

The best ways to strengthen your immune system during the coronavirus pandemic

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Although there is no cure or specific treatment for COVID-19, there are some things you can do to strengthen your immune system against the coronavirus.

Here are scientifically supported ways to help fight off illness.

Get enough sleep

The amount of sleep you're getting each night can make a big difference in your body's ability to fight infection, health experts say.

One 2015 study found that people who sleep less than six hours each night were more likely to catch a cold than those who slept seven or more.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that adults sleep at least seven hours each night. Going to bed and waking up at the same time each day, sleeping in rooms without electronics or screens, and avoiding large meals, caffeine and alcohol before bed are ways to improve your sleep.

Exercise regularly

Research shows that regular, moderate exercise can reduce inflammation and support your immune system's cells.

Health experts recommend moderate exercise at least 150 minutes each week, or about 20 minutes a day. You can also do 75 minutes of more intense exercise a week, or do a combination of both.

Moderate exercise includes brisk walking, biking, swimming or jogging, while more intense exercise includes running or other cardio.

Drink plenty of water

Staying hydrated isn't directly connected to preventing disease, but it can help with your overall health.

Healthline says you should drink enough water each day to make your urine a pale yellow, while other health experts recommend drinking eight glasses of water a day, or about half a gallon.

Manage your stress

In this age of uncertainty, lowering your stress level is easier said than done. But health experts say [high stress levels](#) have negative impacts on your body's ability to fight off illness.

A series of studies in the 1990s led by Sheldon Cohen, a professor of psychology at Carnegie Mellon University, found that people who reported higher levels of stress were more susceptible to the common cold.

Cohen led another study published in 2012 that found psychological stress can cause the body to lose its ability to regulate its inflammatory response, which may promote the onset and progression of some diseases.

Health experts recommend stress management techniques such as avoiding [social media](#), meditating, practicing controlled breathing, doing yoga, or other activities that help you feel relaxed.

Eat plenty of fruits, vegetables and other healthy foods

No one food will prevent infection, but following basic dietary guidelines, like eating plenty of fruit, vegetables and protein is a good start.

There are several specific items you can add to your diet to strengthen your immune system and overall health.

Health experts recommend eating certain foods that are high in vitamin C, like red bell peppers, broccoli, strawberries, spinach, and citrus fruits like oranges, lemons and grapefruit. Sunflower seeds and almonds are recommended because they are high in vitamin E, while other foods, like yogurt, garlic, poultry and chickpeas, have other health benefits.

Ginger, turmeric, green tea, papayas, kiwis, shellfish and mushrooms are also good items to add to your diet, health experts say.

Drink alcohol in moderation

Texans may be eager to take advantage of alcohol delivery and to-go cocktails since Gov. Greg Abbott waived regulations restricting restaurants from providing such services. But health experts say you should be careful about how much you drink if you want to put your body in a good position to fight off disease.

Research shows excess alcohol consumption can make your body more susceptible to respiratory illness, including pneumonia and other lung diseases. It can also decrease your body tissue's ability to heal wounds. Health experts say this is true for chronic and binge drinkers.

While health experts say the occasional glass of wine at dinner won't hurt you, you should avoid overdoing it.

Be careful about taking supplements

Health experts have differing opinions on the use of vitamin and other supplements. They can be pricey, and they don't prevent anyone from catching a disease, no matter how much you take.

Health experts say other disease prevention methods, like frequent hand-washing, is going to help you more than any supplement will.

However, there is some evidence that regularly taking certain supplements can reduce the duration of certain illnesses.

One 2013 study found that regularly taking vitamin C reduced the duration of colds in adults by 8% and in children by 14%. A similar 2017 study found that the duration of colds among people taking more than 75 mg of zinc per day was 33% shorter than those who didn't take zinc.

An exception to the supplement rule that most health experts agree on is vitamin D, which helps your body fight off infection. You can get vitamin D naturally through certain foods, like salmon, or through exposing your body to sunlight. Some health experts recommend taking a vitamin D [supplement](#) during winter months, when sunlight is harder to come by.

If you're going to take supplements, it's important not to take too many. Some health and wellness influencers and Youtubers have recommended taking extremely high doses of supplements in recent weeks in response to COVID-19. But health experts warn that can be dangerous. Taking high doses can cause dizziness, nausea and headaches and damage your organs in more serious cases.

Healthline recommends taking supplements that have been tested by a third party, such as United States Pharmacopeia, NSF International, and ConsumerLab, because supplements aren't regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

Immune-strengthening habits are not a replacement for other disease prevention measures

Practicing habits to strengthen your health does not mean you should stop following other public health guidelines. You should still be social distancing, avoiding nonessential errands, washing your hands often, wearing a [face mask](#) in public and following stay-at-home orders, [health experts](#) say.

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