

Feeling like your body's defenses are under assault? Crowded cities and frequent travel can expose you to more environmental toxins and germs than people had to deal with in the past. Your frontline interface with the environment is your immune system, and a healthy one is fundamental to well-being. Use this issue of *Balanced Living* to learn

more about protecting and strengthening your natural defenses. It includes information on healthy nutrition, quality exercise and rest; how-to's on stress reduction and cultivating healthy emotional states; information on preventing colds; and a recipe that includes immune-boosting ingredients. Make the suggestions part of your everyday health plan!

Yours in health,

Andrew Weil, M.D.

Support for a Healthy Immune System



A healthy immune system allows you to interact with germs and not get infections; encounter allergens and not have allergic reactions; and live more safely in a world where exposure to carcinogens is part of daily life. Our innate healing system is complex, but simple lifestyle habits can help keep it in tip-top shape:

- 1 Maintain good oral hygiene.** Infections of the mouth, teeth and gums can use up a lot of the body's immune resources.
- 2 Use antibiotics only when absolutely necessary** and avoid immunosuppressive drugs, using them only when there are no other alternatives left to consider.

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Foods for Immune Health

Your diet can help support and maintain healthy immune function. Give these suggestions a try!

- 1 Follow an anti-inflammatory diet.** Its focus on inflammation-moderating foods can help maintain immune resources and direct them appropriately.
- 2 Eat garlic.** Aim for a clove of fresh garlic a day - raw, if you can, or lightly cooked.
- 3 Drink green tea.** If you're a coffee drinker, substitute green tea for some or all of your daily coffee (if you prefer decaf, choose decaffeinated green tea).
- 4 Increase your intake of Asian mushrooms.** Shiitake, enokidake, maitake and oyster mushrooms contain compounds that can enhance immune function.
- 5 Eat healthy fats.** Avoid polyunsaturated vegetable oils and foods that contain trans-fatty acids, and replace with a high-quality extra virgin olive oil.



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Foods for Immune Health

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6 Eat plenty of fresh (preferably organic), whole fruits and vegetables.

Aim for a variety of colors, from greens to bright reds and yellows. The natural antioxidants these foods contain help boost the immune system.

7 Focus on foods rich in vitamin C.

This powerful antioxidant plays a central role in the repair and regeneration of tissues and helps protect cells throughout the body. Good dietary sources of vitamin C include broccoli, cantaloupe, kiwi, oranges, peppers, pineapple, pink grapefruit and strawberries.

8 Drink several glasses of good-quality water each day to help keep your mucous membranes moist - these tissues are a first line of defense against inhaled pathogens.

9 Minimize your consumption of sugar and alcohol. Both can compromise the function of white blood cells and other immune tissues.



Support for a Healthy Immune System

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- 3 **Take a daily antioxidant.** A quality antioxidant supplement can help fill nutritional gaps (even in a healthy diet) and help support overall health, including immune function.
- 4 **Consider immune-supportive herbs,** such as astragalus, echinacea and arctic root.



- 5 **Get moderate exercise.** Daily physical activity helps keep every tissue in the body healthy and can raise levels of natural killer cells, a primary defense against cancer.
- 6 **Get plenty of rest.** Lack of sleep and too much stress can weaken the efficiency of the body's immune system.
- 7 **Keep a lid on stress.** Chronic overstimulation of the sympathetic nervous system is often the consequence of our reaction to daily challenges. The result is similar to chronic inflammation, in that stress can contribute to diseases and disorders including immune suppression. Try the exercise and stress management tips in this issue's Quick Tips.

Quick Tip¹



Managing Stress for Immune Health

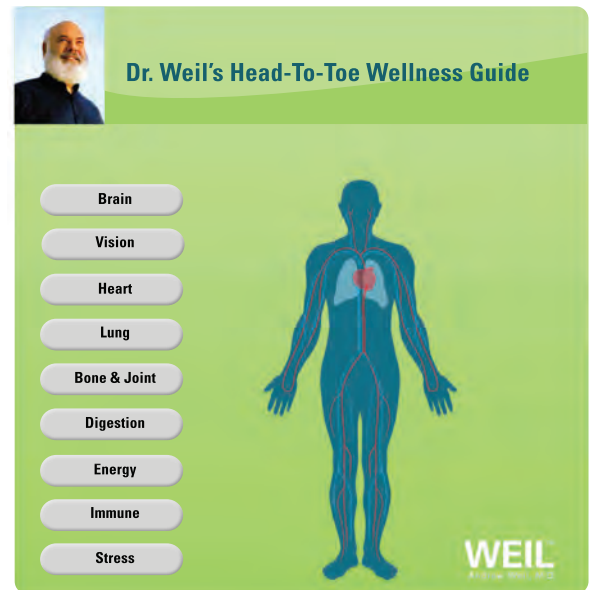
Day-to-day challenges can increase levels of stress hormones such as cortisol, which can weaken the immune system, leading to a host of health issues. Help manage stress levels by writing out your thoughts in a journal, taking a "news fast" (avoiding the news on TV, the internet, papers and magazines) and practicing relaxation techniques such as breathing exercises and visualization. Also, make it a point to stay socially active and to cultivate a positive outlook - both can lead to a healthier and longer life!

