


Ask Leyla: Is there such a thing as an anti-herpes diet?

Q: I suffer from cold sores, and was recently told that what I eat can affect outbreaks – specifically, that nuts could be problematic. Is this true?

I eat nuts daily, but should I be avoiding them to prevent herpes outbreaks?

A: The herpes virus can reactivate in times of stress, a weakened immune system, or with sun and even wind exposure. If you are prone to herpes outbreaks, such as cold sores or fever blisters on the lips or face, or genital herpes, you would likely benefit from avoiding foods high in the amino acid *arginine*. Arginine is required for the herpes virus to replicate. 

Reducing intake of these foods is also helpful for preventing shingles outbreaks, another herpes virus (herpes zoster – a reactivation of the varicella virus years after initial infection with chickenpox).

Arginine is found in many foods, but some of the highest arginine-containing foods are:

- Nuts
- Corn
- Brussels sprouts
- Chocolate
- Gelatin

The amino acid **lysine** can help reduce the frequency of outbreaks and help heal an active infection. Taking daily lysine is also beneficial if you want to continue eating the high-arginine foods listed above. It's the ratio of lysine to arginine that's important—more lysine helps boost the body's defenses against infection by antagonizing arginine. A typical dose for prevention is 500 mg up to three times daily away from food. For active infection, at least 1,000 mg of lysine three times daily is appropriate.

Because sugar weakens immune response, it is best to avoid sweetened foods and beverages such as cakes, cookies, juice drinks and sodas, as well as other refined carbohydrates such as white bread, pastas, potatoes and white rice, which rapidly turn to sugar.

You can read more about natural remedies for herpes simplex [here](#).

To your health!

As you may know, I've been doing a weekly "Q&A with Leyla" podcast feature with Dr. Hoffman. Now you can get my perspective and expertise every Friday on my own episode of the *Intelligent Medicine* Podcast. If you missed last week's, you can [listen here](#). To be sure you don't miss out on any of my important insights and information, **subscribe today!**