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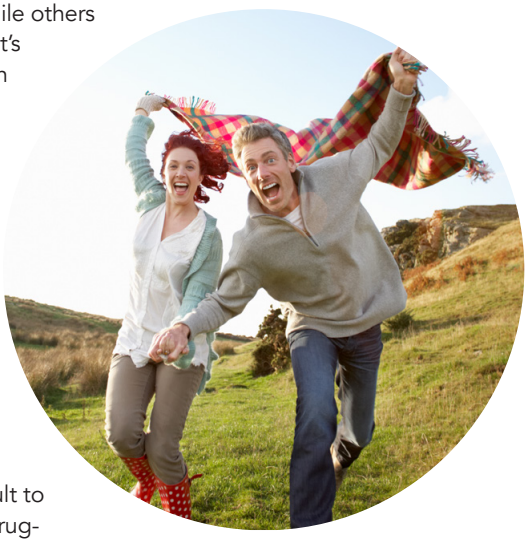
STAY WELL NATURALLY

Have you ever noticed that some people are always healthy and energetic while others seem to catch ever little bug that's floating around? The difference between the two likely lies in how robust their immune system is.



A strong immune system can help you fend off infection and even some chronic health problems. Yet, many of us live lives that constantly challenge our body's natural defenses. We eat too much of the wrong foods, exercise and sleep too little, and frequently let stress get the better of us. Simply getting older can undermine our immunity and leave us more vulnerable to disease. Adding insult to injury, we are exposed to new viruses, drug-resistant bacteria, and a growing number of toxins and environmental pollutants that further weaken our immunity.

That's the bad news. The good news is that eating a diet filled with nourishing food, adopting a few healthy habits, and relying on a handful of immune-specific herbs can rebuild and optimize your immune system. *Stay Well, Naturally* will give you the tools you need to build a strong internal defense system that will help you thrive no matter what threats come your way.

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CHAPTER ONE

Immunity 101

Your body's immune system is a complex network of specialized cells, tissues, and organs that provide vigilant protection against threats from the outside world. When functioning properly, your immune system is capable of dealing with the constant barrage of bacteria and viruses you are exposed to each and every day. It's your 24/7 knight in shining armor that keeps you alive and well.

A strong immune system offers protection in a number of ways. It guards against pathogens that can make you sick by carrying out "search and destroy" missions to eliminate harmful bacteria, viruses, and mutating cells. It also prevents bacteria and viruses from reproducing. What's more, a robust immune system triggers the destruction of damaged cells in a process known as apoptosis.

While aging can have an impact on your body's immune response, study after study confirms that an underperforming immune system is often a result of an unhealthy lifestyle. Exposure to chronic stress, a lack of physical activity, and a steady diet of nutritionally bankrupt foods can weaken even the strongest immune system. Luckily, these are factors we can control. Simply incorporating the tips and tools in this booklet can help to enhance your immunity and boost your overall health.

6 Ways You're Undermining Your Immunity

- You skimp on sleep.
- You eat a diet high in ultra-processed food.
- You don't exercise.
- You're overweight.
- You're chronically stressed out.
- You have a pessimistic view of life.

The Secret Life of Your Immune System

Most of the cells in your immune system are white blood cells (leukocytes), and there are two basic types whose job is to find disease-causing organisms and destroy them:

- **Phagocytes** are white blood cells that gobble up foreign organisms much like a game of PacMan. One of the most common phagocytes is the neutrophil, which targets bacteria and acts as your immune systems first line of defense. Macrophages are another type of phagocyte that function like cellular garbage disposals, ingesting bacteria and cellular debris. Macrophages also produce Tumor Necrosis Factor-alpha (TNF-α), a protein that can kill some types of tumor cells. In addition, TNF-α mediates inflammation and triggers the creation of new blood vessels.
- **Lymphocytes** are produced in your bone marrow. Once created, some lymphocytes stay put and become B cells. These "smart" immune cells identify any rogue bacteria and viruses that may be lurking in the body. B cells also remember specific pathogens that have made you sick in the past. Other lymphocytes that are

born in the bone marrow travel to the thymus (a small gland behind the top of the breastbone), where they turn into T cells. T cells are the foot soldiers of the immune system that destroy the harmful microbes that the B cells have identified. They are so effective that some types of T cells are actually called *natural killer (NK) cells*. These assassin cells not only hunt down pathogens, they also search out and destroy damaged or abnormal cells.

