

Module 4, Lesson 4 Tool:

Foods that Support the Immune System

Food can be one of your best tools to help keep your immune system strong by regulating immune cells and supporting immune function. Yes, once again, food empowers our bodies. Here's a list of foods you can incorporate into your diet to support a healthier, stronger immune system.

Fruits

- Berries
- Citrus fruits (oranges, lemons, grapefruit, clementines)
- Kiwi
- Papaya

Antioxidants such as vitamin C found in these fruits fight against free radicals to reduce oxidative stress and improve immune function. Berries contain flavonoids known as anthocyanins (the pigments that give them their red and blue color) which regulate immune response and have antioxidative properties.

Vegetables

- Broccoli
- Carrots
- Leafy greens
- Mushrooms
- Onions
- Red peppers

Antioxidants such as vitamin E found in broccoli and spinach, and beta carotene from carrots and leafy greens, also fight against free radicals to improve immune function. Red peppers are good sources of the antioxidants vitamin A, vitamin C and beta carotene which support the immune system. Onions are a great source of the flavonoid quercetin, an antioxidant with anti-inflammatory and antiviral properties. Mushrooms provide many nutrients, most notably beta glucans which activate leukocytes (white blood cells that help fight infection) and keep the immune system strong.

Protein

- Chicken

- Legumes
- Shellfish

Shellfish and legumes are good sources of zinc, which plays an important role in immune cell development and signaling, and has been found to reduce the duration of colds. Chicken provides protein which is made up of amino acids. These amino acids regulate cell activation and gene expression, and help build antibodies to help the immune system fight against infections.

Pantry/Miscellaneous

- Almonds
- Garlic
- Green tea
- Honey
- Spices (ginger, turmeric)
- Sunflower seeds
- Whole grains
- Yogurt

Almonds and sunflower seeds are also high in vitamin E, which acts as an antioxidant. Green tea, garlic and spices such as ginger and turmeric have anti-inflammatory properties that help enhance immune system function and protect against infections and disease. Probiotics found in yogurt have also been found to protect immune system function and inhibit growth of harmful bacteria. Whole grains provide zinc and have been shown to reduce inflammatory markers. Oats in particular, like mushrooms, have beta glucans which help fight infection and support immune system function.