

food for thought



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Why is it some people get sick and some do not? Is it as simple as eating specific foods or making sure you don't go out on a chilly day without a coat?

While nutrition does play a vital role in keeping your body's immune system fighting fit, there is evidence that your state of mind or mental health may be just as powerful in keeping these common but debilitating illnesses away.

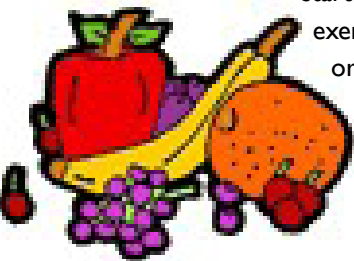
Keeping Up Your Energy

The immune system, like the body's other major systems, is extremely complex. No matter how nutritious, no single food is going to ensure your body is strong enough to ward off colds, flu and other viral infections. But making sure you eat the right things on a day-to-day basis will help. If your body lacks energy and key nutrients, its ability to generate infection fighting cells is weakened, and this gives those nasties looking to invade a better chance.

Specifically, the powerful antioxidants Vitamin C, A and E are crucial, as is zinc and the long-chain polyunsaturated fats found in oily fish, nuts, wholegrain breads and cereals.

Key Nutrients Will Help

Unfortunately, our busy lifestyles, work and family pressures make the goal of maintaining a nutritious balanced diet quite difficult to achieve. Taking your body from one extreme to another is what often results in a weakened immune system. This is the reason people often get sick after they change their diets, go partying for a few days, start gruelling exercise programs or lose weight through crash-dieting.



It is during these times that you are not eating the range of foods needed to give the body all of the nutrients it needs. Simply being aware of the powerful nature of some nutrient rich foods and adding them to your diet can help prevent an immunity depleted state. When you're aware that your diet is lacking, take some short cuts such as drinking vegetable juice to at least give your body an antioxidant boost.

Immune Fighting Foods

- ◆ Garlic, ginger and chilli added to stir fries, roasted vegetables
- ◆ Deeply coloured fruits including berries such as blueberries, raspberries, strawberries, cranberries, oranges, kiwi fruits
- ◆ Broccoli, red capsicum, carrots, sweet potato
- ◆ Green tea.

Don't Worry, Be Happy

While the research is still in its early stages, there is evidence to show stress can impair the immune system. Research conducted at the Garvan Institute in Sydney has found stress can lead to increased production of a hormone that actually suppresses the immune system.

It appears that when psychological stress is experienced, the hormone which is also involved in regulating

appetite and heart rate, is produced in greater amounts. It has also been shown that this hormone can bind to immune cells and weaken their ability to fight against various infections.

10 Ways To Reduce Stress & Increase Happiness

The Making Slough Happy Project was a community project run in the English town of Slough in which researchers evaluated ways 50 volunteers improved the morale and feelings of happiness among the local population. This was done by implementing the simple 10-step plan below:

1. Get physical for 30 minutes three times a week
2. Express gratitude for five things in your life at the end of each day
3. Take time to talk to a loved one at least once each week
4. Plant something
5. Cut TV viewing by half
6. Smile at someone each day
7. Phone a friend and arrange a time to meet up
8. Have a good laugh
9. Treat yourself each day
10. Do a good deed each day

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