

The 6 Best Ways To Boost Your Immune System This Season

By: Jenna Igneri

Kick flu season in the butt!

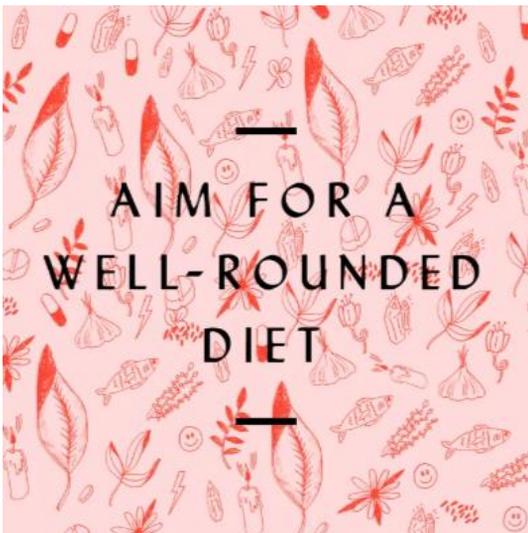
With temperatures dropping—and then randomly rising and dropping once again—it's becoming prime time for all of us to start getting sick. From sore throats and sinus infections to the flu and stomach bugs, the colder months tend to be filled with the germs that stay away during the spring and summer (just in time for when our allergies hit).

However, with the right practices, you can help prevent yourself from catching a nasty bug. A little boost to your immune system before flu season hits hard can help keep you healthy all season long, without having to disinfect everything in your path.

We chatted with the experts to find out exactly what we should do to start getting healthy now so that we're fully prepared come winter. Whether it's watching what we eat or making sure we laugh enough—yes, really—we put together the best tips for boosting your immune system, sans Lysol.

Aim for a well-rounded diet:

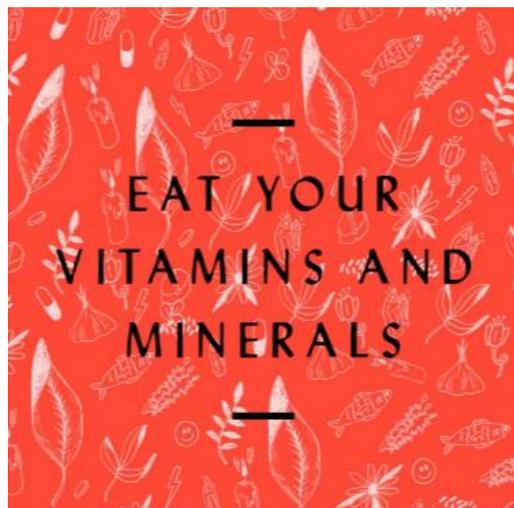
Okay, while this may seem an obvious step is keeping your immune system strong and healthy, it's definitely an important one. A well-rounded diet of whole foods is a key factor in keeping our bodies strong, healthy, and nourished.



Dr. Gabrielle Francis, naturopathic doctor who practices under The Herban Alchemist, recommends getting a variety of foods from the following groups in order to get the full spectrum of proteins, vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants: fruits and veggies (of different colors), legumes, whole and unprocessed grains, clean organic animal proteins and wild fish, dairy from goat and sheep, and filtered water and herbal teas. However, some foods, in particular, tend to have some serious power, which may be worth increasing once flu season hits. “Proteins will help build antibodies against infections, while green foods will promote detoxification,” she says.

Eat your vitamins and minerals:

During flu season, there are certain vitamins and minerals you'll want to up your intake of in order to stay healthy and win any battles against the cold or flu. However, many of us are quick to raid the pharmacy for supplements, taking multiple pills a day that don't even necessarily absorb or have any positive effect. "Rather than taking any supplements, my advice would be to eat your vitamins and minerals instead," says Dr. Finkelson, general practitioner at LiveHealth Online.