When B cells detect a harmful microbe or toxin—technically known as an antigen—they produces antibodies that lock onto the invader and disable it so that it can be eliminated from the body by the T cells. Helping the B cells and T cells is a mixture of proteins that make up the complement system. If a harmful microbe makes its way into the bloodstream, complement attacks it, causing it to burst. Complement, which is made in the liver, is activated by and works with antibodies produced by the B cells.

Specific hormones called lymphokines also play a role in a healthy immune system. One of these, a hormone known as thymosin, stimulates the development of precursor T cells in the thymus to mature T cells. Another group of hormones, known collectively as interleukins, are triggered by white blood cells. One of these interleukins—interleukin-1 (IL-1)—is produced by macrophages after they ingest a foreign microbe. IL-1 triggers fever and fatigue, which assists in killing off many types of bacteria.

How Aging Affects Immunity

Aging can have a significant impact on your immune response. This is because, as you grow older, your body produces fewer immune cells. The immune cells that are produced don't communicate with each other as well as they once did. According to research published in the journal *Nature*, aging immune cells are also less able to repair damaged DNA. The immune system's ability to detect and correct cell defects also declines. These changes explain why older adults are typically more vulnerable to infections and chronic disease. Making matters worse, studies show that vaccines may not work as well or protect for as long in those over the age of 65.

Growing older can also result in chronic, low-grade, systemic inflammation—a condition known as inflammaging. According to a study conducted by the National Institute of Aging, inflammaging is a strong risk factor for multiple diseases that are frequent causes of disability in older individuals. These include many "age related" diseases such as arthritis, dementia, heart disease, and osteoporosis.

Aging can have a significant impact on your immune response

CHAPTER TWO

Be Well Fed

A strong immune system starts in the kitchen. What you eat can either bolster your defenses or undermine them. For instance, a diet rich in minimally processed whole foods provides a natural abundance of vitamins, minerals, and phytonutrients that work together to keep your immune system running smoothly. On the other hand, a diet high in ultra-processed foods could lead to nutritional deficiencies that may reduce the number and function of your immune cells—especially your T cells.

Here are some simple meal-time strategies to ensure that you're getting all the immune-boosting nutrients you need:

Fill your plate with fruits and vegetables. The phytochemicals that give fruits and vegetables their vibrant colors serve as antioxidants that promote a strong immune system. Specifically, they help B- and T-cells reproduce properly so they can adequately mount a defense against pathogens that can make you sick. Plant-based antioxidants also ensure that the neutrophils and macrophages that corral and kill harmful bacteria can do their job. But to get all the benefits that nature's bounty provides, it's important to eat five to nine servings per day. An easy way to do this is to fill two-thirds of your plate with colorful fruits and/or veggies at each meal.

The Chicken Soup Cure

Grandma was right...a steaming bowl of chicken soup just might be the best medicine if you're suffering from a cold or the flu. According to a joint study between researchers in China and the U.S., chicken soup improves T-cell function and enhances the body's immune response.

Choose lean protein. The amino acids in protein form the building blocks of cells, including your immune cells. If you don't eat enough protein, you'll manufacture fewer white blood cells to combat antigens. How much is enough? The general rule of thumb is to consume 0.8 to 1 gram of high-quality protein per kilogram (kg) of your body weight. For a 150 pound adult, that would translate to a minimum of 54 grams of protein daily.

Focus on healthy fats. Researchers from the University of California, Riverside, recently reported that eating a high fat diet negatively affects the genes that regulate the immune system. High fat diets also create an environment in which harmful gut bacteria can thrive. But all fat is not created equally. For instance, trans fats (found in margarines and many commercial baked goods) can contribute to chronic low-grade inflammation in the body while extra virgin olive oil has strong anti-inflammatory properties. And avocado oil is high in antioxidants that preliminary studies suggest might stimulate the immune system.

