

# MAXIMISE YOUR IMMUNITY

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A lowered immunity may result from an unbalanced diet, exposure to environmental pollutants, certain drug therapies or pre-existing disease. Emotional and mental factors also influence the immune system; in particular, long term stress and fatigue. Holistic treatment is aimed at restoring the normal resistance of the body and enhancing overall health and vitality.

## **Nutrition**

A healthy balanced diet will depend on individual health needs and personal preferences. A good intake of vitamins and minerals is essential for optimum health. There are also nutrients that are known to specifically enhance immune system function.

## **Antioxidants**

Antioxidant enzymes are present naturally in our bodies forming an important part of our defence system. Antioxidants are known to neutralise free radicals in the body, helping to protect us against environmental pollution and disease. Free radicals are molecules formed by chemical reactions in the body and the external environment, they can be dangerous if they accumulate to high levels in the body because they can cause damage to body cells. Air pollution, cigarette smoke, UV rays from the sun, and industrial chemicals all produce free radicals. Although our bodies can manufacture antioxidant enzymes, we also need a good intake of dietary antioxidants to boost our immunity and help protect us from the harmful effects of free radicals. Antioxidants can benefit us further by encouraging skin repair, and may even slow down the ageing process.

**Antioxidant nutrients include vitamins A (or beta carotene), C and E, also the minerals zinc and selenium. The best sources of these nutrients are raw, fresh fruits and vegetables, especially dark green leafy vegetables. Orange, red and yellow fruits and vegetables are beneficial as they are rich in carotene pigments, some of which form vitamin A in the body. They also contain flavonoids, which are increasingly being seen as essential components in our natural resistance to disease. Nuts and seeds, such as almonds, pumpkin, sunflower and sesame seeds are also high in antioxidant nutrients.**

Try to eat fruits and vegetables raw, or drink fresh vegetable and fruit juices. Choose organically grown varieties whenever possible. Intensive agricultural techniques are likely to deplete the soil, and the foods grown on the soil, of valuable nutrients, and organically grown foods are therefore likely to be of higher quality. If you are concerned that your intake of antioxidant nutrients is low, it may be beneficial for you to take a high quality antioxidant supplement, ask your herbalist for advice on your individual treatment plan.

## **Plant Bioflavonoids**

Recent research has centred on a special group of plant compounds called bioflavonoids. These compounds are thought to exhibit powerful antioxidant action and enhance immune system function. Foods that are particularly high in bioflavonoids include **cherries, grapes, beetroot, carrots, peppers, buckwheat and green tea**. Many plant medicines are also a rich source of bioflavonoids, for example, Milk Thistle, Cats Claw and Ginkgo biloba.