

Strengthening the Immune System Naturally

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Historically conventional medicine has not been a wellness based approach to healthcare. In fact, most sicknesses and diseases are treated by addressing the symptoms. As I have mentioned before, the answer to America's health crisis is simple; we need less sick people. In order to accomplish this, we need to incorporate health habits into our daily lives to help strengthen our immune systems.

In our convenience oriented society, too many people are looking for the quick fix to staying healthy. Realistically a person cannot focus on one thing to have balanced health. The good news is it can be accomplished by incorporating 5 specific things into daily life.

1. Proper Nutrition:

Nothing can help an individual more than a healthy diet and proper exercise. Our bodies depend on proper fuel. If we put junk in, how do we expect to function efficiently? While most people understand this concept, very few do anything about it. How many people do you know that eat 7-9 servings of fruits and vegetables a day? How many people do you know that drink coffee and/or soda everyday? Fast food?

While there are many vitamins and herbs such as Vitamin C, Zinc, garlic, that can help strengthen the immune system; the best place to start is by eliminating soda and fast food completely and start eating more fruits and vegetables. A person should be eating approximately 7 servings of fruits and vegetables every day. With all the nutritional counseling that I have done, this is my biggest area of concern. A close second is that people do not drink enough water and consume too much coffee and alcohol on a daily basis.

I suggest that people start reading labels. Food is medicinal. Whatever you put in the body has a reaction. Look at reading food labels like you would read drug labels. Certain ingredients will cause lethargy, depression, premature aging, etc. When reading a label the first 5 ingredients should not be:

1. **Hydrogenated and partially hydrogenated oils and fats** (hardens arteries)
2. **Trans fats** (hardens arteries)
3. **Sugar (refined is the worst)** (read the Harmful Effects of Sugar))
4. **High fructose corn syrup (HFCS)** (aging arteries and weakening immune system)
5. **Enriched flour (white flour)** (take all good stuff out, put a little back)

For more on reading labels and proper nutrition visit the obtaining wellness section of www.doctorfortotalhealth.com as well as the health article and forum section.

2. Exercise:

Physical exercise is one of the biggest, if not the biggest, factor in attaining total health and wellness. Exercise is more than just building muscles and keeping your heart healthy. Regular exercise keeps your body working properly, stimulates the brain and builds your immune system. Yes, exercise helps strengthen your immune system!

The biggest tip for physical fitness success, is to find something you enjoy. Exercise does not have to be miserable. While it is true that there will be times you do not enjoy yourself, it shouldn't make you sick to your stomach every time you have to go work out.

The most common reason people do not exercise is that they don't know where to start. They also tend to not continue to exercise once they have started is that they have no one to hold them accountable. For tips on how to start and stay on a program read the exercise and goal setting articles in the obtaining wellness section of website.

3. Proper Sleep:

Most experts recommend that adults need a minimum of seven to nine hours of sleep a night. Many adults get significantly less than this.

As important as getting enough sleep is, the quality of sleep is also critical. In a poll taken by the National Sleep Foundation, three-quarters of adults said they frequently suffer from sleep problems. (i.e. waking up during the night, snoring, pauses in breathing, etc.). Unfortunately, most people ignore their problem and few believe they even have one; only half of those polled said they slept well on most nights.

Without a doubt, sleeping well is absolutely essential if you are ever to achieve optimal health and wellness. If you have difficulty sleeping try the following:

- Get regular exercise daily; however, don't exercise too close to bedtime or it may keep you awake.
- Listen to white noise or relaxation CDs. Some people find the sound of white noise or nature sounds, such as the ocean or forest, to be soothing for sleep.
- Avoid bedtime snacks, particularly grains and sugars, which will raise your blood sugar and inhibit your sleep.
- Read inspirational/spiritual literature to help you to relax.
- Turn off the TV or, better yet, remove the TV from your bedroom if it is in there.
- Sleep in complete darkness or as close to it as possible. If there is even the tiniest bit of light in the room it can disrupt your circadian rhythm and your pineal gland's production of melatonin and serotonin. It is also very important to keep the light off when you go to the bathroom at night. As soon as you turn on that light you will (for that night) immediately cease all production of the important sleep aid melatonin.

4. Stress reduction:

The harmful effects of stress are countless, but one of the greatest is that stress weakens the immune system. One of the most common problems I hear from patients is that they feel constantly fatigued, anxious or depressed. They often have trouble sleeping, even though they are exhausted. This is mostly do to constant stress in their lives and causing the adrenal glands to “burnout.”

In today’s society, people are always on the go. People are racing though life in a “fight or flight” sympathetic nervous system mode. In this heightened nervous state, the body overproduces adrenaline, cortisol and other stress hormones. Eventually, this causes the adrenal glands, the front line in the stress reaction, to show wear and tear and become depleted. This frequently leads to an impairment in the thyroid gland, which can cause a further decline in energy level and mood and is one of the reasons why so many women have thyroid glands that don't work well.

There are many ways to help manage this stress in our lives. The top three ways have already been mentioned, which are better nutrition, regular exercise and proper sleep. In addition, take time to do something you enjoy, such as reading a book, sewing, scrapbooking, hiking, etc. Whatever healthy activity you like doing, take time to do it!

5. Chiropractic

Most people associate chiropractic with neck and back pain, but chiropractic helps the entire body function properly. There are multiple studies showing the benefits of chiropractic to the immune system. There is no differentiating the immune system and the nervous system. They go hand-in-hand.

Experience has demonstrated to me that staying properly aligned and allowing the nervous system to function properly keeps people healthier.