

- Nutrition / Virus

Here are the nutrients you need to fight COVID-19

Food is medicine

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“Let medicine be thy food and let food be thy medicine” said the Father of Medicine and ancient Greek physician, Hippocrates, in 400 B.C. Food was not merely created for sustenance. It has healing properties beyond supplying us with carbohydrates, protein, and fats. Food provides vitamins, minerals, water, fiber, and phytonutrients or natural compounds that come from plants. All these nutrients have the power to not only heal but to prevent diseases as well.



The human body fights off diseases through a healthy immune system, whether it is cancer, heart disease, diabetes, skin disease, or migraine. The immune system is involved. And immunity all begins in the gut. Our digestive system is involved in the breakdown of food, and absorption and production of energy from food. It also houses approximately two-thirds of our immune cells. The gut is home to trillions of beneficial bacteria that impacts immunity. This is perhaps the reason Hippocrates was quoted as saying “All disease begins in the gut.”

If your intestinal barrier is compromised, then your immune system is weakened, thus, rendering you vulnerable to illnesses, the most concerning of which right now is the vicious COVID-19 that has not only taken millions of lives globally but has also left survivors with the debilitating effects of what we now call long COVID, a condition in which other organ systems in the body are affected, including the heart, kidneys, lungs, and blood vessels.

To understand the connection among food, immunity, and COVID-19, it is important to know what happens inside the body when infected with the virus. The infection causes an overproduction of small proteins called cytokines that increase inflammation. This causes destruction and thickening or scarring of lung tissues.

The goal of managing this condition is to quell the inflammation. Some nutrients found in food have shown properties that inhibit the stimulation of inflammasomes. These are innate immune receptors and sensors that respond to infection by causing inflammatory processes to be activated.

These are some of the natural inflammasome inhibitors. Curcumin, the main natural polyphenol found in turmeric, also locally known as luyang dilaw. Unfortunately, curcumin is

poorly absorbed, rapidly metabolized, or broken down in the body and also rapidly eliminated. Combining turmeric with pepper and fatty foods like olive oil, avocado, nuts, and seeds will enhance its absorption. When cooking, remember to add some spice in the form of turmeric to your tuna or salmon while reaping the benefits of antioxidant rich curcumin. Quercetin is abundant in berries, grapes, green leafy vegetables, tomatoes, apples, onions, citrus fruits, tea (*Camellia Sinensis*), and dark chocolate. This flavonoid or plant pigment has antiviral effects against RNA and DNA viruses. It promotes eradication, inactivation, and inhibition of viral replication. It can also help reduce symptoms.

Epigallocatechin Gallate or EGCG comes from green tea or matcha. Both come from the *camellia sinensis* plant but differ in the way of processing. EGCG not only modulates inflammasome, it also potentially targets the SARS-CoV-2 (virus responsible for COVID-19 infection) main protease, which is involved in the multiplication or replication of the virus. Four cups of green tea is recommended per day. Post-kidney transplant patients, however, must refrain from taking excessive green tea as it may interact with anti-organ rejection medications.

Resveratrol is a polyphenol or plant chemical found in grapes, peanuts, cranberries, blueberries, pistachios, and cocoa or dark chocolate. Aside from decreasing inflammation, it is also good for the heart and blood circulation. As mentioned earlier, the heart and blood vessels are also affected by COVID-19. Why don't you replace your morning coffee with a cup of cocoa and nut milk sans the refined sugar? Get a shot of pure cocoa to jumpstart your morning and boost your immunity.

Don't wait until you get COVID19. Ensure that you have a healthy and balanced immune system to help you ward off the threat of infection. Eat your daily dose of fresh vegetables, fruits, whole grains, nuts, and seeds, which all contain the plant nutrients that will arm you in this worldwide battle against COVID-19.

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