

## Boost Your Immune System in Challenging Times



Good nutrition and a healthy lifestyle that includes managing stress, physical activity, and adequate sleep help to boost your immune system and help you fight illness. Immune boosting nutrients are best from food sources. The following are great ways to bump up your immune system every time you eat.

### **Vitamins, Minerals, and Antioxidants**

Studies have shown that fruits and vegetables provide nutrients—like beta-carotene, vitamin C, and vitamin E—that can boost immune function. Because many vegetables, fruits, and other plant-based foods are also rich in antioxidants, they help reduce oxidative stress.<sup>1</sup>

**Beta-Carotene:** Beta-carotene is a powerful antioxidant that can reduce inflammation and boost immune function by increasing disease-fighting cells in the body.

- ✓ Sources: Sweet potatoes, carrots, and green leafy vegetables.

**Vitamins C and E:** Vitamins C and E are antioxidants that help to destroy free radicals and support the body's natural immune response.

- ✓ Vitamin C Sources: Red peppers, oranges, strawberries, broccoli, mangoes, lemons, and other fruits and vegetables.
- ✓ Vitamin E Sources: Nuts, seeds, spinach, and broccoli.

**Vitamin D:** Research shows vitamin D supplementation may reduce the risk for viral infections, including respiratory tract infections, by reducing production of proinflammatory compounds in the body.

- ✓ Food sources: Fortified cereals, plant-based/cow milks, fish, supplements.

**Zinc:** Zinc is a mineral that can help boost white blood cells, which defend against invaders.

- ✓ Food sources: meat, nuts, pumpkin seeds, sesame seeds, beans, and lentils.

### Reference

1. Hughes, D. A. (2000). Dietary antioxidants and human immune function. *Nutrition Bulletin*, 25(1), 35–41. <https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1467-3010.2000.00016.x>