





# wintering<sup>well</sup>

Your guidebook to making the  
most of autumn & winter



**A** healthy immune system is a core component of overall health and wellbeing and central in our approach to making the most of autumn and winter. Luckily, there are lots of things you can do to look after yours.

Read on to discover 20 of our favourite tips for supporting your immune system health every day, as well as for relieving symptoms like sore throats that tend to be more common during the cooler months.



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IMPORTANT: The following tips provide general health and wellbeing information which may be helpful for healthy individuals. Always talk to your health professional to get advice to best suit your personal health needs.




**Nourish**  yourself

# Prioritise a nutritious diet




Eating a healthy, balanced diet providing a broad range of vitamins, minerals and other nutrients should be the cornerstone of your immune health plan.



## Why?

Because the nutritional composition of your diet interacts with your immune system in a vast number of ways, including<sup>1</sup>:

- ❖ Affecting the health of your skin and mucous membranes (which are your body's first line of defence against infection)
  - ❖ Influencing the balance of the microflora in your gut (which play a key role in immune function)
  - ❖ Playing a role in the healthy functioning of specific types of immune cells that work to fight off infectious organisms like bacteria and viruses
- 



# Fill up on fresh fruit and veggies for vitamin C

Vitamin C is the first nutrient many people think of when it comes to healthy immune system function<sup>2</sup>. The secret to ensuring your diet is rich in this important nutrient is to make sure you're consuming an abundance of fresh fruit and veggies, including these:

## Fruit

- Oranges and other citrus fruit
- Kiwifruit
- Watermelon and rockmelon
- Mangoes, papaya and pineapple
- Strawberries

## Vegetables

- Red and green capsicum
- Red and green chillies
- Cabbage
- Cauliflower
- Broccoli

# Treat yourself to an immune-boosting juice!

This Immune Booster Juice recipe from [Hungry Healthy Happy](#) is a great way to top up your vitamin C levels - it provides more than 200 mg per glass.

It's also rich in betacarotene, which is converted to vitamin A in the body. Betacarotene has antioxidant properties, while vitamin A supports immune health by helping to maintain the integrity of the mucous membranes, which act as the body's physical barrier against infectious organisms.





# Get seedy for extra zinc

Pepitas and sunflower seeds are some of the original superfoods. They're rich in zinc<sup>3</sup>, which supports healthy immune system function. These tasty little morsels of goodness are versatile too - add them to your breakfast cereal or porridge, sprinkle them on top of a salad for some added crunch, or munch on them for a protein-filled afternoon snack.


**YUM!**

## **Aussie men missing out on Zinc**

Men are particularly prone to missing out on zinc in their diets. Data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics indicates that more than 37% of men in their 20s, 30s and 40s, and more than half of those aged older than 50 don't get as much zinc as they need every day from their diets<sup>4</sup>.



# Love your gut with fermented foods



The friendly bacteria in your gut influence immune function in a number of ways, including supporting resistance to infection<sup>5</sup>. Since they contain potentially probiotic micro-organisms that can be incorporated into your bowel microflora, fermented foods make a great addition to your diet.

There are plenty of delicious options to choose from - think yoghurt, sourdough bread, kombucha, sauerkraut and kimchi... just for starters.

## Garlic for antibacterial actions

Garlic's famous antibacterial properties<sup>2</sup> are attributed to a sulfur-containing compound called allicin, which is also responsible for both the characteristic smell of garlic and the 'hot' taste of the raw cloves<sup>6</sup>.

Allicin is formed via an enzymatic reaction that occurs when garlic is crushed, chopped or chewed<sup>6</sup>.

**Top tip:**  
**When cooking, chop your garlic first.**

For optimal allicin activity, chop fresh garlic cloves then leave them aside for about 10 minutes before adding them to your meals<sup>6</sup>.

A top-down view of a white ceramic bowl filled with a clear chicken broth. The soup contains wide, flat white noodles, shredded chicken, sliced mushrooms, and various vegetables including red, yellow, and green bell peppers, and green onions. The bowl is placed on a rustic wooden surface. To the right of the bowl, a white napkin and blue-and-white patterned chopsticks are visible. In the bottom left corner, there are some scattered green onion pieces.

