

VITAMINS TO HELP BOOST IMMUNITY

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THE Omicron variant has caused a surge in Covid-19 infections since the middle of last month. Although the variant appears to be less severe than its predecessors, it cannot be taken lightly.

The search for safe and effective treatments to manage Covid-19 is a global and concerted effort that will take time and money.

Hence, it should be noted that currently, there are no supplements that have been shown to cure or prevent the spread of Covid-19.

However, there is evidence that some supplements and supportive treatments may have beneficial effects in Covid-19 management. The overall goal is to reduce transmission of the virus, improve the immune system and control inflammation.

Here are some options to consider.

VITAMIN D: This is top of the list. A vitamin D deficiency is highly correlated with severity of disease. Covid-19 patients with low vitamin D levels present an increased risk of acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS), a life-threatening condition characterised by low oxygen levels and “stiff” lungs.

In addition, patients with low vitamin D have higher susceptibility to infection and hospitalisation. Vitamin D also improves the immune system and controls inflammation at the same time.

MAGNESIUM: In Covid-19, magnesium reduces inflammation, oxidative stress and ensures smooth muscle relaxation in the lungs. Magnesium is involved in more than 300 biological processes, specifically functions of the brain, digestive system and heart.

Patients who are severely ill are more likely to be magnesium deficient. It should be noted that overdosing on magnesium can also cause detrimental effects, hence always seek advice from a healthcare professional before starting magnesium supplements.

POVIDONE-IODINE WASH: Multiple studies in humans have shown that povidone-iodine mouthwash and nasal spray at 0.5 to one per cent is sufficient to significantly reduce viral load within 15 seconds of contact time.

This is useful for patients who have Covid-19 to reduce the risk of transmitting the virus to people around them. Other mouthwash, such as the ones with ethanol, essential oils, cetylpyridium, chlorhexidine and hydrogen peroxide, have some evidence in reducing viral load (although not as good as povidone-iodine), and may be used as an alternative when povidone-iodine is not available.

HEMPEDU BUMI (Andrographis paniculata): A widely used medicinal plant in India, China, Thailand and Malaysia.

It is traditionally used to boost the immune system and to treat infections. It has been shown that the herb can kill the virus in test tube settings, while computer simulation studies have explained its potential use in Covid-19.

It is important to note that when it comes to herbal remedies, the quality and potency of the product may vary, hence, ensure that the product is from trustable sources with the right potency.

VITAMIN C AND ZINC: Vitamin C is arguably the most popular vitamin off the shelf. It works with zinc to boost the immune system and should generally have positive effects on Covid-19 patients.

However, when it comes to clinical trials, vitamin C and zinc have generally not shown encouraging results.

HONEY AND NIGELLA SATIVA (habatussauda): These have antiviral, antibacterial, and anti-inflammatory properties that may improve Covid-19 symptoms. There is at least one completed study in Pakistan and another ongoing studies in Egypt.

The choice of supplement products on the shelf is plentiful. Some are used in combination with other vitamins, some may interact with medications, and some may have adverse effects.

Readers are always recommended to seek advice from their pharmacists, doctors and other healthcare professionals before starting any supplements so that they do not cause more harm than good.