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Stepping up is the key to your defences against winter bugs

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As the winter chill sets in, so do our worries about seasonal sickness. In the hope of dodging coughs and colds, we're booking in flu shots and loading up on vitamins as we aim to boost immunity.



Those are all important steps, but there's another simple trick you can employ to help your body fight infection – keep it moving.

Much like a flu shot, there's no guarantee you'll avoid illness altogether, but consistent exercise acts as an important line of defence.

Your immune system works a bit like a neighbourhood watch.

Throughout your body, specialised immune defence cells travel through your bloodstream, constantly looking for threats like viruses and bacteria.

When you exercise, blood flow increases, which means those immune cells circulate more efficiently, checking more of the body and spotting potential problems earlier.

Think of it as sending more patrol cars on to the streets.

Research consistently shows people who exercise regularly tend to be more resilient when infections strike.

Large reviews of scientific studies have found regular exercisers have around a 31 per cent lower risk of developing common infectious diseases.

You don't need to spend hours in the gym or train like an elite athlete to see those benefits.

In fact, when it comes to supporting immune health, consistency matters far more than intensity.

The goal is regular movement, not exhausting yourself, so a regular brisk walk, moderate bike ride or a short

Your immune system works a bit like a neighbourhood watch ... constantly looking for threats strength training session is often enough.

Exercise also helps regulate inflammation, which plays a major role in long-term health.

Chronic inflammation is linked to conditions like cardiovascular disease and metabolic disorders, and regular movement helps the body better manage those inflammatory responses.

Put simply, exercise helps the body build resilience.

There is one caveat, however. If you do get sick, don't make the mistake of rushing straight back into hard training the moment you feel slightly better.

Your body needs time to recover and jumping back in too aggressively can set you back further.

Start gently, ease back into routine and let your body dictate the pace.

The best way to give yourself a fighting chance against winter illness is by helping your immune system work at its full potential.

So rug up, keep moving and get your body's neighbourhood watch out on patrol.

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