Omega-3 fatty acids are another type of healthy fat that actually tames systemic inflammation and exerts a beneficial influence on your immune cells. What's more, these good-for-you fats help your body absorb fat-soluble nutrients like vitamins A and E. Omega-3s can be found in cold water fatty fish like salmon or sardines.

Add some whole grains. The dietary fiber found in whole grains like barley, rye, and wheat supports a healthy gut *and* a healthy immune system. This isn't surprising since 70 percent of your immune system is found in your gut. One study in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* found that a diet rich in whole grains increased a type of gut bacteria called *Lachnospira*, which is known to produce short-chain fatty acids. Short-chain fatty acids play a key role in preventing infection and fighting pathogens in the intestinal barrier. What's more, a diet rich in whole grains also leads to an increase in memory T-cells—a type of lymphocyte that provides a more potent response to protect against repeated infections by an antigen that has made you sick in the past. Consuming whole grains can also reduce *Enterobacteriaceae*, a family of harmful gut bacteria that triggers infection and inflammation.

The one drawback of eating some whole grains is that they contain gluten—and that can be a problem for some people. Fortunately, buckwheat, brown rice, millet, oats, and quinoa are all gluten-free whole grains that boast the same immune-boosting benefits as their gluten-filled counterparts. As a bonus, oats contain beta-glucan, which clinical trials suggest improves immunity, speeds wound healing, and may help antibiotics work better. But choose your oats wisely. Steel cut oats have double the amount of beta-glucan as rolled quick-cooking or instant varieties.

The Best Foods to Maximize Your Defenses

While increasing the quality of your overall diet can provide powerful immune system support, these eight specific foods can further increase your resistance to disease.

❶ Beef. Red meat, especially beef, is an excellent source of zinc. This important mineral plays a key role in the development of white blood cells. Without adequate zinc levels, you are more vulnerable to infection.

❷ Carrots. An excellent source of beta carotene, carrots support the mucus membranes that line the respiratory and intestinal tracts. Beta carotene also reduces inflammation and increases the number of infection fighting cells, such as your NK cells and T-helper cells.

❸ **Fish.** Selenium, which is plentiful in shellfish, helps white blood cells produce virus-clearing cytokines. Fish, especially cold-water fish, is also a good source of omega-3 fatty acids, melatonin, tryptophan, and taurine—nutrients that support a strong immune system.

❹ **Mushrooms.** These edible fungi are rich in both antioxidants and the immune-regulating mineral selenium. Button mushrooms also boast the B vitamins riboflavin and niacin, which play a role in a healthy immune system.

❺ **Spinach.** Loaded with folate and vitamin C, spinach aids in DNA repair and helps the body produce new cells and tissues. Eat spinach raw or lightly cooked to get the most nutritional benefit.

❻ **Tomatoes.** If you're trying to avoid that bug that's going around, ladle up some lycopene-rich tomato soup. According to a study in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, volunteers who ate a tomato-based diet for three weeks experienced 38 percent less free radical damage to their immune cells than those who ate no tomato products. To unlock the immune-boost power of tomatoes, they need to be cooked or processed so opt for tomato soup, marinara sauce, or roasted tomatoes instead of fresh.

❼ **Watermelon.** This summertime favorite is a wonderful source of glutathione. A powerful antioxidant, glutathione may be the body's most important cellular defense against free radical damage. Since white blood cells also rely on the availability of glutathione to reproduce, enjoying this juicy fruit often can help you maintain adequate levels.

Fill two-thirds of your plate with colorful fruits and/or veggies at each meal.

❽ **Yogurt.** Making yogurt and other fermented foods part of your daily diet provides beneficial probiotics that help protect against harmful bacteria. In fact, research has shown that eating yogurt enhances the body's expression of a protein called gamma interferon, which aids in developing white blood cells. Fermented foods have also been found to increase cytokines and TNF-α. To get these benefits, however, check the label to ensure your yogurt contains "live active cultures."

