



How to Build a Strong Immune System with Herbs

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The immune system is your body's defense against infection and disease. It is a complex system that protects against foreign substances and pathogenic microorganisms, including bacteria, viruses, and fungi. Because it shields the body from disease, it is important to maintain the strength of your immune system. Although there is limited scientific evidence to support it, many claim that herbal supplements can help boost your immune system and support your body's efforts to fight off illness. In addition to choosing healthy lifestyle habits, herbal supplements may aid in keeping your immune system strong.

Method
1

Finding Herbal Supplements in Your Kitchen Pantry

1 Cook with lots of garlic. Humans have used garlic for medicinal purposes for thousands of years. Experts believe that the same compounds that give garlic its signature taste and aroma also have antimicrobial properties.^[1] In order to receive the full benefits of garlic, chop up the herb and add it at the end of cooking to prevent the breakdown of antimicrobial properties.^[2]

- You can also take garlic pills, powders or liquids. The recommended daily dosages are 600 to 900 mg of powder, 4 ml of liquid, and 10 mg of oil capsules.

2 Eat bell peppers. The common bell pepper is an excellent source of certain compounds known to boost the immune system. It contains carotenoid lycopene, which lowers the risk of cancer, as well as beta-carotene, a compound thought to boost immunity.^[3]

- For best results, eat raw bell peppers to prevent the breakdown of immunity boosting compounds.

3 Spice things up with some turmeric. This South Asian spice is considered to be high in antioxidants. It is also believed to be antibacterial and help prevent inflammation.^[4] It may also have anticancer and antioxidant properties.^[5] Turmeric is commonly used in Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi cuisines. You can also buy turmeric supplements.

4 Try eating more mushrooms. In traditional Japanese and Chinese medicine, various mushroom species, including shiitake, maitake, and reishi, have long been considered important for good health. Mushrooms are a good source of polysaccharides, which boost the immune system's ability to recognize and attack infectious diseases. Adding shiitake or maitake mushrooms to a dish is a quick and tasty way to add some immunity boosting properties to your meal.^[6]

- You can find shiitake and maitake mushrooms at your local grocery store. You can also buy mushroom extracts designed to boost immunity. Remember to take the manufacturers' recommended dosages.

5 Add some ginger to your diet. A staple of Asian cuisines, ginger is believed to significantly reduce inflammation and boost heart health. It is also considered an important aid to digestion.^[7] Ginger can be cooked with meals, eaten raw, or taken as an extract.^[8]

- If you are taking ginger extract, remember to follow the manufacturers' guidelines.

6 Sip on some green tea. Developing a habit of drinking green tea daily can be a major boost to your immune system. Green tea contains potent antioxidants and may stimulate your body to create compounds that fight infection. It may also protect against or slow the growth of certain cancers.^[9] In order to boost your immune system, drink three or more cups of green tea a day.^[10]

- You can find green tea at your local grocery store.

Method
2**Using Other Herbal Supplements**

- 1 Consult your doctor.** Before taking any herbal supplements, talk to your doctor in order to avoid any adverse side-effects. Your physician may advise you against taking certain herbal supplements due to known complications. Remember that there is little evidence supporting the supposed benefits of herbal supplements, so consider them with some skepticism. Treat herbal supplements like any other medication and get a professional opinion before taking them.
- 2 Take ginseng.** There are multiple varieties of ginseng that may provide a boost to your immune system.^[11] The most common variety, Korean ginseng, may contain anti-inflammatory and anti-cancer properties, as well as strengthen other immune system functions. American ginseng (*Panax quinquefolius*) is thought to prevent upper-respiratory infections. Ginseng supplements can be found at most grocery stores and pharmacies.^[12]
 - There are multiple products, so be sure to follow the manufacturers' guidelines.
- 3 Try echinacea.** This herbal supplement is believed to stimulate infection-fighting cells and stimulate the body's production of other immune system compounds. There is limited evidence that it may also protect against respiratory infections.^[13] Echinacea is considered an effective aid in preventing and treating colds, flu and other infections. Take echinacea regularly at the first signs of infection.^[14]
 - At the first signs of infection, take 30 to 60 drops of liquid extract or 1 to 2 capsules every two hours for the first 24 to 48 hours. Once the symptoms disappear, take the same dosage four times a day for three days.
- 4 Consider astragalus.** Astragalus root has been a staple of traditional Chinese medicine for centuries. It is believed to boost the production and activity of immune cells.^[15] This can translate into an increase in your white blood cell count. You can take astragalus as a capsule supplement, but it is recommended that you ingest it as a tonic soup.^[16]
 - Simply boil astragalus root or extract in hot water with other herbs and drink it. You can also add it to your soup.
- 5 Look into elderberry extract.** The dark blue-black berry is believed to strengthen the defenses of healthy cells against being taken over by viruses. Although evidence is limited, it may also offer significant protection against viral infections of the upper-respiratory system.^[17] Elderberry extract or syrup can be taken on its own or boiled in a tea.^[18]
 - As a preventative, take ½ teaspoon of liquid extract or 1 teaspoon of syrup twice a day.
 - Double the dosage to hasten the recovery from the cold or flu.
- 6 Think about ginkgo biloba.** This herb is well known for its purported ability to prevent memory loss and improve brain function.^[19] However, there are some who believe the herb has benefits for the immune system as well. The leaves of ginkgo biloba contain high levels of antioxidants that are believed to boost your body's immune system. It is also used as a remedy for inflammation, particularly in the joints. Ginkgo biloba supplements can be found in most grocery stores and pharmacies.^[20]
 - Because of the variety of supplements, follow the manufacturers' guidelines on dosage.

Method
3**Strengthening Your Immune System with Healthy Habits**

- 1 Avoid smoking.** Smoking or ingesting certain tobacco or marijuana products can compromise your immune system and lead to illness. Smoking makes you particularly susceptible to respiratory diseases and infections. If you want to strengthen your immune system, avoid smoking or stop if you are already a smoker.^[21]
 - Avoid tobacco products like cigars and cigarettes.

- E-cigarettes can also be harmful for the lungs and compromise your immune system.

2 Eat a healthy diet. Consuming a diet high in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains has been shown to significantly boost the immune system. Eating lots of fruits and vegetables provides you with the vitamins your body needs to properly fight off infections and disease. ^[22]

- Diets heavy in in sugars and saturated fats tend to compromise the health of your immune system.

3 Exercise regularly. Exercise is a key component to ensuring a strong immune system. It likely increase circulation, which allows substances of the immune system to move more efficiently through the body. Most research has shown that moderate regular exercise is essential to maintaining a healthy immune system. ^[23]

- Experts recommend 75 minutes of intense (i.e. running) or 150 minutes or moderate (i.e. walking) exercise per week.

4 Drink in moderation. Alcohol has been shown to undermine the body's ability to fight off disease and infection. It damages the liver and kidneys, which are crucial in clearing the body of infectious materials. It may also limit the number of white blood cells produced. Limiting the amount of alcohol consumed regularly can significantly strengthen your immune system. ^[24]

- The recommended daily amount of alcohol is one drink for women and two drinks for men.

5 Get plenty of sleep. A proper night's sleep has been shown to strengthen the immune system and help protect against disease. Sleep deprivation can limit your body's production or certain white blood cells and make it more difficult for your immune system to fight off certain diseases. Be sure to get at least eight hours of sleep a night to ensure proper immune system function. ^[25]

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Sources and Citations

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