



## **Ways to Reduce Inflammation and Boost Immune Function Without Flu Shots**

As fall turns into winter, the message is almost impossible to avoid. Television ads, radio spots and signs at local pharmacies echo the same refrain: get your flu shot. Yet in the United States alone, less than half the population follows this advice.

Top reasons for avoiding the annual vaccination include doubts about its effectiveness and concerns over what the shot contains. Fortunately for those who want to boost their immune systems and minimize their risk of infection during cold and flu season, many alternatives exist.

The first step is understanding the connection between immune function and inflammation. Short-term inflammation, such as swollen skin around a twisted ankle or redness around a skin infection is a normal and healthy response to a perceived threat. Problems arise through chronic inflammation, which depresses our immune system and makes us more vulnerable to contagious diseases like colds and the flu. Reducing inflammation is therefore a critical factor in minimizing that risk.

Essential steps for reducing inflammation:

### **Take Your Vitamins**

Several vitamins contribute substantially to immune health. Vitamin D activates the white blood cells that play a key role in immune response. Our bodies naturally create Vitamin D out of cholesterol when we're exposed to sunlight, but during the winter months, those levels drop. Vitamin E is a potent anti-oxidant that modulates immune function and enhances the cells that kill pathogens such as viruses. Zinc is another powerful vitamin for preventing virus replication, while calcium plays a vital role in supporting T Cells that are the first line of defense against illness and infection.

### **Say Goodbye to Sugar and Processed Foods**

By now most people are aware of the harmful effects of trans fats and high fructose corn syrup, but some dangers are less obvious. Foods that promote inflammation include white rice and bread that contains sugar and refined carbohydrates, some forms of vegetable oils, processed meat and fried foods.



## **Supercharge Your Diet**

Adding foods like broccoli, garlic, fatty fish (salmon, herring and sardines), spinach, turmeric, green tea, ginger, ginseng and mushrooms containing beta-glucans will help to boost immune function, along with plenty of greens. The more color in your diet, the better as long as it's naturally occurring (think beets, squash and kale, not Cheetos!).

## **Change Your Mind to Reduce Stress**

2020 has been a stressful year all around, and much of it has been related to factors that we can't control, such as COVID-19 and the economic shut down. But while we can't make much impact on global events, we can govern how we respond to them, and doing so is very much in our best interest. Studies have shown that prolonged stress contributes to inflammation by flooding our bloodstreams with the primary stress hormone cortisol, decreasing our sensitivity to it and depressing immune function over time.

Practicing mindfulness, being aware of our thoughts and focusing on gratitude can help to mitigate those impacts. If we find ourselves dwelling on the negative, finding a way to reframe our experience can support immune health. As an example, instead of thinking about all of the things you can't do because of the pandemic, celebrate what you can do and focus on alternative ways to get the result you want. Adding magnesium to your diet can also regulate cortisol, improve sleep and improve cognitive health.

## **Speaking of Sleep . . . Take Naps!**

During sleep, our body creates cytokines, a type of protein that targets infection and inflammation. When we don't get enough sleep, our ability to respond to threats such as colds, the flu or other viruses becomes compromised. If you aren't able to get seven to eight hours of sleep per night, try taking naps during the day. Even 20-minute naps have been shown to decrease stress and offset the negative impacts of sleep deprivation on the immune system.

## **Safely (and Gently) Remove Toxins with Soluble Zeolite**

We're all exposed to environmental toxins regularly and over time, they accumulate in the body and begin to interfere in everything from hormone balance to immune function. Some detoxification programs place more stress on our bodily systems by stirring up toxins without



providing any way for them to exit because many heavy metals are too small to be eliminated through urine or stool. They then re-enter our systems because they have nowhere else to go.

Soluble zeolite, in the form of Vitality Detox Drops, binds many different particles together, making those substances large enough to pass through, thereby safely and gently removing heavy metals and other toxins and boosting overall health.

If you have decided that the flu shot is not for you but want to take care of yourself this winter, these steps are a good starting point. Your immune system will thank you.