

Meet Your Immune System

Keep healthy this cold and flu season!

Every day, we are exposed to a number of different germs—whether from 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. However, 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 a network of cells, tissues, and organs that helps defend our bodies from germs and diseases. Specialized cells, called white blood cells (or leukocytes), are responsible for finding and destroying any germs that invade the body. These white blood cells are produced and stored in immune organs throughout the body. Immune organs and tissues include the thymus, spleen, bone marrow, and lymph nodes. White blood cells constantly flow between these organs, monitoring the body for any invading germs to ensure we stay as healthy as possible.



How Does the Immune System Handle Germs?

When bacteria or a virus enters our body, an "immune response" occurs, which activates our immune system. When this system is functioning properly, specialized white blood cells find the germs and destroy them before they can cause illness or disease.

Occasionally, when our immune system can't keep up, we may experience sniffles, a cough, or sometimes a fever. These symptoms indicate that our immune system is still fighting off the bacteria or virus that has entered our body.

Additionally, antibodies are produced against the foreign invader, so 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 contribute to the strength of our immune system. By adopting healthy lifestyle strategies such as eating the right foods, engaging in regular moderate exercise, maintaining a healthy weight, getting enough sleep, and managing stress levels, we can reduce our chances of getting minor colds and flu and avoid more serious illnesses. It is also important to avoid harmful lifestyle choices, such as smoking and excessive alcohol consumption. Simple practices such as washing your hands frequently and wiping down surfaces at work and home can also help decrease the number of germs our bodies must handle on a daily basis.



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More information will be shared in upcoming articles. For detailed information on how to boost your immune system, check out the “Immune Health” Lunch and Learn presentation notes found here: [Immune Health Lunch and Learn Presentation Notes](#).

References:

- [Kids Health: Immune System](#)
- [Harvard Health: How to Boost Your Immune System](#)



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