

INSIDE

OCTOBER 2020

IMMUNE HEALTH

In association with
Natural Lifestyle

GUT
STRONG

Understand why we
need a healthy gut
for immunity

FUELLING
YOUR
IMMUNITY

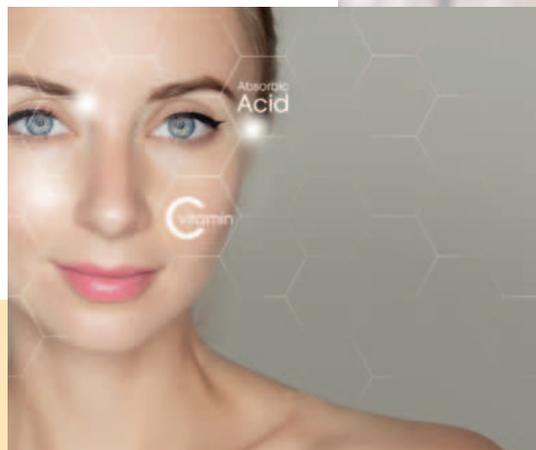
A HERBAL
EDUCATION

Discover the power
of echinacea

*Why vitamin D is one
of the most important
nutrients for your
immune system*

| WHY WE NEED PREBIOTICS | INSIDE GIVEAWAYS | YOUR IMMUNE
QUESTIONS ANSWERED | IMMUNE BENEFITS FROM BOTANICALS

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What are the benefits of taking C-immune?

In addition to strengthening the immune system, the content of Vitamin C has many other benefits and contributes to:

- Normal formation of collagen, which is important for the condition of your skin
- Contains 800mg of pure ascorbic acid
- Normal function of the nervous system
- A normal psychological function
- Protects cells from oxidative stress
- Reduces tiredness and fatigue

C-immune™ is vegan friendly. Take one tablet daily with a meal and boost your immune system.



Boost your immune system

Vitamin C is an important vitamin that we all need, but did you know that humans cannot produce Vitamin C themselves?

Our new product C-immune™ is a high-dose vitamin C tablet with 800 mg of pure ascorbic acid. Vitamin C is one of the substances that humans cannot produce themselves. Therefore, vitamin C must be added through the diet or supplemented with a food supplement. Vitamin C is important for the body's immune system and is an essential vitamin that is part of many processes in the body.

absorbed into the body, but is excreted with the urine and therefore we cannot get too much of it.

When do you need Vitamin C?

C-immune™ has extra focus on your immune system and thus can help you through periods when your immune system may be extra under pressure.

Where to buy?

You can find C-immune™ in Holland & Barrett and Leading Independent Health Stores. For an information leaflet call **0800 389 1255** or purchase online at www.newnordic.co.uk

What is Vitamin C

Vitamin C is an antioxidant that protects cells, DNA, proteins and lipids from oxidative damage. It is a water-soluble vitamin – which means, it's easily



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OCTOBER 2020

WELCOME



Well, what a year 2020 has been for the health of not just the nation, but for the entire world.

Never before has our health been brought so sharply into focus as it has with the arrival of Covid-19. Whether it's our weight, the nutrients we are taking, how much exercise we're doing or the type of food we're eating, the health choices we make have been firmly in the spotlight of late – and for good reason.

At the centre of our health is our immunity, a complex system that is involved in such a wide variety of functions in the body that are designed to keep it healthy. And there's no getting away from the fact that if you fuel this system in the wrong way, and don't feed it with the nutrients it needs, it simply won't be able to fire on all cylinders and keep you in good health.

And so, this is the focus of our first *Inside* supplement of 2020, in which we bring you all kinds of advice and tips from leading experts from across the nutrition world, all designed to help you look after your immune system and, in turn, lead a healthier and happier life.

First up, we bring you an in-depth look at one of the most widely discussed nutrients during the Covid-19 pandemic – vitamin D. The importance of this essential vitamin must not be

underestimated, and we bring you all the advice you need on page 4.

Then, we turn the focus on the botanical world with a fascinating look at the herb, echinacea, how it supports the immune system and who could benefit from its rich properties. Read all about it from a leading expert on page 8.

And we must also remember the gut, which is so interlinked with our immune system, given how much of the immune system is actually found there. One area of importance to support a healthy gut and, in turn, immunity, is probiotics, and we explain in greater detail on page 14. One of the lesser known areas in relation to the gut is prebiotics, and this is an area we also delve into on page 18.

Not only that but we have two nutrition experts answering some of the most common immune related questions from page 26, while botanicals are also a focus; discover the power of elderberry and astragalus on page 18, while mullein and oil of oregano are also highlighted from page 32.

And finally, we want to help our readers to stay healthy and so in this issue, we also have a selection of fantastic giveaways from some of the leading brands in the nutrition world, which you can find throughout the magazine. Take your pick and then head over to www.mynaturallifestyle.co.uk/inside, where you can enter the giveaways.

Rachel Symonds,
Editor

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A VITAMIN D EDUCATION

Vitamin D is one of the most important nutrients for not only overall good health but specifically our immune system – but why? Expert, Andrew Thomas, has the answers.

For many years, we have well understood the relationship between vitamin D and optimal wellbeing, including the protection of our bones, muscles, and teeth. However, we are now seeing increasing amounts of research being published to support that this essential everyday nutrient may be an unsung hero in the fight against respiratory infections.

An analysis carried out at Queen Mary University, London, found that vitamin D helps reduce the risk of infections and studies have demonstrated that the vitamin is also essential for our immune system to fight off viruses once we are already infected.

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, newly published research indicates that vitamin D also plays an important role in preventing respiratory infections, reducing antibiotic use, and improving immune system response. The report from The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA) confirms vitamin D's importance in the body's immune response. Although the research assessed the Irish population, this could, and should, be expanded to all countries, where similar levels of vitamin D deficiency have been reported.

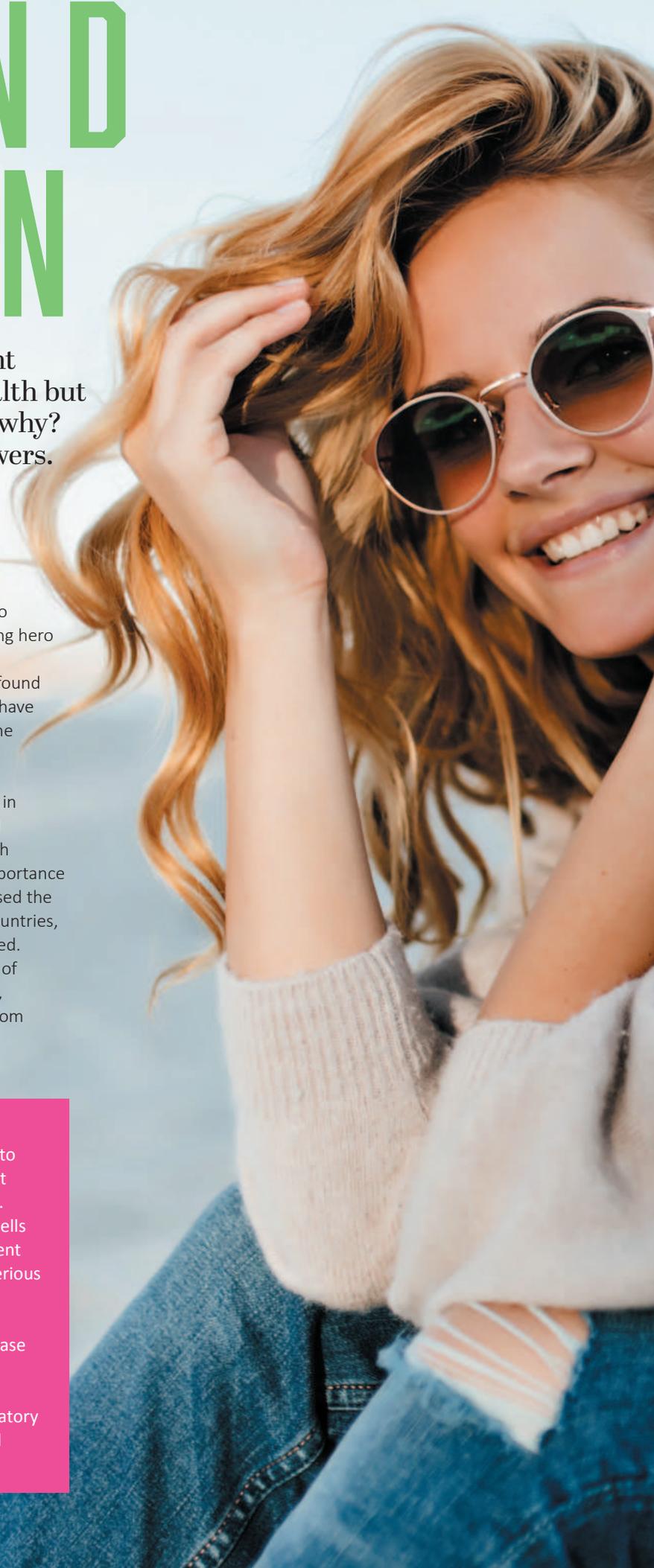
Although the mounting evidence surrounding the vital role of vitamin D in supporting optimal immune health is compelling, many of us remain confused about whether we will benefit from supplementation and how much we should be taking.

How it works

Supporting a naturally effective immune system and helping to protect against disease, vitamin D is a fat-soluble vitamin that plays a crucial role in activating the body's immune defences.

This nutrient is vital for optimal performance of the killer cells within the immune system – the T cells – and without sufficient vitamin D, these cells will not be able to react and fight off serious infections within the body.