CHAPTER THREE

Herbs That Power Up Your Immunity

Your immune system functions best when it is continually nourished and supported. The following herbs have been shown to enhance your defenses against threats, both large and small, to help you stay well all year long.

Astragalus. This herb is often used in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) to support the immune system. Western medicine recently discovered why. In one systemic review of 19 studies and clinical trials conducted in 2023, investigators found that astragalus significantly reduces the markers of inflammation while increasing the production of helper T-cells. Other research reports that astragalus also boosts the activity of macrophages and NK cells, as well as B cells and T cells. Because this herb is so good at enhancing overall immune function, it's often used to prevent or treat upper respiratory ailments, including the common cold.

Burdock. Native to Asia and Europe, burdock has been used medicinally in TCM for centuries. Many of the herb's health benefits can be credited to burdock's potent antioxidant, antiviral, and antibacterial properties. According to research in the journal *Andrologia*, burdock has stronger antioxidant activity than vitamin C. It's also been found to increase levels of two of the body's most effective antioxidants—glutathione peroxidase and superoxide dismutase. These antioxidants scavenge free radicals that can contribute to a number of chronic diseases.

Several studies also note that burdock boasts anti-inflammatory action. This was seen in a 2020 clinical trial involving 36 patients with osteoarthritis of the knee. Those participants who supplemented with burdock root in addition to their standard treatment experienced a significant drop in inflammatory markers. They also had less free radical damage.

Extracts made from burdock root have also shown to protect against microbial infections. According to preliminary studies, burdock root extracts can kill various types of bacteria and the yeast *Candida albicans*. Burdock root extract also disrupts sticky layers of bacteria known as biofilms. Because biofilms are hard to eliminate, especially in hospitals, they can contribute to the rise in superbugs. In addition, burdock destroys *E. coli*, a common cause of urinary tract infections and food poisoning.

Echinacea. This antioxidant-rich herb is a popular "go-to" during cold and flu season—and with good reason. Echinacea contains a complex mix of compounds with antimicrobial and antiviral properties. It also stimulates the production of immunoglobulin M (IgM), an antibody that acts as a part of your body's initial defense against infection. A review

The AHCC Advantage

Technically known as active hexose correlated compound, AHCC is a standardized extract of cultured Lentinula edodes mycelia (a fermented mushroom extract) that has been proven to be a highly bioavailable immune stimulant. Research shows that it boosts the body's immune response to a variety of viral, bacterial, and fungal infections by strengthening NK cells, T-cells, and cytokines. A study involving 30 healthy subjects showed that those who took AHCC after getting a flu shot had higher levels of essential T-Cells than those who just received the shot. In another study from Yale University School of Medicine, supplementing with AHCC for 30 days helped enhance long-term immunity among healthy elderly adults. Other research suggests that AHCC may have potential against the human papillomavirus (HPV), a viral infection that increases the risk of several types of cancer.

at the University of Connecticut found that echinacea decreased the odds of developing the common cold by 58 percent. It also shortened the duration of a cold by as much as four days in those who did become sick. Another review reported that the herb could reduce the risk of developing an upper respiratory tract infection by 22 percent and might prevent severe respiratory infections.

Elderberry. Extracts of this deep purple berry possess potent antioxidant properties. It's also a strong antiviral that's been shown to enhance the body's response to colds and flu without overstimulating the immune system. During one double-blind, placebo-controlled study, 312 air travelers were randomized to take either an elderberry extract or a placebo before, during, and after their flight. Researchers found that those in the elderberry group experienced fewer colds than those taking a placebo. But elderberry doesn't just offer protection; the researchers found that it can also make you feel better sooner if you do come down with the sniffles. That's because elderberry reduces both the severity of cold symptoms and the duration of the illness.

Studies show that elderberry can help protect against the flu, too. A double-blind, placebo-controlled study of elderberry against ten strains of the influenza virus found that it stopped the flu dead in its tracks by boosting cytokine production. Elderberry was also shown to stimulate the production of T-cells and block the replication of the flu virus.

