

Healthy Living

Fact Sheet



Immune System

Dr John G. Clark, MD

What is the immune system?

The immune system is the disease- fighting system God has put in your body to keep you from contracting diseases caused by unfriendly viruses (influenza, AIDS, etc.), bacteria (tuberculosis, golden staph, E-coli, etc.), and parasites (malaria, worms, etc.).

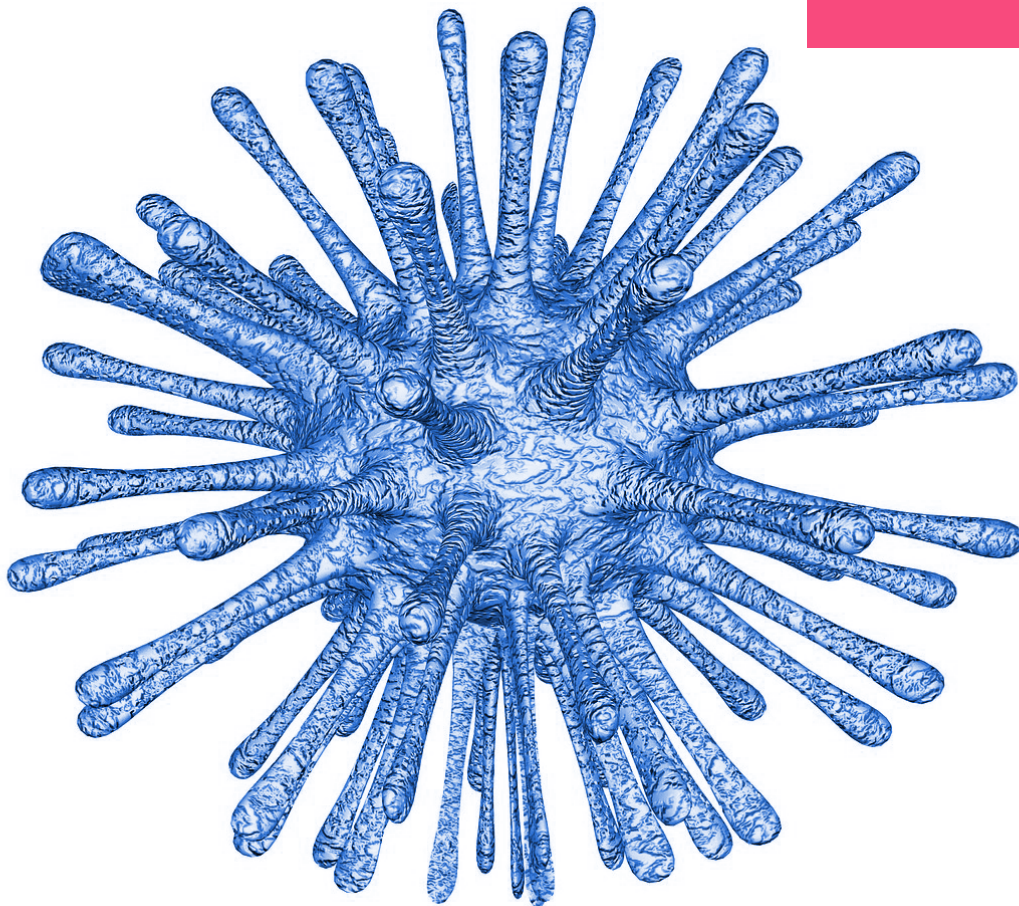
What causes the immune system to fall into disrepair?

The immune system is limited in its ability to protect you when you eat foods containing too much refined sugars, cooking oils, cholesterol, or consuming substances such as alcohol and tobacco.

Encouragement

*"No harm will
overtake you;
no illness will
come near your
home."*

Psalms 91:10 (NET)



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Natural lifestyle approach

Dietary Considerations

The immune system functions best on a nutrient-dense, unrefined, plant based diet, high in phytochemicals and antioxidants. Fresh fruit and vegetables are the most invigorating to the immune system and boost it for fighting disease. Foods especially helpful for a weak immune system include: grapes, apples, grapefruit, onions, garlic, spinach, brazil nuts, pecans, walnuts, pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, chia seeds, soy beans, kidney beans, bean sprouts, and limited amounts of whole grains.

Exercise

Noncompetitive moderate exercise in the open air and sunshine is very beneficial to the immune system. The best times are in the early morning and immediately after meals. Walking is one of the best exercises especially when done outdoors and in a non-stressful environment.

Water

“...take the water of life freely.” (Revelation 22:17 KJV) Three litres of water a day is recommended for boosting the immune system; one upon arising in the morning, one mid-morning and one mid-afternoon.

Rest

Sleep before midnight is much more energizing to the immune system and getting plenty of sleep are both important for melatonin production.

