

Building a healthy immune system

Preventing an illness this season may not be possible, but a healthy immune system is one way to give your body extra protection. Focusing on a healthy lifestyle of physical activity and nutrient-rich foods can help keep you a step ahead.

The following immune supporting nutrients can be found in a variety of foods:

Beta Carotene is a form of Vitamin A and is found in plant foods such as sweet potatoes, spinach, carrots, mango, broccoli and tomatoes. It can also be found in eggs and some other fortified foods.

Vitamin C rich foods include citrus fruits, berries, melons, tomatoes, red bell peppers, broccoli, strawberries and tomatoes. Depending on a person's age and calorie needs, aim for 1 to 2 cups of fruit and 2 to 3 cups of vegeta-

bles each day.

Vitamin D is found in fish such as salmon and tuna and in eggs. Milk and 100% juices that are fortified with vitamin D are also sources of this important nutrient.

Zinc tends to be better absorbed from animal sources such as beef and seafood but is also in vegetarian sources such as wheat germ, beans, nuts and tofu.

Probiotics are "good" bacteria that promote health and are found in cultured dairy products such as yogurt and fermented foods such as kimchi.

Vitamin E is found in seeds, almonds and other nuts, nut butters and avocados.



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Protein comes from animals and plants. Animal sources include meat, poultry, fish, seafood, eggs, and dairy. Plant sources include nuts, seeds, beans, peas, and soy.

Focus on a balanced eating plan, adequate sleep and stress management to help keep your immune system healthy all year long.

Practice good hygiene and find healthy and appropriate ways to cope with stress. Exercise and get plenty of sleep. Remember-lack of sleep contributes to a variety of health concerns, such as a weakened immune system. Seven to nine hours is recommended each day for adults, and children need eight to 14 hours, depending on their age.

Extension programs serve people of all ages regardless of socioeconomic levels, race, color, sex, religion, disability or national origin.