Stored in the body's fat cells for approximately two weeks, remaining inactive until it's needed, vitamin D works to increase the production of antiviral proteins and also decreases 'bad' cytokines – these are the immune molecules that can cause dangerous inflammation in the body. It's our body's inflammatory response that can lead to critical conditions, rather than viral infections themselves.





The sunshine vitamin – is it enough?

Ordinarily, 80 to 90 per cent of our vitamin D stores are provided by the sun, with few foods providing meaningful quantities. But our bodies simply cannot rely on sunlight alone to make enough of this vital vitamin and for people living in the northern hemisphere, the amount of UVB radiation is not sufficient to produce adequate amounts of vitamin D.

The concept of elevating our vitamin D levels naturally is simple. As we expose ourselves to the sun, our bodies generate vitamin D and the more skin we expose, the greater our level of production. However, it's during this exposure that melanin is produced within the skin. Melanin competes

with vitamin D for
UVB absorption
and reduces
vitamin D

conversion within the body – meaning the more melanin we produce, the slower our vitamin D conversion becomes.

Our near complete reliance on sunlight to provide vitamin D is problematic and may be to blame for why deficiencies have become commonplace. Our modern diets and lifestyles, where time spent outdoors is on the decrease and the use of sun cream and cosmetics which include an SPF is on the rise, may also increase the likelihood of deficiency.

Vitamin D deficiency remains a worldwide issue, with around one billion people across the globe experiencing inadequate levels and the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) suggests that in the UK, approximately one in five of us have low or insufficient vitamin D levels.

The recent lockdown has exacerbated this issue, denying vital natural vitamin D production at a time when we would normally be building levels, after an annual vitamin D 'starvation' since October.

This delay in natural vitamin D production is especially detrimental to those who fall within the groups of people deemed more at-risk of a deficiency, including the elderly, those with darker skin and mums-to-be, in addition to children under five-years-old, teenagers, people following a plant-based diet and those with low sun exposure, such as office workers.

Signs of deficiency

A vitamin D deficiency can present with many symptoms, yet these indications can often be attributed to another illness or lifestyle factor and can go undiagnosed. Symptoms include catching frequent coughs and colds, bone ache or soreness, muscle stiffness, headaches, fatigue, and even low mood.

Severe deficiencies can lead to loss of bone density and deformities, such as rickets in children and bone pain or osteomalacia in adults. A lack of vitamin D may contribute to the softening of bones, which can lead to the bowing of the legs in children and adults may see an increase in bone fractures.

Should you supplement?

We now find ourselves in a consistent period of increased risk. With varying levels of Coronavirus worldwide and with cold and 'flu season almost upon us, we are counting on our immune system to protect us from infection – so it's important that we provide our body with the tools it needs to fend off disease.

The Scientific Advisory Commission on Nutrition (SACN) recently concluded that it is difficult to obtain adequate levels of vitamin D from natural sources alone and alternative strategies such as supplementation are becoming increasingly necessary to ensure optimal health.

When it comes to vitamin D requirements, there's no one-size-fits-all and many factors, including medical conditions, lifestyle and diet, age, weight, and skin colour can affect our ability to absorb this essential nutrient.

The best way to understand your personal vitamin D requirements and begin supplementing effectively is to test your levels. Whilst visiting your GP to arrange a test may be tricky at the moment, an easy-to-use at home vitamin D test kit offers a simple and accurate way to ascertain your personal needs.

Public Health England (PHE) recently updated its guidance, urging the nation to consider taking a daily vitamin D supplement of 400IU, yet there is growing evidence to suggest that this is simply not adequate to raise levels to sufficiency in deficient adults and it arguably fails to acknowledge the potential benefit related to Covid-19 resistance.

Considering the latest research, along with a decade of testing and supplementation carried out at BetterYou, evidence suggests that a dosage related to body mass is required, instead of a single dosage level for all. Taking body mass into account, a daily maintenance of 25mcg (1000IU) for every 25kg of body weight is advisable and the Health Food Manufacturers' Association recognises 4000IU to be the safe upper limit for daily intake from all dietary sources.

As our bodies react to every vitamin and mineral differently, we will have a unique response to taking a supplement and the amount of time before you start to see a difference will vary. Those with a deficiency can begin to feel a difference after just two weeks of supplementation, however, significant benefits are experienced after one month. That's why I recommend that those with inadequate levels of vitamin D, for example, those deemed deficient or insufficient, re-test their levels after 12 weeks of supplementing to ensure their levels have increased appropriately.

What to look for in a supplement

Many traditional supplementation methods, such as tablets and capsules, often use fillers to bulk out their products, which can be problematic for those following a plant-based diet. This is because many fillers are sourced from animal products, so it's important to check the ingredients listed on any supplement you intend to use.

This is particularly relevant when looking at vitamin D supplements as while the D3 form of the vitamin is far superior to the D2 form, the majority of vitamin D3 comes from the lanolin contained in sheep wool. There are vegan-friendly versions available of D3 that come from a lichen source, so again, I would advise you to be vigilant when purchasing health supplements.

For many people, such as those with dysphagia, using traditional methods of supplementation can be challenging – particularly for children and the elderly, who may struggle to swallow tablets and capsules. This is also essential for those who suffer from malabsorption disorders such as IBS, Crohn's, colitis and coeliac disease, as the amount of nutrients the body can absorb through the gut may be suboptimal.

Pill free supplementation, such as an



oral spray which delivers nutrients directly to the bloodstream through the inner lining of the mouth, offers an effective alternative method of supplementation.

As vitamin D is fat soluble, it's perfectly suited to an oral spray delivery method as it relies on the bloodstream for transportation from the skin, to the liver and kidneys. The faster it enters the bloodstream, the sooner the body can benefit from it.

Supplementing vitamin D to maintain optimal levels is essential for most of us, and a study conducted by Sheffield University, in conjunction with BetterYou, found oral sprays to be just as effective at elevating levels as traditional capsules. In the trial, of the participants that expressed a preference in the delivery method, over 70 per cent said that they preferred the pill free oral spray for its ease of use and better taste.

About the expert



Andrew Thomas is Founder and Managing Director at BetterYou, which was the first company in the world to develop a topically applied magnesium oil and the concept of nutritional oral sprays. BetterYou has been pioneering product development in this area ever since.

With a passion to educate and communicate, Andrew enjoys sharing his expertise. He has lectured for the Institute for Optimum Nutrition and has been involved with numerous research projects with academic bodies, such as Cardiff University, University of Sheffield, and St Mark's Hospital.

READER OFFER

It's time to supercharge your immune system with a pill-free vitamin D supplement from the pioneering brand behind the UK's first daily vitamin D oral spray.



Helping to keep your natural immune system robust, BetterYou's optimal strength DLux 3000 Oral Spray guarantees your

daily dose of vitamin D. Proven to be just as effective at elevating levels as traditional capsules, this great-tasting, natural peppermint flavoured supplement provides a fast and convenient way to increase levels of this essential vitamin.

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DEFEND YOURSELF

Nutritional Therapist, Alison Cullen, explains all about the immune system – and how the wonder herb, echinacea, could help you.

The world may seem a scary place, full of unknown bugs and fearsome beasts. However, you're better defended than you think as you have your own personal in-built defence mechanism, known as your immune system.

What is it?

Imagine your body as a walled town. Any invader will have to breach the walls to get in, and those walls equate to your skin's oils, your nose hairs, mucous produced by your mucous membranes, tears, ear wax, and stomach acid. None of which may seem hugely attractive, but all of which are important as they are able to either trap or attack incoming bugs.

If an invader gets in, they then have to evade the street patrol. This is made up of white blood cells that are produced in your bone marrow. Some of them clear away rubbish left lying around the streets. Others act more like detectives, checking the identity of any suspicious-looking characters lurking around the place.

Invaders with malign intent, unfriendly bacteria or viruses, for example, are known as pathogens. If the white blood cells identify a pathogen, they can call up more troops to help them.

Then there's the secret service – the immune cells that live in the gut and other organs. The gut contains more than 70 per cent of the body's supply of immune cells, which seek out and destroy pathogens that have made it past the mouth and stomach. Any pathogenic matter that gets into the bloodstream from the digestive tract will have to travel through the liver, where more immune cells (Kupffer cells) are on hand to deal with them.



How does it work?

If a pathogen gets past all these defences and manages to infect cells, an immune response is triggered – in other words, the troops (known as T cells) are called up to attack the invader by as many means as possible.

- The heat is turned up to burn out the bad guys – this makes us feel hot and sweaty.

- Our lymph glands swell as the immune cells there get busy processing the bugs.

- All the mucous membranes secrete more mucus to help trap and wash out bacterial or viral material. We may cough and sneeze and blow our noses more, which all helps expel infected material. This is why it's important to use hankies to avoid spreading the bugs further afield.

We'll probably feel quite tired whilst this is going on, as our body is using more energy to fight off the bug. Resting and staying well hydrated at this time is sensible.

Meanwhile, other white blood cells (known as B cells) are busy making antibodies to fit the bug that's been identified. An antibody is very specific to an individual pathogen – like a pair of customised handcuffs that just fit one particular baddie. Once attached to the bug, it makes it easier for the troops to spot and kill it. Antibodies usually remain available for some time after the initial invasion, ready to be used if that invader tries again.

So far, so healthy

Our natural defence system is, therefore, pretty amazing, and able to cancel out heaps of the dangers lurking around us. Problems arise when we don't keep our immune cells in good shape.

Unsurprisingly, things that are bad for general health are also bad for the health of the immune system.

- **Bad diet:** Too much refined sugar, too many unhealthy fats, too much caffeine, lots of processed foods – these will all make our immune cells less able to counter pathogens efficiently.

