

The York University Staff Association Health & Wellness News and Views

You are young and resilient, but it is still important to take every step you can to stay safe and boost your immune system during the COVID 19 pandemic. You are practicing social distancing. You've become the perfect model for good hand hygiene. And you are keeping those hands away from your face. Additional to the "new normal" Kids are staying home from school, many adults are being forced to work from home and therefore people are moving less, not working out in gyms and may not be keeping up with healthy habits. With the peak of flu season and the addition of COVID 19, finding ways to boost your immune system has never been more important. Not only is good nutrition imperative but having a healthy lifestyle that is balanced with physical activity and good sleep practices will help you remain healthy. Think of your body as an orchestra. For the best performance, you want every instrument in sync to perform at its best. Experts say that boosting your immune system may also give you an edge in staying healthy. Here are a few smart steps to add to your to-do list now.

While no foods or dietary supplements can prevent or cure COVID-19 infection, healthy diets are important for supporting immune systems. Good nutrition can also reduce the likelihood of developing other health problems, including obesity, heart disease, diabetes, and some types of cancer. Eighty percent of your immune system is in the gut, so when it's healthy, we tend to be able to fight off infections not only faster but better. Eat a diet that consists of fruit, vegetables, whole grains, and healthy fats, found in foods such as fatty fish, nuts and olive oil. This eating pattern is high in nutrients such as vitamin C & B, zinc, and other antioxidants and have been shown to help reduce inflammation and fight infection. Protein is also critical for immune health. The amino acids in protein help build and maintain immune cells and skimping on this macronutrient may lower your body's ability to fight infections. What's more, it's also smart to

include fermented foods, such as yogurt, sauerkraut, miso and kifer. Other foods that accomplish this include garlic, onion, and ginger. You can even add a probiotic supplement in your daily consumption. These help build up good bacteria in your gut, which, in turn, supports a healthy gut and immune system.

It is not known if all probiotic foods are safe for some people who are immunocompromised. If you have concerns, please check with your doctor before taking any probiotic foods or supplement.

Maybe you're short shifting your sleep because you're overwhelmed by working from home while prepping all of your meals. Or you find yourself unable to nod off because of the heart racing anxiety many of us are experiencing right now. I get it, but Z's are another natural immune booster and not prioritizing your shut eye can have serious health ramifications. Your immune system is like a computer, it requires rest, so it doesn't overheat. Good quality sleep allows the body to rejuvenate and fight off infection. Giving your body the opportunity to properly recharge every night by getting the required hours of sleep. For most adults, that means seven to eight uninterrupted hours, with children requiring more. When you are sleep deprived your body rapidly send out stress hormones like cortisol to keep you awake and alert, which in turn can suppress your immune system. It is important to practice healthy sleep habits. Power down your electronics an hour before bed. Make sure the temp is cool and the blinds are drawn. If necessary, use a noise making machine, or download a white noise app on your phone. Try to keep a sleep routine, "hit the hay" and "rise and shine" at roughly the same time each day. The more rested you are the better you feel!

Exercise is a powerful way to boost your immune system. It causes your body's antibodies and white blood cells to circulate more rapidly, which allows them to detect and zero in on bugs more quickly. However, with no gyms to train at and no trainers to set us straight, what's a poor ol' quarantined soul to do? Rather than have you roll the dice and hope for the best, I'm going to share some of the best online fitness and health resources that I've come across. I am digging through the masses and going to send weekly Youtube videos that specialize in providing a full workout from the comfort of your own home. Whether you are into yoga, strength training, mobility and core work or cardio combinations I got you covered. No equipment necessary. And, you don't have to stay inside with your door locked. There's all kinds of things you can do outside,

although if you are required to self-isolate for 14 days, you should follow the guidelines of public health. As long as you're not in close contact with other people, [walking/running] is great. You're going to exercise, you're going to feel better, period.

There is a strong link between immune health and mental health. It's a frightening time. We're in the midst of a worldwide pandemic, with cities and even entire countries shutting down. We are all bracing for what may come. And all of us are watching the headlines and wondering, what is going to happen next? For many people, the uncertainty surrounding coronavirus is the hardest thing to handle. And that makes it all too easy to catastrophize and spiral out into overwhelming dread and panic. But you are not powerless. even in the face of this unique crisis to manage your anxiety and stress. From the news to social media, a lot of information is circulating. Some is true, or only partly correct, especially as information rapidly changes. This changing information can be confusing, overwhelming, and even scary. Whether it's dealing with an at-risk family members or, a roller coaster economy, trying to juggle work, keeping kids occupied, homeschooling while schools are closed, or simply adjusting to a new, unfamiliar situation, stress can easily pile up and negatively impact you, both physically and mentally. Use credible sources to obtain up-to-date, scientific information about the illness and how to deal with this virus and most importantly how to prevent it. Knowledge and preparation can help reduce feelings of panic. Keep discussions focused on preventive actions. Set up and praise healthy hand-washing habits, social distancing and maintaining regular routines for work, meals, and other activities. Try to find the positive. Staying positive and optimistic during times of crisis can be challenging, but it's critical to your mental well-being and immune system. Even individuals with the sunniest of outlooks may be having a hard time staying positive. Remaining optimistic requires conscious effort and continuous mindfulness. **Take a break.** You don't have to watch, read or talking about COVID-19 all day. It's important to stay informed but not consumed. **Make time to unwind.** Pick up an old hobby. Start a new one. Just do something you enjoy. **Take care of yourself.** Mind, body, and soul. Take a walk. Listen to music. Read something uplifting. Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, exercise regularly, get plenty of sleep. **Colour a masterpiece.** Colouring is incredibly

therapeutic and relaxing – and what better way to spend your time than colouring some works of art? Some museums and libraries have made colouring books that are free to download.

It is important to keep an eye on your own health. Stay safe and remain positive. Do things that make you happy. It's normal to feel anxious about what's going on, but you're doing your part. It's challenging, but these activities and other things that make you happy not only keep your immune system strong, they will keep you and your loved ones healthy, entertained and engaged.

Stay well.

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