

# Positive Nutrition: Mind Body Spirit

## A mind body spirit approach to a flourishing life

Dear Friends and Family,

It is easy to feel overwhelmed with all the stress around COVID-19, but there are things you can do to prevent and perhaps even lessen the effects of the virus if you happen to be exposed. It is empowering to take control of your health. This list is by no means exhaustive, but hopefully supportive.

### **This is in addition to the WHO "Do the Five"**

Hands: Wash them often

Elbow: Cough into it

Face: Don't touch it

Feet: Stay more than 3 feet apart

Feel sick?: Stay home

### **Sleep**

Make sleep a priority by practicing good sleep hygiene. Sleep is essential for immune balance and whole body restoration. It provides essential time to repair and restore and facilitates clearance of metabolites from the brain. In addition, sleep and immunity are bidirectionally linked. Lack of restorative sleep can lead to chronic, systemic low-grade inflammation and reduced ability to combat infection. Try to:

- \*Turn off electronics at least one hour prior to bedtime.
- \*Install f.lux on your computer to reduce blue exposure which can interfere with melatonin production and sleep. Consider blue light blocking glasses.
- \*Keep your room cool and dark and your bed comfy with natural fibers to restful promote sleep.
- \*Finish eating at least 2 hours before bed.
- \*Practice a nightly sleep ritual like meditation, breathing exercises, hot bath, a foot rub with essential oils or a cup of herbal tea. Keeping a gratitude journal is a great way to connect to the present moment and savor positive emotions, which actually supports immune function and decreases inflammation.
- \*Expose your eyes to natural light within 30 minutes of waking to regulate the body's circadian rhythm and increase melatonin in the evening to support sleep.

### **Stress**

There is robust research linking stress (real or perceived) to immune function. Acute stress down regulates the immune system which is necessary to deal with immediate danger. Long term or chronic stress, however, has a negative impact on immune health leaving the body at higher risk of infection. A stress resiliency practice can increase parasympathetic tone (rest and

digest branch of the autonomic nervous system) and train the body to react in a less activated manner. It can also build a stress resiliency reservoir to support a baseline of calm when added stressors present themselves. There is also research on the benefits of heart rate variability and immune function. Training the nervous system to respond appropriately to stress can greatly impact immune function, turning down an overactive immune system and strengthening the immune system in general. Some ideas for reducing stress include:

\*Meditation: mindfulness, loving kindness, transcendental, sound etc. If you are new to meditation, start with a few minutes. There are many free guided meditations and meditation apps that you can try if you need some support. Insight Timer is one that I like because it has a variety of options. You can also find some here: <https://www.mindful.org/audio-resources-for-mindfulness-meditation/>

\*Gratitude practice: try focusing on 3 things you are grateful and list the reasons why. You can record this in a journal or breathe it into your heart.

\*Breathing exercises: There are a variety to choose from so pick a style that works for you. I like 4-7-8 breathing where you breath in to the count of 4, hold to the count of 7 and then exhale to the count of 8. I also like soft belly breathing based on the model taught by the Center for Mind Body Medicine. I have attached a handout with the meditation.

\*Walking in nature: Walking in nature decreases levels of cortisol which reduces stress. Try getting outside for at least 30 minutes per day.

\*Yoga, qigong, tai chi: All of these “meditation in action” practices reduce stress and can potentially decrease inflammation. There are plenty of online sources to support your practice. Betsy McDonald at Deepest Valley Qigong is a great local resource in Bishop for qigong, sound healing and ceremonial practices. <https://deepestvalleyqigong.com/> For yoga, try Yin Yoga: <https://www.yoga4you.online/yin-yoga-online-classes> or Yoga Nidra (yoga of sleep) <https://yogalondon.net/monkey/our-5-favourite-free-yoga-nidra-sessions/>

\*Laugh: Watch comedy, play with your kids, your pets, play!

\*Prioritize Positivity: Find time during your day to engage in activities that elicit positive emotions—this becomes additive and increases positivity, motivation and decreases stress.

\*Engage in a flow activity where time passes by without you realizing it. In other words, you get out of your head—flow comes when you are thoroughly enjoying something you are good at.

\*Gardening: Gardening can be a flow activity reducing cortisol and stress, plus it is a natural form of movement.

