

With the weather changing and the leaves falling, cold and flu season is upon us. It is important that we take the proper precautions during this time to ensure that we stay healthy throughout this “sick-season”. We can all benefit by following some very simple, daily practices that will help ward off sickness and keep us feeling happy and energetic throughout the entire winter.

Healthy Eating

Science continues to unveil many links between healthy nutrition and how we feel on a daily basis. Researches are finding many foods and macronutrients that help boost immune function and fight off disease and infections. One of the top power foods to regularly include in your diet is garlic; which may boost your immune system, increasing resistance to infection and stress. To get the immune power from garlic, crush the cloves with the flat side of a knife before adding them to your food. This releases the garlic juice, which has great immune properties. Also, cheese and other dairy products contain conjugated linoleic acid, a natural component of dairy fat which has exhibited boosted immune response in recent animal studies. Yogurt and other cultured milk products contain probiotics, beneficial bacteria that help clean the digestive system and provide you with further immune-boosting benefits. Look for the “live active culture” seal, which indicates that probiotics have been added. Also check milk product labels for vitamin D. Early research suggests low levels of vitamin D may be linked to a seasonal increase in colds and flu and a higher incidence of respiratory infections. Vitamin C, found in citrus fruits and juices, may also help the body's immune system. Zinc, found in meat, chicken, peanuts and peanut butter, plays an important role in the proper functioning of the immune system in the body and many other fruits and vegetables contain antioxidants and flavanoids that help fight infection, fatigue, stress, and other factors that lead to sickness during this time of year. Be sure to include lots of leafy greens and vegetables with a variety of color to help keep your body running at its optimum level. You can also help yourself by taking a regular multi-vitamin. Women should look for a multi containing Beta Carotene, Folate, B12, and Iron for added benefits.



Stay Disinfected to Keep Germs Away

One of the most important things you can do to keep from getting sick is to frequently wash and sanitize your hands and exposed skin on a regular basis throughout the day. One of the most common ways we find ourselves contracting sickness is through the transfer of germs in public places. Your hands gather germs from other people and from contaminated surfaces at all times during the day. By washing your hands regularly you prevent yourself from becoming infected by these germs. Use warm water and soap and wash for several minutes. You can also keep hand sanitizer handy in your pocket or purse for quick and easy germ ridding access. It is also a good idea not to share drinks or beverage containers, silverware, and other high contact items with other people during this “sick season”. Some other helpful practices are to sanitize after you come into contact with door knobs, telephones, public transportation, public restrooms and other germ dense areas. Be sure to practice these procedures at home as well. Keeping your house germ and dust free is a great way to provide your body with a sanctuary from germs and diseases being passed around.



Stay Hydrated and Get Plenty of Rest and Recovery

Even when your hands are clean, staying healthy means more than just avoiding germs and sanitizing. The healthier you stay, the better chance your body has of fighting off sickness. This starts by getting adequate amounts of rest. Try to make sure you allow yourself 8 hours of sleep per night in order to give your body the proper time it needs to recover and rebuild. Refuel your body throughout the day by drinking plenty of water. Water contains vital nutrients that support proper cell function within the body, hydrates and lubricates our joints and vital organs, and helps us from overeating.



Get Plenty of Exercise

By staying in shape physically you help promote homeostasis, or a sense of balance, within your body. Getting regular, moderate intensity exercise has numerous benefits for the important systems of our body, but also helps boost immune function. Studies show that people who exercise regularly have significantly fewer sicknesses, and when those who exercise regularly do come down with a cold or the flu—they bounce back significantly faster. Just remember Healthy bodies have an easier time fighting off infection.