

Meet Your Immune System

Every day we are exposed to a number of different germs; whether picking up the phone, opening the door, or accidentally eating bad food. In most cases, our immune system jumps into action to keep us healthy without us even knowing it. That being said, in some circumstances our immune system can't keep up and we end up sick with an infection or illness.

What is the Immune System?

The immune system is made up of a network of cells, tissues, and organs that help defend our bodies from germs and disease. Specialized cells, called white blood cells (or leukocytes), are responsible for finding and destroying whatever germs have invaded the body. These white blood cells are made and stored in immune organs throughout the body. Immune organs and tissues include the thymus, spleen, bone marrow, and lymph nodes. White blood cells are constantly flowing between these organs and monitoring the body for any invading germs to ensure we stay as healthy as possible.

How does the Immune System handle germs?

When a bacteria or virus enters our body, an “immune response” occurs which puts our immune system into action. When this system is working properly, specialized white blood cells find the germs and destroy them before they can cause illness or disease in our bodies.

Occasionally, when our immune system can't keep up, we end up with sniffles, a cough, and sometimes even a fever. These are all symptoms of our immune system continuing to fight off the bacteria or virus that has entered our body.

Additionally, antibodies are made against the foreign invader, so that if you encounter the same germ again, you can respond quickly before you notice any symptoms of infection or illness.

What can you do to boost your Immune System?

Various lifestyle factors can contribute to the strength of our immune systems. By implementing healthy lifestyle strategies such as eating the right foods, getting regular moderate exercise, maintaining a healthy weight, getting enough sleep, and managing stress levels, we can reduce our chances of getting minor colds and flus and avoid more serious illness as well. It is also important to avoid harmful lifestyle choices, such as smoking and excessive alcohol consumption. Simple strategies such as washing your hands frequently and

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wiping down surfaces at work and at home can also help to decrease the amount of germs that our bodies must handle on a daily basis.

More information will be shared in upcoming articles or for more detailed information on what you can do to boost your immune system, check out the “Immune Health” Lunch and Learn presentation notes found here:

http://magnawellness.ca/app/Uploads/Lunchlearns/731_file.pdf

References

<http://kidshealth.org/en/teens/immune.html?WT.ac=ctg#>

<http://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/how-to-boost-your-immune-system>