



## Immune System Boosters

One of my son's teachers used to tell his class "you can't boost your immune system – you're not a car" which always made me laugh – and get annoyed – at the same time. To his credit, my son would argue with his teacher, something along the lines of "my Mom always gives us extra Vitamin C and herbal medicine when we get sick" to which he would respond "well, that's just stupid." Okayyyyy. It didn't matter that there is scientific evidence or the fact that it worked a majority of the of the time...some people are just very stuck in their ways of thinking.

Yes, of course you can boost your immune system! Just like there are certain activities, foods (think white sugar and white flour) and medications that will lower your immune system, the same holds true for increasing it's ability to ward off viruses and infections. Some people think "Well, the coronavirus is so contagious I'm going to get it anyway so what's the point?" That may be true but it's important to recognize that anything you put into your body, or on your skin for that matter, has the ability to either put you "up the slope of health" or "down the slope of health," to quote one of my mentors, the highly respected Canadian functional nutrition practitioner and teacher [Josh Gitalis](#). Basically, as he explains, the higher up the slope of health you are, the faster and easier your body has to respond to any type of invader and the better off you are but you have to work on getting up the slope and staying there on a daily basis. You aren't "healthy" or "unhealthy" – you are somewhere along that line and must keep striving toward better health. Hopefully that puts things into perspective!

Some of the recommendations below are known to be effective against the common flu virus and we are hopeful that it has the same effect with Coronavirus although we don't know for sure. Others are simply known to help strengthen your overall immune system:

### *Immune Boosting Foods:*

- Eat lots of fruits and vegetables – but make sure you aren't adding toxins to your body with pesticides. Wash produce well but check out [the annual Dirty Dozen list for produce especially high in pesticides](#). It is recommended that those on this list are bought organic whenever possible. If you don't like to eat your fruits and veggies, juice them in [this top-rated juicer](#) or do what my family does and blend them into a smoothie such as in [this high speed blender](#). There are tons of fruit and vegetable smoothies online or get the kids involved and create your own!
- Speaking of fruits and vegetables, citrus fruits such as oranges, lemons and grapefruit are high in natural Vitamin C – known to help boost your immune system. Interestingly enough, red peppers are even higher in Vitamin C than oranges! Red pepper juice, anyone?
- Drink lots of water – reverse osmosis or spring water is best. I personally use [this inexpensive, easy to install, under the sink filter](#).
- Drink bone broth – I know it's all the rage these days but with good

reason: your grandmother was right, chicken soup really does help your immune system – and maybe your soul, too. But to really get all the benefits that bone broth has to offer including strengthening your immune system, follow a [bone broth recipe](#). If you don't want to wait that long for it to cook, use an [instant pot](#) and it will be ready in no time!

- Garlic and onions have natural anti-viral properties. Chop them up and use them in whatever you are cooking and of course add some to your bone broth for extra benefits. If you have [IBS and/or are following a LOW-FODMAP diet](#), skip this suggestion.
- Ginger – aside from being known as the anti-nausea herb of choice, it also contains very potent anti-inflammatory compounds called gingerols which inhibit the formation of inflammatory messengers of the immune system.[1] It also contains antibacterial and antiviral properties and soothes lung tissues. Make a simple tea with fresh ginger, lemon, mint and [this delicious organic honey](#).

### ***Immune Boosting Supplements:***

- Vitamin C – the immune system vitamin – 1000 mg 3x/day (or more). Some suggest to take it to bowel tolerance – meaning, until you develop loose stools and then cut back on the dose. Since this varies person to person, start with the recommended dose and go up from there.
- Zinc – the immune system mineral – 30 – 60 mg twice a day.
- Oregano – but especially this type containing the [Mediterranean source P73](#) wild oregano that was used in studies to successfully destroy bacteria and viruses. It is best to take it 3x/day when you feel the start of symptoms as taking high doses for a long period of time can have negative effects on the good bacteria in your intestinal tract (similar to antibiotics but not nearly as detrimental).
- [Elderberry extract](#) – in addition to being an excellent source of Vitamin C, it improves and strengthens immune system function, helps detoxify the body and reduces cold and flu symptoms. [2]
- Echinacea – shown to have profound immune enhancing effects, and direct antiviral activity. [3] We like [this brand](#). That being said, it's best NOT to take during a fever as it may increase the inflammatory response of this type of unfamiliar virus. Best to take as a preventative measure or if your symptoms during the virus do not include a high fever.
- NAC – N-Acetylcysteine is an antioxidant and precursor to glutathione, one of the major antioxidants in lung tissue. In a double blind trial, using NAC during the flu season reduced the frequency and severity of symptomatic flu episodes. [4] While we don't have studies showing it's effectiveness specifically on Coronavirus, my guess would be that it would show similar effects. I recommend [this quality formula](#).

