



Tips for Supporting Your Kid's Innate Immune Intelligence

Message from Milly

Greetings!

As strange and stressful as last year was with lock downs, virtual school, etc. the silver-lining was that most kids got sick *less*. This makes sense as the majority of common childhood illnesses are passed around in the close-quarters...especially crowded, poorly ventilated classrooms.

However, now that school's back in session we can expect our children to start bringing home sniffles, sneezes, viruses, bacterial infections, etc.

And that's not (usually) a bad thing! In fact, kids should get sick sometimes for the sake of their own immune function.

I'll explain more about this in the next section along with some commonsense tips to help fortify immunity and keep your kiddos from catching every bug-on-the-block.

School's finally back! Let's help make this a great year by sending our kids out there confident in their bodies' wisdom to protect them.

-Milly

P.S. This information is not specific to COVID...I would get in trouble if I did that! Rather, it's general information on how to keep your child's immune system strong for life.



Tips for Supporting Your Child's Innate Immunity

As a former lead nurse at a prominent local hospital, I know that no parent likes to see their child fall ill.



But, a child who doesn't get sick now and then is not getting the immune workout they need and deserve.

The truth is that non-complicated illnesses like colds, flu, fifth disease, and other childhood ailments actually help educate our children's immune systems. Which ultimately makes them stronger and more resilient.

There is even evidence that certain viruses provide genetic updates to the virome (similar to the "biome" but related to viruses)[1].

Now, that's not to say we want to needlessly subject our children to miserable and preventable diseases. But, it is okay for them to get minor illnesses and can even be beneficial, so long as: it's managed well *and* they're not getting sick all the time (which can indicate other issues).

Part of the problem is so many childhood illnesses are mismanaged with unnecessary medications.

For example, it's been proven that 1 out of 3 antibiotic prescriptions are unnecessary[2]...and about 90% of them (overall, not just the unnecessary ones) are written for upper respiratory illnesses that are viral...not bacterial.[3] This often includes ear infections in children. Which is a real shame because research has shown that about 80% of childhood ear infections clear up on their own (bacterial or viral), and that antibiotics only have a "modest" impact.[4] Given how they disrupt the microbiome (and all the other potential side effects) it's worth getting a second opinion.

Then there's the issue of steroids, which, in my opinion as an RN are entirely over-prescribed these days. When I worked in the hospital 20+ years ago it was a rare patient who got steroids because of the potential side effects, but today they're regularly prescribed for children. And a study published in the *American Academy Pediatrics Journal* by Baylor University found there has been "substantial over-prescribing of OCS [oral corticosteroids] for children with an asthma diagnosis." [4]

Of course, there are times when these life-saving medications should be used without question! I have witnessed the miracles of properly administered medications of all types. However, I'd highly recommend questioning their use for most common, non-threatening infections. **In fact, research has shown that good patient-provider communication is one of the most effective ways to avoid unnecessary**

Obviously, your relationship with your healthcare providers is key here. So, take the time to find a conservative (in terms of their medical philosophy), ideally integrative, and non-alarmist doctor you can trust.

References:

1: <https://www.livescience.com/61627-ancient-virus-brain.html>

2: <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2016/p0503-unnecessary-prescriptions.html>

3: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/8120703/>

4:

<https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2017/04/06/peds.2016-4146>

5: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/27325869/>

Want a Healthier Child? Make Sure They're Getting Enough of These Nutrients

Good nutrition is absolutely essential in building and maintaining a child's immune system. From gut health to mucosa and spleen function, everything relies on specific nutrients to function optimally.

Here's a list of common nutrients I often see lacking in children (and adults):

Zinc: this is a biggie for immunity as it acts as a viral disruptor.[1] Many people are deficient due to diet and other factors.

