

## What Can You Do To Help Boost Your Immunity?

Whilst not enough is known about Covid-19 to say whether any of the suggestions below will help, there are things we can do to generally boost our immunity.

Our body's immunity is affected by many things - what we eat and drink, how often we exercise, whether we go outside into the sunshine, our sleep quality and how stressed we are.

Understanding these in more detail may be helpful to adopt immune boosting changes and habits:

### 1. What To Eat And Drink:

#### • **Vitamin C:**

- Research suggests eating plenty of vitamin C rich food does seem to help support the immunity (3).
- Vitamin C rich food examples:
  - cabbage, broccoli, green leafy vegetables, red peppers (capsicums), brussel sprouts, oranges, blackcurrants (and other dark berries such as blueberries/blackberries).

#### • **Vitamin D:**

- Research indicates that Vitamin D can help support the immune system (1).
- Vitamin D is not found in sufficiently high quantities in most food but there is some in oily fish such as sardines, in foods fortified with vitamin D and in mushrooms that have been exposed to sunlight (on a sunny window ledge, for example, for a day (5)).
- The NHS recommends supplementing with 10mcg per day during autumn/winter (2).

#### • **Zinc:**

- In research, the mineral zinc appears to help support the body's immune systems (3).
- Zinc-rich food examples:
  - Oysters especially (canned included), shellfish and fish, popcorn, seeds (in particular pumpkin seeds), walnuts, almonds, muesli (because of the nuts/seeds), tomato sauce/paste.

#### • **Prebiotic Food:**

- These are foods that feed your gut microbiota. This can also help boost immunity since a great deal of the body's immunity to fight off viruses and bacteria infection takes place in the gut.
- Prebiotic food examples:
  - Generally vegetables, fruit, nuts, seeds, legumes, pulses, whole grains.
  - More specifically, from research:
    - Jerusalem artichokes, chicory, radicchio, rocket, garlic, onion, leek, spring onion, asparagus, beetroot, fennel bulb, green peas, snow peas, sweetcorn, cabbage esp savoy cabbage, artichokes, apples, dark berries, ginger.

- **Fermented Food:**

- These are foods which contain live bacteria that beneficially affect gut microbiota and the lining of the gut.
- Fermented food such as:
  - Natural kefir, natural yoghurt, sauerkraut, kimchi and live apple cider vinegar.

- **Food And Drink To Limit:**

- Sugary food and drinks, and food with a lot of white flour ingredients (4).

## **2. Exercise:**

- Exercise boosts the immunity and helps to keep us well, along with reducing stress.
- Try being creative with exercise, as any movement helps. Even a little bit makes a big difference:
  - Dance to your favourite songs
  - Go online and use an app or video for inspiration
  - If you have stairs, run up and down them
  - Live video a friend and exercise together

## **3. Reducing Stress Where Possible:**

- Too much stress increases the hormone cortisol, which can suppress the immune system.
- How to reduce stress:
  - This is very individual, however slowing down and taking time to do things, rather than rushing, helps to reduce stress.
  - Exercise, of any type, helps reduce stress.
  - Asking for help can reduce stress, and helping others can likewise reduce stress.

## **4. Sleep:**

- Quality sleep has the ability to boost our immunity and reduce feelings of stress and anxiety.
- Take some time to work out what it is that is blocking you from having a quality night's sleep; generally a quality night's sleep is 7-8 hours each night with almost no interruptions.
- See if you can alter those things that seem to hinder the quality or duration of your sleep.

## **5. Sunshine:**

- If you live in the UK then the weather will be coming out of it's wintery feel. If you have time, when the sun shines, stop and go outside around midday:
  - into your garden
  - onto your balcony
  - or on your front door step

- If you can, expose some of your skin that's not seen sunlight all winter by wearing a T Shirt and shorts (if its not too cold). That way your body will make more vitamin D.
- Bask in the feeling of the sunshine on your skin making you feel better and producing some vitamin D!

#### References:

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