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Mind–Body Connection

Jenifer Skues
Health Psychologist

Does stress affect my immune system?

It certainly does! According to Hans Selye who first outlined the three stages of stress in the 50s, if we maintain the first stage called Alarm Reaction (the fight or flight response) then we have ongoing high stress hormones including adrenaline and cortisol, and the immune system can be compromised. This level of stress is the second stage called Resistance, with symptoms such as exhaustion, weariness, insomnia, depression, anxiety, and being vague and forgetful. You're more likely to stop the good health habits and pick up bad ones such as smoking, self-medicating with drugs and/or alcohol, or other addictive habits such as caffeine, chocolate binges and junk food to reduce the physical, mental and emotional impact of stress. Both the level of stress and bad health habits can do major damage our immune system. If we maintain this then we reach the third stage of Exhaustion, which usually results in burnout. In all stages of stress your immune system becomes depleted so you will be an easy target for viruses and related illnesses. You can see how important it is to manage your stress levels and have good health habits to maintain a healthy immune system that keeps us alive and well.

Encouragement

*"Peace I leave with you;
my peace I give to you;
I do not give it to you as
the world does.
Do not let your hearts be
distressed or lacking in
courage."*

John 14:27 (NET)

Can a spiritual focus buffer stress?

There is very good evidence showing that a healthy spiritual focus on a God of love has a very positive affect on our overall health. Dr Roberta Lee in her book 'The Super Stress Solution' talks about spirituality and prayer. She found that research showed people who are more religious or spiritual use their spirituality to cope more effectively with life. Apparently they are better able to cope with stress, they heal much faster from illnesses, and they experience positive benefits to their overall health and wellbeing. It helped them to stop trying to control things, to see that they weren't responsible for everything that happens in life, as well as feeling part of a greater whole. Another investigator Dr Andrew Newberg has also done extensive investigations into spirituality and health. In conclusion to some of his research he stated that, "We've learned that being religious or spiritual has a very profound effect on who we are, has a very profound effect on our biology and on our brain. ... it actually can change our brain and change ourselves over time."

Our health and longevity is dependent on our immune system, which protects us from viruses and bacteria as well as preventing rapid cancer cell growth. Therefore I encourage you to have a more spiritual focus because having a living faith and an active prayer life can buffer stress and keep your immune system healthy.

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Immune Health Tool Kit

How to have a healthy immune system by managing your stress levels

1. What you think is how you feel, and how you feel is how you and your body behave!

Take time to change the way you think as your 'stinking thinking' negatively impacts your mood and physiology, resulting in high stress levels that will negatively impact your immune system. Here's a list of thought distortions that you need to change if you use them. When you catch yourself thinking this way then turn the negatives into positives.

- Black & White Thinking (two extremes, there's nothing in between)
- Overgeneralizing (one experience or belief is generalized to everything)
- Mind Reading (you think you know what others think & respond without checking it out)
- Fortune Telling (predicting the future based on your past or your beliefs)
- Magnify or minimize (blow things out of perspective and make it a catastrophe or pretend it's not important when it really is)
- Personalize (you think it's all about you whether it's a comment, compliment or feedback)
- Emotional Reasoning (rationalize something using your feelings versus thinking it through)
- Discount the positive (hence you don't accept any good things in your life)

We've all learned them from an early age so don't panic, just pick one to work on (see FEED process below) and notice how much less stressed you feel. Your immune system will love you.

2. Changing beliefs and attitudes helps to buffer stress and improve immunity

Changing beliefs and attitudes can only be done in present time and it's a FEED or STARVE principle. A psychologist by the name of Dr John Arden outlined the following simple process using the FEED acronym to help you rewire your brain and change any stress producing habits that you want to.

- **F = FOCUS** your attention in the present (past = depression, and future = anxiety)
- **E = Put EFFORT** into focusing on changing what you want to stop doing (see above)
- **E =** The new habit will eventually become **EFFORTLESS (brain is rewired)**
- **D =** Use your **DETERMINATION** to maintain it (effort put in is proportional to outcome)

3. Have a healthy sleep cycle

Sleep is essential to maintain our mental and physical health. Sleep deprivation does not only play havoc with your brain function but also weakens your immune system. If you're having problems getting a good night's sleep then try some of the following: have regular doses of magnesium; try some relaxing herbal teas; have a bath with magnesium flakes or Epsom salts in it; don't sit on a computer or be under bright lights before you go to bed; go to bed and get up at the same time; don't use any caffeine drinks, and don't eat rich foods or eat late at night. Zzzzzz

Disclaimer: This fact sheet presents principles designed to promote good health and is not intended to take the place of personalised professional care. The opinions and ideas expressed are those of the writers.

Readers are encouraged to draw their own conclusions about the information presented.