Rhubarb Root. Used in TCM since the third millennium, rhubarb root has been relied on to treat a variety of ailments such as constipation, fever, and inflammation. Rich in antioxidants, the roots of the plant possess strong antibacterial properties.

According to a 2020 study in the journal *Chinese Medicine*, rhubarb is effective against a wide range of harmful bacteria, including *Staphylococcus aureus, Heliobacter pylori*, and *Escherichia coli*. It's also been shown to inhibit the growth of pathogenic bacteria in the intestinal tract, which helps to maintain healthy immune function in the lining of the gut.

One compound in rhubarb root, rhaponticin, also provides anti-inflammatory benefits. Clinical studies show that rhubarb root decreases the inflammatory response that can be triggered by infection. It may also help to thwart low level inflammation throughout the body.

Sheep Sorrel. This perennial herb has been used for centuries both as medicine and as food. Sheep sorrel is a good source of two critical antioxidants: vitamin A and vitamin C. Vitamin A is an effective anti-inflammatory micronutrient that is essential for a healthy immune system. Vitamin C, on the other hand, helps to heal wounds and fight infection by enhancing the production of B and T cells and helping them function more efficiently. One clinical trial of elderly pneumonia patients conducted in the U.K. found that vitamin C reduced the severity of the infection and shortened recovery time.

Sheep sorrel also contains a variety of flavonoids and polyphenols that protect against free radical damage. The most important flavonoid in this leafy green herb is quercetin, a nutrient that boasts strong antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and antiviral properties. In one study that appeared in the journal *Mediators of Inflammation*, sorrel prevented oxidative stress in farm workers occupationally exposed dust. This helped reduce the likelihood of respiratory issues and lung disease among these workers.

Slippery Elm. Slippery elm is a red tree native to Canada and the U.S. The inner bark contains mucilage, a slime-like substance that transforms into a gel when it comes into contact with water or saliva. Mucilage has been reported to heal injuries and soothe a dry, scratchy throat. But that may be just the beginning of this herb's infection-fighting powers. Research in the journal *Molecules* found that slippery elm killed a common bacteria *(Streptococcus pyogenes)* that causes sore throat by preventing it from forming biofilms.

The herb also contains prebiotic compounds that reduce some types of harmful intestinal bugs that can trigger inflammation. Plus, it's been shown to increase beneficial immune-supporting bacteria in the gut. During one small study involving 12 people, slippery elm increased *Bifidobacterium, Lactobacillus,* and *Bacteroides*, probiotic strains that contribute to a balanced microbiome and a healthy immune response. And, in a study published in *PeerJ*, Canadian researchers reported that slippery elm also blocks the production of interleukin-8, a cytokine that causes inflammation in cells.

CHAPTER FOUR

Practice Wellness

The things you do every day can play a huge role in your overall wellness. Paired with an immune-fortifying diet and supplement plan, the following habits can help to keep you healthy and happy no matter what health challenges you may face.

Exercise Often

According to a 2019 study review out of Appalachian State University, moderate intensity exercise stimulates cellular immunity by increasing the circulation of those immune cells that identify and kill a variety of viruses and bacteria. Plus, exercise delays the onset of age-related muscle loss—a condition technically known as sarcopenia. Other studies show that moderate, but not high, intensity exercise can also help to keep inflammation in check.

If that weren't enough, exercise also raises your body temperature, and that can help prevent harmful bacteria from growing. This temporary boost in temperature might also help the body fight infection more effectively. And exercise slows down the release of cortisol and other stress-related hormones that can make you more vulnerable to illness.

So how much exercise is enough? If you're sedentary, start out with just 10 minutes of daily activity every day at least five days per week. Then gradually add five minutes to your workout each week. The ultimate goal for optimal wellness is 30-60 minutes of moderate aerobic exercise like walking, biking, or dancing three to five times per week and at least 20 minutes of strength training twice a week. Studies show that strength training builds muscle which increases the amount of immune-boosting glutamine your body produces.

Studies show that strength training builds muscle which increases the amount of immune-boosting glutamine your body produces.

