

21 Quick Tips to Prevent Infection & Strengthen Immunity

Seems like there's a new strain of flu, virus, or infection popping up all the time these days, right? But don't panic! Before you try one of those crazy social media trends to prevent illness, take a peek at our list of 21 tips. We want you to be prepared with holistic strategies to strengthen immunity and keep yourself healthy the natural way.

Here are 13 diet and lifestyle adjustments from TCM you can make to support a strong immune system.

1. Eat Fruits, Vegetables, Nuts, Seeds

Food is the first and most basic type of natural medicine in TCM. When the body doesn't have all the nutrients and nourishment it needs to stay in fighting shape, it can't defend against sickness. Plan to stock up on plenty of healthy fruits, vegetables, nuts, and seeds. TCM practitioners often suggest eating [Liver-specific foods](#) as that's the organ that detoxes the body. Kale, broccoli, and cabbage are three veggies you can try to keep your Liver on top of its game.

2. Try Elderberry Syrup

A classic in TCM, elderberry has finally made its grand entrance to popularity in modern medicine too. This medicinal berry is used to help bolster the immune system and help ease respiratory infections. Studies have shown that elderberries are effective in [cutting down colds](#) by up to four days. You can find elderberries in teas, syrups, and supplements.

3. Add Echinacea to Your Routine

It might be time to switch up your morning cup of tea! Ditch the black tea and opt for an echinacea tea during prime cold and flu season. There's no clear evidence that it can shorten your cold, but it is considered a [preventative measure](#).

4. Minimize Stress

Here's your perfect excuse to say 'no' to helping Karen from Accounting figure out how to use Zoom for the fifth time. Stressful situations like that can literally drain your energy and weaken your immune system. Do what you can to cut out [excessive stress](#) in your days and save that energy for your immune system.

5. Burn Sage

Sage isn't just for your hippie friends. Studies have shown that burning medicinal herbs like sage kills up to [94% of airborne bacteria](#) and the effects last up to 24 hours. Ignite

your bundle of sage and walk around your home, letting the smoke waft into each corner of the rooms to cover all your bases.

6. Increase Vitamin C and Zinc

Instead of fighting over toilet paper at the grocery store, you might want to stock up on orange juice instead. Studies have shown that [vitamin C and zinc](#) are two of the most powerful supplements to support a healthy immune system. Vitamin C is so powerful there's even a [new clinical study](#) in China for treatment of coronavirus through high amounts of the stuff.

7. Get Garlic-y

Fun fact: while it might give you some killer breath, you can also get the benefit of [immune support](#). Another superfood that can keep you healthy is garlic. Considered an antibacterial and antiviral solution, garlic is a yang food that helps [support digestion](#) and flush out toxins from the body.

8. Exercise Consistently

Just because you might want to avoid large crowds during peak sickness seasons, doesn't mean you should write off going to the gym entirely. You can actually support your immune system by maintaining a regular and balanced exercise routine. While you don't want to overdo it and put too much stress on your body, it's important to get your blood moving, your heart rate up, and maintain your physical fitness and strength.

9. Take Ginger-Turmeric Health Shots

While not as fun as a martini, an immune boosting health shot is a winner. These two-ounce drinks might be small, but they're packed with quite the punch. Ginger and turmeric have both been studied for their [immune-boosting](#) and [anti-inflammatory](#) benefits. Take a shot each morning for some daily immunity TLC. You can find health shots in many grocery and health stores or make them at home.

10. Eat More Mushrooms

In TCM, [reishi](#) and shiitake mushrooms are considered a powerful adaptogen, or superfood, designed to heal and nourish the body. Primed for immune support, mushrooms have the science to back them up too. A study on women being treated for breast cancer showed that shiitake mushroom supplements led to stronger immune systems compared to those not taking the supplement. These mushrooms all are said to be good options; reishi, shiitake, maitake, cordyceps, tremella, and turkey tail.

11. Catch Some Extra Z's

Now is not the time to pull that all-nighter. When looking for extra immune-support, you'll want to make sure you get plenty of rest. Sleep is the prime time for our bodies to repair any damage, fight off pathogens, and recharge to face the bacteria and viruses of the world the following day. When we don't get at least 7 hours of sleep each night, these functions might be cut short, leading to greater risk.

12. Use Medicinal Herbs

In TCM there are many medicinal herbs known to help boost immunity. When visiting your TCM team, you'll be given an herbal mix specific to you and your needs. A few common immunity herbs you might be prescribed include eleuthero (*Eleutherococcus senticosus*), Asian ginseng (*Panax ginseng*), or astragalus (*A. membranaceus*).

13. Be Mindful of Alcohol Intake

While it might be 5 o'clock somewhere, you should consider reaching for the mocktail instead of the cocktail. Too much alcohol can actually weaken our immune systems, leaving us open to viral threats. To really make your immunity efforts worth it, it's best to avoid alcohol altogether, or stick to a glass or two only every once in a while.

So now you have a holistic plan to strengthen your immune system, but let's talk about lifestyle shifts that can actually prevent you from getting an infection in the first place. Most viral and bacterial illnesses are contracted by sharing of bodily fluids (droplets from sneezes, coughs, saliva, etc.) or touching items that someone contagious has previously used. While most of these are things you should already know and be doing regularly...we've been seeing some concerning headlines during the coronavirus era about people partying together in public spaces. So we figure a quick reminder wouldn't hurt.

- Wash Your Hands
- Sanitize Areas You Touch Often
- Cover Mouth and Nose When You Cough or Sneeze
- Avoid Sharing Drinks, Plates, and Utensils
- Don't Pick at Wounds
- Stop Touching Your Face
- Keep Hand Sanitizer Handy

You've got the basics on lock, but there are a few ways viruses can sneak through the cracks. To keep your space totally germ-free you'll want to think about sanitizing your

electronics, car interiors, bags, and even your bed more consistently! Here's a look at our top tips.

Phones

When was the last time you were without your phone? You can't remember right. We bet you can't remember the last time you cleaned it either. If you're as attached to your phone as we are, you should be sanitizing it once a day or at least a few times a week if you're worried about catching a bug.

Laptop

While you're at it with the phone, give your laptop a clean too. We know you *said* you were following all those standard hygiene rules above, but you can never be too careful.

Regularly Wash Bedding

No matter how many showers you took today, you'll definitely be bringing bacteria and viruses into your bed tonight. Gross, we know. Beyond the standard suggestions above, there isn't too much you can do besides [washing your bedding](#) more frequently, especially those pillowcases and sheets, which are closest to your skin and face. Clean bedding should help you rest easier, and hopefully healthier too.

Steering Wheel

Think about all the things you touch at the grocery store or the gas station. Even if you're laying low during a peak sick season, you're touching all kinds of things that others have used before you. From typing in your debit card number to holding the gas pump. Then you get right back in your car and touch the steering wheel. Prevent those hitchhiking germs from coming home with you by sanitizing your steering wheel (and maybe your seatbelt, and controls too).

Bags and Purses

When you sit down for coffee at Starbucks, where do you put your bag? Probably on the ground or table, both of which are prime locations for roaming bacteria and viruses. When you bring your bag home with you, you might also be bringing those yucky guys too. Be sure to spray a disinfectant or wipe down your most-loved bags.