- **Too many alcoholic drinks:** Too much alcohol has as much of a disorientating effect on immune cells as it does on us.

- **Stress:** When we are under pressure, fewer street patrols operate. The daily tasks of checking for unfriendly elements in our midst are neglected.

- **Poor sleep:** During the night, the immune system gets a chance to carry out regulatory chores that keep it functioning optimally. Without proper sleep, levels of inflammatory chemicals are affected, making us less likely to respond effectively to infections.

- **Smoking:** This kills off useful nutrients in your body, and also distracts immune cells from their other jobs, as they have to clear the litter left behind by inhaling smoke.

So, what happens if your immune system isn't up to scratch?

Weak immune function makes it harder to withstand infection. The immune system will also take longer to conquer the bug, so symptoms such as raised temperature, swollen glands, sore throat, catarrh, etc., will be present more frequently.



Getting help from nature

Echinacea purpurea is a herb with a long and honourable history of supporting immune function. Originally used by Native Americans to speed up the healing of flesh wounds, its modern-day use is focused on its ability to improve the efficiency of our white blood cells. When you have been taking *Echinacea purpurea*, your white blood cells are more likely to jump on the right bugs at the right time to effectively cancel them out.

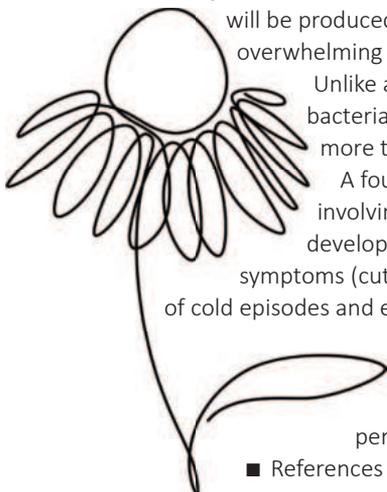
Your immune cells are better primed to respond with maximum efficiency when the invader alarm goes off.¹ Inflammatory chemicals, which are released at the start of the immune response, will be produced in sufficient quantities to break down and burn out the bug, but not in overwhelming amounts that injure innocent bystanders (your own body's tissues).²

Unlike an antibiotic, *Echinacea purpurea* will work against viruses, as well as bacteria. It won't kill off your friendly gut bacteria, which is important because more than 70 per cent of your immune cells live in your gut!

A four-month long trial carried out at the Common Cold Centre, in Cardiff, involving 755 participants, showed that *Echinacea purpurea* reduced the development of recurrent colds by 59 per cent, reduced the severity of cold symptoms (cutting the need to use painkillers by 52 per cent), and reduced the number of cold episodes and episode days (the number of days cold symptoms were experienced).

Those most at risk of infection – those prone to more than two colds per year, those with high stress levels, poor sleepers, and smokers – benefited most. A high safety profile was shown over the four-month period.³

■ References available on request



Get fresh

Some of the key compounds held within *Echinacea purpurea* are lost during the drying process, so using a product made from fresh plant material will provide you with more potent action.

Research shows that the antiviral action is found in *Echinacea purpurea*'s aerial parts – the stem and leaves of the plant.⁴ The root helps out by being anti-inflammatory, but it doesn't provide that vital antiviral protection.

Check your echinacea product to make sure it's not just root but has some of that 'above ground' action going on too.

Winter well

A few sensible decisions about a diet full of fresh veggies, and a lifestyle where activity is balanced by rest and good quality sleep, backed up by some specific plant-powered remedies, and your winter defences will be superb.

READER OFFER



A.Vogel Echinacea Lozenges contain extracts of freshly harvested, organic echinacea, essential oils, herb extracts and honey. Those already suffering with

a cold or 'flu may find they help soothe a sore or irritated throat. *Inside* is offering readers the chance of winning one of 20 of these handbag heroes. Visit www.mynaturallifestyle.co.uk/inside to enter.

About the expert



Alison Cullen is a Nutritional Therapist and works as Education Manager at

A.Vogel, a company specialising in herbal remedies.

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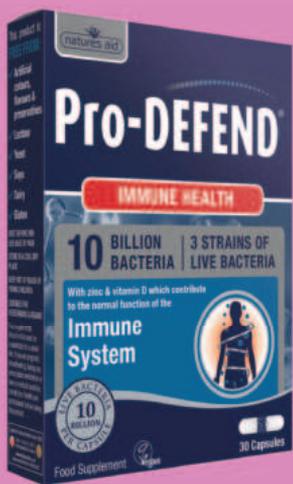
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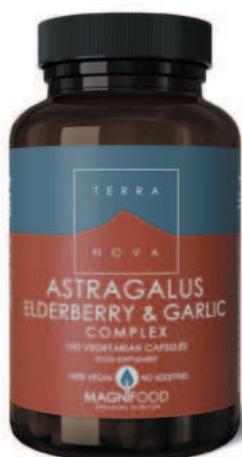
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THE MICROBIOME AND IMMUNE HEALTH

Ever wondered why your gut health plays such a crucial role in your immune function? Nutritional Therapist, Jenny Logan, helps you to understand.

The immune system is the guardian of health. Its job is to provide protection from invaders, germs, and damaged cells. It is made up of a vast network of different cells, tissues, and organs, which all work together to keep the body as healthy as possible.

The following cells and organs all play a vital role in maintaining a healthy immune response:

■ **The skin:** Forms a protective barrier which prevents bad bacteria and viruses from entering the blood stream.

■ **The mucous membranes:** Line every entrance to the body – the nose, the mouth, the digestive system, and the intimate areas.

■ **The lymphatic system:** A network which runs throughout the whole body carrying lymph – a fluid containing white blood cells, nutrients, and waste materials – in and out of the bloodstream.

■ **The thymus:** A small organ, which produces white blood cells called T-cells. T-cells help to destroy viruses and bacteria.

■ **The bone marrow:** Produces many of the important white blood cells, including B-cells, which work with T-cells to help fight infection.

■ **White blood cells:** Produced by the bone marrow and stored in the blood and lymph.

■ **The gut:** In addition to being lined with mucous membranes, the gut houses epithelial cells, which form around 70 per cent of the cells of the immune system. These epithelial cells form a physical barrier along the inside of the gut, which prevents bad bacteria, viruses, and other toxins from gaining entry to the blood stream, where they could cause illness.

The stomach also acts as part of the immune system, as the acid it contains kills off many potential pathogens.

The gut is also home to the microbiome, a world housing over 100 trillion bacteria, living inside every human being, and playing a vital role in supporting and strengthening our immune response.¹





Roles of the microbiome

No matter how hard we try, nothing in our environment is truly sterile, from the bathroom to the kitchen, to our food.

Our intestinal immune system – supported by the microbiome – encounters more ‘baddies’ and protects us from more illnesses than any other part of the body. Every day that we do not get ill after eating food or putting our hand to our mouth, we have the good bacteria in our gut to thank for it.

How good bacteria look after us

■ **Supporting the gut wall:** The bacteria of the microbiome support the health and function of the epithelial cells and the mucous lining the gut. Without a healthy colony of beneficial bacteria, the protection offered by the epithelial cells could start to break down, leading to illness and inflammation. This is a condition often referred to as leaky gut. Leaky gut has been associated with low immunity, chronic fatigue, food intolerances, allergies, and low mood.² Research into the roles of specific good bacteria has highlighted the role of *Lactobacillus plantarum* in supporting the health and integrity of the gut wall. Clinical trials have indicated that supplementing with *L. plantarum* can help to reduce the symptoms associated with leaky gut and restore the integrity of the gut wall.³

■ **Competing for space and food:** One of the ways that our good bacteria protect us from illness is to take up all the space and food available in the gut. This means that a large, healthy colony of beneficial bacteria in the gut will prevent the ‘baddies’ from having space to grow or food to eat, thus protecting us from illness.

■ **Creating a healthy environment:** The good bacteria of the microbiome thrive in a slightly acidic environment. This acidic environment is also hostile to unfriendly bacteria to prevent them from being able to live in the gut and cause illness. Certain bacteria, such as *Lactobacillus acidophilus*, help to encourage the growth of other good bacteria within the microbiome by producing lactic acid. This maintains the acidic environment required to keep the good bacteria alive and well.⁴

■ **Regulating inflammation:** Research has indicated that as well as supporting the right environment for healthy immune function, certain good bacteria could play a direct role in supporting immune health by supporting the production of immune cells and reducing inflammation. *Bifidobacteria animalis subsp. lactis* is one strain which has been shown to be particularly effective at reducing inflammation. It does this both by inhibiting the production of pro-inflammatory cytokine, TNF Alpha, and increasing the production of anti-inflammatory cytokine, IL-4.⁵

■ **Training our immune cells:** The bacteria of our microbiome help to train and strengthen our immune system. Research has shown that the presence of beneficial bacteria is vital to the normal development of immune function. For example, mice with a sterile gut lack certain immune cells, which then develop, and mature once bacteria flora are introduced to their gut. We also know that children who do not get early exposure to their mother’s vaginal microbiome have an increased risk of inflammatory issues and autoimmune problems.

Optimal immune health

All this means that the microbiome plays a pivotal role in health and wellbeing, and to support a healthy immune function we do need to consider strengthening and supporting it.

One of the most important times to take a bacterial supplement would be after taking antibiotics. Whilst we know that there are times when antibiotics are required to help combat a bacterial infection, research has indicated that whilst antibiotics help to wipe out bad bacteria, they also damage the good. It has been proven that even a year after finishing antibiotics, the gut flora may still not be fully recovered.⁶

This could offer an explanation as to why some people get stuck in a cycle of almost constant infections – without the good bacteria required to support a healthy immune system, they are more likely to get another infection. For this reason, many nutritionists will suggest that anyone who has used any antibiotics in the previous 12 months use a high strength, broad spectrum good bacteria supplement, providing between 30-100bn good bacteria per capsule, to try and rebuild their microbiome.

