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# Holistic approach to boost immunity

**TAKING UP INTENSE WORKOUTS ON WEEKENDS MAY BE AS GOOD AS WORKING OUT THROUGHOUT THE WEEK, AS PER A NEW STUDY. ALL YOU NEED TO DO IS DEVOTE 150 MINUTES OF EXERCISE OVER TWO DAYS**

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In today's world, where environmental pollution, adulteration, use of ultra processed foods is so common that maintaining a strong immune system becomes a priority. Here, only one approach will not work, it is the holistic approach which is needed to boost our immune health.



Let's first understand, what do we mean by Holistic health approach. This not only focuses on use of medicines and food supplements, but in addition, considers the overall well-being, which includes body and mind, and emphasises prevention through lifestyle and natural therapies.

Let's consider some key strategies to support immune function:

## Balanced Nutrition

A diet rich in whole foods, particularly fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, is the foundation of a strong immune system. Key nutrients that support immune health are: | Vitamin C - Found in citrus fruits, bell peppers, and berries, this nutrient helps boost the immune response. As a powerful antioxidant, it strengthens the body's defence system. By supporting various immune mechanisms, like antimicrobial activities of WBC, vitamin C is a key player in the immune system. In addition, it also helps in reducing the risk of chronic diseases. A great friend of iron, helping in its absorption, vitamin C, along with iron, keeps the immune system strong. | Vitamin D - Found in fatty fish, fortified foods, and from sunlight exposure, this vitamin functions as an immune booster and its deficiency is linked to immune disorders and increased risk of infections. Vitamin D not only helps the body to fight infection but also helps in early recovery. | Zinc - Found in seeds, nuts, and legumes, this nutrient is essential for immune cell function. It is crucial in the prevention and management of viral infections. It exhibits antiviral activity and its supplementation has

shown positive impact on the immune system. | Antioxidants - Antioxidants are molecules that can help the body fight off harmful free radicals, which have been linked to many diseases, by providing resistance against infectious microbes such as bacteria, viruses, and parasites. Many vitamins, like A, C, E, are powerful antioxidants that keep the immune system strong. Polyphenols in green tea, berries, and dark chocolate help reduce oxidative stress and inflammation. | Probiotics - Fermented foods like yogurt, kefir, kimchi, etc support gut health, which is crucial for immune function, as a large portion of the immune system resides in the gut.

#### Adequate Sleep

Sleep is essential for immune health. During sleep, the body repairs and regenerates, and immune cells are more active. Chronic sleep deprivation has been linked to increased inflammation and reduced immunity. Try getting 7-8 hours good sleep for better immune health.

#### Stress Management

Chronic stress suppresses the immune system by increasing the release of cortisol, a stress hormone that inhibits immune function. Stress management techniques like meditation, yoga, deep breathing exercises, and mindfulness can significantly reduce stress and improve immune health. Also, indulging in a hobby of one's choice is another way of keeping stress at bay.

#### Physical Activity

Regular moderate exercise enhances the immune system function by promoting circulation, which helps immune cells move more effectively throughout the body. Health experts recommend minimum 150 minutes of active exercise per week to keep one in good health. Activities like walking, swimming, jogging, cycling or yoga are great options for boosting immune health, without causing excessive stress on the body.

#### Hydration

Staying well-hydrated is key to overall health, including immune function. Water not only helps eliminate toxins from the body but also supports the circulation of immune cells. Try taking at least 8-10 glasses of water per day, which can be in the form of infused water, soups, vegetable juices, laban, chaas, or even herbal teas like ginger or turmeric, which have anti-inflammatory properties.

#### Herbal and natural supplements

Several herbs and natural supplements are known to support the immune system. This includes, echinacea, turmeric, honey, ginger, and garlic. All these have some powerful phytochemicals that help in both, preventing and fighting, infection.

#### Minimising toxins

Avoiding environmental toxins, such as smoking and excessive alcohol consumption, is crucial for immune health. These habits can weaken the immune system and increase susceptibility to infections.

#### Positive social connections

Maintaining sense of community, working for higher goals and ideals has been shown to keep one happy and calm. This, in-turn, can positively affect immune function.

To conclude, it's not just one approach that will help, but it is the combination of all the approaches mentioned above that work towards building a strong immune system. The focus is on balancing the body and mind. By prioritising nutrition, sleep, stress management, physical activity, and incorporating natural remedies, one can boost immunity and promote overall well-being.

No time to even think about a workout on weekdays? So what is your excuse on weekends? While some people stay physically inactive all year round, others take at least 30-40 minutes to sweat it out but if you only get time on weekends, try to make the most of it. Turns out, cramming adequate exercise into your weekend can still reduce disease risk. If you can compensate for the lost workout during the weekends on two days you get off, you can still be healthy. Weekend warrior workout is easy to incorporate into your life, and you get the same health benefits as people who are regularly active, as per a new study. or sports, mainly on the weekends, rather than spreading them throughout the week. They usually have busy schedules during weekdays (e.g., work or family responsibilities), making it difficult to exercise regularly.

"Weekend warriors often engage in intense, longer sessions of physical activities to compensate for the lack of exercise during the weekdays," says fitness expert Yash Agarwal. Also, a new study points out that doing weekend warrior workout can lower disease risk. The study, published in the *Circulation* journal in September 2024, found that weekend warriors had a lower risk of developing over 200 diseases compared to inactive people. The list of diseases included hypertension, diabetes, kidney disease, and mood disorders. Those who managed to do at least 150 minutes of exercise were labelled as regular exercisers if their workout routine was spread out. Weekend warriors came under the category of people who crammed their 150 minutes of exercises into just one or two days in a week. Participants who did less than 150 minutes of exercises a week came under the inactive group. The study, which had nearly 90,000 participants, showed that the total amount of exercise people got was more important than how frequently they worked out.

Another study, published in August 2024 in 'Nature Aging', showed that the weekend warrior workout pattern was associated with lower risks of stroke, dementia, Parkinson's disease, and depressive disorders.

So, if you are a weekend warrior, make sure that at least 150 minutes of exercises are well spread over the weekend. You would need to exercise for about one to two hours on Saturdays and Sundays, that's all.