## Congestion-clearing chicken soup

Way back in the 1970s, researchers conducted a study that suggests that chicken soup's long-held reputation as being the perfect comfort food when you've got a cold is well-deserved. Their study showed that hot chicken soup helps improve nasal air flow – which is just what you need when you've got a blocked nose!<sup>7</sup> This recipe takes the congestion-clearing benefits of chicken soup a step further, incorporating traditionally prized ingredients like ginger and chilli to help clear your head, shiitake mushrooms for immune support, garlic for its antibacterial properties, plus veggies that provide vitamin C and betacarotene.

## Ingredients

**Serves 1 person as a main meal, or two as an entrée.**

Enough water and vegetable or chicken stock to cover the chicken in a shallow pan in a ratio of around 1-part stock to 3-parts water (the amount of liquid you need depends on the size of your pan).

- 1 chicken breast
- 1 shallot, finely sliced
- 1 small carrot, finely sliced
- 30g snow peas, coarsely chopped
- 1/2 red capsicum, finely sliced
- 1/4-1/2 chilli, sliced finely (adjust quantity according to taste and how congested you're feeling)
- 2 additional cups of vegetable or chicken stock
- 5-10 slices dried shiitake mushrooms
- 50g soba or udon noodles
- 2 teaspoons tamari or soy sauce
- 5cm piece fresh ginger, grated
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- 1/2 teaspoon sesame oil



## Instructions

1. Put dried mushrooms in a small bowl, cover with boiling water, then leave to rehydrate for 20 minutes. When they're soft and plump, remove them from the water and cut off the stems.
2. Remove any tendons, skin or veins from the chicken, then place in a shallow pan.
3. Pour the water and stock mixture into the pan until the chicken is submerged.
4. Put on a very hot stove until the liquid boils, then cover the pan and simmer on low heat for 15-20 minutes or until the chicken is cooked.
5. In a separate pot, cook the noodles in a small portion of water, as per the instructions on the pack (normally 8-10 minutes).
6. When cooked, slice or shred the chicken into small pieces, and place it in the serving bowl with the strained noodles.
7. In a separate saucepan, combine the stock, tamari, grated ginger, crushed garlic and sesame oil, and bring the liquid to the boil. Put the lid on the pot, turn the heat down low and simmer for 5 minutes.
8. Add the shiitake mushrooms and carrots, then continue simmering until the carrot is just tender.
9. Add the snow peas, shallot, capsicum and chilli, and simmer for an additional two minutes.
10. Ladle the vegetables and broth over the chicken and noodles.





# Eat Brazil nuts for selenium

The mineral selenium has antioxidant properties and is also involved in some aspects of healthy immune system function<sup>2,8</sup>.

Brazil nuts are the world's richest source of selenium - a single nut provides around 68 to 90 micrograms<sup>9</sup>. That means adults can get a significant proportion of their daily selenium requirements (60 micrograms per day for women and 70 micrograms per day for men<sup>10</sup>) by munching on just one Brazil nut every day.

Other foods like mushrooms, seafood, poultry and eggs also contribute to your dietary selenium intake<sup>8,10</sup>.

## Good to know!

Don't go overboard on the Brazil nuts, or on selenium either. Selenium can cause adverse effects when consumed in excess.





# Pomegranate –traditional sore throat soother

Pomegranates aren't just a delicious way to add some zing to your salad - they've also been used medicinally for hundreds of years. For example, in traditional Arabic medicine, they're traditionally believed to relieve sore throats (as well as to relieve inflammation)<sup>11</sup>.

They're rich in antioxidants and antimicrobial compounds too<sup>12</sup>, making them a fantastic addition to your immune-healthy eating plan.



