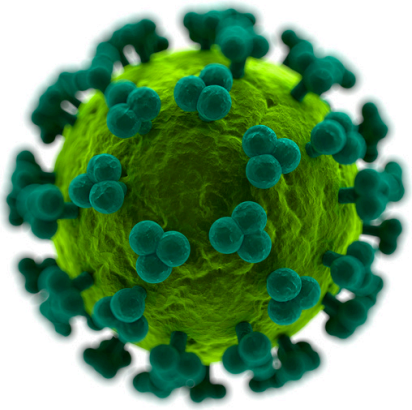
A Lifestyle Medicine Approach to the Common Cold



We all get them; it's inevitable during the course of the year, you or someone in your household is going to catch the cold virus and, once you do, chances are it's going to spread quickly around your social group.

It's common knowledge that using antibiotics won't work - either to treat the symptoms or cure the virus. In fact, doing so will do more harm in the long run. So, what can you do to help you recover?

Keep hydrated

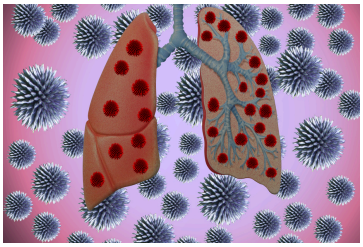
When your body is fighting the common cold virus, you need to be sure to keep hydrated. Staying hydrated when you're unwell can help your skin and mucous cell membrane act as a barrier to prevent bacteria from entering the body.[1] This can not only help you fight off illness but can help prevent you getting sick in the first place.



Staying hydrated can also play a role in decreasing nasal irritation when coughing and sneezing, and is a natural way of alleviating some of the common cold symptoms.

Sleep Matters

Getting an adequate amount of sleep can help reduce the risk of you getting a cold in the first place.[2] You should aim to have between 7-9 hours of uninterrupted sleep a night, which will help boost your immune system by producing and releasing a protein called cytokines. These proteins can target and eradicate infection.



Reduce harmful substances

When your body is fighting off a cold, you can aid it by reducing harmful substances such as nicotine and vapes.[3] Smoking of any kind has an impact on the structure and function of your lungs, which includes reducing their ability to defend against infection.

References:

1. The Importance of Staying Hydrated: General Hydration and Virus Recovery. Canadian Digestive Health Foundation.
2. Cohen S, Doyle WJ, Alper CM, Janicki-Deverts D, Turner RB. Sleep habits and susceptibility to the common cold. Arch Intern Med. 2009 Jan
3. Office of the Surgeon General (US); Office on Smoking and Health (US). The Health Consequences of Smoking: A Report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta (GA): Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (US); 2004. 4, Respiratory Diseases.

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A Healthy Diet Can Help



A diet that is balanced and healthy can support your immune system to help lower the length of a common cold, as well as the severity of its symptoms. [4]

Vitamin C, found in citrus fruits and berries, can reduce the duration of your cold symptoms, as can zinc, which is found naturally in foods such as seeds and nuts.

To help prevent a cold, you can add whole foods to your diet - fruits, vegetables and healthy fibres - which can improve your immune system.[5]

Avoid Stress



Stress is a part of every day life, good and bad. Negative stress, the kind that has a psychological impact, can be a risk factor for the common cold. It can impact your immune system and lower your resistance to viruses and infections such as the common cold, as well as making inflammation last longer.[6]

Looking after your physical, emotional and mental wellbeing by adapting your lifestyle to eliminate negative stress where possible will help your body fight off infection.

References:

4. Rondanelli M et al . Self-Care for Common Colds: The Pivotal Role of Vitamin D, Vitamin C, Zinc, and Echinacea in Three Main Immune Interactive Clusters (Physical Barriers, Innate and Adaptive Immunity) Involved during an Episode of Common Colds-Practical Advice on Dosages and on the Time to Take These Nutrients/Botanicals in order to Prevent or Treat Common Colds. Evid Based Complement Alternat Med. 2018 Apr
5. Khalid W et al. Functional constituents of plant-based foods boost immunity against acute and chronic disorders. Open Life Sci. 2022 Sep
6. Alotiby A. Immunology of Stress: A Review Article. J Clin Med. 2024 Oct 25

The advice contained within this factsheet is as accurate and as comprehensive as possible, but it is only general advice, and should not be used as a substitute for the individual advice received from consulting a person's own doctor.
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