



FOOD SUPERHEROES: Eat up to boost immunity



The cold and flu season can take its toll on even the healthiest person. With people coughing and sneezing seemingly everywhere, it can be hard to avoid the many illnesses that make their rounds this time of year.

The good news is, there are some foods that may help you stave off colds and flu. These foods can boost the immune system, helping it fight off bad viruses that could make you sick. A healthy diet is a key part of a healthy immune system.

Perhaps these foods don't have superhero powers, but they act like protectors and guardians for our health. For a super-charged immune system, eat foods that contain these nutrients:



VITAMIN A

This vitamin regulates the immune system. It keeps skin and tissues in the mouth and stomach healthy, which helps keep out unwanted invaders. Good sources of this vitamin include sweet potatoes, carrots, apricots, red bell peppers, spinach, kale and eggs.



VITAMIN E

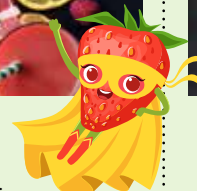
This vitamin fights off free radicals, which cause damage to the body's cells and may harm the immune system. Vitamin E is found in wheat germ, sunflower seeds, hazelnuts, almonds, avocado, peanuts, red bell peppers and eggs.



VITAMIN C

Perhaps the most famous of the immunity vitamins, vitamin C is well known for a reason. It tells your immune system to make antibodies to fight off infections. Citrus fruits like oranges and grapefruit are great sources, as well as red bell peppers, strawberries, broccoli and tomato juice.

NOTE: grapefruit can interact with medicines. If you take any medicines, ask your doctor before eating grapefruit or drinking grapefruit juice.



ZINC

This mineral is found in many cold remedies and "immune boosting" vitamins. But, getting it from whole foods is usually better than taking a pill. Find immune-boosting zinc in lean meat, poultry and seafood, as well as cooked beans and lentils, cashews, pumpkin seeds, cottage cheese and fortified breakfast cereals.



A well-rounded diet is very important to overall health. But, don't rely on foods alone to keep you healthy this cold and flu season. Eat right, get exercise, get plenty of sleep and wash hands frequently for a healthier winter – and a healthier life. Finally, if you do get sick, these same healthy habits will help you feel better sooner.