However, bacterial supplements are for life, not just after antibiotics. This is because the microbiome is influenced by many things, and beneficial bacteria can also be killed off by a high sugar diet, processed foods and artificial sweeteners, stress, digestive issues, and the pill or HRT.

In addition, scientists researching the impact of the microbiome and the many roles of the good bacteria which live there have also found that specific bacteria can be used to help improve the function of the immune system.



Specific bacteria to support immunity

Three strains of bacteria with research supporting their role in maintaining a healthy immune system are *Lactobacillus acidophilus*, *Lactobacillus plantarum* and *Bifidobacteria animalis subsp. lactis*.

L. acidophilus helps to keep the gut environment healthy, producing lactic acid to support the health of all our other 'good guys'.⁴

L. plantarum has been shown to play a key role in supporting the health and integrity of the all-important gut wall, preventing 'leaky gut'.³ *B. lactis* and *L. plantarum* help with the absorption and production of vitamin B12 and folic acid, both of which are important in supporting immune health and reducing tiredness.⁵

L. plantarum was used in a study conducted on people suffering with chronic fatigue. Over a 30-day period, those people taking a supplement including *L. plantarum* reported a 60 per cent improvement in symptoms and experienced a 16 per cent improvement in natural killer cell activity.³

Studies carried out on the immune supportive benefits of both *L. plantarum* and *L. acidophilus* have shown that they enhance the innate and acquired intestinal immune systems, helping to increase the level of monocytes, neutrophils and antibodies being produced. This means that supplementing with these bacteria helps to prepare the body, should unfriendly bacteria and viruses attack.^{5,7}

All three strains have shown an ability to help reduce inflammation and increase antioxidant protection, which would, in turn, reduce the symptoms of illness, making these bacteria ideal to use during infections, as well as in prevention.⁵

■ References available on request

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Pro-DEFEND contains a unique blend of specially selected bacteria with carefully chosen nutrients, including zinc and vitamin D to support a healthy immune system. Each vegan-friendly Pro-DEFEND capsule provides 10bn bacteria across three strains: *Lactobacillus acidophilus*, *Lactobacillus plantarum* and *Bifidobacteria animalis subspecies lactis*. Part of the award-winning Microbiome range from Natures Aid, all the bacteria selected for the Microbiome range have been proven to effectively colonise the microbiome after swallowing, and are stable at room temperature, meaning you do not need to refrigerate your supplements to keep the bacteria alive. *Inside* is offering readers the chance of winning one of five packs. Visit www.mynaturallifestyle.co.uk/ inside to enter.



About the expert

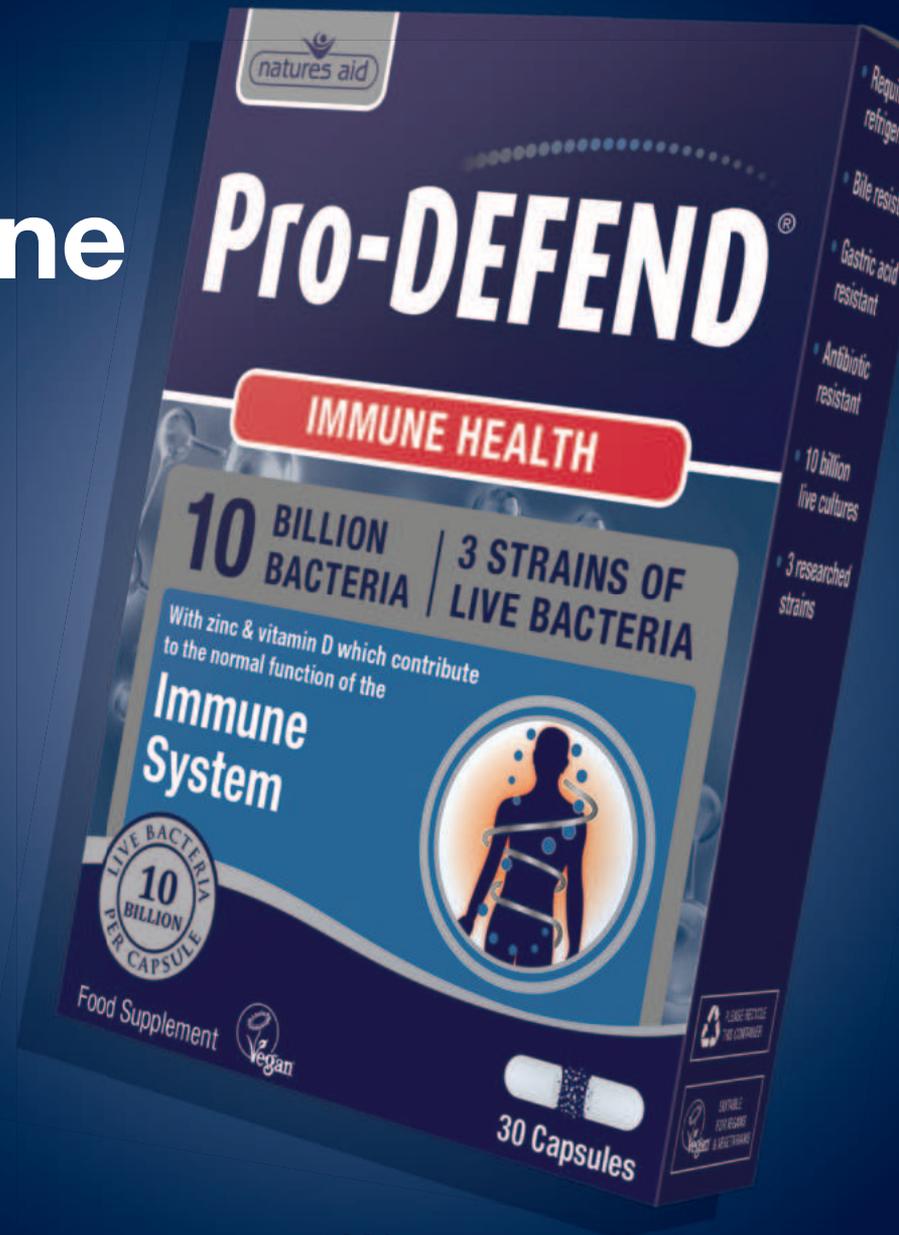
Jenny Logan is the Product Development and Training Manager for Natures Aid and has worked in the natural products industry for more than 20 years. She is a Nutritional Therapist and ran her own very successful health food store for 13 years, before setting up in private practice.



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BRILLIANT BOTANICALS

The natural world has given us some wonderful immune boosters. Here, nutrition expert, Alice Bradshaw, delves into the power of elderberry and astragalus.

Immune health is always a primary issue as we enter the colder season, but with the ongoing concern that is Covid-19, the emphasis is even greater.

The body's immune system is constantly on guard to protect and defend against invading foreign substances, microorganisms and toxins and ensuring that the immune system is working optimally is crucial for a healthy immune response.

Most people recognise that nutrition and lifestyle are key to immune health, but there are also many botanicals that have long been used in the world of natural medicine for their immune supportive properties. Two of the best known are elderberry fruit and astragalus.

ELDERBERRY

With a long history of medicinal use, the elderberry plant was described by the ancient Greek, Hippocrates, as his 'medicine chest' due to its wide-ranging health benefits.

Historically, elderberry has been used to relieve pain, fight viral infections, reduce inflammation, ease sinus congestion, relieve symptoms of the common cold, fight influenza and even delay age-related ailments. Many of these attributes have been verified in more recent research studies, which is key to the fact that elderberry remains one of the most popular natural remedies of modern times.

Formally known as *Sambucus nigra* (its botanical name), elderberry is native to Europe, Africa and Asia but can also be found in the US. Both the flowers and berries are used as natural remedies. Traditionally, the berries were used to make syrups, jams and wine and to this day, elderberry syrup is one of the most popular winter remedies found in health food stores.

Researchers have identified the active components within elderberry, of which there are many. Found within the pigments and phenolic compounds in elderberry are flavonols, quercetin and anthocyanins – the latter give the characteristic red, purple and violet colours to many fruits and vegetables and are responsible for the distinctive deep colour of elderberries. The anthocyanins (named as cyanidin-3-sambubioside-5-glucoside, cyanidin-3,5-diglucoside, cyanidin-3-glucoside, cyanidin-3-rutinoside,

pelargonidin-3-glucoside, and pelargonidin-3-sambubioside) have been extensively studied for their various activities within the human body. They've been shown to enhance antioxidant status after ingestion, offer protection from demise to the body's cells, support immunity and exhibit anti-inflammatory properties.

In addition to these intriguing phytonutrients, elderberries are an exceptional source of many nutrients, most notably, vitamin C, vitamin A, vitamin B6, potassium and iron. But how does this impressive nutritional profile translate into protection for the immune system?

Numerous studies have demonstrated the immune-enhancing benefits of elderberry, specifically in relation to colds and 'flu. It was demonstrated that elderberry supplementation was not only capable of reducing cold and 'flu symptoms, but if taken within the initial 48 hours of the onset of symptoms, could shorten the duration of influenza symptoms by four days on average.

Colds and infections can also present with respiratory symptoms and inflamed sinuses. Studies show that elderberry supplements reduce *Streptococcus* and *Branhamella catarrhalis* species bacteria, which are associated with upper respiratory tract infections.

With its documented antiviral, antibacterial and immune supportive attributes, elderberry is something to consider as a natural addition to any immune focused nutrition regime, particularly through the colder months.



