

# Strengthening Your Immune System

When faced with risk of illness, whether in routine cold and flu season, or with the circulation of a novel virus, a question is often asked about “boosting” immune systems. While the idea of quickly boosting your immune system seems promising, it is important to remember that an immune system is in fact a *system* and not an individual part of your body. Science tells us that, while boosting an immune system is somewhat of a myth, there are proven lifestyle steps that can be practiced regularly to strengthen your immune system. The following measures are recommended by Harvard University and Healthline to strengthen your immune system:



Don't Smoke.



Eat a diet high in plant based foods such as fruits and veggies.



Avoid highly processed foods and certain fats. Include healthy fats in your diet.



Eat fermented food or take a probiotic.



Avoid added sugars.



Get adequate sleep.



Exercise regularly, at least 150 minutes a week.



Drink very little alcohol.



Stay Hydrated.



Maintain a healthy weight.



Maintain a healthy blood pressure.



Get regular medical screenings, including dental. Follow your doctor's medical direction and plan of care if you have medical conditions.



Keep your immunizations up to date



Practice good hygiene.



Practice stress reduction and self-care and maintain positivity.

## IMMUNE SYSTEM MYTHS

Myth #1: Getting more than the recommended amount of vitamins will improve your immune system.

Fact #1: There is no evidence that taking excess supplements improves immune function, in fact, excessive amounts of some supplements may be harmful. Staying with recommended allowances is important unless otherwise advised by your physician.

Myth #2: The more active your immune system is the healthier you will be.

Fact #2: While it is true that our immune systems build antibodies with exposures to germs, it is also true that there can be too much of a good thing. Over reactive immune responses can be responsible for allergic reactions and certain autoimmune diseases. While there are multiple reasons an immune system malfunctions, we should not make an effort to overload it in order to boost it.

Myth # 3: Gargling with salt water will kill viruses or bacteria to prevent illness.

Fact #3: While warm salt water can be soothing to a sore throat, it does not effectively prevent sickness from occurring.