

# Meal planning to support a healthy immune system

written by Allison Fingleton | December 8, 2021



*As cold and flu season looms, try these natural solutions from our partners at Nutritional Therapeutics to bolster your resistance. For the month of December, you can get 20% off their entire line of supplements with code HOLIDAY20.*

*—Dr. Ronald Hoffman*

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With cold and flu season well underway, many of us are focusing on what we can do to keep our immune system at its best. One of the easiest ways you can be proactive about supporting your body's immune process is to pack your plate with immune-supporting ingredients that contain plenty of healthy vitamins and minerals.

When it comes to foods that help you get or stay healthy, most people's first thoughts turn to the old standards: orange juice and chicken soup. But your options don't end there! You can work immune-supportive foods into each meal of the day with just a little bit of planning.

For breakfast, skip the aforementioned orange juice (it delivers a wallop of sugar), and opt for a fresh smoothie instead. Fruits like papaya and kiwi are packed full of nutrients including vitamin C (double your daily dose in a single papaya), folate, and potassium. Papaya provides the added bonus of the digestive enzyme papain, which has anti-inflammatory effects on the body. But don't overdo it on the fruit—balance their naturally occurring sugar by adding some spinach greens to the blender. Spinach packs a serious punch of vitamin C, along with vitamins A and K, folic acid, and iron. Mix in a scoop of NTFactor® Lipids Powder to help maintain healthy cellular function and provide a powerful energy boost.

Pair your smoothie with a bowl of plain Greek yogurt to take advantage of the probiotic cultures that give it its signature tanginess, and reap the many benefits of vitamin D. This crucial vitamin helps reduce the body's production of pro-inflammatory compounds, making you better equipped to fight off respiratory illness so common this time of year.

For lunchtime, turn to veggies. Did you know that red bell peppers contain almost three times as much immune-boosting vitamin C as the lauded oranges? You can even find vitamin C in veggies like broccoli and spinach, making a simple lunchtime salad a great way to pack more of this crucial nutrient into your diet. Top with avocado and garnish with some slivered almonds or sunflower seeds for a dose of powerful antioxidant vitamin E, another important nutrient for maintaining immune function and reducing oxidative stress.

Sunflower seeds are also high in selenium—providing almost half of your daily needs in a single ounce. Studies have linked adequate selenium levels to a supportive effect on the body's ability to fight viruses.

For a mid-afternoon boost, consider taking a break to enjoy a hot beverage. Soothing green tea will provide potent antioxidants, particularly epigallocatechin gallate (EGCG), which has been shown to aid immune function. If you want something with a bit more bite, opt for a spicy turmeric latte—all the rage these days. Turmeric is high in curcumin, which is well established as an anti-inflammatory compound and has shown promise as an immune-supportive compound as well.

For dinner, harken back to that age-old chicken soup recommendation. It turns out, there's more to it than an old wives' tale. The meat itself contains vitamin B6, which facilitates the body's ability to form healthy red blood cells, while chicken stock contains amino acids, collagen, and other nutrients that protect the health of your gut (home of 70% of your immune system). Boost the immune fighting power of soup by adding veggies high in beta carotene (such as sweet potatoes and carrots), or swapping the traditional noodles for beans or lentils, which are high in zinc (shown to support white blood cells). You could also consider adding mushrooms, many of which have health benefits.

Incorporating all these healthy foods into your daily routine is a great way to give your immune system the solid foundation it needs to help you stay hale and healthy this cold and flu season. And don't forget to include NTFactor® to give your body the energy boost it deserves!