



Eating for Immunity in a Stress Filled World

Do you know that the average adult gets 2.5 colds a year? The expenses associated with a cold don't make headline news but they add up, costing the economy \$40 billion per year. It starts with missed days of work impacting business production and lost employee wages, estimated at \$20 billion. Second there are 100 million unnecessary physician's visits a year when staying at home, drinking plenty of water and resting would have helped reduce the symptoms. Over-the-counter drugs cost \$2.9 million while prescription drugs are estimated at \$400 million with antibiotics coming in at 1.1 billion.

As you can see, the impact of the simple cold virus has an enormous financial impact. What if there was a way to reduce the odds of contracting a cold besides the tried and true tips of not touching your eyes and nose, washing you hands frequently and getting enough Vitamin C? Indeed these are still great recommendations, but have you tried eating for your immune system?

Your immune system is a network designed to prevent invasion by harmful substances, including bacteria, viruses, and harmful chemicals, and to act as a surveillance system against the development of cancer. It is when the immune system breaks down that the onslaught of outside invaders, including the common cold, takes over the body.

One contributing factor that causes our immune system to break down is stress. Stress alters the five basic components of nutrition. It affects what nutrients we get from our foods, how it is digested, what is absorbed, how our food is metabolized and even the process of getting rid of it.

What if you could eat yourself to improved immunity? You CAN! Proper nutrition is so important that when certain foods are added and others removed that the immune system is strengthened and essential vitamins and minerals are replaced.

As long ago as the 5th century B.C., Greek physicians noted that people who had recovered from the plague would never get it again-they had acquired immunity.

Eating for immunity is not a license to eat whatever you want but making healthy choices about what you eat.

There are 13 steps that you can follow for improved immunity:

1. Eat a variety of colored foods.
2. Eat foods high in antioxidants
3. Choose organic foods
4. Drink filtered water
5. Reduce caffeine consumption
6. Avoid genetically altered foods
7. Include fresh herbs and spices
8. Consume free range meats
9. Consume 30 grams of fiber per day
10. Add Omega 3 fats
11. Be mindful of your food preparation
12. Follow natural eating patterns
13. Apply only natural oils to your skin

While all this information can be overwhelming, it is important to start somewhere, anywhere, just start. I had this conversation with a client about getting started:

Me: So, should I talk to you about nutrition, or would you rather not hear about it today?

Client: You can talk to me about it, but I doubt it will make a difference.

Me: Yeah, I know it's hard to eat differently than what you are used to. How would you feel about one small change by making your snack healthy? It doesn't have to be gourmet food, but something as simple as an apple with some peanut butter. Really it can be anything you want; just healthy, and make sure it's whatever you want. There doesn't have to be a plan of when and what; just better. If you start out with a snack then you will be ready to add in healthy meals in a few weeks, fitting them into your life. Make sure it's a snack because we both know how it goes when you try to change everything at once.

Client: Yeah, changing everything means excuses for every meal. You're right. I sure can't find an excuse to not fit a healthy snack into my day.

Note from client: Today I had some almonds for an afternoon snack. Day one is done! :o)

Peggy Green is president and owner of Whole Body Fitness. She is a **Licensed Wellness Coach** from Wellcoaches Corporation and a **Certified Health and Fitness Instructor** from the American College of Sports Medicine. Her passion is to transform women's lives by helping them improve their health and wellness.

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