ASTRAGALUS

Astragalus membranaceus (commonly referred to as astragalus or astragalus root) is a popular herb that has been used for many hundreds of years in Chinese medicine, where it is classified as a tonic for various body systems and regarded as a master immune herb. Modern herbal medicine recognises the research-proven benefits of this herb, including its adaptogenic, antiviral/antibacterial and immune supportive properties.

The dried root of the astragalus plant is the most commonly used part of this herb. The key constituents have been identified as triterpene saponins (astragalosides), flavonoids and polysaccharides. Additionally, astragalus contains phytosterols, essential oils, amino acids and antioxidant compounds.

As an adaptogen, astragalus helps protect the body against various stressors – which may be physical, mental, or emotional – which, in turn, is supportive to immune health and overall wellness. Stress is an often overlooked suppressor of the immune system and many changes in lifestyles (such as less social contact, working from home, additional responsibilities) that resulted from the need to control Covid-19, have added considerable amounts of stress to many individuals.

The role of astragalus as an immune-supportive herb has been demonstrated in research. There appears to be several mechanisms of action, including enhancing activity of natural killer cells and optimising B and T lymphocyte activity (immune cells that defend and fight off infections). As a result of this increased immunity, astragalus has also demonstrated anti-viral properties and is commonly used to prevent colds and upper respiratory infections.

Numerous studies suggest that the polysaccharide content of astragalus could be an additional factor for its immune supportive actions within the body. Incidentally, polysaccharides may positively influence the gut microflora, potentially further enhancing immune function. Healthy microflora is needed to help the body fight infection and enhance immunity. Studies have shown that astragalus polysaccharides increase beneficial bacteria, while reducing less favourable microflora.

It is now accepted that an overwhelming inflammatory response serves to add complications for those with various viral infections. Astragalus has been shown to help balance inflammatory cytokines (a category of signalling molecules that mediate and regulate immunity and inflammation).

SUPPLEMENTS

To obtain the numerous health benefits of elderberry and astragalus, using natural supplements are the best and most practical option. There are numerous forms to choose from, be it tinctures, syrups or capsules. There are also many combination products that contain these herbs, plus other immune supportive and antiviral botanicals, such as garlic and olive leaf or nutrients such as vitamin C or zinc. One very effective way to obtain the remarkable health benefits of these herbs is to choose fresh freeze-dried products.

Fresh freeze drying is the best natural method to keep sensitive plants almost as fresh as when they were cropped. Research shows that fresh freeze drying protects and retains a plant's potency, biochemical integrity and enzyme activity, as well as its colour, flavour and smell. Fresh freeze drying also significantly concentrates all of the beneficial compounds in a fresh plant.

Unlike conventional drying and extraction methods, this is achieved without damaging or removing the original fresh plant constituents. Unlike extraction, freeze drying concentrates virtually all of the original plant compounds in more or less the same ratios and balance as was contained in the fresh plant. It also means that concentration is achieved without the use of solvents such as ethanol (used to make simple extracts) or toxic solvents often used to make standardised herbal extracts (such as methanol, acetone or hexane).

Food supplements should not be used as a substitute for a varied diet and are not recommended during pregnancy or breastfeeding (unless on the advice of a healthcare practitioner). If taking immunosuppressant drugs or any other prescribed medication, consult a physician before using astragalus or elderberry.



About the expert

Alice Bradshaw is a qualified Nutritional Therapist with a passion for health writing. She has worked in the natural health industry for 25 years and is Head of Education and Nutrition Information at Terranova Nutrition.

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Terranova Astragalus, Elderberry & Garlic Complex is a powerfully active and intensely synergistic formulation for healthy immune system support and resistance. The formula features a well-researched combination of botanicals and fresh freeze dried phytonutrients. Freeze drying of plants has been shown to be superior to other drying methods in terms of activity, biochemical complexity, solubility and stability, and retains a plant's enzymatic integrity. As with all Terranova products, the product is free from any fillers, binders, manufacturing additives and is suitable for both vegetarians and vegans. *Inside* is offering readers the chance of winning one of five. Visit www.mynaturallifestyle.co.uk/inside to enter.





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PREPPING THE IMMUNE SYSTEM

Our immune systems are complex and require a range of nutrients to function. But how much have you thought about the importance of prebiotics in their function? Here, Lucien Harthoorn, Research and Development Director at Clasado, explains all.

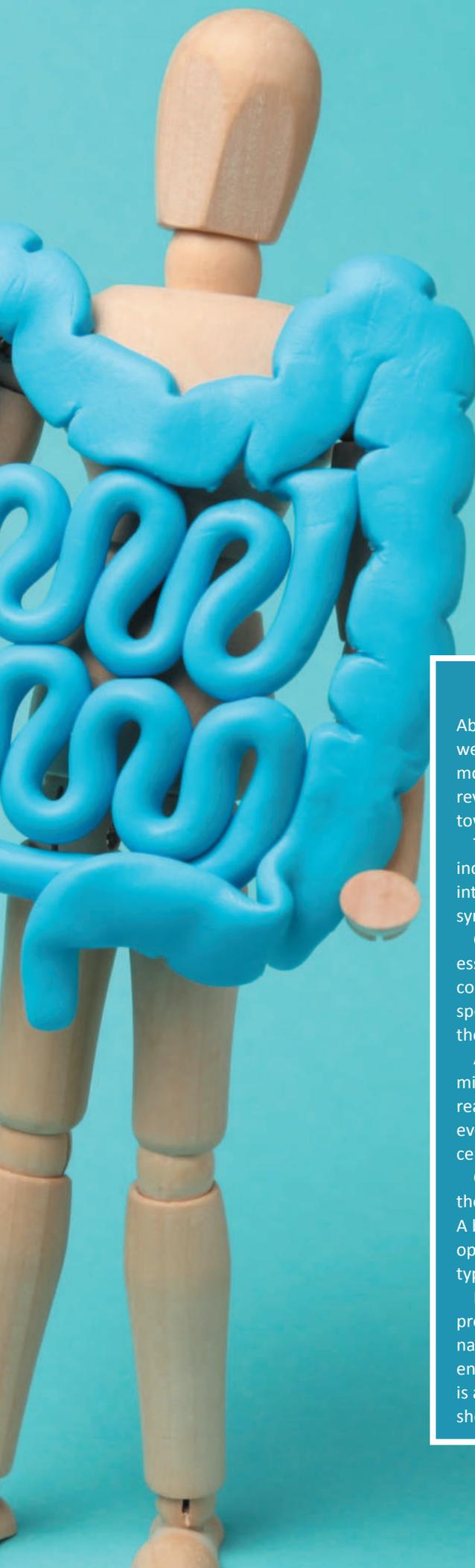
From infancy right through to our later years, our immune system is one of the unsung heroes of the body. It doesn't always receive the same attention as other elements of physical, or even mental health, but it's our body's first line of defence against illnesses and disease.

But, as a global pandemic has put the focus on everyday wellness, many of us are taking the opportunity to get more attuned with how the body works, and the ways we can proactively support our physical health.

In modern media, we are often bombarded with references to immune health and immune function, but what does it look like in practice? In humans, we generally identify three main types of immunity.

- Innate immunity is the system we have from day one. This includes barriers, cells and substances, designed to catch and trap pathogens before they get further into the body.
- The second type is adaptive, or 'acquired' immunity. As we grow and become exposed to both bacteria, viruses but also vaccinations, the body builds a catalogue of antibodies that can respond to certain threats and pathogens. The adaptive immune system will take over if pathogens have made it past the innate immune system and gained entry to the body. This system is also known as the 'immunological memory', as the adaptive immune system remembers previous pathogens and diseases in order to respond appropriately.
- A third type of immune response is passive immunity. This is short-term immunity, resulting from the introduction of antibodies from another individual. One example of this is during pregnancy – the growing foetus can 'borrow' specific antibodies from the mother through the placenta before birth. Similarly, antibodies can be passed through breastmilk after birth, to help protect the infant from some infections during early years.





SIGNS OF WEAK IMMUNITY

Like every part of the body, the immune system can sometimes struggle, and may need extra support. If the immune system is compromised, you may experience recurrent infections, such as lingering coughs and colds that you can't fight off, or that reappear just when you think you're getting better.

Once your immune system is less strong, it can be difficult to break the cycle. Recurrent infections damage your body's natural defences further each time, meaning your body is less and less able to respond properly and recover. We see this in practice as the body ages – it becomes harder to fight off infections and illness in old age, known as 'immunosenescence'.

The effectiveness of your immune system is influenced by many factors that affect your body and its health as a whole. Psychological and emotional problems, stress, poor diet, malnutrition, and a sedentary lifestyle can all result in reduced immune system function, which makes it all the more important to support it where possible.

GUT SUPPORT

About 70 per cent of our immune system lies in the gut¹, which indicates that what we put into it could have an impact. Because of this, diet can be a way to develop more effective immunity by fuelling the body the right way. As research continues to reveal just how crucial the digestive system is to overall health and wellness, it points towards the gut as a great starting point for bolstering immune health.

The immune system requires a number of particular nutrients to function properly, including vitamin C and D², as well as minerals such as zinc and selenium. The interplay between the gut and the immune system is complex, but research uncovers synergistic elements between them.

Commonly known as gut microbiota, bacteria in the gut helps the body to produce essential nutrients and substances that our cells cannot produce on their own. The compounds produced by microbiota depends on the bacterial composition, which speaks to the value of supporting bacterial diversity. Essentially, gut bacteria educate the immune system from the time we are born.

As we grow, we are consistently exposed to new environments, along with new microbes and potential pathogens. The immune system needs to find a balance in reaction and tolerance, otherwise we would experience an immune mobilisation for every new event. Microbial diversity in the gut plays a part, as it teaches immune cells to become more selective in their response.