Herbal helpers



# Astragalus: ancient Chinese immune support

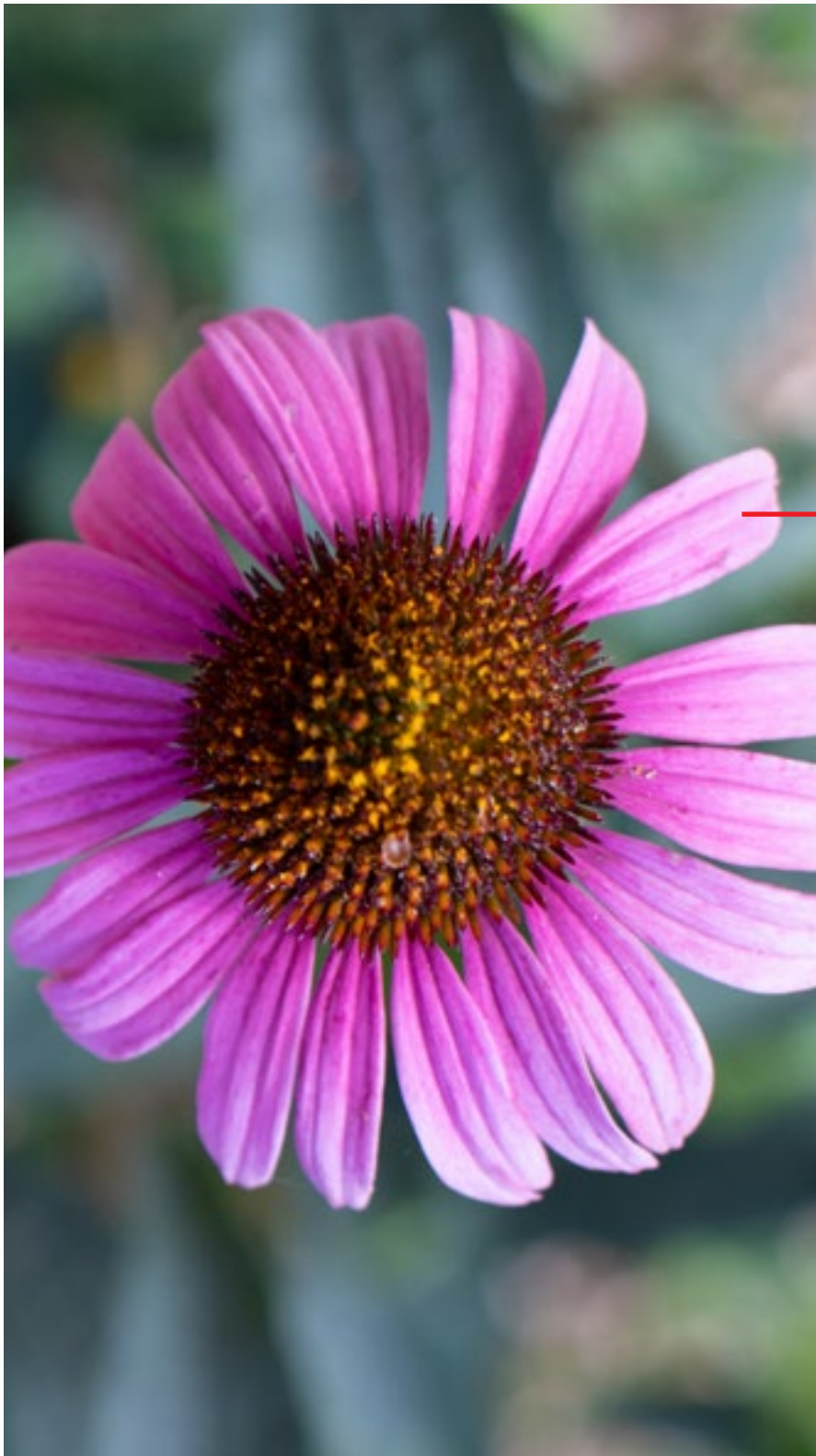
Astragalus root is regarded as an important immune system-supporting herb in traditional Chinese medicine (TCM)<sup>13</sup>, where it's traditionally taken to:

- Support healthy immune system responses
- Help decrease the frequency of common colds and flu
- Help the body recover after mild illness
- Relieve fatigue
- Strengthen Qi (life force energy), boost vitality and promote good health

## Good to know!

Based on its traditional use in Chinese medicine, astragalus root is best taken to support healthy immune system function and help decrease the likelihood that you'll catch a common cold. If you notice symptoms indicative of the early stages of an infection like a common cold or flu (such as a sore throat, runny nose or mild fever), stop taking it temporarily and instead consider andrographis, which helps relieve these symptoms.





