



For the Private Hospital Sector

Nutrition Fact Sheet

Tips To Boost Immunity During Winter

As we head into the colder months, our risks of catching a cold or flu are increased. This is because we tend to spend more time indoors where the viruses are more easily transmitted from one person to another. Whilst there is no one food, nutrient or supplement that can prevent colds or flus, eating a well balanced diet that includes the following nutrients will help to boost our immunity and fight off colds and flus. In this fact sheet, we explore some practical tips and key nutrients that can help to boost immunity during Winter.

EAT A WELL-BALANCED DIET

Hospitals can be an environment where patients are exposed to a variety of pathogens, viruses and bacteria, which can increase the risk of infections. Additionally, hospitals are also often associated with procedures that may weaken the immunity system such as surgery. For this reason, eating a well-balanced diet that is rich in fruits and vegetables, whole grains and lean proteins, is always of great importance to meet our nutritional needs and promote a healthy immune system.

Practical tips to improve nutrition for hospital patients:

- **Small and frequent meals.** - have 6 small meals a day (i.e. 3 main and 3 mid meals).
- **Use herbs and spices** to enhance flavour. E.g. garlic, basil, cinnamon, oregano, thyme, etc.
- **Make meals colourful and appealing.** The more variety of food consumed increases the number of nutrients, vitamins and minerals that can help to support the immune system.
- **Limit processed foods** - processed foods provide little nutritional value.

KEY NUTRIENTS FOR HEALTHY IMMUNE SYSTEM

There is no one food, nutrient or supplement that can prevent illness. By eating a well balanced diet, that includes the following nutrients, will help to ensure normal immune functions.

Protein

Protein plays important roles in maintaining healthy immune system, as well as healing and recovery. Food sources of protein include lean meat, poultry, seafood, eggs and legumes.

Vitamin A

Vitamin A is involved in the development of the immune system and plays regulatory roles in immune responses. Food sources of vitamin A include sweet potatoes, carrots, pumpkins, mangos, cheese, eggs and milk.

Vitamin C

Vitamin C supports the immune system by protecting against oxidative stress, aiding in microbial killing, and preventing tissue damage.

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Food sources of vitamin C include citrus fruits (oranges, grapefruit, mandarins), capsicums, strawberries and tomatoes.

Vitamin E

Vitamin E can help enhance the function of immune system and reduce oxidative stress.

Food sources of vitamin E include sunflower seeds, almonds, hazelnuts and vegetable oil.

Zinc

Zinc helps keep the immune system strong by fighting off invading bacteria and viruses, helps wound healing and supports normal growth.

Food sources of zinc include lean meat, poultry, seafood, milk and wholegrains.

HYDRATION

Drink plenty of water throughout the day is essential for good health and immunity. Aim for at least 8 glasses of water a day.

Dehydration can cause lethargy, fatigue, worsen cold and flu symptoms, and slow down digestion.

Hospital patients can be more prone to dehydration due to a number of factors such as

use of medications and loss of independence during recovery. Older hospital patients in particular can also experience decreased thirst sensation, further increasing the risk of dehydration.

Hydration tips for hospital residents:

- Keep water containers in accessible places.
- Drink even when you aren't thirsty.
- Add slices of lemon or orange or ice cubes to give water a fresher taste.
- Eat foods with high water content (e.g. fruit and vegetables).
- Broths, soups, milk, smoothies, etc. all count towards your total water intake.
- Build hydration into your routine. For example, drink a glass of water when you wake up in the morning, after meals, and before or after exercise.

OTHER HEALTHY LIFESTYLE TIPS FOR BOOSTING IMMUNITY

- Aim for at least 7-8 hours of sleep each day.
- Get recommended vaccine if you can.
- Minimise infection by washing your hands regularly.

For more information, please visit:

Nutrition and Immunity

<https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/nutrition-and-immunity/>

Supporting Your Immune System

<https://nutritionaustralia.org/app/uploads/2020/09/Fact-sheet-Supporting-your-immune-system.pdf>

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