Conversely, dysbiosis, which is an imbalance of microbes in the gut, can affect the production of the signalling molecules that the body relies on for information³. A balanced gut microbiota composition could be essential for the support of a fully optimised defence and immune system, which requires the regulation of various types of immune cells and signalling molecules in the body.

Research demonstrates that an intake of certain dietary supplements, in this case, a prebiotic, can reduce adhesion of pathogens to gut cells and increase the secretion of natural substances that prevent the invasion of pathogens. The relationship doesn't end there – the gut microbiome could also play a role in soothing gut symptoms; IBS is a leading example. Certain symptoms such as bloating and constipation have been shown to be positively affected by the intake of prebiotic fibre.

WHAT DO PREBIOTICS DO?

As gut health has once again become a central point of focus for overall physical health and wellbeing, prebiotics are taking the spotlight.

Prebiotics are defined by the International Scientific Association for Prebiotics and Probiotics as ‘a substrate that is selectively utilised by host microorganisms, conferring a health benefit’.

The goal of a prebiotic is to feed and nourish specific good bacteria in the gut, which, as well as helping with digestion of food, are known to have additional benefits to health. *Bifidobacteria* is one example of a beneficial bacteria. They are important members of a varied gut microbiota and have been linked to many important processes throughout the body.

Although they only make up a small percentage of our gut microbiome in adulthood, *Bifidobacteria* produce metabolites, which cross feed other beneficial bacteria and lower the pH, making it more difficult for pathogenic bacteria to grow in the GI tract.

CHOOSING YOUR PREBIOTIC

As the prebiotic category grows, you will find a greater choice of supplements available.

At the core, it’s important to understand the main functions of potential dietary supplements, and match this up with the outcomes or benefits that you are looking for.

For example, one may wish to specifically nourish and support *Bifidobacteria* due to its understood mechanisms of action that include protection against pathogens by competitive exclusion, modulation of the immune system and provision of nutrients. These individuals would find a prebiotic supplement that specifically targets *Bifidobacteria* to be more beneficial.

As with all aspects of health and wellness, it’s important to have a demonstrable effect. This is established through scientific research, publications and clinical trials. Research on how the gut microbiome can be modulated through supplements is well documented, and individuals would be advised to investigate studies into the efficacy of potential dietary supplements.

■ References available at www.mynaturallifestyle.co.uk/inside

WHERE CAN PREBIOTICS BE FOUND?

Prebiotics can be found naturally in some high-fibre foods, for example, in bananas, Jerusalem artichokes, onions, legumes and grains.

The challenge for many is that through diet alone, one would have to consume high quantities to achieve a prebiotic benefit and is unachievable for individuals who are unable to tolerate these foods, which is one of the reasons why prebiotic supplements are seeing such a surge in popularity.

All prebiotics are fibre, but not all fibre is prebiotic and consumption of this type of fibre through regular diet is particularly low in the UK. A study on behalf of Public Health England found that only nine per cent⁴ of adults in the UK eat the recommended 30g of fibre a day, which includes 5g of prebiotic fibre. Prebiotic supplements are one way to increase the daily intake of fibre and prebiotic fibre, when it cannot be easily achieved through diet alone.

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About the expert

Dr Lucien Harthoorn is the Research and Development Director at Clasado Biosciences, the team behind award-winning prebiotic supplement,

Bimuno. He has an MSc in Biomedical Sciences and a PhD in Metabolic Physiology and is responsible for driving the science behind Bimuno forwards.





Could your gut hold the key to supporting immune health?

For many of us, the importance of a well-supported immune system is absolutely crucial and sometimes the body's natural defences appreciate a helping hand!

But, did you know that your gut – and the trillions of bacteria that make up your 'microbiome' – have an important role to play too? Not only that, the microbes in the gut can also influence other areas too, such as digestion, sleep and even stress and anxiety!

There's never been a better time to get better acquainted with your gut microbiome... but where do we start?

Bimuno® DAILY is a versatile prebiotic supplement that fits into everyday routines with ease. It's a taste-free powder that can be added to hot or cold drinks or even your morning cereal. When taken every day, Bimuno is shown to work in just 7 days*, but how does it work?

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*Scientific data shows that daily use of Bimuno® increases gut bifidobacteria levels within 7 days, results may vary.

Your immune questions answered

There is much to consider when it comes to immune health that it can be confusing to know what is right. Here, Nutritional Therapists, Lindsay Powers and Catherine Gorman, answer some key questions.

Q Why is vitamin C so important for my immune system and what do I need when buying a supplement?

Lindsay explained: In his book, *Vitamin C the Common Cold and the Flu* (1976) by Linus Pauling, he writes 'In 1976-1977, when another swine-flu epidemic is expected, it is especially important that everyone know that he can protect himself to a considerable extent against the disease and its consequences by the use of this important nutrient, vitamin C'.

We've known for a long time now that vitamin C plays a vital role in immune function, and in light of the current Covid-19 pandemic, the role of this vitamin is coming to the fore even more. If we look more closely at the role of vitamin C and the immune system, research shows that vitamin C has a direct effect on immune activity:

- Vitamin C has been shown to increase interferon levels, which have anti-viral activity.
- Vitamin C enhances the production of T-lymphocytes, essential for cell-mediated immune responses.
- Vitamin C enhances macrophage activity and clearing spent neutrophils from the site of infection.
- Vitamin C helps to Inhibit haemagglutinin and neuramidase spikes on viruses.

In general, as nutritionists, we are aware that a deficiency in vitamin C can result in impaired immunity and a higher susceptibility to infections. Signs of lowered immunity include frequent colds, infections, slow wound healing, gut issues such as diarrhoea, respiratory issues such as coughs, irritability and stress.

As vitamin C cannot be stored in the body, we need to eat it every day. Good food sources include oranges, strawberries, blackcurrants,

peppers and broccoli.

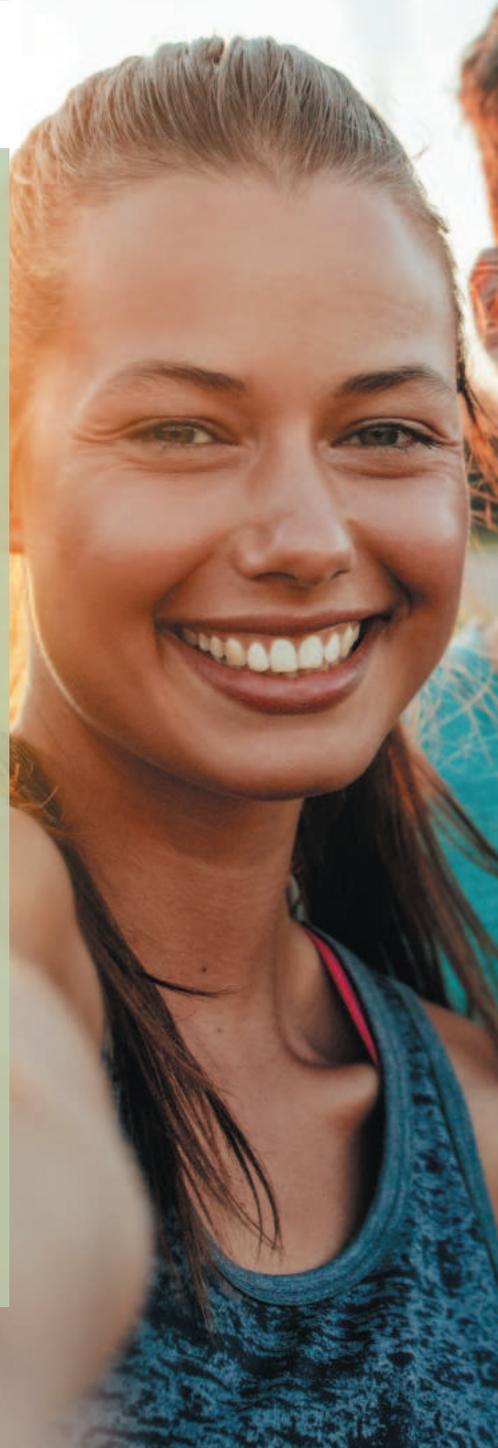
When it comes to achieving a higher intake, this isn't always possible through food alone, especially as our bodies may have a higher requirement during times of illness or prolonged stress, for example. Therefore, supplementation is often recommended to help us achieve a higher intake, but it is important to consider the best form of supplementation for optimal benefits.

Liposomal vitamin C products are gaining more and more popularity. Liposomal supplements use liposomes – tiny fat bubbles – to overcome the common problem of losing nutrients through digestion, as they are able to permeate the phospholipid membrane of the cell and deliver nutrients quickly and effectively into the cells where they are needed.

Using a liposomal vitamin C product, in particular, can help us to absorb much more of this vital vitamin and avoid any of the unpleasant gastro-intestinal side effects that may come about from higher doses of vitamin C powder or tablets.

When quercetin is combined with vitamin C, this further enhances its immune benefits, and is especially beneficial for those with seasonal allergies.

Other options for vitamin C intake include plant derived products, such as camu camu powder, which are naturally rich nutrients and antioxidants, including vitamin C and flavonoids. Using a whole plant derived source of vitamin C can be effective at supporting immune health, as well as other areas such as cardiovascular and metabolic health.



Q How is magnesium involved in immunity and how can I make sure I am getting enough?

Lindsay suggested: Magnesium is an essential element that is crucial to hundreds of physiological processes in the body. Not surprisingly, inadequate magnesium intake has been linked to various adverse health issues. In terms of immunity, magnesium is linked to immune cell development and activation.

