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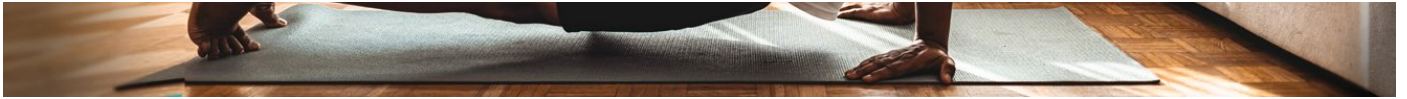
## Avoid Illness by Keeping Your Immune System in Top Shape

By Dr. Diana Rangaves

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[PRESCRIPTION DRUGS, YOUR HEALTH & WELLNESS](#)





Whether you're trying to protect yourself from COVID-19 or the common cold, it's vital to maintain a fully functioning immune system to avoid getting sick. The good news is that the human immune system automatically does an incredible job defending the body against disease. While the idea of boosting the immune system doesn't have the science to back it up, what you *can* do is protect it by consistently making healthy lifestyle choices.

## Get Plenty of Sleep

Your immune system functions best when you've gotten enough sleep. Individuals who don't sleep enough or who get poor sleep quality tend to be more susceptible to illness. Several studies have illustrated this link. For example, a [2015 study](#) of 164 adults found that healthy adults who got fewer than six hours of sleep per night had a higher chance of catching a cold than their more slumberous counterparts.

## Wash Your Hands Frequently

One of the easiest things you can do to avoid getting sick is to wash your hands frequently. You touch several surfaces with your hands: doors, touchscreens, tables, pens, and so much more. Thanks to the fact that many people touch the same surfaces, it is easy for bacteria and viruses to move from person to person.

This becomes even more true when you think that people touch their faces [an estimated 23 times an hour](#), according to the Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology. Washing your hands before you touch your nose, eyes, or mouth can prevent unwanted germs from entering your body, thereby preventing you from getting sick.

## Drink Lots of Water

Drinking water doesn't protect you against illness directly. However, [dehydration](#) can weaken your bodily functions in general. That's why staying hydrated is so critical if you want to keep yourself from getting sick. Water is the best thing to drink because it doesn't contain any unhealthy sugars.

## Eat Nutritious Whole Foods

Whole foods, such as vegetables, fruits, legumes, and seeds, contain many healthy vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. These ingredients have provided some protection against illness. For example, antioxidants can help [reduce inflammation](#), a common cause of many health conditions. [Studies](#) have shown that vitamin C can help with the common cold. Furthermore, vitamin D deficiency has been [linked to autoimmune disease](#), suggesting it has an important role to play in keeping the immune system healthy.

## Exercise Regularly

[Moderate exercise](#) aids the immune system by reducing inflammation and allowing the regular regeneration of the body's immune cells. Studies have also shown that exercise can [boost vaccine effectiveness](#) in immunocompromised people. Things like jogging, swimming, hiking, speed walking, and steady cycling are examples of moderate exercise. However, keep in mind that intense and prolonged exercise can decrease immune system functioning.

## Keep Your Stress Levels Low

Anxiety and stress are [not good for the immune system](#) because they can cause immune cell function imbalances and inflammation. That's why managing stress is crucial to warding off sickness. Ways to keep your stress levels under control include exercise, meditation, staying in contact with close friends, taking a walk, or seeing a counselor.

## Drink Alcohol in Moderation

Drinking large quantities of alcohol can [directly suppress](#) many of the body's immune responses, which is why many people get sick shortly after a long night of partying. Avoid excessive drinking to protect the immune system.

That said, moderate alcohol consumption may benefit the immune system. So, if you're keen on a glass of beer or wine with dinner, don't feel you have to cut it out to prevent yourself from falling ill.

## Up Your Intake of Probiotics

[Research](#) suggests that a healthy gut allows the body's immune cells to differentiate between healthy cells and invasive organisms like bacteria and viruses. Consuming probiotics, a beneficial type of bacteria, are key to keeping your gut healthy.

You can find probiotics in fermented foods, such as yogurt, kefir, sauerkraut, and most pickled foods. A [2017 study](#) that included 126 children found that drinking fermented milk every day reduced infectious diseases by 20 percent.

You can also take probiotic supplements if you prefer. A separate [2017 study](#) found that taking the probiotic supplement *Bifidobacterium animalis* strengthened immune response. However, probiotic supplements can be pricy. One way to save money while regularly taking probiotics is to enroll in the [ScriptSave<sup>®</sup> WellRx](#) prescription savings card program, which works with pharmacies across the country to offer lower prices on thousands of brand name and generic prescription medications.

*Dr. Diana Rangaves, Google Scholar, holds a doctorate from the University of California. As a clinical pharmacist and writer, she has extensive experience and expertise in all levels of content creation, leadership, health, fintech, and business sectors. A published author, she writes for numerous print and online outlets. Diana lives in California with her dogs and pasture pets in their forever home.*

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