

Client: Patrick Holford
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Boost your immune system

Don't want to get ill this winter?
Then follow our guide and make
your immune system stronger

Winter's is well and truly upon us. And that means colds and flu are, too. But there is a way you can help your body to fight off illnesses - boost your immune system.

"In the winter, you get less vitamin D as there's less light and that's a potent booster of the immune system," says Patrick Holford, a leading nutritionist and co-author of the book, *Boost Your Immune System*.

"Also you tend to eat less fruit and veg in the winter, which means you are getting less vitamin C, which also boosts your immunity," he explains.

"On top of that, too much stress, not getting enough sleep or exercise and caffeine all deplete the immune system."

Read on to find how a few simple changes can help make your natural defences stronger.

What is an immune system?

It's a network of cells, tissues and organs that join forces to protect the

body from "foreign" invaders, such as germs, bacteria and viruses. Sometimes your immune system has a false alarm and attack something harmless like dust. This is what causes allergies.

What makes it weaker?

Poor diet and stress make you more prone to disease. Then there are toxins in the air we breathe and the food we eat, a lack of exercise and too little sleep. Signs that your immune system is weakened include allergies, thrush, colds and flu, tiredness, infections and slow wound healing. Take this simple test: if you suffer from more than two colds a year, you need to boost your immunity - fast!

How can you strengthen it?

You need to give your immune system ongoing support if you want it to be in tip-top condition. Thankfully, there's a wide range of ways you can do this...

Poor nutrition is the most common cause of a weakened immune system, so it's vital you eat a healthy, balanced diet. "Your immune strength is totally dependent on an optimal intake of vitamins and minerals and other immune-boosting nutrients," says Patrick. "Don't smoke and minimise alcohol, tea, coffee and sugar."

■ Bananas, tuna, carrots and sunflower seeds. They're rich in vitamin B6, which boosts the production of antibodies that fight infection.

■ Chinese cabbage for vitamin A, kiwis, lemons, oranges, broccoli and peas for vitamin C and avocados for vitamin E, which are all proven to support your immune system.

■ Turkey, eggs and pumpkin seeds as they're rich in zinc. Deficiency of zinc causes your thymus to shrink. It is needed to produce enzymes that get rid of routinely produced

cancer cells (not the large amounts once cancer is established).

■ Garlic, which has been linked to lowering stress and has antiseptic, antibiotic and antiviral qualities.

■ Manuka honey has been shown to have natural immune-supporting properties. Try Comvita UMF Manuka Honey (www.comvita.co.uk),

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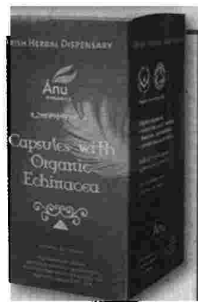
priced from £15.95.

■ **Orange and red foods**, such as red peppers, carrots and sweet potatoes, as these are high in beta-carotenes, which have been linked to cancer prevention.

■ **Blue and black foods**, such as berries, as they're high in anthocyanidins that stop viruses getting into cells.

Take herbs

Echinacea: This herbal remedy is prescribed by doctors in Germany to help fight colds and flu. It contains inulin, which helps make more immune cells. Take as directed for no more than three to four weeks. Patrick advises taking it three times a day when you already have an infection. Try Anu Organics Capsules With Organic Echinacea (£14.30, www.anuorganics.co.uk).



Goldenseal: This is thought to work by increasing blood supply to the spleen, which produces fighting cells. It's also been proven to be effective against parasites, mouth ulcers, coughs and colds. Try Holland & Barrett Goldenseal Root (from £8.49, www.hollandandbarrett.com).

Astragalus: Studies show this herb has potent anti-viral properties. It has been found to boost the production of infection-fighting white blood cells and help the making of T-cells, which protect against disease. Try Nature's Plus Astragalus (£20.29, www.revital.co.uk).

Take a good multivitamin

"Since no nutrients work in isolation, take a good-strength multivitamin and mineral supplement," says Patrick. Try Solgar's Formula VM-75 (£10.85, www.solgar.co.uk). He also



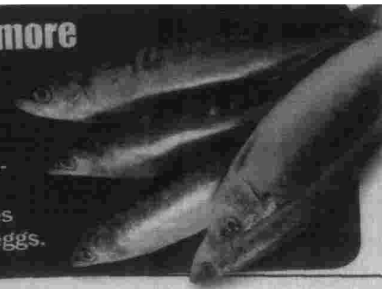
recommends taking an immune-boosting formula that contains vitamin C, zinc, berry extracts and ginger, such as BioCare ImmuneC (from £8.95, www.biocare.co.uk).

Sleep!

If you don't get enough sleep, you can reduce the effectiveness of your immune system by 50 per cent. Aim to get around eight hours of shuteye every night.

Get outside more

Light on our skin stimulates the production of vitamin D, an essential immune-boosting vitamin. Good food sources include fish and eggs.

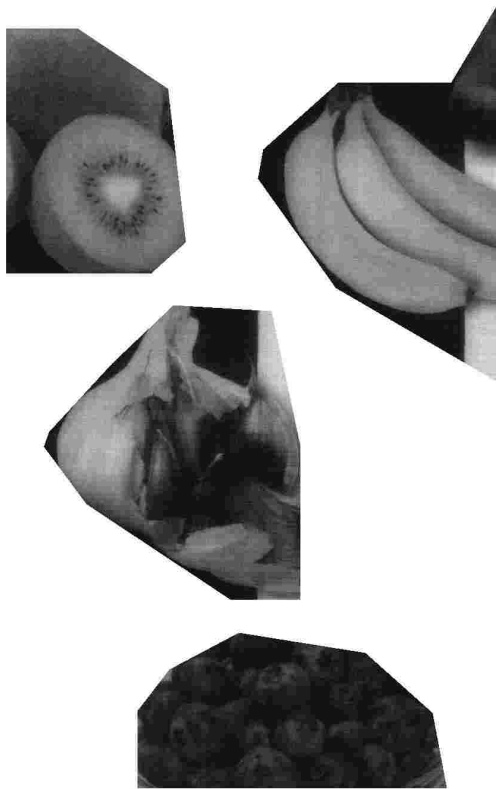


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Drink lots of water

A minimum of eight glasses a day is what celebs such as Jessica Simpson aim for. This detoxes you, makes you go to the toilet more and supports your lymphatic system as it drains the waste fluids from your cells.



Exercise

Taking regular exercise, like Katie Holmes does is essential for boosting immunity. Your immune system works more efficiently when your internal muscles are working properly.

