

## Building Your Immunity Naturally

By Dr. Robert DeVincentis

Seems that each year people are getting more and more sick than the year before. The cold and flu season grows stronger and stronger every year. The more we use antibiotics, the more resistant bacteria become to these medicines. Bacteria and viruses have the ability to change their structure to become stronger and more resistant to antibiotics. It is no secret that the use of antibiotics is abused. So many people rush to their doctor when they get any symptoms. So many parents rush their children to the pediatrician the minute their children get the sniffles. Everyone wants a quick fix to feeling bad; however in the meantime, they may do more harm than good and weakening their own immune system by consistently taking antibiotics. So how can we boost our own immune system to minimize the amount of sicknesses we get and speed up our healing time when we do get sick?

Our environment is full of bacteria and viruses, also called germs. To understand the amount of germs that are around us, I will revert back to my old microbiology courses in my undergraduate and graduate training. To determine the amount and type of bacteria and viruses that are found both on our bodies and around our immediate environment, students in this class would simply use a cotton swab and touch different parts of the body or environment then rub the swab on a Petri dish. After this we would put the Petri dish in a temperature controlled refrigerator and let it sit overnight. The next day we would examine under a microscope the types of germs that were cultivated. What I saw changed everything that I believed to be clean. We found pneumonia germs in our mouths! We found strep bacteria (causes strep throat) on the doorknobs! We even found e-coli on our hands! There are a couple of points to learn about this: (1) Dangerous bacteria and viruses are all around us and unavoidable and (2) Many of these dangerous germs are found on or in our bodies all the time and lastly (3) Even though we may not be sick, our bodies are constantly fighting off bacteria and viruses every day of our lives.

To talk about boosting your own immunity we must first discuss the basics of immunology- the study of our immune system. The immune system is a collection of different organs, tissues, and specialized cells that collectively function together to allow our bodies to fight and eliminate bacteria and viruses from overcoming our bodies.

The immune system is one of the most complex systems of the body. The specialized cells, which help eat up bacteria and viruses, are called antibodies. These antibodies travel around our body to seek and destroy any foreign particles in our body. The lymphatic system is a type of drainage system where many of these antibodies do their work. The lymphatic system also drains all the waste left over from the antibodies doing their work to the liver and heart. Quite simply put, the body has been made to heal itself. The immune system is designed to fight any bacteria or virus the body becomes overcome with. Remember, our body is constantly fighting off these germs even if we do not have any symptoms. We will get symptoms when our body's immune system has been overwhelmed with bacteria and viruses and cannot keep ahead in the constant fight against them. So when the immune system is not functioning at 100%, we are automatically susceptible to getting symptoms, even with the normal exposure of bacteria or viruses we get each day.

So the next question is how can we keep our immune systems functioning at 100% or what will cause our immune system to function less than 100%. The following list are a few things that will depress our immune system:

1. Emotional stress
2. Caffeine consumption
3. Alcohol consumption
4. Physical stress (over-exercising)
5. Sleep deprivation (less than 7 hours a night)
6. Excess sun exposure
7. Prescription medications
8. Improper nutrition
9. Infants under one year not breast feeding

Obviously to improve immune system function, avoid everything listed above. The following is a list of different supplements that have been proven to give a boost to the immune system.

1. Echinacea
2. Golden Seal
3. Antioxidants- Vitamin A (beta carotene), C, E, and Selenium
4. Zinc

Dosages of Zinc should be 50mg two times per day; anything more may irritate the stomach. The quality of the Echinacea does matter; you need to have both forms of Echinacea (purpurea and angustifolia). The most common mistake people make when taking Echinacea is not taking enough of it.

I recommend taking three capsules that contain 300mg each at least three times per day. This is for anyone that weighs between 110-165. If you weigh more add more, if you weigh less decrease dosage accordingly.

There have been no scientific studies that have evaluated the possible side effects of Echinacea for children under 2 or mothers that are breast-feeding or pregnant, therefore, most companies who carry the product don't recommend these groups using it. However, I have given it to my child when she was one year old and my own wife has taken it while breastfeeding. There are also liquid forms of Echinacea that may be more suitable for children. Do not take Echinacea as a prevention, research has shown that your body can build up immunity to it. Try to start taking Echinacea the minute you start to feel symptoms, if you start too late it may not be effective. It is also a good idea not to take Echinacea for more than two weeks at a time because your body may again develop immunity to it. I usually recommend stop taking Echinacea two days after you stop feeling symptoms.

The antioxidants can be taken in a multivitamin form or individually. Vitamin C can be taken separately 500mg three times per day preferably in a chewable form. Did you ever wonder why some people always get sick and some people never do? Is it because the person always sick is around more bacteria and viruses than the people who rarely get sick? After reading this article you might answer this question differently than before. In the meantime, try to avoid all the things listed above which may decrease immune system function and the next time you feel symptoms try the natural remedies listed above.

*Dr. Robert DeVincentis owns a sports chiropractic clinic located on  
Beach Blvd. near San Pablo and can be reached at 223-1616.  
[www.doctor-d-chiro.com](http://www.doctor-d-chiro.com)*