

Immune Health Basics

The immune system is our body's defence and repair system, keeping us safe from virus, bacteria and foreign invaders. For comprehensive information, longer food lists and a complete reference list go to <https://jeanlamantia.com/cancer-bites-diet-blog/immune-health-basics/>

Vitamin and Mineral Immune Health Basics

While you could argue that all essential vitamins and minerals are important for the immune system, there are specific vitamins, minerals and foods that directly support the cells of the immune system. I have listed them below as well as the top 3 food sources. Visit [my website](#) for complete food lists.

Vitamin A

It's most known for its role in good vision, but also is important in supporting the immune system.

- Beef liver, sweet potatoes and spinach are 3 top sources

Vitamin D

Also known as the sunshine vitamin since we can make it in our skin with exposure to UVB rays

- Sources include swordfish, salmon and tuna

Vitamin E

A group of fat-soluble vitamins, as well as immune support, it is also an anti-oxidant

- Top sources include wheat germ oil, sunflower seeds and almonds

Vitamin B6

A significant portion of elderly people have low vitamin B6 levels. The elderly also have a less robust immune system

- Sources include chickpeas, beef liver and yellowfin tuna

Vitamin B12

Is required for proper red blood cell formation. When it low, you can develop a type of anemia called megaloblastic anemia.

- Sources include clams, beef liver and rainbow trout

Folate/Folic Acid

Folate and B12 work together to optimize the immune system.

- Sources include beef liver, spinach and black eyes peas

Vitamin C

When you are deficient, your immune cells can't phagocytize (engulf and digest) invader cells

- Top sources are red peppers, oranges and orange and grapefruit juice

Iron

Iron is found in hemoglobin in red blood cells which move oxygen from the lungs to the tissues.

- Top sources include fortified breakfast cereal, oysters and white beans

Selenium

You maximize your immune function by reaching your requirement for selenium. Taking more selenium, than your body needs, does not help.

- Food sources are Brazil nuts, tuna and halibut

Zinc

Found in a variety of foods and used as an additive in throat lozenges. It's important for wound healing as well as immune support. Even mild to moderate zinc deficiency can impair immune function.

- Top sources include oysters, beef and Alaskan crab

Food and Supplement Immune Health Basics

Mushrooms, oats, barley and seaweed

These foods contain an important fibre called beta-glucans which support the immune system.

Omega-3 fatty acids

A powerful anti-inflammatory, omega-3 is also immune supportive.

Prebiotics and Probiotics

In addition to choosing fermented foods, choose onions, garlic, bananas for prebiotic fibre.

Soy

Soybeans, tofu, tempeh and soy beverages are all soy sources that support immune function.

Lifestyle Immune Health Basics

In addition to vitamins, minerals and foods, lifestyle choices are also important for immune health

Stress management

-Practice regular stress management techniques

Sleep

-Aim for 7-9 hours of sleep per night

Physical activity

-Regular moderate physical activity is your best bet

Spending time in nature

-Taking a walk where there are trees can help boost immune cells

Laughter

-Not only does it feel great, and is a great stress relief, laughing helps keep you healthy

Important Notes about Immune Health

As we age, our immune function declines, these guidelines are even more important for the elderly. Processed foods are lower in vitamins and minerals than whole foods, try and choose whole foods most often with a limited amount of processed foods.

For a full list of food sources, greater detail and additional information for vegetarians, GO TO

<https://jeanlamantia.com/cancer-bites-diet-blog/immune-health-basics/>