

# Boosting Your Immune System for the Flu Season

## Hygiene:

- Wash hands often with soap and water, especially after a cough or sneeze.
- Trap those germs, cough or sneeze into your jacket, sweater, or the crook of your arm rather than into a closed fist or open hand to prevent the spread of germs.
- Don't expose yourself, avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Keep surfaces clean, using a couple of drops of tea tree, oregano, or thyme oil you can make your own natural disinfectant spray to clean countertops, shared telephones and keyboards etc.
- Avoid close contact with sick people; influenza is thought to spread from person-to-person through coughing or sneezing

## Lifestyle:

- Rest, ensure you are getting adequate rest (8 hours per night). Too little sleep puts a strain on your body and is known to weaken the immune system.
- De-stress, practice deep breathing exercises to help manage stress. High stress, fear and worry cause a release of stress hormones which depresses the immune system making you more susceptible to infections.
- Get out, staying indoors exposes you to more germs, decreases exposure to sunlight and vitamin D levels. Taking a brisk walk outside on a cool day forces your body to warm itself up and increase circulation helping to promote your natural defenses.
- Move, take a walk, stretch and engage your body in mild to moderate physical activity to encourage sweating and blood circulation.
- Alternate your showers, alternate the water between hot (for 3 minutes) and cold (for 30 seconds) in your shower for 4 cycles helps to improve circulation, increase detoxification and boost your immune system

## Diet:

- Increase vitamin C fruits and vegetables such as oranges, lemons, grapefruit, strawberries, raspberries, black currants, peppers, spring greens, brussel sprouts, broccoli, and cauliflower all have good vitamin C content.
- Avoid refined sugar, studies have found that even 5 hours after ingesting sugar neutrophil (a major player in your body's defenses) activity was still depressed preventing optimal function of the immune system.
- The smellier your breath the better. Eat more garlic and onions because both are immune boosting and have antiviral and antibiotic properties and have the largest effect when eaten raw.

## So the flu's gotcha, fight back!

- Let your body work. A fever is part of your body's normal defenses and allowing a mild fever (1-3 degrees above a normal body temperature of 37.5°C) significantly supports the immune system and promotes healing.
- Stay home and get the rest you need, being at work or school does not make you productive and hampers the healing process. You should also limit contact with others to prevent the spread of infection.
- See your ND they have the tools to help get you back on your feet. If you are susceptible to developing colds or flu's, your ND or intern can help promote your immune system using nutritional supplements, individually prepared botanical tinctures and other therapies.

## References:

"Canadian Nutrient File" 2010. [www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/nutrition/fiche-nutri-data/index-eng.php](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/nutrition/fiche-nutri-data/index-eng.php) [Accessed Sep 27, 2012]