them fermenting while they are being digested). They provide similar benefits to vegetables but also contain a lot of sugar so pay attention to which ones you choose. Lemons are the king of immune boosting fruits, squeeze in a glass of water and drink in the morning.

Other roots like garlic, turmeric and ginger are excellent anti-bacterial and anti-viral foods if you feel like you are coming down with an infection. In China, mushrooms are often used to improve the immune system. They have incredible medicinal properties.

WATER & TEA

Water regulates all of your body's systems and is essential for a strong immune system. It helps keep mucous membranes moist enough to trap pathogens and ensures a good blood and lymphatic system. Drink 2 litres per day. It is better to drink warm or room temperature water instead of cold water (which uses the body's energy to warm it).

You can drink something even more powerful than water for your immune system and that is GREEN TEA. The high levels of theanine in green tea has been shown to boost the disease fighting capacity of White Blood Cells by up to 5 times. The high Vitamin C content in tea also helps to prevent and fight infection.



what to avoid...



SUGAR & EXCESS CARBS

This is probably the most important diet tip for your immune system. Cut down on sugar! When your body is exposed to high levels of sugar it impairs your white blood cells to fight pathogens. It also causes your body stress trying to control your sugar levels which means that less energy is dedicated to your immune system.

What is a high level of sugar? A normal sugar level in the blood is 1 teaspoon for your whole body. A soft drink or dessert can have anything up to 15 teaspoons per serving. Refined sugar is the worst, but breads and cakes are just as bad. Try to eat less carbs and less sweet food.



CUT DOWN ON ALCOHOL & COFFEE

Coffee affects your adrenal glands and stress levels which suppresses your immune system. Similarly, excessive alcohol use depresses the nervous system, impairs your bone marrow's ability to make white blood cells and is dehydrating.



BE WARY OF RAW

Much has been written about the benefits of a raw diet. While it is true that raw vegetables have the highest concentration of beneficial vitamins and minerals, they also contain the highest amount of toxins. According to Chinese Medicine, eating raw food is really difficult for the body to digest and should be avoided (except fruits). The rule is 'if it's got seeds in it, then you can eat it raw'.

Toxins are neutralised during heating so cook your veg lightly and you'll get most of the health benefits without the toxins.

Foods such as raw shellfish, sushi, rare meats and undercooked eggs contain infectious bacteria and parasites which give you immune system more work, so they should be eaten sparingly.

STEP 3: **USE IMMUNE BOOSTING HERBS**

HERBS & SUPPLEMENTS

It is important that you feed your body the correct nutrients for a good immune system including a zinc and vitamin C supplement. For a more focussed immune system boost, you should also have a regular consumption of medicinal herbal brews. Here are some excellent immune regulating teas.

AMACHAZURU TEA

everyday immune regulator



Amachazuru is known in China as simply the IMMORTALITY HERB and is a powerful IMMUNE REGULATOR. It is also full of antioxidants, protecting body cells from damage.

NATURAL RESISTANCE TEA

for a potent immune boost



This medicinal Chinese herbal blend is an effective immune system fortifier. Formulated by our expert herbalists to quickly improve your body's ability to defend and attack infection.

WINTER RESCUE TEA

for a quick recovery



This medicinal Chinese herbal blend is specially formulated by our expert herbalists to help the body to quickly recover if you are already suffering from a cold, cough or flu.

AVOID DRUGS

Aspirin, ibuprofen and antibiotics actually impair your immune system and make you more vulnerable to pathogens. They should only be used as a last resort to combat symptoms and not relied upon to fight infection. Try to use natural methods to help your body to take care of itself.

STEP 4: **GET SOME QUALITY TIME IN BED**

Lack of good quality sleep disturbs regulation of key chemicals produced by the immune system to fight infection. In fact, sleep deprivation (less than 7 hours a night) has been shown to triple your chances of getting ill. This is why when you have an infection your body forces you to feel tired so that you can help fight the pathogens through sleep.