Stay Hydrated

All cells, including your immune cells, need water to function properly. Water helps to flush out toxins that can make you sick. Maintaining optimum hydration also helps the mucous membranes that line your nasal passage and sinuses stay moist so they can better deal with airborne germs, pollutants, and allergens.

For true hydration, opt for pure H2O whenever possible. You can also augment your liquid intake with teas, coffee, or broth. To ensure you're getting enough fluid ounces, take your weight in pounds and divide it in half. This will give you your personalized daily fluid requirement.

One type of beverage that doesn't contribute to your fluid intake is alcohol. That's because alcohol suppresses your immune response in key organs like your lungs. In fact, chronic alcohol consumption negatively impacts pathogen clearance and tissue repair

throughout the respiratory system. It also triggers inflammation in the intestinal tract and damages T-cells, neutrophils, and other immune cells in the gut.

Sleep Well

Not getting enough sleep can suppress your immune response and put you at greater risk of infection. A study commissioned by the National Institutes of Health found that adults who cut back on sleep for six weeks had increased markers of inflammation. People who are sleep deprived also develop fewer antibodies. As a result, they likely get less protection from vaccines. To ensure you're getting enough zzzz's, strive for seven to nine hours of quality sleep each night. Set the stage for a good night's sleep by establishing a consistent sleep routine, keeping your room cool, dark, and quiet, and avoiding alcohol and caffeine for at least a few hours before turning in.

Stress Less

There's increasing proof that chronic stress can lead to a significant decrease in the ability of the immune system to fight off disease. One reason is that unrelenting stress leads to high levels of cortisol—a stress hormone that causes immune cells to age faster. But regularly practicing relaxation techniques like yoga or meditation can ease tension and boost immune function.

ACTION PLAN

Your "Stay Well" Tipsheet

EAT WELL

- **Carry a water bottle** and drink from it frequently throughout the day to help your immune cells function properly.
- **Add fermented foods** like kefir, sauerkraut, or kim chi to your diet to bolster the immune-fortifying bacteria in your gut.
- **Check out your local farmer's market** for colorful, antioxidant-rich fruits and vegetables.
- **Whip up a pot of hearty steel-cut oatmeal** for an early morning dose of immune-supporting beta-glucan.

LIVE WELL

- **Start your day** with a brisk 15-30 minute walk to power up your immune system.
- **Wash your hands often**, scrubbing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after being around someone who is ill.
- **Hit the sack at the same time** every night. Studies show that consistent, adequate sleep is essential for antibody formation, a healthy immune response, and a happier mood.
- **Avoid second-hand smoke**, which can increase your risk of upper respiratory infection by triggering free radical damage and inflammation.

SUPPLEMENT WELL

- **Ensure your immune system is at the ready** 365 days a year with a daily dose of **Essiac Vegetable Capsules**. A powerful combination of burdock root, Indian rhubarb root, sheep sorrel, and slippery elm, it's like having an immune-supporting superhero on your side.

- **Need even more protection?** Revitalize your defenses with **Essiac Gold with AHCC**. This unique supplement pairs the immune supportive ingredients in the original Essiac formula with AHCC, which is clinically shown to increase the activity of those all-important NK cells.

- **Power up your defenses** during cold and flu season or during periods of stress with a blend of clinically proven herbs and adaptogens. We're a fan of **Essiac Lymphatic Drops**, which contains a proprietary mixture of astragalus, echinacea, elderberry, ginger, and red root—all herbs shown to enhance immunity and support lymphatic health.

Have you ever wondered why you're more likely to get sick after a stressful event? The key lies in your lymphatic system—a group of vessels and organs that, as part of your immune system, help protect against infection. But stress, especially chronic stress, can damage your lymphatic tissue, leaving you vulnerable to whatever's going around. Essiac® Lymphatic Drops pairs a unique adaptogenic formula with potent immune-boosting herbs to help you stay healthy, especially during times of stress.* Plus, it's alcohol-free and kosher certified. Created with 100% organic and wild-crafted herbs, Essiac Lymphatic Drops provides comprehensive and convenient immune support you can trust.

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