[March 16, 2020](https://www.brainerdbaptist.org/the-brainerd-blog/2020/3/16/strengthening-immunity-through-food-and-nutrition)

[Strengthening Immunity Through Food and Nutrition](https://www.brainerdbaptist.org/the-brainerd-blog/2020/3/16/strengthening-immunity-through-food-and-nutrition)

[Marleah Payne](https://www.brainerdbaptist.org/the-brainerd-blog?author=5e6f665f931e6a27c22fa269)

The Lord designs and prepares the body to be a natural battleground in the ongoing fight against sickness and disease. He blesses us with the ability to build a strong immune system to fight off invasions of viruses and bacteria. The kinds of food you eat play a vital role in arming the body as it provides nutrients that can protect and sustain our health and well-being. It is important to take steps to build strong immunity especially during times of illness outbreaks such as the coronavirus (COVID-19).

 This is a new virus and no one is immune to it and there are no treatments or vaccines (yet). It is not certain that food can prevent you from getting the virus, but food can help with overall good health and wellbeing. Thankfully, the Lord provides nutritious foods that help protect us from sickness and disease that we can enjoy and live healthfully!

There are many different foods that can help strengthen the immune system. Vitamins, minerals, and phytochemicals are the main components that work together to protect healthy cells in our bodies. Antioxidants and phytochemicals help protect cells from damage caused by free radicals. Free radicals are unstable cells that lead to the development of other chronic health conditions. A balanced and sufficient supply of vitamins and minerals can come from eating a well-balanced diet with a variety of healthy foods. Here are some tips on nutrients and the foods you can eat to help protect your body and build a stronger immunity:

ANTIOXIDANTS

Again, antioxidants are well known for their vital role in protecting the body from sickness and disease. They are easily used up so they must be constantly restored in the body through the diet. Antioxidants can be found in many foods!

Excellent sources of antioxidants:

·      Fruits

·      Vegetables

·      Cocoa

·      Spices such as cinnamon and curcumin

·      Legumes

·      Teas

·      Coffee

PHYTONUTRIENTS

Phytonutrients are specific chemicals that work as antioxidants. There are many different phytonutrients; the most recognized include polyphenols, flavonoids, quercetin, resveratrol, and anthocyanins.

Excellent sources of phytonutrients:

·      Teas—particularly green tea

·      Many fruits & veggies (especially grapes, apples, and dark-colored berries)

·      Cocoa

·      Soybeans

·      Onions

·      Nuts & peanuts

VITAMIN C

Increasing Vitamin C is often recommended during cold and flu season. While it may not completely prevent a disease, it can help protect from illnesses and has been shown to reduce the duration of the common cold. Vitamin C also helps make collagen for healthy skin, bone, and muscle tissue, and helps the body absorb iron.

Excellent sources of Vitamin C:

·      Strawberries

·      Dark colored berries

·      Citrus fruits

·      Bell peppers

·      Tomatoes

·      broccoli & cauliflower

·      Potatoes

·      Leafy green veggies

VITAMIN E

This vitamin works alongside vitamin C and is a powerful antioxidant. It has over 200 biochemical actions in the body and has been shown to help prevent certain cancers, heart disease, arthritis, cataracts, and neurological disorders. One thing good to know is that vitamin E is easily destroyed by heat and exposure to air, so it’s best to get it fresh and without cooking when possible. Vitamin E is critical for immune function and should be consumed regularly through the diet.

Excellent sources of Vitamin E:

·      Almonds & other nuts

·      Peanuts

·      Sunflower seeds & other seeds

·      Spinach

·      Broccoli

·      Plant oils (wheat germ, hazelnut, sunflower, safflower, grapeseed, canola, palm)

·      Whole grains

·      Kiwi fruit

·      Eggs

·      Leafy green veggies

VITAMIN A & CAROTENOIDS

Vitamin A plays many roles in the body and is essential for healthy functions. It is also a strong antioxidant. Carotenoids from food turn in to vitamin A when digested. Beta-carotene is the most well-known carotenoid and can be found in many food sources. Lutein and lycopene are also highly recognized carotenoids. Dairy and eggs are great sources of vitamin A.

Excellent sources of carotenoids:

·      Many fruits—tomatoes, tomato juice, watermelon, apricots, cantaloupe, peaches, papaya, mango, plums

·      Many veggies—carrots, broccoli, collard greens, kale, pumpkin, spinach, sweet potatoes, yams, butternut and winter squash, Brussels sprouts

VITAMIN D

The main source of vitamin D is the sun! But many people in America still have a deficiency. Vitamin D plays many roles to support a healthy immune system so it is important to make sure we are getting enough.

 Some great food sources of vitamin D:

·      Dairy products

·      Fortified products (orange juice, cereals, non-dairy milk)

·      Eggs

·      Fatty fish

ZINC

This mineral is a powerful antioxidant and helps activate other antioxidants in the body. It is well recognized for its contributions in supporting a healthy immune system. Zinc has many other roles in the body. It helps control inflammation, nervous system functions, building proteins, and wound healing. Taste and smell sensors are also improved by zinc! Many natural could and cough supplements contain zinc but it is also available in food.

Some great foods with zinc to taste:

·      Baked beans (no added sugar)

·      Chickpeas

·      Nuts & seeds

·      Shellfish

·      Lean meats & poultry

·      Fortified foods & supplements

SELENIUM

Research has shown that selenium can greatly improve the immune system as it is essential for the activation of other key antioxidants. Iodine also needs selenium for healthy functioning thyroid glands. Vitamins A, C, and E enhance the absorption and action of selenium. Too much selenium can be dangerous so high dose supplements are not recommended. Again, eating a well-balanced with a variety of foods is the key.

Excellent sources of selenium:

·      Plants- fruits and veggies get it from soil

·      Garlic

·      Fish

·      Brazil nuts & other nuts

·      Whole grains

·      Corn

·      Eggs

·      Cheese

TAKEAWAY TIPS

The best way to build a healthy body and support your immune system is to eat well-balanced meals and snacks each day. The Lord blesses us with good food so that we can enjoy life to the full. He can and will sustain us with the nutrients we need for defense against sickness and disease!

**Here are some takeaway tips that can help you live and eat healthfully:**

·      Eat at least 1 ½ cups of fruits and 2 ½ cups of veggies.

·      Create a colorful plate! Make at least ½ your plate colorful with fruits and veggies.

o   Fresh, frozen dried, and canned fruits without added ingredients are all healthy!

·      Choose whole grains and lean proteins over refined grains and high fat meats

·      Get antioxidants from food sources instead of supplements.

·      Have fruits, veggies, and nuts for snacks instead of ice cream, cookies, and candy.

·      Add spices and herbs to your foods to get extra flavor, nutrients, and appetizing aromas.

·      Enjoy a cup of green tea each day.

·      Drink plenty of water! It is essential for life and used by every nutrient in every part of the body.

Please note this information should not be used to diagnose, treat, or cure any disease or replace advice from health care providers. Consult your health care provider before making any changes related to a specific diagnosis or health condition and make sure the foods do not interact with other medications or supplements you are taking.

Thank you for taking time to read these tips! I hope they bless you and help you stay healthy while strengthening you immunity!

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*“And God said, ‘Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food.’”*

*~Genesis 1:29*

*“Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and you will enjoy the choicest of foods.”*

*~ Isaiah 55:2*

*“The LORD will always lead you, satisfy you in a parched land, and strengthen your bones. You will be like a watered garden and like a spring whose waters never run dry.”*

*~ Isaiah 58:11*

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