# Echinacea: traditional cold and flu remedy

In Western herbal medicine, echinacea has a long history of traditional use for helping to relieve symptoms of common colds and flu, and for supporting the immune system in fighting illness<sup>14</sup>.

It appears to exert its influence on the innate immune system, which is the aspect of immune function that attempts to fend off any infectious organisms it encounters (as opposed to the acquired immune system, which goes into battle against organisms that it's already come across in the past)<sup>2,14</sup>.

For example, echinacea stimulates phagocytosis, the process by which immune cells engulf and 'gobble up' infectious organisms<sup>2</sup>. (Think of it as a game of Pac-Man that happens in your blood stream, helping to keep you healthy!)





# Reishi mushroom: traditional support for immune health and recovery

Reishi mushrooms have been used for centuries in Chinese medicine, where they're traditionally used to support immune health and are considered particularly beneficial for providing immune system support during stressful times.

In TCM, reishi is also traditionally used to aid recovery after illness, to boost energy and vitality for those who are feeling tired, weak or lacking in motivation, and to support healthy ageing<sup>15,16</sup>.



environment  
**Lifestyle and** 



# Exercise regularly for immune benefits

Regular aerobic exercise helps boost your immune system defences. For example, people who regularly exercise at a moderate intensity are less susceptible to upper respiratory tract infections like common colds and flu than people who engage in little or no activity<sup>17</sup>.

For most people, that equates to 30 to 60 minutes of an activity like cycling or brisk walking on most days of the week<sup>17</sup>.

Wondering how you can tell if you're working out at a moderate pace? You want to be able to talk while you exercise but be working too hard to break into song<sup>18</sup>!

## Just getting started?

The improved immune function and other health benefits of exercise vary according to your underlying fitness and overall health, so talk to your health professional before getting started if you're new to exercise, very unfit or overweight, over 40 years old or experiencing any health problems<sup>17</sup>.

Once your health professional has given you the go ahead, start your new exercise regime gently and build up the intensity over time. This will give both your body and your immune system time to adjust to your new activity levels<sup>17</sup>.




# Make sure you get enough sleep

How have you been sleeping lately? Clinical research indicates that people who get less than six hours of sleep each night are more than four times as likely to develop a common cold after exposure to the viruses that cause them than people who sleep for longer periods of time<sup>19</sup>.

## Sleep more when you're sick:

If you do come down with a common cold, be sure to get as much sleep as your body needs because it's hypothesised that the immune system's ability to 'remember' the infectious organisms it encounters may be enhanced during periods of deep sleep<sup>20</sup>.

# Schisandra relieves sleeplessness and supports immune defences



In TCM, schisandra berries are traditionally used to relieve sleeplessness, including difficulty falling asleep and frequent waking. They're also taken to relieve coughs in TCM<sup>2</sup>, and are traditionally considered especially beneficial for people who've experienced several colds in a row<sup>15</sup>.

## Fun fact:

Schisandra berries are traditionally used as both a herbal medicine and a therapeutic food in TCM. Their Chinese name Wu Wei Zi means 'five taste berry' because they're simultaneously sweet, spicy, salty, bitter and sour<sup>15,21</sup>.



# Seek out sunshine for vitamin D

Vitamin D is important for the healthy functioning of both the immune system and the respiratory system<sup>22</sup>.

