

## Help Yourself by Boosting Immunity Through Flu Season

by Kim Brandstetter, DO

With the onset of flu season, maintaining your health is of the upmost importance. The most obvious first line of defense is to get your annual flu vaccine, but this alone may not be enough to keep you healthy. Taking an active role in boosting your immunity is a great first step, but separating fact from fiction can be a challenge in today's society. Below you will find some well studied tips for preventing the spread of disease.

### Hand-Washing

Frequently washing your hands using good technique is a very effective way of remaining healthy. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend the following:

Wet your hands and turn off the water, lather your hands with soap and scrub each side of your hands and under your nails for a total of at least 20 seconds (the equivalent of humming "Happy Birthday" two times through). Turn the water back on and rinse your hands thoroughly with warm clean water.

### Sleep

Did you know that if you are chronically sleep-deprived your body may not produce the same number of antibodies to the flu vaccine as a well rested person? Getting 7-8 hours of sleep allows your body to help fight off disease effectively - less than this and you may be at risk.

### Diet

There are numerous supplements sold over the counter promising boosted immunity if you take them daily. With a well balanced diet, these supplements aren't necessary. Give your body everything it needs by filling your plate with a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables. The more color to your plate the broader spectrum of nutrients you will get. Sugary drinks and foods high in simple carbohydrates weaken your immune system, making you more likely to get sick.

### Exercise

Daily exercise - at least a 30 minute walk daily - is a great way to improve your overall health and vitality.

### Stress

While stress hormones are protective and helpful, chronic stress and an increase in stress hormones can make us feel sick and tired. Finding ways to minimize and manage stress can help us fight off that bug going around the office this season. Positive coping methods such as artistic expression, meditation, music, reading and gardening are all ways to keep well this season.

### Stay Social

Studies have proven that remaining social and laughing often helps keeps those stress hormone levels at bay! By dining with friends, going to a party or spending time with loved ones, your immunity is enhanced. Keep yourself healthy and enjoy the holiday season!

### Holiday Hours

All Thunderbird Internal Medicine offices will be closed on Christmas Day and New Year's Day. We will be closing on Christmas Eve at 3 pm, but will be open normal hours on New Year's Eve. Best wishes to all for a happy, happy holiday season!



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