

Finding the Balance: The Key to Healthy Immunity



The best defense we have against any illness is our immune system. We are born with the natural ability to repair, rejuvenate and restore our body and in order for our immune system to function at its best, we need to supply our body and mind with the essential elements required to be in balance. Abundant nutrients from fresh organic produce, high quality protein and essential fatty acids, plenty of sleep, fresh water and relaxing 'down time' creates the harmony our body needs to function at its optimal level and the result is a healthy immunity and a happier you!

*Whatever occurs in the mind affects the body and vice versa.
The mind and the body cannot be considered independently.
When the two are out of sync, than both physical and emotion stress can erupt.*
-Hippocrates

The Stress Connection

Stress is a common result of the busy lives we lead. Whereas some amount of stress is normal, continual stress can have a negative impact on our health. Scientists have found a link between the cause of the common cold and physical and psychological stressors in our lives. When we experience stress, be it physical, psychological or a combination, the body releases cortisol, the stress hormone which then causes a negative immune factor, Interleukin-6 (IL6), to be excreted by our immune system. IL6 reduces the positive immune factors responsible for halting viruses from replicating themselves.

Visit this great website dedicated to how to reduce, prevent, and cope with psychological stressors in everyday life.

www.helpguide.org/mental/stress_management_relief_coping

Stay Hydrated

Plenty of purified water allows the positive immune factors found in our saliva, tears and the secretions of our nose to flush out invaders, particularly viruses, from the body. Well hydrated mucous membranes are our first line of immune defence. Allowing ourselves to become dehydrated offers an opportunity for cold and flu viruses to get inside our cells. When it is cold outdoors, drinking enough water often slips our mind. Six to eight glasses of fresh, purified water daily is ideal—especially during cold and flu season.

If you find your home is dry during the winter months consider investing in a vaporizer. These inexpensive appliances create a steam from fresh water and help to humidify indoor air. Most vaporizers also have a place to add pure essential oils, enabling the steam to infuse their medicinal effects into the room. Consider pure essential oil of orange for helping to break up mucous secretions, eucalyptus for respiratory support or other antiseptic oils to help with health and healing. Putting a pot of water on the wood stove, or hanging wet laundry to dry in the house are other great and cost free ways to keep the air indoors moist.

Avoid Sugar!

Sugar inactivates our Natural Killer (NK) cells. NK cells are a type of white blood cell that are specialized to fight viruses. As little as one teaspoon of sugar shuts off NK cell activity by 50% for up to six hours, leaving us vulnerable to viral infections. While white refined sugar is toxic to the immune system, the naturally occurring sugars and their components in whole fruits, vegetables and medicinal herbs such as polysaccharides optimize immunity.

Understanding the Benefit of Fevers

A fever is usually a sign of a viral or bacterial infection. Viruses and bacteria thrive at body temperature. They have a hard time surviving, and in the case of viruses, multiplying at temperatures higher than normal body temperature. A fever is the body's way of fighting an infection. Fever increases blood flow to speed up the immune system's defense actions. Numerous studies have shown that fever enhances the immune response by disabling bacteria and viruses.

When the internal thermostat rises, white blood cells are activated and the body heats up to kill off potentially threatening bugs. In fact, research shows that medicating a child with an anti-fever drug for even a low to moderate fever may interfere with this natural defence.

Be sure to stay hydrated when you have a fever. Higher body temperature creates more fluid loss leading potentially to dehydration. Light broths, herbal teas, fresh diluted juices and filtered water are ideal choices.

It is common practice for parents of young children to give fever reducing medication, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen, to reduce a child's fever during an illness. This is done as a comfort measure, often to help children sleep and also because we have been led to believe that a fever can be dangerous and can compromise the long term health of a child. Although one must be cautious about medium to high fevers in infants under 3 months of age and/or fevers over 104F, the nature of the fever in general in both adults and children is a very effective, although unfortunately uncomfortable, immune response.

The following websites are great references about fevers and children's health.

www.truestarhealth.com/members/cm_archives05ML4P1A8

www.naturalnews.com/027149_fever_Chi_RNA

www.attachmentparentingdoctor.com/fever

Get Some Sunshine

In the Kootenays it is not unheard of to not see the sun for weeks during the winter months. Living in a northern climate, Canadians' ability to produce natural Vitamin D from the sun in the winter is limited. There has been much research over the past few years linking Vitamin D deficiency with impaired immune function. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why cold and flu season occurs during the winter months.

Getting up the mountain above the cloud line to expose your skin to the Vitamin D producing rays of the sun is one way to supply your body with this essential nutrient, as is supplementing with Vitamin D3.

Remember your Greens and other Alkalizing Foods

Let food be thy medicine, thy medicine shall be thy food.

-Hippocrates

An alkaline diet optimizes our body's own natural immune response. Leafy greens, and other green veggies, colourful fruit and berries are highly alkaline foods that help to balance out the many acidic comfort foods and drinks that many of us take pleasure in over the festive season. Fresh organic produce contains concentrated naturally occurring components that contribute to healthy immunity, such as antioxidants, phytonutrients, enzymes, trace minerals and many others. The highest concentrations of antioxidants are found in the most deeply or brightly coloured fruits and vegetables such as spinach, kale, red bell peppers, berries, carrots, apricots, pomegranates, and tomatoes. Try to eat a rainbow of colourful foods every day!

Fresh is best! Many nutrients are destroyed by heat or other processing. Homemade coleslaw, colourful salads and other raw food creations can round out any meal. Freshly made juices and smoothies are great choices as liquefying breaks down the hard cellular structure of fresh fruits and veggies, making them easier to digest and their nutrients more bio-available. Fresh fruit juices should be diluted with purified water.

Want to get more leafy greens in your diet and not really into eating all those salads? Try a Green Smoothie. These concoctions are easy, surprisingly delicious, very alkalizing and rich in immune supporting nutrients.

For some great Green Smoothie recipes, check out this link
www.rawfamily.com/recipes

For fun and delicious raw food creations and salad ideas see the recipe section on our website
www.kootenay.coop

Our Produce staff are always happy to help you find what you are looking for.

Choose your Natural Remedies for Healthy Immunity

Lifestyle choices and a healthy diet contribute to a strong and effective immune system. Although we strive to find the right balance for ourselves and our families, we often need a boost during the dark and cold days of winter.

Thankfully there are countless natural remedies that are safe and effective for helping to prevent and treat colds and flus. Elder Berry combinations, Sterols and Sterolins, Vitamin C, Echinacea, medicinal mushrooms, Oregano Oil, aromatherapy essential oils and green food supplements are just a few examples.

Our Personal Care department has many effective remedies and great reference materials to help you make informed natural health decisions and to find the remedy that is most suitable for you.

For more information about the benefits of Essential Fatty Acids refer to our Fats and Oils Guide on our website
www.kootenay.coop/publications/fatsandoilsguide.doc
or ask for your copy at the Personal Care desk.