

CSFP Nutrition Newsletter

FOODS TO HELP BUILD THE IMMUNE SYSTEM

A strong immune system is essential to good health and protecting the body from harmful substances, bacteria, and viruses. A healthful diet can help to keep your immune system in top shape. When you combine healthy eating with staying hydrated, getting plenty of sleep, exercising on a regular basis and finding positive ways to deal with stress, you'll set up your immune system to be at its best.

Feeding your body with certain foods may help keep your immune system strong.

Look no further than your CSFP food package to find certain foods that will help improve your immune system. Following is a list of those foods and their unique qualities.

Lentils

Lentils are a plant-based protein food that is a good source of zinc, iron, and Vitamin B6, all of which contribute to building infection-fighting white blood cells.

One cup of lentils provides 37% of recommended daily amount of iron, 17% recommended daily amount of zinc and 18% recommended daily amount of Vitamin B6.

Rolled Oats

Rolled oats provide beta-glucan, selenium and zinc which help to enhance immune function. Beta-glucan is a type of fiber found in oats that helps to build white blood cells. It can also activate chemical

reactions in the body that help the immune system function more efficiently. Selenium and zinc aid in fighting infection. Oats also have arginine, which helps with blood flow and helps to heal injuries. Oats have antioxidants which help prevent the body's cells from becoming damaged and infected.



Spinach

Spinach has numerous antioxidants and iron, all which are involved with keeping the immune system healthy.

Iron is an under consumed mineral by most individuals across the globe and having iron-deficiency anemia can contribute to an impaired immune system. Consuming a high iron food (like spinach) with a food that's rich in Vitamin C (oranges, leafy greens, tomatoes) helps with iron absorption.

Don't Forget the Water!

Since our bodies are comprised of approximately 60% water, staying hydrated is important for keeping the body's systems working sound, especially the immune system. An element in our body called "lymph" is comprised mostly of water and carries important infection-fighting immune cells around your body. Being dehydrated slows down the movement of lymph, and sometimes leads to an impaired immune system.

OTHER FOODS THAT HELP BUILD IMMUNITY

Grapes

Although grapes contain numerous antioxidants that protect the body's cells from damage, they also contain a critical component: water. Grapes are composed of 82% water and can also help keep you hydrated.



Walnuts

Walnuts are bursting with an Omega-3 fatty acid that the body cannot make and must be acquired through food, such as walnuts. Walnuts have been shown to have prebiotic properties, which means they can help maintain good "gut" health and a properly functioning immune system.

References:

Mashhadi NS, Ghiasvand R, Askari G, Hariri M, Darvishi L, Mofid MR. Anti-oxidative and anti-inflammatory effects of ginger in health and physical activity: review of current evidence. *Int J Prev Med.* 2013;4(Suppl 1):S36-S42.

Amidor, Toby. "Optimal Nutrition For a Healthy Immune System". *Today's Dietitian*, January 2022, pp. 13-15;

<https://health.clevelandclinic.org/health-benefits-of-grapes>

<https://www.healthstartfoundation.org/hsblog/6-quick-easy-snacks-to-boost-your-immune-system>

Immune-Boosting Spinach-Yogurt Dip



Ingredients:

3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided

Two-11-ounce packages baby spinach OR 1 can spinach; squeeze in paper towel to dry

1 garlic clove, finely grated

1 1/2 cups plain Greek yogurt (2% fat)

1/2 cup finely chopped fresh cilantro

Salt

How To Make It:

Heat 1 tablespoon oil in a large skillet over high heat.

Add half of spinach and cook, tossing often, until just wilted; transfer to a colander and let cool. Repeat with 1 tablespoon oil and remaining spinach.

Coarsely chop the spinach.

Mix spinach, garlic, yogurt, cilantro, and remaining 1 tablespoon oil in a medium bowl Season with salt.

Cover and chill for one hour prior to serving.

Serve with crunchy, raw vegetables or whole grain pita chips.

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