

- Influenza / Communicable diseases—Prevention / Cold (Disease)

Stay healthy this flu season

Use the following tips and tricks to stay protected, as best you can, against the flu

The Chronicle Herald (Metro) · 27 Sep 2021 · A9 · ELLEN GREENAN, RD

With flu season fast approaching, it's time again to shift our focus to staying healthy and boosting our immunity. Any one can get the flu, including healthy individuals, however older adults, young children and those with certain pre-existing health conditions are at a higher risk for flu-related complications. Last year with all of the COVID19 restrictions that were in place, flu season was almost non-existent in Canada. But experts say this year could be much different, as people begin to socialize more, travel and get back to their usual routines in the community.

Whether you are looking to protect yourself or a loved one this fall, there are a few key steps you can take to boost your immunity and stay healthy.

EAT A BALANCED DIET

When it comes to immune health there are a few key nutrients to include in your diet:

- Vitamin C (bell pepper, strawberries, oranges, broccoli, spinach) and Zinc (oysters, pumpkin seeds, beef, lobster, beans, cashews).
- Vitamin E, A and certain B vitamins also play a role in our immune function (nuts and seeds, fish, carrots, winter squash, legumes, meat). Worried about meeting your recommendations for these nutrients? Start by balancing your plate, include a fruit or vegetable, whole grain and protein at each meal. Also focus on variety in your diet, eating a variety of foods means you are more likely to get all the essential vitamins and minerals you need. Don't only rely on taking vitamin tablets and supplements, they can't fully replace the nutritional value of whole foods. If you have specific concerns about your intake, talk to your doctor or dietitian.

STAY HYDRATED

Humans are comprised of more than 50 per cent water, so staying hydrated is critical to helping your blood carry essential nutrients to your organs and muscles. The older we get, the less sensitive our thirst response becomes,

putting us at a higher risk of dehydration. If water isn't always the most appealing to you, try infusing your water with fresh fruits and veggies. My go-to refreshing and vitamin-packed combo is strawberry, basil and lemon.

GET YOUR GUT IN CHECK

Gut health can play a large role in how well the immune system functions — the healthy bacteria in our gut help boost our immunity. You can improve your gut health through diet by eating a variety of prebiotic foods (garlic, onion, banana, asparagus, artichokes, which are food for the healthy bacteria in your gut) and probiotic foods or fermented foods (probiotic yogurt or kefir, kombucha, sauerkraut), which are a source of healthy bacteria for your gut.

GET YOUR FLU SHOT

The most important step you can take to keep from getting the flu is to get your flu shot annually. While there are diet and lifestyle choices you can make to improve your health and immunity, they are not nearly as effective as the flu shot. In fact, between 70 and 90 per cent of flu cases can be averted through vaccination.

With all of the focus on vaccines these days, it's also important to remember that the COVID-19 vaccine does not protect you from the flu! This year's flu shot will be available in the coming weeks, so stop by the pharmacy at your local Atlantic Superstore and ask about getting your flu shot in-store this fall.

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