

BETter Living ...

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Ways to Build Immunity

None of us expected that 2020 would bring a change to society that impacts all aspects of life. Many of us are away from our location of work, school, and other community activities. We are in our homes learning new technology so we can collaborate with others, learn new things, and proceed with educating our youth.

In this time of quarantine, we want to look at the positive side in regards to spending quality time with family. Many times we have so many things that are consuming our time and we do not get to connect with family members. Relationships help us grow and learn and make us healthier. Besides people helping our health, there are several other factors that we will discuss.

Alcohol & Smoking

According to the U.S. Dietary Guidelines, Americans should consume alcohol in moderation if they consume it at all. That would be 1 drink per day for women and 2 drinks per day for men. If you do not currently consume alcohol, you should not start. If you currently smoke, quit. Smoking damages your airways, which increase your chance of getting sick. By quitting, you will allow your immune system to repair and become stronger.

Nutrition

It is important to get not only macronutrients such as: protein, carbohydrates, fat, but also micronutrients, in your diet, especially throughout seasons of illness. The best way to get micronutrients is through fruits and vegetables, as they include lots of vitamins and minerals. In the schools, I always teach the students to eat the colors of the rainbow at every meal. The more colors of foods you include on your plate the greater the chance of increasing your vitamins and mineral consumption. Vitamin C and Zinc play a strong role in your immunity.

Hands

The importance of handwashing has definitely come to the forefront. For many years, I have used a black light and glow lotion to simulate the germs that on our hands with students in schools and teach them the importance of washing their hands with warm water and soap and drying them with paper towels. Our hands touch many door handles, countertops, tables, and surfaces, so always wash your hands prior to food prep, after using the restroom, before you eat, and anytime you cough, sneeze, or blow your nose. If you do not have access to soap and water, then alcohol based sanitizer will be the second best option.

Exercise

The recommendations for adults is to include a minimum of 150 minutes per week that is 30 minutes per day for at least 5 days. Physical activity increases the circulation in your body which allows the immune system cells to move freely throughout your body. It also will help maintain a healthy weight, reduce blood pressure, and help protect against multiple diseases.

Sleep & Stress

Getting enough sleep is very important as your whole body needs the time to rest, repair, and renew. Stress levels can effect your quality of sleep by increasing the levels of cortisol in your body. It is important to reduce your stress which in turn will improve your sleep. Deep breathing and meditation can help reduce stress levels. Here are the recommended hours of sleep based on age: Adults: 7-9; Teens: 8-10; School-age: 9-11; Preschoolers: 10-13.

I hope you all take this time to renew, relax, eat the colors of the rainbow, spend time with family, wash your hands with soap and warm water and get quality exercise and sleep, which in turn will help your immune system and will keep you healthy.

For more information, visit: health.gov, sleepfoundation.org, smokefree.gov, choosemyplate.gov, or email me: btrieb@ksu.edu.