

Natural Remedies to Boost Your Immunity

Dr. Renu Bala Sharma

Professor & Head (Home Science)

Govt. Auto. Girls PG College Of Excellence Sagar

Abstract -

Diet plays an important role in the maintenance of good health and stamina and in the prevention and cure of disease. Good health can be preserved and promoted only by the right kind of food and on the vice-versa wrong kind of food is an invitation to disease. For good health, we need more than 40 different nutrients, and no single food can supply them all. It is not about a single meal, it is about a balanced food choice over time that will make a difference ! A high-fat lunch could be followed by a low-fat dinner. After a large meat portion at dinner, perhaps fish should be the next day's choice?

Key Words - Immunometabolism, obesity, phytonutrients.

You are what you eat" is more than just a catchy phrase your mother used to get you to eat right. It's a profound truth from the Stone Age to the Industrial Age; people have recognized the healthful properties of certain foods. And now, in the Information Age, the importance of nutrition is so well recognized and supported by scientific evidence that virtually every major public health organization in the world makes dietary recommendations.

Variety means choosing a number of different foods in any given food group rather than eating the same food daily.

- 33% Fruit & Vegetables
- 5+ a Day
- 33% Starchy carbohydrates
- 12% Meat, Fish, Eggs, Beans
- Oily fish once a week
- 15% Milk & Dairy

- 3 portions daily
- <8% High fat/sugary foods
- Avoid saturated fats

The COVID-19 pandemic is posing severe threats to international health and the economy.

At the moment there is still no cure for the disease.

Alternative methods need to be found to control the spread of the virus.

Nutrition -

Not a cure for COVID-19 but healthy patterns of eating optimize the function of the immune system, improve immunometabolism, and are a modifiable contributor to the development of chronic disease that is highly associated with COVID-19 deaths.

Effect of a Poor Diet -

An unhealthy diet is one of the major risk factors for a range of chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and obesity. A poor diet will lead to nutrient deficiency and this will likely lead to chronic disease.

Recent literature has shown that a poor or bad diet causes more deaths globally than either smoking or hypertension. In 2017, the study of 195 countries, linked poor diet to 11 million deaths globally. That translates to 22% of deaths among adults in 2017.

Poor nutrition drives chronic health conditions! Eating habits that have stronger links to higher death rates include

- Diets high in sodium
- Diets low in whole grains, fruit, vegetables, nuts, and seeds

People need to eat fewer processed foods and more "whole" plant-based foods... Although there are differences in typical diets across the world, on the whole, unbalanced diets are a health threat across the globe and not just impacting death rates but also the quality of life.

COVID -19 and Nutrition -

Micro-nutrients with the strongest evidence for immune support are:

Vitamin C, Vitamin D, Zinc

Other nutrients that may help include:

Vitamin A, Vitamin E, Selenium, Omega 3's, B vitamins

Plant Phytonutrients (from plant-based foods) may have antioxidant, anti-inflammatory and anti-viral effects.

While there's no magic "healthy pill," there are tried-and-true ways to take your immunity superpowers up a notch.

Focus on food -

"I believe in the power of immune-boosting foods," "Choosing whole, unprocessed foods does wonders for overall health."

Good nutrition is essential to a strong immune system, which may offer protection from seasonal illness and other health problems. No one food or supplement can prevent illness but you may help support your immune system by including these nutrients in your overall eating plan on a regular basis. World Health Organisation: Nutrition Advice during the COVID-19 :

Good nutrition and hydration are important. A well-balanced diet keeps you healthy, strengthens the immune system, and reduces the risk of chronic disease and infectious disease. It is recommended that a diet with a variety of fresh food and unprocessed foods is followed daily, to provide the body with the necessary vitamins, minerals, dietary fibre, protein, and antioxidants.

Immunity Boosters for Immune Health -

- Protein plays a role in the body's immune system, especially for healing and recovery. Eat a variety of protein foods including seafood, lean meat, poultry, eggs, beans and peas, soy products and unsalted nuts and seeds.
- Vitamin A helps regulate the immune system and protect against infections by keeping skin and tissues in the mouth, stomach, intestines and respiratory system healthy. Get this vitamin from foods such as sweet potatoes, carrots, broccoli, spinach, red bell peppers, apricots, eggs or foods labeled "vitamin A fortified," such as milk or some cereals. Vitamin C supports the immune system by

stimulating the formation of antibodies. Include more sources of this healthy vitamin by choosing citrus fruits such as oranges, grapefruit and sprouts, or red bell pepper, papaya, strawberries, tomato juice broccoli, kiwi or cantaloupe.

