

How to BOOST Your IMMUNITY Against the CORONAVIRUS



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COVID-19 / Coronavirus

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that are common in people and many different species of animals, including camels, cattle, cats, and bats. Rarely, animal coronaviruses can infect people and then spread between people such as with MERS-CoV, SARS-CoV, and now with this new virus (named SARS-CoV-2).

The SARS-CoV-2 virus is a beta coronavirus, like MERS-CoV and SARS-CoV. All three of these viruses have their origins in bats. The sequences from U.S. patients are similar to the one that China initially posted, suggesting a likely single, recent emergence of this virus from an animal reservoir.

Early on, many of the patients at the epicenter of the outbreak in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China had some link to a large seafood and live animal market, suggesting animal-to-person spread. Later, a growing number of patients reportedly did not have exposure to animal markets, indicating person-to-person spread. Person-to-person spread was subsequently reported outside Hubei and in countries outside China, including in the United States. Some international destinations now have apparent community spread with the virus that causes , including in some parts of the United States. Community spread means some people have been infected and it is not known how or where they became exposed. Learn what is known about the spread of this newly emerged coronaviruses.

More cases of COVID-19 are likely to be identified in the coming days, including more cases in the United States. It's also likely that person-to-person spread will continue to occur, including in communities in the United States. It's likely that at some point, widespread transmission of COVID-19 in the United States will occur.

Widespread transmission of COVID-19 would translate into large numbers of people needing medical care at the same time. Schools, childcare centers, workplaces, and other places for mass gatherings may experience more absenteeism. Public health and healthcare systems may become overloaded, with elevated rates of hospitalizations and deaths. Other critical infrastructure, such as law enforcement, emergency medical services, and transportation industry may also be affected. Health care providers and hospitals may be overwhelmed. At this time, there is no vaccine to protect against COVID-19 and no medications approved to treat it. Nonpharmaceutical interventions would be the most important response strategy.

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Watch for Symptoms

Reported illnesses have ranged from mild symptoms to severe illness and death for confirmed coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) cases.

The following symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure.*

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

The Coronavirus is a virus that spreads via airborne droplets, much like most other viruses including the common cold and flu.

This ensures that the virus is able to spread quickly from person to person, but it doesn't mean that every person who comes into contact with it will immediately be affected. This comes down to many factors, including the strength of your immune system. Just as some people manage not to get sick when everyone else in their family has the flu, it's also possible for some people to resist the coronavirus if their immune system is up to the challenge.

There is no specific strategy to follow in order to fortify yourself against the coronavirus, but there are plenty of tips that can help to make you less susceptible to all forms of illness, which will in turn help you to stave off this particular illness.

Here are some of the things you can do.

Nutrition

The first and most profound way you can improve your immunity against all manner of illnesses and infections, is to make sure you have your nutrition well covered. The immune system is powered by what we eat, and is unable to perform optimally unless it gets the necessary ingredients.

In particular, vitamin C is considered one of the most important nutrients when it comes to supporting good health and fighting invaders. Among other things, vitamin C is an antioxidant, meaning that it helps to destroy "free radicals" that otherwise damage cells. Vitamin C is also a precursor to the feel-good

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neurotransmitter serotonin, which can help to put the body in a calmer and more restorative state (see below).

You can find vitamin C in countless different fruits and vegetables, including (in particular) citrus fruits, apples, peppers, kale, sprouts, berries, and more. Most people don't need to supplement with extra vitamin C, but this being a water soluble vitamin means that it is nearly impossible to "overdose."

Vitamin E meanwhile is a powerful antioxidant too but also a key player in many of the fundamental biochemical reactions throughout the body governed by the immune system.

Folic acid is extremely beneficial for our immune system too, so much so that it is often added to foods. This is especially true for young children. Folic acid is found readily in whole-grain products, such as rice and pasta.

Iron is important due to its role in forming blood cells. You'll get iron from beans, broccoli, red meats, and fortified cereals.

Selenium is a useful ingredient for regulating the immune system, improving its efficiency and preventing unwanted inflammation and other effects. Selenium is found in garlic, broccoli, sardines, and tuna.

Another tip is to try and support a healthy microbiome. This refers to the collection of microbes living in your stomach, intestines, and elsewhere. Most bacteria are harmless and actually good for you, and in fact they play an important role of keeping *bad* bacteria AND bad viruses away. If you have a stronger gut fauna, then you will be less likely to contract viruses of all kinds.

So how do you support this in your own body? One tip is to try and consume more fibrous foods, as well as more fermented foods and yogurts. The latter two contain nature cultures of friendly bacteria, while the former will help to feed the bacteria by passing through to the areas where they live.

The most important thing you can do for your gut bacteria though, is to consume as varied a diet as possible. Studies show that the cultures with the strongest microbiomes are also those that eat a rich and varied diet. One good goal to aim for is to consume 50 different ingredients/foods every single week.

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Lifestyle

One of the most profound things you can do to strengthen your immune system is to avoid stress. This is something many of us don't consider as being truly important, but the truth is that when you are highly stressed, you become "run down" and far more susceptible to colds and other illnesses.

There is actually a very logical reason for this. When you are stressed, this essentially places the body into what is known as a "fight or flight state." This is the body's response to danger, controlled by the sympathetic nervous system, and intended to help improve our chances of a positive outcome in a physical confrontation. This literally prepares your body to either get into a physical fight, or run away from a danger.

