

How to Stay Well and Boost Your Immune System

1. **Wash your hands.** We've all heard plenty about this lately but a reminder is always good. The best method to clean your hands is with antibacterial soap and water for 20 seconds. If soap is not available, use hand sanitizer with at least 60% rubbing alcohol. Do not touch your face, eyes or mouth until your hands are clean.
2. **Sleep.** Sleep is a time our muscles and bodies heal, rest and regenerate. Toxins in our brain that can cause extreme stress and anxiety are released as we sleep. Shoot for 8 hours a night and make your sleep environment quiet, dark and electronic free. The blue light emitted from electronics can disrupt your sleep cycle. Get off all electronics at least an hour before you want to get some sleep.
3. **Eat well.** Antioxidants found in foods and teas reduce inflammation and help prevent infection. Not only do fruits and vegetables provide your body with vitamins (far better than synthetic vitamins), they also have antioxidants which are immune boosters. Try to eat at least 3 fresh fruits per day and 4 servings of vegetables per day such as sweet potatoes, squash, broccoli, blueberries, tomatoes, carrots, spinach, citrus fruits, and strawberries. Other foods rich in antioxidants are beans, avocado, nuts, fish, and green tea (decaffeinated preferred for kids).
4. **Exercise:** Exercising an hour a day will keep your body healthy, reduce stress and help your immune system. Try to find something fun that you enjoy doing. Start with 15 minutes a day and work your way up to one hour 4 to 5 times a week.
5. **Fresh Air and Sunshine:** An hour a day of walking, exercising, gardening or just playing outside (with sunscreen on of course) provides vitamin D, an essential vitamin, and reduces stress- both of which will help your immune system. Studies show that people who are "nature deprived" suffer from more illnesses and infections than those who "play" outside daily.
6. **Get your check-ups and vaccines:** Make sure you and your family are current on your check-ups and life-saving vaccines. Rates of vaccination in the U.S. have dropped since the COVID-19 Pandemic and doctors fear we may see a resurgence of diseases such as measles and meningitis. If you are unsure whether you or child needs vaccines, call your doctor today.
7. **Laugh, spread joy, spend time with family and friends:** Put those gadgets away and spend some time playing cards, walking, talking or just goofing around with your loved ones. Studies have proven that over 2 hours of electronic time in a day increases stress, anxiety, and depression which in turn increases inflammation in our body leading to illness and infection. Laugh with your loved ones, because "laughter really is the best medicine."

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Written 5/24/2020

