

Supercharging the Chicago Immune System

By Jayson Kroner, CSN

I've noticed a trend. Very few people, at least those of us who reside in cold weather climates, seem to rank winter high on their list of seasonal favorites. Now, this could easily be attributed to the snow, the icy roads, or the arctic winds that blow in a constant reminder of Mother Nature's seasonal authority. Or it might have a little something to do with the tens of millions of individuals who fall victim to cold and flu symptoms. It's been estimated that approximately 10 to 20 percent of the US population fall into this category, with even more individuals suffering from symptoms that never get reported. To further complicate things, many experts believe that this year's season could be one of the worst on record.

It's highly unlikely that any good television-watching American has been able to duck the rumors of a potential pandemic, as well as the horror stories of what a worldwide flu outbreak could mean to our global population. At the time of this initial writing, things seem to have found a calm. But that doesn't erase the fact that this could change without warning. Should things take a turn for the worst, it will become essential for all of us to look at our immune system with a completely new set of eyes. A solid understanding of today's most effective immune system support supplements is a great place to start. Let's explore.

Antioxidants

In light of how grossly overused and misunderstood the term "antioxidant" is, there's simply no mistaking the role that these free radical fighters play in human health. Better still, there are plenty for you to choose from. Nutrients such as vitamins A, E and C, as well as other constituents, such as Alpha Lipoic Acid, CoQ10, Grape Seed extract, Green Tea extract, Lycopene, Astaxanthin and others work by targeting unstable chemicals within the body, and neutralizing them before they can further damage cells. This is especially important during cold winter months, a time when the body's natural defense mechanisms are forced to

work harder than ever. Considering how many are at your disposal, don't worry about taking each and every one that's out there. Experiment a bit until you find the one that agrees best with you. Most antioxidants can be taken throughout the day, with or without meals as directed on the label. This helps encourage a more constant supply of free radical protection.

Olive Leaf

Leaves from the Olive tree are loaded with a number of cell-supporting compounds that have been shown in studies to help sustain the immune system against environmental stress. One of the most scientifically significant is oleuropein—a class of high-powered phytochemicals that is naturally rich in one of the immune system's most welcome winter inhabitants, elenolic acid. By assisting the body in warding off many of the stresses that send the digestive and immune systems into a full-blown defensive frenzy, the compounds in Olive leaf have been shown to help with fatigue, excess yeast proliferation, cholesterol oxidation and environmental stress response. Available in capsule form, make sure to follow the dosage instructions as provided for on the label.

Probiotics

Supplement-savvy individuals may associate the term probiotics with digestive integrity, but there's more to these helpful bacteria than just a good gut. Probiotics, including acidophilus, bifidus, and others, play an important role in the immune system's day-to-day operations. Aside from populating the gastrointestinal tract with the beneficial bacteria we need to digest food, stay regular and ward off pathogenic invaders, there's now good evidence suggesting that probiotics can strengthen the immune system by increasing the production of T-cells, NK-cells (natural killer), and other immune system catalysts. Some studies have demonstrated their ability to support healthy respiratory function, as well as their influence on maintaining the body's natural inflammatory response. Any way you look at it, probiotics are an absolute essential

for both seasonal and year-round wellness. Probiotics should be taken with meals and they also work very well with digestive enzymes, fiber and other digestive supplements. Look for enteric coated formulas in glass bottles, as these rarely require refrigeration.

Medicinal Mushrooms

Known for their unmistakable role in kitchens worldwide, mushrooms such as Shiitake, have been consumed for centuries as a way to support good health. What we know now is that these mushrooms, including Maitake and Reishi, boast high concentrations of 1,3 beta-glucans, natural food compounds that are almost non-existent in today's overprocessed modern diet. From a cellular perspective, the 1,3 form of beta-glucans is used by the body to help support innate and adaptive immune system function. Look for a formula that delivers an organic mushroom blend of at least 150-200 mg, utilizing the Shiitake, Maitake and Reishi species as well as others, if applicable.

When it comes to staying healthy this winter, a little common sense can also be a great help to staying healthy. Eat smart, dress warm, and pay close attention to what you're exposed to. Find a support supplement that works for you, and always consult your doctor if you're taking medications. If you were sick last season, make sure that your winter garb has been thoroughly washed before you put it back on. Keep a hand sanitizer within arm's reach, and remember to wash your hands thoroughly throughout the day. These measures, coupled with the right diet and knowledge of what you can do to support your immune system, just might make a world of difference this winter.

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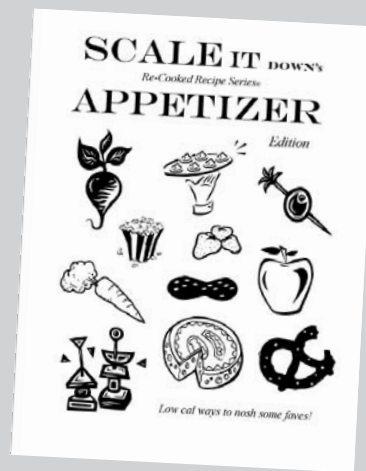
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