Magnesium is closely related to our body's inflammatory response, and low levels of magnesium may lead to higher levels of pro-inflammatory cytokines. Pro-inflammatory cytokines are produced as an immune response that worsens disease, compared to anti-inflammatory cytokines that calm inflammation and encourage healing.

Today, we are estimated to have a reduction in magnesium content in the food we eat by 50-60 per cent compared to 50 or

100 years ago, and it is getting harder and harder to get enough just from food alone. Again, as with vitamin C, we may also have a higher requirement during periods of prolonged stress or illness. Supplementing with magnesium is, therefore, becoming more essential in order to support optimum levels.

When we choose a magnesium supplement, it is important to find the most efficient forms and delivery methods for optimal absorption. A highly effective method is to use a transdermal or topical product, which involves absorbing magnesium chloride via the skin. Magnesium can actually be quite poorly absorbed via digestion, so using a topical product, such as an oil or lotion, overcomes this potential issue and ensures we are quickly and efficiently able to achieve a good daily intake.

Q What are your top recommendations for anti-viral nutrients this winter?

Catherine advised: There are lots of effective natural products and nutrients that are shown to exhibit anti-viral properties, which can be used to sure-up our immune systems, especially over the winter months.

Olive leaf is a good natural plant-based option, which contains a powerful polyphenol called oleuropein, which exhibits not only anti-viral, but antibacterial, anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties. Taken alongside zinc, another critical mineral for immune health, olive leaf can help modulate our immune response and give us that added protection.

Look for a dietary supplement derived from the yeast, *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*. It is a potent and powerful

antioxidant, which has been shown to modulate the immune system and increase antioxidant levels in the blood. One study demonstrated its ability to reduce cold and 'flu-like symptoms.

Beta glucans are naturally occurring polysaccharides found in the cell walls of pathogens, such as fungi, yeasts and moulds. They can stimulate the activity of immunity cells such as macrophages and natural killer cells, which destroy invading pathogens.

Larch arabinogalactan is an excellent source of dietary fibre, which can help increase levels of beneficial gut bacteria, such as *Bifidobacteria* and *Lactobacillus*. Studies show it can also help to stimulate the cytotoxic abilities of natural killer cells and enhance other aspects of the immune system.

Q How can I make sure my immune system is healthy to avoid catching a winter cold?

Lindsay explained: A poor diet and an unhealthy lifestyle can certainly contribute to lowered immunity. If you are not getting all the nutrients your body needs on a daily basis, there will inevitably be consequences, including a weakened immune system.

Eating too much processed food, sugary snacks and starchy carbohydrates not only puts us at risk of nutrient deficiencies, it can also activate the innate immune system and impair adaptive immunity. This leads to chronic inflammation and weak defences against pathogens. Poor sleep, inadequate exercise, obesity and stress can also increase inflammation in the body.

Digestive problems can make us more susceptible to illness and infections. Seventy per cent of the cells which make up our immune system are actually based in the gut. Unbalanced bacterial flora, inflammation or barrier defects, can all cause disruption.

Smoking, excessive alcohol consumption and stress can deplete the body of crucial immune supporting nutrients, such as vitamin C and zinc.

Our food choices can have a huge impact on our immunity. Eat a nourishing diet, rich in vegetables, fruit, healthy fats, nuts, seeds, pulses, good quality meat and fish. This will ensure we are getting an adequate supply of vitamins, minerals and antioxidants to support our immune systems.

Fibre and fermented foods such as kefir, kombucha and sauerkraut will help keep our gut bacteria happy.

We can also give added support to our digestive health and immunity by supplementing with friendly bacteria or probiotic products, which contain strains such as *Lactobacillus* and *Bifidobacteria*, as well other types such as SBOs (soil born organisms).

Q What is colloidal silver and why do you recommend it?

Catherine advised: Silver has been shown to exhibit broad spectrum anti-microbial activity and may help to target unwanted pathogens in the body, such as bacteria, viruses and fungi. We recommend it as a first line of defence, where it can be used to clear invading organisms during an infection. It is useful for all ages, especially at the first sign of a sore throat or cold, or even more intensively for more serious viral infections.

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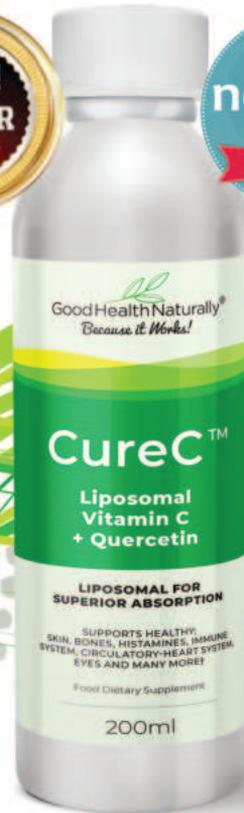
vitamin C product, and Hydrosol Silver Spray, a broad spectrum anti-microbial, acts as your first line of defence. PrescriptBiotics contains friendly soil-based microorganisms to support good gut and immune health, whilst D.I.P. Daily Immune Protection offers a comprehensive immune formula, including Eipcor, beta glucans and larch arabinogalactan powder. Visit www.mynaturallifestyle.co.uk/inside to enter.

About the experts

Nutritional Therapists, Lindsay Powers and Catherine Gorman, are Health Coaches for Good Health Naturally, a leading worldwide producer of nutritional supplements.



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How micronutrients can support immunity

A guide to the key nutrients for supporting a healthy immune system.

A lack of nutrients including vitamin D, selenium and zinc could hold the key to explaining why Coronavirus hits some people harder than others, according to new research.

A group of Norwegian, Swedish, and Russian scientists writing in the science journal, *Nutrients*¹ have pinpointed shortages in such key nutrients as a potential reason why some Covid-19 patients go on to develop potentially lethal severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS).

The scientists conducted a review of studies published in the last 10 years looking at zinc, selenium and vitamin D and Covid-19. They found scientific evidence to support the idea that these three nutrients in particular can help protect against SARS-CoV2, as well as mitigate the course of disease with Covid-19.

The problem is that many people, particularly in Western countries, do not currently get enough zinc, selenium and vitamin D from their diets to meet recommended daily levels for good health. For example, a recent study of dietary habits² found that over half of women and a quarter of men in the UK don't get enough selenium, partly because soil in the UK is particularly low in the nutrient.

How can selenium help?

A selenium deficiency can affect not only the body's immune response but also the ability of a virus to cause disease. A recent study from China reported a higher Covid-19 cure rate in patients with higher selenium status.³

In addition, a mechanism which SARS-CoV2 depends on to reproduce itself can be countered by a protein in the body called glutathione peroxidase (GPX1), which is highly dependent on selenium to function properly.

Proteins like GPX1 help the body combat inflammation, but they need over 100mcg a day for optimum performance, which is more than most people are able to get from their daily diets without taking a supplement.

More generally, research carried out by the American scientist, Melinda Beck⁴, has also shown that people with low levels of selenium are far more vulnerable to otherwise harmless respiratory infections compared to people with recommended selenium levels.

Selenium supplements are available in two forms: 'inorganic' (such as sodium selenite and selenate) or 'organic' types, such as selenium-yeast. The major difference between the two types is that the organic variant contains a wider range of beneficial compounds, important for the eventual production of GPX1. Most selenium supplements are in the 'inorganic' form, but scientific evidence suggests that only about 50 per cent of an inorganic supplement actually gets absorbed by the body. Selenium-yeast, however, is shown to be much more effective.

How can vitamin D help?

Vitamin D's role in the immune system is well established. It stimulates the maturation of immune cells, and studies suggest that the higher the level of vitamin D in the blood, the lower the level of inflammation markers in the body.

A study carried out in Los Angeles⁵ concluded that vitamin D deficiency is a risk factor for positive Covid-19 test outcome. A similar study from Cincinnati⁶ found associations between vitamin D deficiency and hospital admission, disease severity, and even death.

Severe vitamin D deficiency is often seen among critically ill patients, and in older patients, severe vitamin D deficiency is considered an independent risk factor for community-acquired pneumonia. It has also been shown that vitamin D can reduce inflammation in the body without altering antiviral activity and viral clearance in airway tissue infected with respiratory viral disease (RVD).

More generally, a major study published in the *British Medical Journal* has demonstrated that vitamin D supplements help protect against respiratory tract infections, which covers everything including colds, 'flu and pneumonia.



Immune system support

when you need it most

How can zinc help?

Zinc is essential for the development and maintenance of immune cells and other cell types. It is already known that zinc deficiency increases inflammation and inflammatory biomarkers.

A lack of zinc has been seen to affect most parts of the immune system, especially T cell function, which, among other functions, are vital for the coordinated operation and regulation of the entire immune system.

Zinc may also be effective for controlling the over-active inflammatory response seen with Covid-19. Studies have shown that zinc supplementation is able to decrease Covid-19 related symptoms such as lower respiratory tract infection.⁸

More generally, zinc has been shown to interfere directly with viral replication and protein synthesis, providing beneficial and therapeutic effects against viral infections.⁹

What else can help support the immune system?

The yeast derivative, 1,3 1,6 beta glucans, can trigger an unspecific immune response, priming the immune system in the same way as for a harmful 'flu or cold, but without the symptoms.

In research, this immunity boost reduces the chance of catching a cold or a 'flu, including through the cold autumn or winter months which represent peak cold and 'flu season.^{10,11}

Vitamin C supplementation is known to support respiratory defense mechanisms, preventing viral infections, and reducing their duration and severity as well as having anti-histamine properties that can improve 'flu-like symptoms.⁹

In addition, vitamin C administration has been shown to reduce the severity and duration of pneumonia in elderly patients.¹²

While there is currently no treatment for Covid-19 and no proven vaccine, research into the nature of the disease and potential mitigating factors has been intense, with a flurry of studies addressing the condition.