- One study found that older adults who ate kiwi every day for a month had a significant decrease in the severity and duration of upper respiratory infection symptoms.
- Vitamin E works as an antioxidant and may support immune function. Include vitamin E in your diet with fortified cereals, sunflower seeds, almonds, vegetable oils (such as sunflower or safflower oil), hazelnuts and peanut butter.

Dr. Darling recommends following immunity boosters :

- **Garlic :** Allicin, a compound in garlic, is well-known for its ability to boost the immune system. The most benefit comes from eating a raw (3 to4) garlic clove daily. If you can't stomach raw garlic, the next best thing is to roast it.
- **Antioxidants :** Stress can lead to lowered immunity and make you more prone to illness. Colorful fruits and vegetables including berries, carrots and spinach have antioxidants that protect you against oxidative stress, which translates to a stronger immune system.
- **Zinc** helps the immune system work properly and may help wounds heal. Zinc can be found in lean meat, poultry, seafood, milk, whole grain products, beans, seeds and nuts.
- **Other nutrients**, including vitamin B6, B12, copper, folate, selenium and iron also may support immune response and play a role in a healthful eating style.

Tips for maintaining a healthy diet :

Replace saturated with unsaturated fat

Fats are important for good health and proper functioning of the body. However, too much of it can negatively affect our weight and cardiovascular health.

We should limit the consumption of total and saturated fats and completely avoid trans fats; Avoid processed, baked and fried foods that contain trans-fat.

Use unsaturated vegetable oils (e.g. olive, soy, sunflower or corn oil) rather than

animals fats or oils high in saturated fats (e.g. butter, ghee, lard, coconut and palm oil)
Eating fish 2-3 times a week, with at least one serving of oily fish, will contribute to our right intake of unsaturated fats.

When cooking, we should boil, steam or bake, rather than frying.

- Eat less salt and sugars
- Avoid foods (snacks), that are high in salt and sugars
- When cooking and preparing foods, limit the amount of salt and high-sodium condiments (e.g. soy sauce and fish sauce)
- Limit intake of soft drinks or soda and other drinks that are high in sugars (e.g. fruit juices, cordials and syrups, and flavoured milks .)
- Choose fresh fruits instead of sweet snacks such as cookies, cakes and chocolate

Why ?

People whose diets are high in sodium (including salt) have a greater risk of high blood pressure, which can increase their risk of heart disease and stroke. When eating, it helps not to have salt at the table, or at least not to add salt before tasting.

Similarly, those whose diets are high in sugars have a greater risk of becoming overweight or obese, and an increased risk of tooth decay. People who reduce the amount of sugars in their diet may also reduce their risk of noncommunicable diseases such as heart disease and stroke.

Everyone is different and there is no one-size-fits-all diet. However, I do believe there are some general principles that are beneficial for everyone.

Here are 10 healthy living principles everyone should practice:

1.) **Do not skip breakfast**

Some people skip breakfast because they think it'll help them to lose weight.

But a healthy breakfast high in fibre and low in fat, sugar and salt can form part of a balanced diet, and can help you get the nutrients you need for good health.

A wholegrain lower sugar cereal with semi-skimmed milk and fruit sliced over

the top is a tasty and healthier breakfast . so, eat a wholesome nutritious breakfast and lunch; have dinner 2-3 hours before bedtime. Ensure you eat clean and healthy throughout the day even if you are snacking in-between meals, opt for healthy snack options like green tea, roasted makhana, salad bowls, smoothies or simply a bowl of fresh fruits. -

2.) Eat regularly, control the portion size -

Eating a variety of foods, regularly, and in t-he right amounts is the best formula for a healthy diet.-

Skipping meals, can lead to out-of-control hunger, often resulting in helpless overeating. Snacking between meals can help control hunger, but snacking should not replace proper meals. For snacks, we could choose yoghurt, a handful of fresh or dried fruits or vegetables (like carrot sticks), unsalted nuts, or perhaps some bread with cheese.

Paying attention to portion size will help us not to consume too much calories, and will allow us to eat all the foods we enjoy, without having to eliminate any.

Cooking the right amount makes it easier to not overeat.

