

Boosting your child's immunity

Every parent wants his or her child to be healthy so as not to miss school or other important calendar events in the child's life.

It's also hard for parents to see their children suffer with aches and pains associated with being sick. What is one sure way to prevent your child getting sick at every flu season and from developing lifestyle diseases like childhood diabetes and obesity?

Boosting your child's immune system by providing balanced diets from a wide variety of foods to supply the nutrients needed for maintaining good health is primary in keeping your children from common illnesses. These include influenza, ear, nose and throat infections, bronchial irregularities and allergies.

According to Jane Sheppard, publisher of www.healthychild.com, we must give children a healthy attitude to understanding food so that they have control over their own bodies. The guidelines include:

1. Consuming lavish amounts of fruits and vegetables to provide phyto-chemicals which keep the immune cells healthy and keep children free from disease now and later on in life. Your children should be taught that eating fruits and vegetables are important to prevent diseases. They should be served fruits when they are in season and should learn to eat unusual fruit like pomegranates and plums which are powerful immune-boosting fruits. Vegetables should include loads of dark-green leafy vegetables as well as brightly coloured veggies like tomatoes, carrots, pumpkin and cruciferous vegetables like broccoli, cabbage and cauliflower.
2. Other wholesome foods like peas, beans and nuts should be included in the diet. These are excellent because they have healthy fats.
3. Watch the consumption of foods with empty sugary calories. Sugar is known to place the immune system at risk as sugar depresses the ability of the white blood cells to fight infection. Snacks that children love like Cheese Trix, sweet biscuits and chips are examples of foods for children with empty calories.
4. Probiotics will boost the immune system by stimulating white blood cells that fight infection of the respiratory tract and prevent allergies and diarrhoea. Dr Gary Huffingale, in his book *The Probiotics Revolution*, suggests that parents start feeding their children yoghurt with *Lactobacillus acidophilus* combined with ripe bananas and other fruit.
5. Let children play in the sun, a natural and primary source of vitamin D which helps the immune system. Fifteen minutes in the sun should provide enough vitamin D for the day.
6. There is a relationship between hormones and the immune system so any hormonal imbalance will affect the immune system. Selenium, a powerful antioxidant, will boost the immune system.

7. A little dirt only helps to boost the immune system instead of damaging it. It is natural for children to play in dirt and sometimes eat it so parents should not panic too much as the body will respond and the immune system will kick in by

trying to expel bacteria from the body.

8. In addition to good nutrition, children need physical activity through play for boosting mental and emotional growth. Unstructured play also keeps children happy, as an important factor in keeping the immune system healthy.