DIET AND AUTOIMMUNE DISEASES

Make your Diet Work for You

© Elaine Moore

Certain foods known as immunity boosters aid the healing process in people with autoimmune disorders.

Defining a Good Diet

A good diet has long been considered the basis of good health. The simple term good diet refers to a diet that provides the countless nutrients present in whole foods that are essential for life and provided in a well-balanced diet. In addition these foods should be free of chemical contaminants and contain an abundant supply of vitamins and minerals.

A good diet contains an assortment of foods rich in vitamins A, B complex, C and E; foods with high mineral content, particularly zinc, selenium, calcium and magnesium; foods rich in omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids such as oily fish, seeds and nuts; adequate protein from lean meats and grain; fiber from grains, fruit and vegetables. To prevent allergies the diet should be varied and the same foods shouldn't be eaten on a daily basis.

Vitamin C found in many fruits and vegetables is needed by all of the immune system's cells to carry out their functions. Vitamin A found in liver, dairy products, oily fish and plant foods is essential for the thymus gland, an immune system organ necessary for the proper maturation of immune system cells. B vitamins and calcium are needed for white blood cells known as phagocytes and for proper skeletal muscle and nervous system function. Vitamin E, zinc, and selenium are powerful antioxidant needed to reduce oxidative stress and for antibody production. All immune system cells require protein for their continued production. Protein sources are also needed for the production of amino acids and antibodies.

Immune System Effects

A good diet can strengthen, not stimulate, the immune system and enable all of the body's organs to carry on with their intended functions. On the other hand, a bad diet contains food ladled with pesticides, chemical preservatives, artificial sweeteners, and stabilizers that are detrimental to our health. For instance, the unnatural composition of iodized food products, while preventing iodine deficiency in certain regions, has been found to trigger autoimmune thyroid disease worldwide. And certain molecules in genetically engineered products are recognized as foreign by our immune systems, and in turn, our immune systems are stimulated and weakened, which promotes autoimmune disease development.

Chemical Toxins
Chemicals such as chlorine and fluoride added to our water supplies also cripple the immune system, as do antibiotics added to the grains fed to cattle and poultry. It's not surprising that many people with penicillin allergies develop hives or symptoms of anaphylaxis after eating poultry or beef. For those of us with autoimmune diseases, maintaining a good diet involves avoiding processed foods, buying free range or organic meat products, and adding foods known to be top immunity boosters to our diets.

An efficient functioning immune system is essential for good health and for the prevention and healing of autoimmune diseases. An efficient immune system also protects us from infection and cancerous growths and helps temper the allergic response. Signs of a poorly functioning immune system include autoimmune diseases, digestive problems, fatigue, joint pain, muscle weakness, food intolerances, allergies, and poor skin.

**Top Immunity Boosters**

Different foods differ not only in taste and appearance but also in their nutrient content. The top immunity boosters listed in this article include foods with the proven ability to improve immune system health. In some cases, specific nutrients can only be found in a scattering of different foods, foods considered essential for immune health. While dietary supplements are another important component of immune system health, many nutrients can't be adequately extracted from food sources and can only be obtained from eating whole foods. And since many nutrients are only found in foods of a certain color, dietary experts recommend choosing foods from a broad spectrum of colors for optimal health.

The top 10 immune system boosters include, which supply the highest levels of these nutrients, include beets, shiitake mushrooms, avocado, curly kale, grapefruit, blueberry, brazil nuts, soy beans, green tea and garlic. Other top immune boosters include sweet potatoes, carrots, onions, garlic, yams, red bell peppers, tomatoes, rhubarb, pumpkin, chili peppers, avocados, cruciferous vegetables, watercress, nettle, spinach, Belgian endive, globe artichokes, arugula, kiwi, pineapple, papayas, mangoes, guava, cantaloupe, passion fruits, citrus fruits, bananas, grapes, berries, rosehips, hazelnuts, apples, endive, walnuts, cashews, almonds, pistachio nuts, sunflower and pumpkin seeds, safflower oil, evening primrose oil, sesame seed and oil, aduki beans, oats, wheat germ, quinoa, bulgur, rice, corn, kidney beans, lima beans, green beans, lentils, snow peas, turkey, guinea fowl, pheasant, duck, chicken, fresh tuna, salmon, anchovy, mackerel, shrimp, yogurt, peppermint, chamomile, rosemary, ginger and turmeric. These foods all contain an abundance of nutrients with antioxidant, immune restoring or anti-inflammatory properties.

**Resource:**