

.... Foods to Fight Colds & Flu



Garlic

People generally love or hate the taste of Garlic and if you have cooked with it, I am sure you have experienced the dreaded 'Garlic hands' after chopping it! Garlic is one of the most ancient herbs that been used since the beginning of documented history, for both medicinal and culinary purposes. Just imagine, in ancient Egypt, Garlic was given to the labourers to maintain their strength and increase productivity whilst building the great monuments of Egypt, and it was found in King Tutankhamun's tomb when it was excavated in 1922.

In ancient Egyptian times Garlic was prescribed as treatment of abnormal growths, malaise, parasitic and insect infections, and circulatory complaints. In ancient Greece, Rome, India and China, as well as by Hippocrates, Garlic was recommended for the treatment of infections, infestations, male potency, respiratory and cardiovascular disorders as well as ingestion of poisons and toxins. Recent research has validated the therapeutic use of Garlic for many of these historical applications.

Garlic has a variety of beneficial effects on the immune system. It induces macrophage phagocytosis, stimulates the release of tumour necrosis factor- α , interleukin-2, interferon- γ as well as stimulating the proliferation of lymphocytes and the activity of natural killer cells. It has also shown to act against viral infections including rhinovirus and para-influenza virus.

Feed your children some Garlic too! Research has found that a Garlic preparation prevented non-specific acute respiratory infection in children by 2-4 fold, at a dose of 300-600 mg daily. So what are you waiting for? Throw some Garlic into the pan with your next meal!

Mushrooms

Button mushrooms are an Aussie favourite in cooking and we are using more Field and Swiss Brown mushrooms too. But have you ventured into using the more exotic mushrooms varieties that are no longer a secret of the Asian grocer? Reishi, Shiitake, Enoki, Maitake and Oyster are just a few of the readily available mushrooms that you can add to your diet. These medicinal mushrooms contain long chain polysaccharides called beta-glucans which have been found to be potent immune enhancers. Some of the effects they have on the immune system include increasing phagocytosis, activating macrophages and have an anti-inflammatory effect via the modulation of pro-inflammatory cytokine secretion. Even the good old Button mushroom has been found to have a beneficial effect on immunity. A lot of research is also focused on the anti-cancer potential of mushrooms. Mushrooms can easily be added to stir fries, winter soups, pies, pasta and omelettes.

Red, Yellow & Orange Vegetables

Rich in antioxidant nutrients, lycopene, betacarotene and vitamin C, the red, yellow and orange coloured vegetables are a great support to immune function. Red capsicum contains almost 3 times more vitamin C than oranges and can be used in a wide variety of dishes! Other great nutrient rich vegetables include pumpkin, sweet potato, squash, beetroot, radishes, red onion, chillies and carrots.

Vitamin C increases the number of circulating immunoglobulins, including IgA, IgG and IgM. Supplementation increases the activity of neutrophils, which act to identify and destroy both bacterial and viral pathogens and increase their vitamin C concentrations. Many of these vegetables can be juiced as well as cooked, so get colourful with your vegetables to support your immune health.

Berries

Berries are a rich source of proanthocyanidins, which are potent antioxidants. One berry in particular, Elderberry has been found to inhibit viral binding to cells and reduce the severity and duration of viral infection such as influenza. It can be eaten when fully ripe and traditionally has been made into jams and as an addition to pies! Other berries such as blackberries, raspberries, blueberries and blackcurrants also contain cyanidins. Blackcurrant has shown to inhibit influenza virus in vitro testing and blackberries protect against inflammation of the lung pleura. A great start to a wintery morning is some organic oats with a mix of these berries on top!

Green Tea

Can you help your immune system with a simple cup of Green Tea? Maybe you can! Green Tea contains catechins and theanine which recently was found to reduce the incidence of influenza infection amongst aged care workers. The authors suggested it may be a useful prophylactic treatment against flu infections. Green Tea catechins may act via inhibition of the endonuclease activity of influenza A virus, affecting viral binding and replication. When selecting Green Tea look for organically produced teas, you may even like to try the more expensive Japanese Matcha Tea. This is a powdered Green Tea, where you consume the whole product, rather than just an infusion.