Best food sources of zinc:

Food sources:

- Lamb
- Oysters
- Pumpkin seeds
- Crab
- Hemp seeds
- Grassfed beef
- Cashews
- Lentils
- Chickpeas
- Cocoa

Most bioavailable supplements:

Due to the lack of zinc in everyday foods, I often recommend supplementation with one of the following:

- Zinc glycinate
- Zinc sulfate

Vitamin D: "the sunshine vitamin" naturally decreases in our bodies during the winter. Add to this a lack of vitamin-D-rich foods, and it's no wonder many people are deficient. Yet, our immune systems cannot properly function without it!

Since most foods don't have adequate vitamin D, I typically recommend a D3/K2 supplement. The amount depends on your child's unique needs.

Vitamin C: is essential to immunity because it supports



both your innate and adaptive immune system. Plus, as an antioxidant it's naturally anti-inflammatory.

Best food sources:

- Leafy greens
- Citrus fruits
- Mango
- Kiwi
- Bell Peppers
- Broccoli

Most bioavailable supplements:

I like either whole-foods based, buffered, or liposomal vitamin C.

Iodine: unless your children really like sea veggies chances are they aren't getting much iodine. However, iodine is critical to immune function, brain development, and more. It's really one of those "missing links" to better health.

Unless you're really savvy about iodine, I wouldn't recommend supplementing without some counsel from your healthcare practitioner. Yes, it's not necessarily easy to take too much...but it can happen with small children. If you'd like to look into this at your next appointment, I'm happy to help.

However, seaweed snacks are a great source for kids as is dulse (1-3 teaspoons) which you can blend into smoothies.

Vitamin A: you wouldn't know it, but many children lack sufficient amounts of vitamin A.[2][3] This is especially prevalent in kids that don't eat a lot of fruit/veggies and/or don't eat grassfed meats. However, genetics also play a role as about 45% of the population has a genetic mutation that decreases their ability to convert beta carotene (plant-based vitamin A) to vitamin A.[4]

Vitamin A is paramount to immune health as an anti-inflammatory and regulator of mucus and gut function.

Best food sources of Vitamin A (animal):

- Beef liver (from grassfed cows ONLY please!)
- Lamb liver (again, grassfed sheep please)
- King Mackerel
- Salmon
- Goat cheese
- Grassfed butter (yum!)

Best food sources of Beta Carotene (plant-based):

- Sweet potato
- Winter squash
- Dark leafy greens (spinach, kale, collards, mustard greens, etc.)
- Carrots
- Red pepper

Best supplements:

I like either high-vitamin A cod liver oil or plain cod liver oil from Nordic Naturals as it's tested for heavy metals and has a neutral flavor.

References:

1: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31305906/>

2: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/27128154/>

3:

https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/141/Supplement_5/S439

4: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/22113863/>



As always, the information in this newsletter is provided for educational purposes only and is not meant to replace the advice or care of your medical provider.

All the links to products are provided for educational purposes and are not affiliate links.

Nutrition is essential...but it's not everything. If your child is getting sick frequently, investigate the following immune-downers:

- Food sensitivities: gluten, dairy, eggs, soy, and corn are the top culprits.
- Poor indoor air quality from fragrances, synthetic laundry soap, pesticides (pest control), cleaning chemicals, personal care products, etc. So many respiratory issues can be fixed by cleaning up your indoor air!
- Additives and excitotoxins in food, like [MSG \(which goes by dozens of names\)](#), "natural" and "artificial" flavors, etc.
- Lack of sleep
- Not enough sunlight for vitamin D and circadian rhythm.
- Stress/over-scheduling.
- Excess screen time (especially time spent on social media).
- Unfiltered water, which can contain any number of immune-suppressing contaminants.
- Not enough time spent outdoors. Nature provides some pretty incredible immune boosters from trees (phytoncides), fresh air, the dirt, beneficial microbes, etc.
- Lack of movement. Children of all ages should be exercising every day in some way!

And when in doubt, check in with your child's doctor or healthcare practitioner. I always say that parents (particularly mothers, but fathers too!) are the best barometer when it comes to knowing what's right, and not right, for their children's health.