

Do you worry about getting sick?

Would you love to avoid a runny nose, a sore throat, or worse?

Want to recover faster when illness strikes?

The pandemic has brought immune function into sharp focus. We now understand the importance of nourishing the system that fights infection and helps us to stay well. But this raises key questions...

How can you boost immunity?

And how can you do so, naturally and safely?

Research shows you have more power than you might imagine. There are a range of steps that boost immunity, leading to fewer infections and faster recovery. See, your body is truly amazing... it just needs the right support. When you gift yourself that support in the form of positive lifestyle and nutrition approaches, you can supercharge your ability to stay healthy.

With that said, here are our 5 favourite immune supporting tips.

### **Prioritise sound slumber**

Do you sleep soundly, or toss and turn? Do you head to bed late and rise early, sacrificing slumber in order to fit more in; to get more done?

Did you know that quality and quantity of sleep profoundly affects your immunity?

The immune system is complex. It contains and produces:

- chemicals that help the system “talk” to itself and other parts of the body (cytokines)
- cells that hunt down and kill foreign invaders (white blood cells, or WBCs)
- antibodies that remember a contagion after the first exposure. Next time your body is exposed, the invader is rapidly identified, triggering a targeted and more effective response

Each of these — cytokines, white blood cells, and antibodies — are essential for a healthy immune response.

But when we slumber poorly, immunity suffers.

A study published in [The FASEB Journal](#) investigated the effect that one night of sleep restriction had on the immune system. Participants were only allowed to doze between 10 pm and 3 am. The authors found that the sleep deprivation caused several important changes.

This included a decrease in the strength and activity of two types of WBCs — natural killer cells and lymphokine-activated killer cells — and suppression of a specific cytokine. In short, they found that poor sleep stopped the immune system from responding well. This study adds further support to the main finding of other studies: sufficient slumber is important for health and healing.

So, how can you sleep well to boost immunity?

- Set a regular wake and bed time
- Sip [Chamomile tea](#) in the evening
- Choose a supportive and comfortable mattress and pillow
- Ensure your bedroom is dark, slightly cool, quiet, and safe
- Take a [warm bath or shower](#), of at least 10 minutes, one to two hours before retiring
- Avoid [blue light](#) for two hours before bed. This includes devices like TVs, computers, laptops, mobile phones, tablets, and eReaders
- Seek professional advice, if needed

### **Meditate as a regular practice**

At ChiroEase, we love meditation! After regular practice, the stress ebbs away and the mind clears. But modern science is discovering this ancient technique has important benefits for the body, too. Including for the immune system!

A study named [Alterations in Brain and Immune Function Produced by Mindfulness Meditation](#) investigated the effect an eight-week mindfulness meditation program had on immunity. At the end of the eighth week, participants were given the influenza vaccine. Then, after four months, brain and immune function were measured. The results were wonderful!

A part of the brain that has been shown to be involved in “positive affect” — happiness — was activated. [Happiness](#) is great for immune function! Plus, there was a significant increase in [antibody titres](#) to the vaccine; meditation enhanced the body’s response to the jab.

Meditation is simple to learn. A dedicated practice is all you need. If you’re unsure how to get started, you’ll find helpful advice and guided videos on [YouTube](#). Or ask us at your next appointment.

### **Digitally detox**

Have you given much thought to the amount of time you spend perched in front of a screen? Particularly scrolling through social media?

Chronic stress is known to [tank immunity](#). For many people, social networks act as a long-term stressor. So, a study published in the journal, [Computers in Human Behavior](#), decided to investigate the possible link.

The authors uncovered a rather startling finding. Users who experienced Facebook-related anxiety were more likely to suffer from a higher number of upper respiratory infections than those who are unstressed by this platform.

Think honestly about how social media impacts you. If you notice signs of anxiety — for example, nervousness, an increase in your heart or breathing rate, sweating, trouble concentrating, or feeling panicky — it’s time to take action.

A short-term or extended digital detox may help...

In fact, whether you feel stressed or not, taking a digital break has a raft of health benefits. And think of the free time you'll liberate to spend on more meaningful experiences!

### **Enjoy regular exercise**

Do you exercise regularly?

