



# The Wellness Family

Dr. Cuperus Keeps You Informed

## Supporting a Healthy Immune System

As the weather turns colder, you may find that your family will be spending less time outside and more time inside with the heater running. Your body's natural immunity against common illnesses will be put to the test now more than ever, right down to the common cold or the flu.

### What is Immunity?

Immunity is defined as having resistance to infection or a specific disease; and your immune system is the network within your body that recognizes and destroys invading or foreign bacteria, viruses and germs.

The immune system is like no other bodily system, as it is not just one organ but an interaction between many organs, structures and substances within the body. Your immune system has the task of patrolling and protecting the body. It does this using a number of tools inside your body: white blood cells, bone marrow, the lymphatic system, specialized cells and body tissues, and specialized substances that are present in the blood. All of these must work together to protect the body against viral or bacterial infections and disease.

### Immunity Status

It's not difficult to tell when your immune system is being overly taxed; one of the first symptoms is fatigue. Other symptoms to look for include chronic infections, frequent colds and flu, frequent cold sores and sore or swollen lymph glands.

A poorly functioning immune system can be caused by many factors. These can include any of the following:

- Emotional state/stress
- Abrupt lifestyle changes
- Dietary habits/nutritional intake
- Surgical/medical treatments
- Prescription medications

When your immune system is not functioning at its best, any exposure to germs, bacterial or viral infections can lead to a serious health risk.

### Healthy Changes

There are choices you can make for your family to help them have strong and healthy immune systems. Then, as children bring home bugs from school, your whole family can fight them off successfully.

The first change should be dietary. Food provides energy for our bodies and there are several vitamins and minerals that are a fundamental part of a strong immunity, including the following:

- Vitamins A, C, E, Beta-Carotene and Selenium are antioxidants, which are part of our body's natural defense mechanism – consumed in fruits and vegetables
- The mineral Zinc is important because of the role it plays in increasing your child's resistance to infection – found in red meats, eggs and most dairy products
- Magnesium is another important mineral essential for boosting your child's immune system – available in legumes and milk



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Additional dietary changes that can help support your family's immune systems include:

- Eat three meals and two snacks a day – making sure that at least four out of the five are rich in protein and dark green vegetables
- Purge the kitchen, eliminating all junk food and snacks – or – store them in a medium sized Rubbermaid container in the garage or master bedroom out of the reach of children (make it an effort to get to these items so they won't be consumed as easily or as frequently)
- Reduce sugar intake as much as possible – studies have shown a high intake of processed sugar adversely affects the immune system as it impairs the ability of white blood cells to sweep up and kill bacteria
- Keep fruits, nuts and boxed raisins on the counter; celery with peanut butter or other "like" items in the fridge; go to your local health food store to find some other great tasting alternatives. (ie. European or whole grain breads, cheeses and fruits)
- Consider taking the time once every six weeks to write down what your family eats for a week and look for areas of improvement.

Finally, make sleep a high priority for your entire family. Long considered a restorative process that is a fundamental part of a healthy body, recent clinical studies have found that sleep is also a crucial part of a properly functioning immune system. In fact, a sleep-deprived individual's immune system includes patterns of alteration similar to those found in depressed and alcoholic patients.

Age	Total Hours Sleep	Naps in Hours
6 Months	14-15	3-4
1-2 Years	13-14	1-3
3 Years	12-13	1
4 Years	11-12	no longer naps
5-9 Years	10-11	no longer naps
10-15 Years	9-10	no longer naps
16+ Years	approx. 8 hours	no longer naps

It may be that your child just won't sleep this long, but, while this chart is certainly not a requirement, it is most definitely a healthy guideline. The most important thing to remember is that good rest is a prerequisite for a healthy immune system, so begin to establish a simple routine Sunday through Thursday that encourages your child to get their much-needed sleep.

Some suggested routines to fight stimulation close to bedtime can include:

- No TV, VCR, DVD or computer/video games in the child's room
- No homework right before bed
- Avoid TV, computer games within an hour of bedtime
- Play soothing music or have "Story Time" with little ones an hour before bed

### Other Tips and Recommendations

To help support your immune system and keep it operating at peak efficiency, consider the following healthy lifestyle choices for you and your family:

- Increase your water intake – you should be drinking at least 8-10 glasses of water per day to boost the immune system and flush out toxins
- Exercise regularly – daily physical activity for 30 minutes a day will improve your overall health and give your immune system the boost it needs
- De-stress – be sure to include regular relaxation and down-time into your weekly schedule as stress will quickly wear down your body's natural defenses

### Herbal Remedies

The most popular natural remedy for supporting the immune system is the herbal supplement. These are Mother Nature's cure for a poorly functioning or over-taxed immune system.

- Astragalus Root is used to treat viral infections including the common cold, it helps to stimulate white blood cells and protects from invading organisms
- Bayberry has antibiotic effects for sore throat, coughs, colds and the flu
- Garlic is effective against many types of bacteria, viruses, parasites and fungi as well as has anti-inflammatory and astringent properties
- Ashwagandha is a general stimulant of the immune system – this herb is known to counteract the effects of stress and promote general well-being
- Ginseng is popularly known to provide support to the immune system
- Goldenseal strengthens the immune system, cleanses and detoxifies the body and has antibacterial properties
- Echinacea is an herb that helps to stimulate a variety of immune cells
- Green tea can stimulate the immune system
- Gargling or steaming with Apple Cider Vinegar and water has proven health benefits

### The Chiropractic Factor

Your immune system is a bodily system and as such is controlled by your central nervous system. When your spine is out of alignment or subluxated, your nervous system suffers and this will affect all of your body's natural systems, including your immune system.

Your Doctor of Chiropractic is the only healthcare professional dedicated to the understanding that a properly functioning central nervous system will improve you and your family's overall health. Many patients report back an improvement in their family's quality of life after beginning routine wellness Chiropractic care.



Dear Patient,  
 Dr. Cuperus is dedicated to providing you with the absolute best in family wellness care. So take a moment today to discuss with your Family Wellness Chiropractor any concerns you may have regarding your family's overall health and wellness.

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