

EAT *to beat* COLDS & FLU

YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE ONE OF THE FALLEN HEROES IN THIS YEAR'S FIGHT AGAINST COLDS AND FLU. THE SECRET LIES IN EATING TO FORTIFY YOUR BODY. LET US GET YOU STARTED ON THE ROAD TO SUCCESS

H Having a cold and getting the flu may happen at the same time of year, but they are very different illnesses. It is important to recognise this, because it affects the way we treat them.

“Colds and influenza (flu) are different conditions. Colds are short-lived viral infections of the upper airway, while flu is a viral illness that occurs predominantly in the winter months in South Africa,” says Deepa Maharaj, Self-Medication Association of

South Africa's technical committee chairperson and a qualified pharmacist.

“50% of colds are caused by one of more than 100 rhinoviruses, while influenza is caused by one of the strains of two types of influenza (A or B). With influenza, you need to take greater care in order to prevent complications such as irreversible damage to your heart muscle.”

She continues: “One must remember that the ‘flu’ is a viral infection; it will not respond to any antibiotic. Antibiotics are effective only in treating the secondary bacterial infections sometimes associated with influenza.”

This is important, as misuse of antibiotics is one of the biggest factors in the rise of antibiotic-resistant “superbugs”.

DO YOU HAVE A COLD OR FLU?

Your symptoms will determine whether you have a cold or the flu. Dr Alain Sanua, a GP and holistic health practitioner in Dunkeld West, outlines the common symptoms associated with each:

COLD: Congestion in the sinuses causing headache, postnasal drip and cough. This can become a bacterial infection if left untreated.

FLU: Fever, muscle or body aches and fatigue. It is picked up due to weakened immunity, most commonly as a result of stress, fatigue, exhaustion and overworking.

HOW TO BOOST YOUR IMMUNITY

What you eat plays a major role in the strength and efficacy of your immune system. Therefore, your eating plan is your front-line defence against colds and flu. Nutrition expert Melissa Kelly summarises the key components in a diet that promote immunity:

- **Selenium** – A deficiency in selenium is associated with impaired antibody function. You can find it in Brazil nuts, sunflower seeds and eggs.
- **Vitamin A** – A deficiency in vitamin A is associated with reduced antibody function and lymphatic response. You can find it in sweet potatoes, carrots, spinach and kale.
- **Vitamin C** – A deficiency in vitamin C is associated with impaired antibody function, while the presence of vitamin C is associated with the provision of antioxidant activity which supports healing at inflammatory sites. You can find it in pawpaw, brussels sprouts and strawberries.
- **Vitamin E** – A deficiency in vitamin E is associated with impaired antibody production. You can find it in sunflower seeds, spinach, asparagus and Swiss chard.
- **Beta carotene** – Beta carotene increases the production of immune-signalling molecules. You can find it in orange vegetables such as butternut, pumpkin and carrots.
- **Zinc** – A deficiency in zinc is associated with decreased resistance to infections. You can find it in oysters, lean beef, lean chicken, beans and dairy.

FORTIFYING YOUR GUT MICROBE

It may seem surprising, but a healthy microbiome in the human gut has a direct role in optimum immune system function. This is because the gut contains the largest number of immune cells in the body and, as a result, constitutes approximately 60% of the entire immune system.

Kelly elaborates: “The immune system is modulated by your gut. In other words, it gets turned on and off by your gut. Therefore, healthy gut bacteria is the best prevention against colds and flu.”

She continues: “You can ensure that you have healthy gut bacteria by eating resistant starch, more fresh food and less processed food. Resistant starch is a fibre component that is not found in all fruit and vegetables. It can be seen as a prebiotic.

“The best sources of resistant starch are legumes, beans, cooled potato, cooled rice and green bananas. Many people cut these out for weight-loss purposes, but shouldn't, as they are necessary for a strong immunity and healthy weight loss.

“You should also take a probiotic throughout the year in order to encourage a healthy gut microbe. Your immune system is important not only once a year; it is important every day of the year in order for you to be healthy and have energy.”

Kelly adds: “Omega 3 is also important to gut health, and you require a lot of it. The omega 3 / omega 6 ratio also modulates your immune system. We tend to have too high an omega 6 level and ought to counteract this with omega 3.”

Omega 3 is found in fatty fish such as salmon, pilchards, mackerel and sardines.

“Homemade juice can be a very good way to get nutrients in,” Kelly concludes.

SUGAR AS AN IMMUNE-SUPPRESSANT

There is evidence to suggest that sugar acts as an immune-suppressant. The often-cited 1973 neutrophilic phagocytosis study out of Loma Linda University is a key example.

Neutrophils are small white blood cells. They're also the most abundant white blood cell, or leukocyte, in the body. Neutrophilic phagocytosis is the process by which offensive microbes are dispatched by neutrophils.

The Loma Linda study observed the effect of sugar ingestion on neutrophilic activity. After an overnight fast, subjects were administered oral 100g portions of either glucose, fructose, sucrose, honey or orange juice. Blood was drawn before and after administration of the sugar, then mixed with a shot of staphylococcus epidermidis (a fairly common bacterial strain) to determine the neutrophilic phagocytosis response.

After ingestion of sugar, the neutrophilic response was significantly decreased, while fasting significantly increased the response. This tells us that sugar decreases our immune system's ability to respond to foreign microbes.

One of the major problems with eating sugar is that it creates inflammation in the body, which compromises the immune system. As a result, eating sugar has often been linked to sore throats, for example.

This is because sugar is a highly acidic food. Eating a diet which is too acidic is also known to compromise your gut health.

MELISSA KELLY'S *easy* IMMUNE-BOOSTING RECIPES

ORANGE, MANGO & GINGER JUICE

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 orange, peeled
- 100g frozen mango
- ½ cup carrots
- ¼ inch fresh ginger
- 1 cup coconut water
- Ice cubes

METHOD:

Extract for 30 seconds, or until smooth.



SPINACH, BERRY & BEETROOT JUICE

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cup spinach
- 200g frozen blackberries
- 50g beetroot
- Fresh mint
- 1 tsp honey
- 1 Tbsp chia seeds
- 1 ½ cup unsweetened almond milk
- Ice cubes

METHOD:

Extract for 30 seconds, or until smooth.



HONEY & SOY SALMON

INGREDIENTS:

- Salmon fillet (150g)
- 1 onion, roughly chopped
- 1 Tbsp fresh coriander leaves, chopped
- 2 tsp olive oil
- 1 tsp grated ginger
- 2 Tbsp soy sauce
- 1 Tbsp fresh lime juice
- 2 Tbsp honey
- Salt and ground pepper

METHOD:

Mix the oil, ginger, coriander and onion together. Season with salt and pepper. With a sharp knife, make a few equal slits into the skin of the salmon fillet. This allows you to use the herb marinade and cook the salmon evenly. Gently stuff the slits with the herb mixture, and season with salt and pepper. Stir the lime juice, soy and honey into a mixture, until smooth. Place the salmon skin side up on the grill; cook until well-marked (about 3-4 minutes). Turn the salmon and continue to grill while brushing the top with sauce, until the fish is cooked through (about another 3-4 minutes). Enjoy with salad and baby potatoes.