Since it's formed by the action of sunlight on the skin<sup>23</sup>, it's easy to assume that most Australians get enough of it, just by going about their daily lives – but many of us don't expose our skin to sufficient sunlight to maintain optimal levels in our bodies<sup>23,24</sup>.

This is particularly the case for people who:

- ❖ Spend the majority of their time indoors
- ❖ Have naturally darker skin, as they need more sunlight exposure than fairer people in order to produce vitamin D
- ❖ Cover their skin when going outside

## How much sunlight do I need?<sup>24</sup>

During the summer months, most people living in Australia who are out and about regularly get enough vitamin D to meet their health requirements; just a few minutes a day is all the sun exposure you need at that time of year.

However, with the shorter, darker days of autumn and winter, you may need up to 2-3 hours of sunlight on your skin per week, unless you live in the northern part of the country.

Regardless of what time of year it is, take care not to expose your skin to sunlight for so long that you get burned!



# Rug up against the wind

In TCM, when mild upper respiratory tract infections like common colds arise from outside the body and involve the rapid onset of symptoms, they're often regarded as being associated with excess wind – regardless of whether the person affected has been outside in windy weather or not.

When a mild fever is present at the same time, they're described as being associated with wind-heat. This symptom pattern is typical of common colds and flu, which usually start with the sudden onset of symptoms like a sore throat, runny nose, nasal congestion, headaches and a mild fever.

To help prevent wind impacting your body in this way, TCM suggests avoiding going out in


blustery conditions. If you do need to go out, rug up well, making sure to keep your neck and head well covered - these areas are traditionally regarded as easy access points that enable wind to enter the body<sup>25</sup>.

## Introducing Fang Feng - the 'Wind Protector'

In TCM, the herb Fang Feng (also known as 'Wind Protector') is traditionally used to clear wind-heat from the body, so it's frequently used to help relieve cold and flu symptoms.





your mindset  
**Manage** 



# Take control of your stress levels

Ever noticed that when you're feeling stressed, you're more likely to catch a cold? You're actually not imagining the link between the two. Research shows that not only are you more susceptible to the viruses that cause common colds when you've been stressed for a while, your symptoms are also likely to feel worse<sup>26</sup>.

That makes stress a double whammy when it comes to your immune health, so take a step back from everything that's going on in your life and have a think about the changes you can make to help you cope better. We've included a few suggestions for you on the following pages.

## Top tip: Try Siberian Ginseng

Siberian ginseng supports the body's natural resistance to stress and fatigue, helping to improve stamina and enhance vitality.

At the same time, it supports healthy immune system responses, and aids recovery after mild upper respiratory tract infections like common colds.

# Build your resilience to boost your immune resistance

Making changes that support your emotional resilience may ultimately also help enhance your physiological resistance to mild upper respiratory infections like common colds and flu<sup>27</sup>.

Resilience is defined as the ability to prevent, minimise or overcome adversity, threats and other forms of stress – in other words, it's your ability to bounce back from hardship<sup>27,28</sup>.

This capacity is based on a combination of resources, including<sup>27,28</sup>:

- 🍃 Your sense of having control over your circumstances
- 🍃 A positive outlook
- 🍃 The personal skills and character traits that you can lean on
- 🍃 Supportive relationships with your family, friends, peers and community

The good news is that you already have some of these resources at your disposal, and that others can be cultivated and strengthened, improving your resilience over time<sup>27,28</sup>.

To get started, consider a free course on [Positive Psychology: Resilience Skills](#), presented by the University of Pennsylvania.



# Mindfulness & meditation for immune function

Meditation and other mindfulness practices prompt us to be aware, open and accepting of whatever is occurring in the present moment, without getting mentally or emotionally immersed in it<sup>29</sup>.

The practice of mindfulness is well known for its benefits for improving our ability to handle stress and mild anxiety<sup>29</sup>.

However, regular mindfulness meditation may also help boost some aspects of immune function – especially those involved in regulating inflammation in the body<sup>29</sup>.

If you'd like to give it a try, check out [Fusion's free 10-minute mindfulness meditation](#) with Sarah Davis from Living a Brave Life.

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