If not, it's time to start. Your immune system depends on it! See we, humans, are designed for activity. Just like a perpetual motion watch, we must move to function.

This is particularly so in our COVID-19 world. As the article, [Physical exercise as a tool to help the immune system against COVID-19: an integrative review of the current literature](#), spells out.

The authors noted that, "The practice of physical activities strengthens the immune system... Thus, regular practice of adequate intensity is suggested as an auxiliary tool in strengthening and preparing the immune system for COVID-19." Yes, regular exercise may prep and nourish your immune system so you can fight this novel coronavirus, and others.

Why does exercise matter?

Physical activity triggers the release of pro- and anti-inflammatory cytokines. Remember, cytokines are the chemicals the immune system needs to "talk" to itself and the rest of the body. These are required to communicate — and respond — effectively.

When physically active, white blood cells are recruited and the number of lymphocytes (a type of WBC) in the circulation rises. This primes the body for a quick response.

These changes lower the incidence of viral infection, reduce symptom strength, and decrease the risk of death.

How much should you exercise?

Daily exercise is ideal. The key to intensity is found in moderation. For adults between the ages of 18 to 64, the [Department of Health](#) recommends:

— 2 1/2 to 5 hours of moderate intensity exercise each week. Think brisk walking, golf, or swimming, or

— 1 1/4 to 2 1/2 hours of vigorous intensity exercise each week. For example, aerobics, jogging, netball, or soccer

There is a catch, though. [Exhaustive physical activity](#) depletes immunity and raises the risk of infection.

### **Evidence-based supplements**

There are a range of nutrients that have been shown to boost immunity and protect against infection. But, there are so many claims. Some true, some not. The overload can quickly become confusing.

So, how can you sort the truth from the misleading?

How can you know which product truly acts as an immune system booster?

Let's take a look...

### Vitamin C

Vitamin C has [antiviral effects](#). Appropriate dosing has been shown to reduce the symptoms of flu and the symptoms and duration of the common cold. But this nutrient — often taken as a humble and affordable supplement — has greater benefits than this alone.

Vitamin C also:

- enhances the multiplication of [natural killer cells](#), a type of white blood cell that encourages infected cells to self-destruct
- [decreases the risk](#) of a broad range of diseases
- helps to [kill microbes](#)
- reduces tissue damage and inflammation

### Vitamin D

[Vitamin D](#), also known as “the sunshine vitamin,” is important for maintaining a physical barrier against viruses. Think of this like adding bricks that strengthen a wall to keep out the elements. This nutrient also stimulates production of antimicrobial compounds, and protects against viral infection and severity.

### Zinc

The mineral, zinc, has numerous important roles in immunity. So much so that a [deficiency](#) depresses both arms of the immune system. This reduces the ability of the [immune system](#) to respond to both new and previously encountered infections.

### Immune supports

There are a range of immune supports that have been prescribed by traditional and natural health practitioners for centuries, echinacea and garlic included.

[Echinacea](#), also known as coneflower, is a herbaceous flowering plant. Found in products like ArmaForce, echinacea has been shown to:

- reduce the duration and severity of the common cold
- contain anti-inflammatory properties
- produce anti-microbial and anti-viral effects

[Garlic](#) — found in products like Kyolic — has been shown to:

- exhibit antioxidant and anti-inflammatory benefits
- possess antibacterial and anti-fungal properties
- modulate the immune system

Whether you are interested in echinacea, garlic, or other immune supporting supplements, the brand you choose matters greatly. Certain brands are steeped in evidence and designed for prescription by health professionals. These are the ones we recommend. BioCeuticals, an established and reputable company, is one of our favs for science-backed, beneficial products.

### **The immune takeaway**

Immunity — a system we've long taken for granted — has become front of mind since the pandemic started. Given the importance of a healthy immune system for wellbeing, this newfound awareness is useful.

To boost immunity, remember to prioritise sound slumber, practice regular meditation, spend time away from the computer — particularly social media — exercise daily, and support your immune system with evidence-based professional supplements.

If you have any questions, [please ask us](#). We are here to help you achieve wonderful, vibrant health.