This latest paper is interesting because it looks at what is already an acknowledged problem in many countries – nutrient deficiency – in light of the pandemic.

While the authors point out that the direct evidence of micronutrients being involved in the course and outcome of Covid-19 is observational and limited at this point, it is conceivable that good nutritional status, especially among the elderly and vulnerable population groups, may have an immune-enhancing and anti-inflammatory effect that could prove beneficial.

■ References can be found at www.mynaturallifestyle.co.uk/inside



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The essential oil

Herbs offer us some fantastic health-supporting benefits – take oil of oregano as a good example. Here, Nutritional Therapist, Isabelle Nunn, explains why.

Several herb species classified as oregano have been widely used in folk medicine to alleviate inflammation-related diseases, respiratory and digestive disorders, headaches, rheumatism and diabetes, among other conditions.

But why is it so special? And can it support your immune system this winter?

How it works

Oil of oregano is an essential oil from the *O. vulgare L.* and is used worldwide as a raw material for medicinal and health products. Previous studies have shown that oregano oil is composed of over 50 per cent phenolic compounds, primarily carvacrol and thymol, but also contains other active ingredients, including sesquiterpene, terpinene, terpineol alcohol and flavonoids.

The antioxidant capacity in the oregano plant has been found to be highest in the leaves and flowers, so when looking for an oil of oregano supplement, it is important to make sure the aerial parts of the plant are used in the process and not the roots, which have a poorer antioxidant capacity.

The anti-inflammatory properties of oil of oregano are linked to its flavonoid and phenolic acids content, with major individual compounds being rosmarinic acid, apigenin, luteolin, quercetin, scutellarein and their derivatives.

Carvacrol is the main active ingredient in oregano and has been widely studied for a range of health benefits, including antioxidant properties, activity against harmful organisms, antimicrobial, antibacterial and antifungal properties (carvacrol is well regarded in the treatment of candida).

More and more studies are being done into carvacrol, largely due to the recent increase in bacterial resistance/tolerance to chemical antimicrobial agents, such as triclosan, as well as an overuse of antibiotics. When it comes into contact with bacteria, carvacrol causes the bacterial membrane surrounding the cell to destabilise, and from there attacks the RNA/DNA of the cell, causing it to break down. Several reports to date have expressed the antimicrobial, fungicidal, anti-carcinogenic and anti-tumour activities of carvacrol.

Cutting inflammation

Lowering inflammation is important as it is a root cause of chronic illness. Inflammation can arise due to several lifestyle factors, including stress, a pro-inflammatory diet (where the ratio of omega 6 to omega 3 is higher than it should be), medication, other illnesses, surgery and trauma.

Flavonoids and phenolic acids are some of the most abundant and highly studied phytochemicals in the oregano species. Epidemiological, in vitro and in vivo experiments have related long-term consumption of dietary flavonoid and phenolic acids with a decreased risk in the occurrence of chronic diseases.



CONTROL COLDS

When it comes to cold and ‘flu symptoms specifically, carvacrol has been the subject of several clinical studies. In one study where subjects were exposed to sulphur mustard, carvacrol was shown to reduce inflammatory messengers, whilst increasing anti-inflammatory ones and also improving respiratory symptoms and forced expiratory volume (1) - FEV(1) – the amount of air your lungs can expel in one second. This suggests that carvacrol may prove effective at dealing with those inflammatory responses to cold and ‘flu viruses in the upper respiratory area, such as sneezes, sniffles and blocked noses.

One small study found that oil of oregano may help with reducing more painful symptoms of viruses, such as body aches and sore throats, however, further research is needed to verify this claim. Another paper looking more into the chemical composition and antioxidant properties of different parts of the oregano plant noted oil of oregano’s use in traditional Chinese medicine as a treatment for fevers and respiratory conditions, both of which are symptoms associated with cold and ‘flu.

One discussion observed that whilst carvacrol has been shown to kill some viruses, it may not kill all viruses, and that whilst carvacrol has been shown to be effective in reducing surface transmission of some viruses that affect humans, such as herpes and the ‘flu, it doesn’t necessarily mean that it can kill viruses inside the human body.

In light of the current epidemic, it is important to remember that at this time, there is no proven prevention or treatment for Covid-19. In order to best protect yourself against infection, be sure to take action to look after your immune system and overall health; steps such as taking herbs, supplements and incorporating certain superfoods into your diet, as well as making better lifestyle choices, such as exercising, getting plenty of sleep and eating a well-balanced whole food diet with plenty of variety. This will help keep your inflammation levels low. If you do start experiencing respiratory symptoms of a cold or ‘flu, it is best to stay home to shorten the duration of your illness, as well as prevent the virus from spreading.



About the expert

Isabelle Nunn is a Nutritional Therapist and Head Nutritionist at Kinetic Enterprises, a company which distributes a number of brands, including Nature’s Answer.

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Nature’s Answer Oil of Oregano is made from wildcrafted Mediterranean oregano leaf oil, and is a pure standardised extract – not to be confused with less potent tinctures. The extract is standardised for 7mg of carvacrol per serving, and the supplement is free from gluten and alcohol free, and is vegan and cruelty-free. Nature’s Answer uses carefully-controlled extraction techniques to capture the holistic balance of each herb and ensure these values are passed on through in the finished product. *Inside* is offering readers the chance of winning one of five. To enter, visit www.mynaturallifestyle.co.uk/inside

Must-have mullein

Nutritional Therapist, Isabelle Nunn, explains how mullein could support your immune health.

Mullein has been used by cultures across the world for centuries, including native Americans, Europeans, Israelis, and Asians. It can be found even throughout desert regions in Northern Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, and India.

Traditionally used as a respiratory remedy for conditions such as hay fever, asthma, irritable chronic bronchitis, as well as other upper respiratory tract infections, mullein is revered for its soothing and relaxing properties, making it ideal to keep in your remedy cabinet for the autumn/winter season.

When experiencing chestiness and/or inflammation of the mucus membranes, mullein is an ideal tonic to aid in the reduction of inflammation, whilst also helping to stimulate fluid production and promoting expectoration, in other words, it helps you to get rid of any bothersome phlegm.

The science

The leaves of the mullein plant are naturally rich in an abundance of plant compounds, including flavonoids, saponins, tannins, mucilage, coumarins and glycosides. It is also a source of ascorbic acid (vitamin C), and several essential minerals, including potassium, calcium, iron, magnesium, manganese, phosphorus, and selenium.

Research has looked into mullein possessing antiviral, anti-influenza, antibacterial and antioxidant activities, and studies suggest that it may support and relieve treatments of many conditions, including pneumonia, staph infections and *E.coli*. It may also act as an antispasmodic (reduce muscle spasms), ease sore throats and migraines, and help support inner ear inflammatory disease or ear infections.

Mucilage is an important component constituent of mullein, highly regarded for its effect on reducing coughing and tightness in the respiratory system. The properties of mullein may help to loosen and remove excess mucus in the respiratory system, while also reducing inflammation.

Focus on asthma

One particular area of interest is the use of mullein to manage asthma conditions. There are two types of asthma and both are related to our immune system's production of an antibody called immunoglobulin E IgE production. Atopic asthma involves inflammation facilitated by the immune system's elevated production of immunoglobulin E (IgE), whereas non-atopic asthma is intrinsic and inflammatory, created by the production of local IgEs, a reaction against viruses.

According to the British Lung Foundation, about eight million people in the UK have been diagnosed with asthma, which means there are more cases of asthma than all other lung diseases combined. Around 200,000 people in the UK have severe asthma, a debilitating form of the condition that doesn't respond to usual treatments and can cause people to be in and out of hospital. Early research suggests that the anti-inflammatory and antispasmodic properties of mullein may help the muscles relax during an asthma attack, whilst also opening the bronchial tubes.

■ References can be found at www.mynaturallifestyle.co.uk/inside

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About the expert

Isabelle Nunn is a Nutritional Therapist and Head Nutritionist at Kinetic Enterprises, a company which distributes a number of brands, including Nature's Answer.



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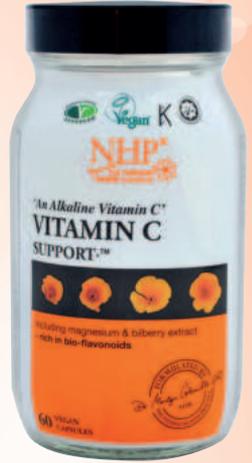
Immune Nutrition Support

- Zinc and vitamin C affect your immune system in many ways. Research has shown that zinc may have a balancing effect on your body.
- Nature also gives us other support through these difficult times. Traditional herbs like black elderberry and olive leaf are particularly helpful. Beta glucans, found in mushrooms such as shitake, also have a specific benefit for your immune function.
- **Immune Nutrition Support** contains an ideal combination for promoting good immune function. It provides good amounts of black elderberry, olive leaf, zinc, beta 1, 3, glucans, vitamin D3, mushrooms, vitamin C and probiotics.

- Take 2 capsules daily, for best results take 1 capsule twice per day with food.

Vitamin C Support

- Good levels of vitamin C may help support your immune function.
- When wanting to optimise your immunity, you should supplement your own vitamin C stores with magnesium ascorbate, a good alkaline form of vitamin C which is gentler on your digestive system than the ascorbic acid form which can act as an irritant.
- Take at least 1,000mg of **Vitamin C Support**, made with magnesium ascorbate, per day. Because this vitamin is water soluble, it is better taken in two amounts daily, as your body can't store vitamin C.



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