SLEEP TIPS

- Switch off all TV and computers by 10pm
- Turn on some soft relaxing music, dim the lights and make sure that the room temperature is less than 21 degrees
- Drink some warm milk or herbal tea (a chrysanthemum tea is perfect)
- When ready for bed, turn off the music, switch off all lights and close all curtains, the room should be as dark as possible
- Get into bed and give yourself permission to forget all your worries until tomorrow

STEP 5: **LAUGH IT OFF**

Have you ever wondered why so many illnesses are stress related? It's because stress hormones suppress the immune system. Learn the art of relaxation by tuning out those intrusive and worrying thoughts. Take up meditation and do some exercise. For more detailed information about stress management, pick up our 'RISE ABOVE STRESS' guide.

Laughter is an incredible medicine and has been shown to affect every cell in our body. It reduces stress and improves immunity. Surround yourself with people and situations that make you laugh.

HOW DOES MY IMMUNE SYSTEM WORK?

The immune system can be thought of as an army with a complex network of biological structures and processes to defend against disease and attack pathogens and tumour cells. Basically, your immune system is made up of the following elements:

1. SURFACE BARRIERS

The first defense against pathogens is to stop them from getting into your body. Your skin is impenetrable and secretes substances from hair follicles to kill bacteria and fungi (that's why skin rarely gets moldy except where there is no hair like the feet). Your nasal cavities and lungs are covered in small hairs and mucus to grab any pathogens and neutralise them. Your mouth has antibacterial saliva and your stomach is acidic enough to kill germs before they can be absorbed.

2. WHITE BLOOD CELLS & ANTIBODIES

White blood cells are constantly patrolling your body by travelling in your blood and lymph (more on the lymph system below). There are many different types of white blood cells, all working together to combat any pathogens that have managed to get past the surface barriers.

3. LYMPH SYSTEM

Lymph fluid is essentially blood plasma, a nearly colourless liquid which bathes all of your cells. As blood arrives at capillaries it passes through the thin walls as lymph fluid which then feeds the cells. The lymph fluid also collects the cell waste as well as any stray pathogens and is absorbed by the lymph vessels.

The lymph vessels slowly move the lymph fluid back up the body to rejoin the blood near the heart. Along the way, it filters the fluid through lymph nodes. These nodes trap any pathogens and destroys them with white blood cells. This is why you may feel for swollen lymph nodes (like tonsils) as a sign of an infection.

4. COMPLEMENT SYSTEM

A group of small proteins, made in the liver that circulate throughout your body. If a complement protein encounters a pathogen it triggers a release of chemicals that try to kill the pathogen and alert the body of an infection.

5. HORMONES

Hormones can be used to regulate the sensitivity and strength of your immune system. Some hormones increase the production of white blood cells whereas others (primarily the stress hormones) suppress your immune system. The hormones released by certain white blood cells will trigger a fever to try to kill the bacteria by heat and also fatigue to make sure that you rest.

6. INTERFERONS

These small proteins are a way for neighbouring cells to communicate with each other; essentially they pass on the message that there is an infection so that close by cells try to interfere with the replication of viruses.

7. TNF

Tumour Necrosis Factor is a substance produced by white blood cells to kill tumour cells.

OVER REACTING IMMUNE SYSTEM

A healthy immune system is not just one that is strong but also one that does not over react. There are many health problems that are a result of an over reactive immune system.

AUTOIMMUNE DISEASE

This is when your immune system mistakenly attacks your normal cells as if they were foreign. There are more than eighty autoimmune diseases, some are chronic, others acute and life threatening. For example, Diabetes I occurs when the immune system attacks pancreatic cells, Rheumatoid Arthritis occurs when the immune system attacks tissues in the joints and Narcolepsy is caused by the immune system producing antibodies to induce fatigue. There are many other suspected autoimmune conditions such as psoriasis, inflammatory bowel disease, multiple sclerosis, schizophrenia and Crohn's disease.

ALLERGIES

This is another form of immune system error; where the body reacts to a harmless substance as if it were dangerous. The allergen may be food or a certain type of pollen or dust. These allergies can develop at any time (usually at times of stress). The body reacts to the allergen by stimulating inflammation (a way to increase blood flow to the affected area) and the release of fluids to try to clear the body.

**FOR ADVICE TREATING ANY AUTOIMMUNE OR
ALLERGY CONDITIONS PLEASE COME IN OR CONTACT
US FOR FREE HEALTH ADVICE**