

10 Foods Nutritionists Eat to Boost Their Immune Systems

BY LYNN ALLISON

THE COLD AND FLU SEASON IS behind us but the need to keep your immune system strong and working efficiently is as important as ever.

“Now is the time to become a health advocate and shore up your immune system, the body’s natural defense system, to ward off illness and reduce your risk of disease,” Ellen Kamhi, Ph.D., aka The Natural Nurse, tells Newsmax.

Susan Levin, MS., RD., director of nutrition for the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine, tells Newsmax that we should “eat the colors of the rainbow” to boost the immune system.

“The pigments that give fruits and vegetables their bright colors represent a variety of protective compounds,” Levin says.

To keep your immune system strong at all times here are 10 top immune-boosting foods that nutritionists eat and how they can help you:

1 Blueberries. The anthocyanins in blueberries destroy free radicals, reduce inflammation, and boost brain health, says Levin. One cup of blueberries provides 15% of the daily recommended amount of vitamin C. Not only is vitamin C a key nutrient that helps the immune system work properly, it’s also an antioxidant that helps protect cells from damage.

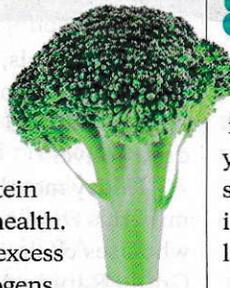
2 Sweet potatoes. The beta-carotene in sweet potatoes fights cancer and supports the immune system. They also contain



more than twice the recommended amount of vitamin A and are a good source of B6.

3 Garlic and onions. The allyl sulfides in these vegetables help destroy cancer cells and reduce cell division, notes Levin. Garlic contains the enzyme alliinase, which converts alliin to allicin that boosts immune function. You can also reap the benefits by using aged garlic extract if you do not like the strong taste of the raw or cooked product.

4 Broccoli. This super healthy veggie and its cousin, Brussels sprouts, contain indoles, as well as lutein which supports eye health. They also eliminate excess estrogen and carcinogens from the body.



5 Tomatoes. Tomatoes are an immune-boosting powerhouse. They contain lycopene, which helps prevent breast and prostate cancer, says Levin. According to some research, lycopene may also reduce your risk of heart disease. Tomatoes also contain potassium, which helps control blood pressure and vitamin K, important for blood coagulation and bone health.

6 Oily fish. Fish like salmon, trout, anchovies, and sardines are rich in essential omega-3 fatty acids — a precursor to many compounds that play a defensive role in immune response, says Michelle Dudash, RDN, and author of *Clean Eating for Busy Families*.

7 Red bell peppers. Keri Glassman, MS., RD., and founder of Nutritious Life, says she hasn’t had a cold in over a decade thanks to the power of peppers. “Red peppers are one of my favorite foods to incorporate into my diet for immune-boosting benefits,” she says. They are particularly rich in vitamin C, which is important for immunity, reducing the length and severity of colds, and collagen, which keeps your skin healthy.

8 Black elderberries. Kamhi says that this delicious fruit, which is readily available in health food stores as a syrup, is a superhero of immune boosters. “It offers gentle yet powerful support for the immune system,” she says. As a plus, the syrup is tasty and has a flavor even kids will love.

9 Yogurt. Yogurt supports a healthy digestive system, which in turn bolsters the immune system. “The immune system is the main link between our gut bacteria and how it influences our health,” says Gabrielle Geerts, RD.

10 Oil of oregano. Kamhi says the oil is rich in vitamins and minerals that offer beneficial support to the immune system. Oregano is also a natural antioxidant, antifungal, and antibacterial — which is exactly what your body needs to stay healthy. By consuming oregano in concentrated oil form, you reap the most benefits. If you don’t like the taste of the drops, you can purchase supplements in capsule form. □