Make sure your supplements, whether they are Vitamins, Minerals, or Herbal remedies are low in sugar, and don't contain fillers or other unnecessary

ingredients. It defeats the purpose to take high sugar, chemical filled synthetic supplements. They should also have enough of the active ingredient to do the job. Often when studies are done showing supplements did not have a positive effect it was because they were too low in potency or made with unhealthy ingredients. [Hint – don't buy them from Costco or your local drugstore.] A health food store, quality brands like those I recommended above from Amazon or a [professional Supplement Dispensary](#) is a much better option.

### **Lifestyle:**

- Make your own easy natural hand sanitizer – get a spray bottle and add 70% alcohol along with a few drops of essential oil of tea tree (melaleuca), eucalyptus, thyme, lavender, rosemary, clove or a combination, and optionally a few tablespoons of pure aloe vera taken from inside the actual aloe vera leaf. There are many brands of essential oils out there that are not pure and have added ingredients used to dilute the products. Pure essential oils are NOT the same as botanical oils or the inexpensive essential oils you can buy at your local health food store. I personally have been using [Doterra essential oils](#) for a while since they have a great reputation but lately I have been switching to [Living Libations](#) which I feel are even more pure.
- Lowering your stress helps your immune system so do yoga or dance using an online streaming service (I love [Les Mills on Demand](#)), or go for a walk outside which will also benefit you by getting some sunlight. The naturally occurring vitamin D helps your immune system as well and so many of us are deficient because of the overuse of sunscreen. It is a good idea to be out in the sun for at least 15 minutes a day without any sunscreen. After that, use an all natural brand like [this one](#) or [this one](#).
- If you feel like you are coming down with something don't do a hard workout like running, heavy weight lifting or HiiT as these forms of exercise can increase cortisol levels – the stress hormone. But don't sit still either – a light workout is fine as long as you feel up to it.
- Sleep 8 hours a night – this is so important! Go to bed before 11 pm and sleep in complete darkness to have the best benefits.
- Be happy – I know, I know, easier said than done. Writing down things you are grateful for...it might sound cheesy but it helps. I am personally grateful to live in Florida where I can sit in my backyard as I write this, go for a bike ride which is apparently safe for social distancing and of course grateful for my awesome family despite the fact that it's only Day 2 of them being home and it has been a non-stop cooking and eating fest!
- Most of all have faith...we will get through this! ☐

If you found this helpful, please share with family and friends!

### **References:**

[1] "The Healing Power of Herbs and Spices." *The Encyclopedia of Healing Foods*, by Michael T. Murray et al., Time Warner International, 2006, pp. 486–487.

[2]“The All-In-One Guide to Natural Remedies and Supplements: Discover the Health and Healing Powers of Herbs, Vitamins, Minerals, Fats, Enzymes, Amino Acids, Aromatherapy, Homeopathy, Flower Remedies, Leading Edge Discoveries, Nutraceuticals, Phytochemicals.” *The All-In-One Guide to Natural Remedies and Supplements: Discover the Health and Healing Powers of Herbs, Vitamins, Minerals, Fats, Enzymes, Amino Acids, Aromatherapy, Homeopathy, Flower Remedies, Leading Edge Discoveries, Nutraceuticals, Phytochemicals*, by Ken Vegotsky et al., AGES Publications, 2001, pp. 202–203.

[3]“Immune Support.” *The Clinician’s Handbook of Natural Medicine*, by Joseph E. Pizzorno et al., Elsevier, 2016, p. 391.

[4]“Influenza.” *Nutritional Medicine*, by Alan Gaby, Fritz Perlberg Publishing, 2017, p. 1249.

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