



.... Top 5 Tips to Stop Infection

The average adult has two to three upper respiratory infections each year. We are exposed to viruses all day long, but some people seem more susceptible to catching colds or the flu. Why is that? Here are a few tips that may help you to ward off the nasty symptoms of a cold or flu this winter.

Proper Hygiene

We all know that the most common way to spread a virus is from direct contact from an infected person to another and often it's the little things that we don't think twice about that can be contributing the most. If you are already showing symptoms it is important that you take some precautions to stop the spread of your germs to others and also to reduce the duration of your current symptoms. Cover your nose and mouth when coughing and sneezing and make sure to wash your hands regularly, dispose of used tissues and minimise sharing objects with others, particularly towels. Simple but very effective.

Exercise

There is increasing research surfacing that is showing that regular, moderate intensity exercise can boost the immune system. This is as a result of increased circulation of immune cells throughout the body resulting in an increase in the production of macrophages, the cells that attack bacteria and viruses. After exercise the functioning of the immune system will return to normal within a few hours however consistent, regular exercise can increase the longevity of these immune boosting properties. There is however a fine balance as exercising too regularly and at a high intensity can leave us burnt out and feeling fatigued and more susceptible to infection. Research has also found that during intense physical exertion, the body produces certain hormones that temporarily lower immunity. This is important for people who are regularly involved in high intensity sports as their immunity will need to be supported more, as well as encouraging rest and recovery. It is also important to get outside to exercise, it is often difficult to step outside in the cold to go for a run however the fresh air is a better alternative to the recycled, germ-filled air that may be circulating inside the gym.

Minimise the Use of Heaters

During the cooler months it's not unusual to lock ourselves indoors and turn on the heater. If this is the case it is important to check the filters of these heaters regularly, particularly if there is someone in the house already sick. A dirty air-conditioning filter can't effectively capture mould spores, dust particles or other irritants and they end up just being spread around the home making you sick. Those in the home with respiratory allergies, breathing problems, asthma or an already compromised immune system are more likely to be effected. Heaters also dry the air which can in turn dry out the mucous membranes of the nose and upper respiratory tract, reducing defences against infections.

Drink Plenty of Water

During Summer it is easy to drink water during the day as it also acts to cool the body down, in winter however we often don't drink enough water and can become dehydrated. The body needs water to remove waste from the body and to transport minerals in and out of the cells. When the body lacks water it has to work twice as hard to get oxygenated blood to the cells, this can result in the organs and us feeling fatigued and exhausted. A good way to increase our water intake during the cooler months is through herbal teas which also have their own added health benefits. Fresh ginger and lemon tea can help to stimulate the liver to eliminate toxins, it is warming and has a number of immune boosting properties. This tea is antibacterial which can aid in a sore throat, is anti-viral, and has a number of digestive benefits as well. Avoid adding sugar to your tea, use good quality honey instead as this has added antimicrobial effects.

Eat Healthy

In winter it's a lot easier to eat convenient foods as shopping, preparing and cooking hearty, healthy meals can cut into time well spent under the heat of the doona. But winter is the time when more attention should be paid to consuming healthy, nutrient rich dishes. In the cooler months we tend to crave warmer, richer, denser foods in the attempt to keep our bodies warm. Sweet potato and carrots contain beta carotene which can be converted to vitamin A to help prevent and fight off infections by enhancing the actions of white blood cells that destroy harmful bacteria and viruses. Onions contain flavonoids, particularly quercetin which is a powerful antioxidant that is also a natural anti-histamine and anti-inflammatory. Onions and garlic are both rich in sulphur-containing compounds which can add to their anti-bacterial health benefits. Foods such as soups, casseroles and stir-fry's are great winter dishes and we can easily add plenty of nutritious vegetables and herbs.