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## WAYS TO BOOST YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM

Want to ward off the flu this winter? All the wellness-boosting superfoods you need are in the fresh food aisle.



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ad diets come and go but one fact never changes: loading up on fresh in-season fruit and veg is a simple way to maintain good health. Eating with the seasons provides dietary variety, which helps your body obtain all the nutrients it needs to help fight off the sniffles.

"We change our clothing to move with the seasons, so it makes sense to change our diets too," says Lee Holmes, author of the Supercharged Food cookbook series ([superchargedfood.com](http://superchargedfood.com)). "Strive to buy food that is in season. Not only does it taste better, because it's had the chance to ripen and

develop naturally, but often it's also far cheaper." And you'll be helping the environment too – in-season produce is often sourced locally, which means lower greenhouse gas emissions.

Here's some smart shopping tips on increasing your intake of important nutrients that help support your immune system.

1

**FILL UP ON FIBRE** Fibrous foods, such as broccoli, peas, green beans and spinach, do more than just keep you regular – they're like superheroes for your gut. A team at Sydney's Garvan Institute found that once fibre reaches your large intestines, the bacteria that live in your gut use it in a process that helps lower inflammation.

2

### BOOST YOUR VITAMIN C

Fruit and veg high in vitamins C and A help promote a healthy immune system. While everyone knows that oranges are a tasty source of vitamin C, dietitians recommend consuming a wide variety of fruit and vegetables in a range of colours.

"Oranges are a poor cousin to many other foods that are high in vitamin C, such as sauerkraut, camu camu and berries," says Cyndi O'Meara, nutritionist and founder of Changing Habits ([changinghabits.com.au](http://changinghabits.com.au)).

Kiwifruit has twice as much vitamin C as orange (per cup equivalent) and pomegranate, spinach and beetroot are also excellent sources (whiz them up in a smoothie for the ultimate C boost!). ▶

3

**PACK IN MORE****PREBIOTICS**

You've heard of probiotics (the live bacteria cultures in yoghurt and kefir) but prebiotics are just as vital for the immune system.

"Probiotics are the bugs and prebiotics are the food that the bug lives on," says Cyndi O'Meara.

Prebiotics help stimulate the growth of good bacteria to help maintain a healthy digestive system. Green vegies, garlic, legumes and wholegrains are an excellent source of prebiotics.

5

**EAT MORE PROTEIN**

Protein helps build and repair the body, so if your intake is inadequate, your immune system may be compromised.

"Protein is essential," says Cyndi, "without it, immunity may drop."

How do you increase your protein intake? Eat lots of fresh fruit and vegetables, legumes, wholegrains, nuts and seeds.

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**ORANGE WONDER**

Oranges, sweet potato and pumpkin should all be high on your shopping list of immune-boosting items.

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6

**DRINK**

Alcohol makes your liver work overtime and destroys the cells that line the gut – and you need these to absorb immune-boosting nutrients such as vitamin C and zinc. But it's not all bad news.

"Small amounts of the right kind may actually enhance absorption," Cyndi says. "A dry, preservative-free red wine before and throughout dinner may help you digest meat, chicken and fish proteins. It has the same effect as apple cider vinegar and rocket salad!"

# breakfast with bite

You have a choice of three toppings with Woolworths Gold's new range of yoghurts.

Gold Greek Yoghurt & Raspberry with Belgian Chocolate & Hazelnut Muesli



Gold Greek Yoghurt with Coconut Macadamia Muesli



Gold Greek Yoghurt with Orange Macadamia Muesli



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*A single breakfast solution, without buying your yoghurt and muesli separately, is so convenient.*



**7** **MAKE A SUPER SMOOTHIE** A super green smoothie may be the secret to helping support your immune system. It's simple – combine lettuce, celery, spinach, cucumber and pear with a squeeze of lemon juice in your blender or food processor.

**8** **GET ENOUGH ZINC** Zinc is an important nutrient for our immune system but it is not stored by the body, so a daily intake is needed to maintain adequate levels. Boost your intake of lean red meat, dairy foods and seafood. And if you're worried you are not getting enough zinc, check with your doctor or dietitian, as a zinc deficiency can be hard to diagnose.

**9** **SPICE ROUTE** Spices are an ancient immunity remedy. Which ones are best? Rosemary and turmeric are excellent anti-inflammatories (add rosemary to a meat dish and a good spoonful of turmeric to any curry you make). If you're suffering from a cold, combining cinnamon with honey can help, as they're both natural antibacterials that can help fight bugs in your system.

**10** **FAT CHANCE** Your body can't effectively absorb some vitamins and minerals from a meal if there's no good fat to go with it. "When you add avocado to a salad, the amount of nutrients that are utilised and absorbed by the body increases," Cyndi explains. "Protein and fat is essential for life. Fat is delivered by many natural foods, including avocado, nuts, seeds, meat, fish, good-quality dairy and olives." ■