



Healthy at Home

It's been said that the three best "medicines" we can take are breakfast, lunch, and dinner. During a pandemic, when both physical and emotional health are at greater risk, food is one way in which we can protect and promote our wellbeing. If you've been reaching for less healthy options than you'd like to lately, don't get down on yourself; it's normal to eat more out of boredom and as a way to ease anxiety. By focusing on adding more health-boosting foods into our daily routines, we'll naturally crowd-out some of the less helpful snacks.

Good for the Mind, Body, and Planet!

Straight from Mother Nature, the most nutrient-rich foods are bursting with natural color and flavor. While all whole foods are packed with disease-fighting phytonutrients, some are particularly powerful when it comes to boosting immunity. Let's take a look at some of the all-stars:



Leafy greens— Leafy greens contain almost all of the vitamins A-K, and they are packed with fiber and antioxidant power. Arugula, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, kale, spinach and more... you can't go wrong with leafy greens!



Dark orange fruits and veggies— They're rich sources of Beta-carotene (the main dietary source of vitamin A), which is a key player in keeping the immune system functioning properly. Pumpkin, sweet potato, squash, cantaloupe, carrots (and leafy greens!) are all great sources.



Foods rich in vitamin C— Vitamin C is a powerful antioxidant and one of the biggest immune system boosters of all. It's critical to make sure we get enough Vitamin C each day, because the body doesn't produce or store it. Aim to get your daily dose from a variety of sources: citrus fruits, red bell peppers, strawberries, leafy greens, cauliflower, broccoli, and Brussels sprouts are some of the best.



Magnesium-rich foods— In addition to boosting immunity, they may also help us to feel calmer. This is important because we know that stress can make us more susceptible to illness. Legumes, nuts, seeds, leafy greens, and whole grains are all good sources of magnesium. These foods also happen to be rich in zinc and in vitamin E, a powerful antioxidant that helps the body fight off infection.



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Chickpeas and other legumes— A great source of naturally cholesterol-free protein, chickpeas are also packed with zinc and rich in Vitamin B6, which is vital to supporting the immune system. Leafy green veggies are also good sources of vitamin B6.



Spices— In addition to tasting delicious, spices such as ginger, garlic, turmeric, and capsaicin (from chili peppers) all have protective properties and can easily be incorporated into nearly any dish.



Mushrooms—Why did everyone like the mushroom? He's a funghi! (And very nutritious!) In addition to helping to prevent disease, including lowering cancer risk mushrooms are one of the few food sources of vitamin D.



Water and tea— While these aren't technically "foods," they play a very important role. Getting enough fluid helps to support the immune system, and tea has antioxidative effects. Another great way to get healthy fluids is to make soups and broths from vegetables.



Pre- and probiotic foods— Did you know that 70-80% of your immune system is located in your gut? You can help promote the good gut bacteria (AKA probiotics) by eating more fiber-rich and fermented foods. Probiotics thrive on prebiotics, which you can get from eating whole plant foods that are packed with fiber such as fruits, veggies, legumes, and whole grains. When it comes to probiotics and fermented foods, some of the best options for good-for-your-gut foods include tempeh, miso, and kimchi.



Remember, one of the best things we can do to stay healthy—in addition to exercising, managing stress, and getting enough sleep—is to eat a wide variety of whole, plant foods. The more colorful you make your meals each day, the better. Not only do these foods help us avoid getting sick, they can actually help to boost mood—which in turn also supports a strong immune system. So while you're staying in, try out some new recipes or work on building healthy habits. Check out wfeh.org for recipes, resources, and inspiration.