In the fight or flight mode, our body therefore increases production of adrenaline, cortisol, dopamine, and other excitatory neurotransmitters and hormones. These trigger numerous physiological changes throughout the body: accelerating the heartrate, increasing muscle tone, narrowing vision, and even thickening the blood.

All these adaptations are intended to improve our chances of survival – the thickening of the blood for instance is intended to encourage clotting so that we will scab over and not bleed out in case of injury.

What this ALSO does though, is to drive blood and oxygen away from the vital organs and toward the muscles and the brain. We need muscle to fight, and we need a sharp mind to spot chances to escape. We DON'T need to be concerning ourselves with digestion at this point. Likewise, we don't need to channel a lot of energy into immunity – there are more pressing concerns than the common cold right now! Thus, when you are stressed, your muscle tone increases but your immune system is suppressed.

In the wild where our bodies evolved, these kinds of threats would be immediate and short-lived. We might see a predator cross our paths, enter a stressed state, and then escape only to calm down. Today though, sources of stress often persist and follow us around. You might be stressed about some aspect of your relationship for instance, about money, or about your boss. Perhaps you have too much work on your plate in the office.

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You come home and you think about these things, keeping you in that aroused state and *keeping* your immune system suppressed. This means you are going for long stretches of time as highly vulnerable to *ANY* illness that might attack. This is chronic stress, and it's terrible for our health.

So how do you overcome this stress? For many of us, sources of stress are unavoidable. It's not so easy to simply quit your job, and your money troubles are unlikely to go away overnight, even if you will them to!

What you *can* do though, is to change the way you react to those troubles. This is where meditation and mindfulness come in, both of which are tools that we can use to better manage our long-term chronic stress. Studies show that meditation can help to reduce the incidence of disease, and this is a great way to improve many other aspects of health too.

Another thing you can do is to try and counterbalance those negative moods with positive ones. That means spending time with friends, doing things you love, planning for the future, and going on holiday. If you think about the people you know who never seem to get sick, they're likely the same people who have boundless energy and enthusiasm for life. This is not a coincidence!

Likewise, you also need to make sure that you sleep as healthily as possible. The opposite of the fight or flight response (which is also known as a sympathetic response, or a catabolic state), is rest and digest – or an anabolic state. It's during this time that our body sends more energy *to* our immune systems and digestion, to help us repair and fortify our bodies for the day ahead. This happens when we are physically and mentally at rest.

And you are never *more* at rest than when you are asleep. Sleep is the most anabolic state the body can enter naturally, and is a time when you will build muscle, restore tissue, and drive out infection and illness.

The more sleep you get, the more resilient you will be against all kinds of disease.

Some tips for getting the best sleep possible include:

- Making sure that your room is as dark and quiet as possible
- Investing in a better mattress
- Aiming to go to bed and wake up at a consistent time every night/morning
- Taking a warm bath or shower before bed

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- Avoiding exposure to blue-light emitting devices for half an hour before bed
- Avoiding stimulating activities such as gaming or watching movies
- Using CBT and other methods to calm your thoughts
- Keeping the bedroom slightly cool. Keeping the window ajar is actually even better, as this helps you to feel the temperature cool and then heat up – important signals to the body.

The Challenges When Travelling

With only a handful of reported cases of coronavirus in the US, your likelihood of contracting this disease is most likely if you are travelling. This is where the issue lies: when we travel we are far more likely to spend time in close proximity to strangers in sealed environments. Likewise, we are likely to be tired and jetlagged, to eat a diet that isn't as healthy or varied as normal, and to experience high amounts of stress!

For all these reasons, it is important to try and make sure not to pile on events and travel right at the start of a trip. Upon arriving in a new country, spend time acclimatizing to the local timezone (it can help to spend more time outdoors), and seeking out good quality food.

More Tips

Did you know that flossing your teeth will actually reduce your chances of getting cancer? These two things might seem wholly unrelated, but it makes sense when you consider just how much unwanted bacteria enters the body through the mouth. This is why our immunity takes a constant beating from foreign invaders, and it's why you will improve your chances of avoiding coronavirus if you floss regularly! More important, this demonstrates the way in which seemingly unrelated issues affect immunity – and why you need to generally look after your health.

Another tip is to make sure you spend lots of time outdoors. This is because spending time outdoors will increase your production of vitamin D – a vitamin that actually works more like a “master hormone” than an actual vitamin. This is to say that it will stimulate the release of other hormones, many of which boost your immunity. This is why recent research shows that vitamin D is actually *significantly* more powerful than vitamin C when it comes to strengthening immunity.

Sunlight and fresh air can also benefit your health in other ways, and to once again draw upon circumstantial evidence: consider that people who spend a lot of time outdoors rarely seem to get sick!

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Finally, you could consider active cold exposure through cold showers, or even swimming outdoors. While some people still believe that spending time in the cold will *make* you sick, the truth is that bacteria and viruses alike prefer to travel where it is warmer.

Being in the cold simply suppresses your immune system and makes it work harder. This might sound like a negative thing, until you consider that this works like training. In other words, by spending time in environments where your immune system needs to work harder, you actually improve its efficiency and strength. Thus, when you are back in the warm, it becomes *better* at preventing you from picking up disease.

While you may not be able to practice all of these things, taking into account just a few of these strategies can be highly effective in helping you to support your immune system against coronavirus. Combine this with a face mask, avoidance of the most at-risk areas, and other strategies, and you can significantly lower your risk of infection.

And one more consideration? When you practice these things, you'll also improve your ability to *recover* from illness should you be affected.

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