

Vitamin C and Immunity

By Jen Muzzi, RDN/LDN, RYT-200, Chef

Winter is usually the time of year when virus, flu and cold rates are higher. This year, those statistics won't change, but we have a new factor, COVID. As we head into the holiday/winter break, it's important to remember that washing your hands with soap and water is one of the easiest things you can do to prevent illness. COVID and flu are droplet related viruses. So with the mask mandates, along with other [recommendations from the CDC](#) of which we are all very well aware of at this point, it's best to adhere for preventing the spread of either.

As a dietitian I get asked a lot of questions on immunity and preventing illnesses. I also see a lot of articles written by nutritionists (who aren't Dietitians- big difference) that talk about "boosting your immunity". While there aren't any specific foods that "boost" your immunity, there are foods and micro/macronutrients that can help you to fight off sicknesses easier, quicker and support your immune system.

Probably the most well known "immune boosting idea" is that Vitamin C prevents colds. But, that's not entirely accurate. Vitamin C actually helps you to get over a cold quicker by stimulating the formation of antibodies. So, it may decrease its severity of but, doesn't prevent. Also, fun fact: OJ and oranges are a good source of Vitamin C, but not the *best* source. Red bell peppers, strawberries, kiwi, broccoli, sweet potato, cantaloupe, papaya, pineapple all have more vitamin C than our citrusy friends.



Vitamin A rich foods are also good for our health, as it helps to regulate the immune system. It's probably no coincidence that winter foods in season are higher in vitamin A, such as squash varieties and sweet potato. But also higher in Vitamin A are red bell pepper (hello-winner with both C + A!), tomatoes and carrots.



Sometimes taking a supplement can help if you have issues with these foods, but it's always better to have these vitamins in "food form". For example, some vitamins may interfere with medications. Also, if you are eating these foods and taking supplements, it can affect the absorption of other nutrients in the body. Such as: too much Vitamin A can interfere with Vitamin E absorption. There is such a thing as "too much of a good thing"

Bottom line for your health and immunity: eat a variety of foods & lean protein, drink plenty of water, get Vitamin D from fortified foods and/or sunlight and move your body!

Eat Well, Be Well, Do Yoga, Walk your Dog and Bon Appetit!

~~ Chef Jen