Dr. Weil's Head-to-Toe Wellness Guide: Preventing a Cold

Even with the best dietary and exercise measures aimed to keep your immune system healthy, the common cold can still strike. With more than 200 different viruses ready to attack, there are untold opportunities to suffer a seasonal malady. Consider the following suggestions to help minimize the chance of catching a cold:



- 1 Wash your hands frequently** with hot or warm water and soap, especially when you have been in public areas or around someone who has a cold.
- 2 Avoid touching your nose or eyes**, as this may transmit respiratory secretions picked up from surfaces or the air to vulnerable tissues.
- 3 When possible, avoid people who have a cold** until the fifth day of their illness, when they should be less infectious.
- 4 Eat two cloves of raw garlic**, which have antiviral properties, at the first sign of a cold. Try chopping the garlic and mixing it with honey if the taste is too strong on its own.
- 5 Stay hydrated**, which keeps nasal passages moist, making them better defenders against viruses.



Dr. Weil's Head-to-Toe Wellness Guide covers nutrition, lifestyle and supplement information for nine different health categories. Learn more by visiting DrWeil.com or join DrWeilonHealthyAging.com for access to an enhanced version that includes links to related recipes!

Quick Tip²



Best Exercise for Immune Health

Regular physical activity strengthens our natural defenses, in part by maintaining good circulation. Walking is a perfect exercise: it challenges and tones almost every major organ in the body, including the immune system. It requires no special equipment, and just about anyone can do it. Aim for 30-45 minutes of moderate intensity most days of the week - look for indoor walking tracks or clubs if weather in your region is inclement; otherwise enjoy walking outdoors!

Garlic Broth

Garlic is an herb with remarkable medicinal properties - and it tastes great, too. It acts as a cardiovascular tonic, lowering blood pressure and cholesterol levels and inhibiting blood clotting. It's also a powerful germicide and may even protect against some carcinogens. Sip a warm mug of this flavorful broth as is or use it as a base for other soups.

You can buy vegetable stock or make your own – we've included a recipe for homemade vegetable stock below.

VEGETABLE STOCK INGREDIENTS

- 2 medium leeks
- 4 onions
- 6 carrots
- 3 stalks celery
- 1 small bunch parsley stems
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 teaspoons large-leaf marjoram
- 1/2 teaspoon dried thyme
- 3 Turkish bay leaves (or 1/2 California bay leaf)
- 1 1/2 gallons cold purified water

VEGETABLE STOCK INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Wash and trim the leeks and chop along with the onions, carrots, celery and parsley.
- 2 Heat the olive oil in a large pot, add the vegetables and stir-fry to brown lightly. Add 1 1/2 gallons of cold water. Also add the marjoram, thyme and bay leaves.
- 3 Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer, partly covered, for 1 hour.
- 4 Strain the stock through a fine sieve or a cheesecloth-lined colander. Press or squeeze the vegetables to extract their liquid. Discard the vegetables and cool, chill, or freeze the stock.



GARLIC BROTH INGREDIENTS

- 8 cups vegetable stock
- 1 1/2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 whole head garlic, cloves peeled and coarsely chopped
- 1 bay leaf
- 1/4 teaspoon dried thyme
- Pinch dried sage
- Salt to taste

GARLIC BROTH INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 To the vegetable stock, add the olive oil, bay leaf, garlic, thyme and sage.
- 2 Bring to a boil, reduce heat, cover and simmer for 30 minutes. Add salt to taste.
- 3 Strain and serve.

Serves 4.

NUTRIENTS PER SERVING

- Calories: 110.0
- Protein: 5.5 grams
- Fat: 5.2 grams
- Saturated Fat: 0.7 grams
- Monounsaturated Fat: 3.7 grams
- Polyunsaturated Fat: 0.5 grams
- Carbohydrate: 11.0 grams
- Fiber: 0.4 grams
- Cholesterol: 0.0 mg
- Vitamin A: 14.4 IU
- Vitamin E: 0.6 mg/IU
- Vitamin C: 6.6 mg
- Calcium: 52.9 mg
- Magnesium: 19.7 mg