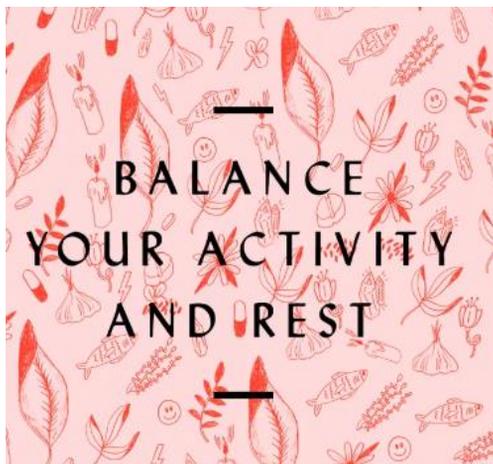
So, with that being said, what vitamins should we be looking out for? Dr. Francis suggests vitamin C, vitamin A, b12, folic acid, and bioflavonoids, such as quercetin and hesperidin, to boost your immune system. The next time you go grocery shopping, check labels and do your research on the produce you choose to make sure you're getting these essential immune boosters.



Get in your herbs wherever possible:

There are a number of herbs that can have a positive effect on the immune system. Niknejad recommends turmeric, ginger, ashwagandha, and Shatavari, just to name a few. Whether you incorporate into your cooking or make into a tea, these herbs have a number of benefits that are beneficial to the immune system, whether because they're rich in antioxidants or possess the ability to ease stress and anxiety.

Dr. Finkelstein also stresses the importance of turmeric, already known to many as a superfood. "It has fantastic antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties," she says. "Add a sprinkle to your daily tea or coffee as a preventative. When you are sick, it can be added to honey to soothe a sore throat."

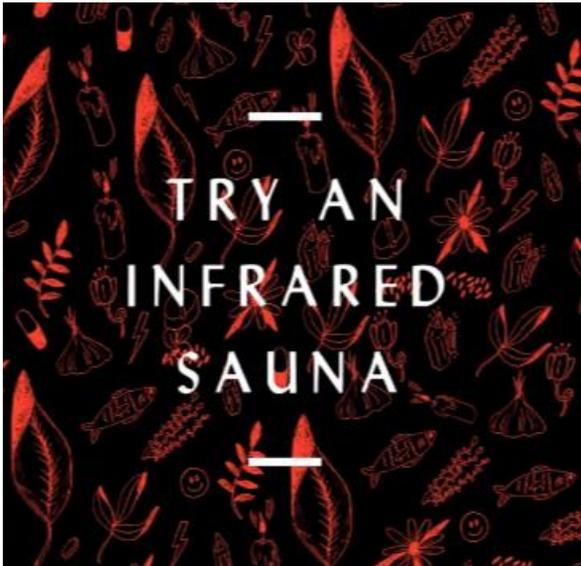


Balance your activity and rest:

Of course, exercise is an important part of being healthy, but when it comes to using it to garner your immune system, it doesn't have to be very intense to be beneficial. "Mild to moderate aerobic exercise daily is great for the immune system," says Dr. Francis.

“It all depends on the person and whatever exercises one feels comfortable and happy with,” says Niknejad. “If one is involved in an exercise that leaves them feeling not-so-great about themselves afterward, then I would skip it, as that kind of thinking will weaken the immune system.”

However, if you're already feeling under the weather, it's best to avoid doing anything too strenuous—walking is enough. “It is best not to push yourself and do heavy exercise when your immune system is compromised,” says Dr. Francis. “Rest is better.”



Try an infrared sauna:

If you feel a cold coming on, try a quick session in an infrared sauna. “They're excellent for detoxification and clearing infections in early stages, and can also increase antibodies and immune function,” says Dr. Francis.

According to Sunlighten, infrared light has the ability to penetrate human tissue, which then produces a number of anti-aging, detoxing, and therapeutic health benefits. These wonder saunas were even covered by Goop, so there's that.

While you can purchase your own for a cool few thousand bucks (which would be purely aspirational for the majority of us), a quick Google search will let you know which one of your local spas has one.