Fending off the flu

7 immunity-boosting tips you need to know

By Katherine Foreman
Spry Living

W ith cold and flu season starting to rear its ugly head, it's more important than ever to keep healthy and germ-free, beginning with the basics — your immune system. Since all sickness starts with a little immune system. Since all sickness starts with a little

1. Don't ignore your gut feelings

It may feel like your nose and throat are the immune system head-quarters (headquarters). It may feel like your nose and throat are the immune system head-quarters (headquarters). As with anything, it's the little lifestyle adjustments that make the biggest difference, so we've rounded up seven simple yet powerful everyday immunity boosters to keep you happy, healthy and prepared to ward off those pesky winter germs.

2. Add a little spice to your diet

Many herbs and spices like garlic, ginger and turmeric have been used for years as anti-inflammatory agents with boosting antioxidant properties and a healthy list of other added benefits. It doesn't hurt that they make for the perfect garnishes, so start implementing more into your daily food intake to maximize the benefits.

3. Zinc is the answer

While it is ultimately very important to consume a lot of vitamin C when times are tough, healthwise, zinc has also been proven to reduce the duration of colds by a few days. The anti-inflammatory, antioxidant-rich, antibiotic agent can be digested in foods like spinach, pumpkin seeds, nuts, beans and oysters. Doctors say adding 25 mg of zinc to your diet for a couple of days if you start feeling under the weather is a sure-fire way to ensure you aren't down and out too long.

4. Antibiotics are not necessarily your friend

For as long as you can, taking the natural route and finding organic ways to fend off germs is actually the most effective way to remain well. Antibiotics often help do the trick, but have also been shown to suppress the normal immune functioning and attack the good bacteria your body needs to stay well. Drinking lots of water — particularly infused with the health-boosting properties of things like lemon, honey and ginger — is an easy and effective way to get the benefits you want without detracting from your body's natural manufacturing process.

5. Get those endorphins flowing with plenty of exercise

Even exercising as little as a couple of times a week helps to keep stress at bay, improve the quality of your sleep, and strengthen your body. Making the time to get that workout in, especially if it's outside and can expose you to all of that good vitamin D, will be well worth it when you don't bring the flu home with you.

6. Sleep, sleep, sleep

We know — the thought of getting 7-8 hours of sleep every night seems like a big laugh in today's hectic world, but doctors emphasize that budgeting for at least that amount of sleep each night is one of the most integral ways to support a thriving immune system.

Along with a host of other benefits, it's an excellent method of regulating stress levels, which, if too high, seriously impair the immune system's ability to function properly. If you can't swing spending that amount of time sleeping each night, try supplementing with 20-minute power naps during the day. You'll definitely be glad you did.

7. Lay off the processed foods

Avoiding a large sugar, gluten and processed-food intake is essential in staying healthy and strong throughout the year. Doctors and nutritionists advise making your diet as colorful as possible to boost immunity. Leafy greens and an abundance of berries, sweet potatoes and the like are key elements of the infallible health regimen.