3.) Be flexible -

For example, if you decide to cut down on sugar, do it gradually over a few weeks rather than all at once. By cutting down from two teaspoons in your coffee/tea to one-and-a-half, then one and so on, your taste buds will adapt and you're less likely to crave for the sugar.

Remember, increasing or adding even one new health behaviour can make a big difference to your health.

4) Cook More at Home

When you do the cooking, you control the ingredients. If you do eat out, be smart about it. Watch your portion sizes, order extra veggies instead of starches, and ask for things like dressings and sauces on the side.

5) Buy Local and Choose Organic (When Possible and Practical)

Shop from your local farmer's market. You'll find fruits and vegetables that were picked that very same day and haven't lost their nutrients while traveling or sitting on a

shelf. Know the "dirty dozen" (foods that have the most pesticide residue) and focus on buying organic versions of those fruits and vegetables.

6) Drink Water

Choose water most of the time and remember that if you're thirsty, you're already dehydrated. Take a water bottle with you everywhere to remind you to drink more often. And use additions like berries, mint or lemon to flavor your water if you don't like it plain.

Drink plenty of fluids

Adults need to drink at least 1.5 litres of fluid a day! Or more if it's very hot or they are physically active. Water is the best source, of course, and we can use tap or mineral water, sparkling or non-sparkling, plain or flavoured.

Fruit juices, tea, soft drinks, milk and other drinks, can all be okay - from time to time.

7) Exercise: "Exercise increases your resilience so you can fight off infection" . "Our bodies function better when we're physically active every day." Dr. Darling recommends carving out at least 10 minutes a day, ideally 30 minutes, and doing a mixture of cardio and strength training.

Maintain a healthy body weight

The right weight depends on factors like our gender, height, age, and genes. Being affected by obesity and overweight increases the risks of a wide range of diseases, including diabetes, heart diseases, and cancer.

Excess body fat comes from eating more than we need. The extra calories can come from any caloric nutrient - protein, fat, carbohydrate, or alcohol, but fat is the most concentrated source of energy. Physical activity helps us spend the energy, and makes us feel good.

The message is reasonably simple: if we are gaining weight, we need to eat less and be more active!

8.) Be Physically Active

Physical activity is important for people of all weight ranges and health conditions.

Physical activity can help control your blood pressure, cholesterol and triglyceride levels, as well as your weight, it maintains or increases our muscle mass, It can also help improve your brain function, concentration and sleep quality.

Get on the move, make it a habit!" 150 minutes per week of moderate physical activity is advised, and it can easily become part of our daily routine. It helps us burn off the extra calories,

Apart from physical activities, one must regulate their eating habits and consume a balanced diet.

9) Distress Yourself -

Yoga and meditation bring peace to the mind and body. It is recommended to perform these activities between 6 am to 10 am in the morning on an empty stomach as the body is in Kapha state. "The Kapha dosha helps overcome the states of dullness and lethargy and therefore yoga asanas and poses in the Kapha state removes sluggishness as the body is the strongest physically in this state and benefits from flexibility".

Meditation: Even five minutes a day of guided meditation, or simply sitting quietly and focusing on your breath, can make a difference. Meditation lowers your heart rate and blood pressure and reduces anxiety. Plus, it's calming. So it's not surprising that it also helps you to have sound sleep.

10) Sleep enough (don't Compromise on Sleep) -

Aim for eight hours every night. To help meet this goal, power down and disconnect from your electronics at least one hour before bedtime and focus on more calming activities like meditation, reading or journaling. When you're tired, you're more likely to eat poorly - so make an effort to get enough sleep each night. A healthy mind resides in a healthy body. Disturbed sleep often hampers not only a person's mental but physical well-being as well. Begin by ensuring you sleep on time and wake up before sunrise, which gives you more time in the day for your tasks and is also a step towards a healthy lifestyle.

When diet is wrong, Medicine is of no use, When diet is correct, Medicine is of no need. Ayurvedic Proverbs.

References -

1. Boosting the Immune System, From Science to Myth: Analysis
2. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov › articles › PMC6673706> 605-Oct-2020
3. Nutritional Strategies to Boost Immunity and Prevent Infection ...
<https://academic.oup.com › cid › article>
4. Food & Nutrition - Healthline
<https://www.healthline.com › health › food-nutrition>
5. Food and Nutrition - Healthy Eating - HealthLink BC
<https://www.healthlinkbc.ca › healthy-eating › everyone>