

Immune Health



Back to school means new backpacks, sharpened pencils, and lots of shared germs. As routines get busier and the sniffles start making the rounds, it is the perfect time to check in on your immune health.

The immune system is the body's natural defence system. It is a complex system of cells, tissues, and organs that work together to protect us from harmful pathogens (i.e., germs) such as bacteria, viruses, and other foreign invaders.

Immune health refers to how well this system functions to keep us safe by fighting off infections and recognizing and eliminating cells that may become harmful, such as viruses.

A healthy immune system identifies threats and responds appropriately. It includes innate immunity (the body's first line of defence) and adaptive immunity (learns and remembers specific pathogens to respond effectively over time). When the immune system is strong, it can prevent illness or lessen its severity. When it is weak, we become more susceptible to infections, inflammation, and disease.

Several factors influence immune health, including:

- **Nutrition:** A balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean protein, and healthy fats supports the production and activity of immune cells.
- **Sleep:** Quality sleep helps regulate the release of cytokines, a type of protein that is vital for immune response.
- **Physical activity:** Regular exercise enhances our immune system and reduces inflammation.
- **Stress:** Chronic stress can suppress immune function over time.
- **Vaccinations:** Staying up to date with recommended vaccines helps train the immune system to fight specific illnesses. Ask your doctor or pharmacist if you are up to date with recommended vaccines.
- **Avoiding harmful habits:** Smoking and excessive alcohol use can worsen the body's ability to defend itself.

In summary, immune health is important for overall well-being. By adopting healthy lifestyle habits and staying informed, we strengthen our body's natural defences and improve our resilience to disease.

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