\*HeartMath techniques: Deep breathing with an element of gratitude and visualization. Check out the Heart Math Institute for more information. <https://www.heartmath.org/>

\*Hot epsom salts bath: Epsom salts contain magnesium which is relaxing for the body. Add some lavender essential oil to increase relaxation.

\*Take a media break to allow yourself to “unplug” and breathe. Stress, chaos and feelings of helplessness increase sympathetic nervous system activity.

\*Prayer or mantra can become a form of meditation normalizing heart rhythm and lowering stress.

\*Singing is fun and relaxing and can engage the vagus nerve reducing stress.

\*Listening to calm music can reduce sympathetic nervous system activity.

\*Call a friend or family member because social isolation can increase inflammation and can decrease immune function.

\*Try L-theanine, PharmaGABA, magnesium, Tulsi tea or CBD oil if you are feeling anxious and other stress reduction techniques are not sufficient.

\*Schedule a massage or sauna to increase relaxation and detoxification.

\*Consider adding an adaptogen (balances stress response) like Tulsi (Holy Basil), Ashwagandha (Withania somnifera), Bacopa monnieri, Rhodiola rosea.

## **Movement**

Exercise that you enjoy practiced on a regular basis can increase immune competency and is important for overall health across the lifespan. A balanced exercise routine can actually enhance and modulate the immune system and allows for immune flexibility. It can decrease inflammation. Move every day for at least 30 minutes. Types of movement include:

\*Yoga, qigong, tai chi

\*Gardening

\*Cycling

\*Walking in nature

\*Hiking

\*Skiing and snowshoeing

\*Swimming

\*Dancing

\*Rebounding

\*High intensity interval training

The key is to find something you enjoy so you will do it on a regular basis. If movement doesn't come easy for you, schedule time on your calendar to take a break and go outside for a walk.

## **Hydration**

Adequate hydration supports the circulatory system and allows for adequate elimination and detoxification. Hydration also supports temperature regulation, mood and cognition. Include:

- \*filtered water
- \*mineral water
- \*green tea
- \*black tea
- \*herbal tea

## **Diet**

Eating an anti-inflammatory, whole foods diet can decrease inflammation and promote immune health. I recommend a modified Mediterranean dietary pattern personalized for your particular needs. This is the sort of diet to eat to prevent chronic illness, not just COVID-19. It support vibrant health. Foods to focus on include:

\*Diverse array of colorful vegetables and fruits. These foods provide vitamins, minerals, fiber and polyphenols which have many beneficial functions in the body. Eat the rainbow everyday—7-12 servings.

\*Cruciferous vegetables like broccoli, cauliflower, kale and Brussels sprouts and vegetables in the allium family (onions, garlic, leeks) are particularly good for detoxification and immune function. Asparagus, spinach and avocado are sources of glutathione, which is the body's master detoxifier. Include vitamin B and vitamin C rich foods: B—legumes, nuts/seeds, whole grains, eggs, poultry—C—red and green peppers, strawberries, citrus, broccoli, kale, kiwi, rose hips, citrus.

\*Increase your intake of colorful, low glycemic berries like blueberries, blackberries, raspberries, strawberries. I add this is a separate category since these fruits are especially supportive of cognition, gut health, heart health and are a great source of vitamin C.

\*Eat healthful monounsaturated fats to support immune function and decrease inflammation: organic extra virgin cold-pressed olive oil, avocado oil, nuts, nut butters, salmon, sardines, mackerel. Eat coconut oil (saturated fat) in moderation only.

\*Include beans like lentils and chickpeas for protein, fiber, detoxification and blood sugar balance.

\*Include adequate protein for repair and detoxification: organic free range, poultry, wild

seafood, grass fed bison and beef, tofu, nuts, legumes, protein powders, whey powder, yogurt, organic eggs.

\*Add whole grains if tolerated: steel cut oats, amaranth, millet, teff, buckwheat, quinoa (pseudo-grain), spelt, kamut, red/black rice.

\*Green and black tea

\* Spices like rosemary, oregano, sage, mint, cinnamon, ginger, turmeric. Always add pepper and a fat when you cook with turmeric to increase absorption.

\*Nutrient boosts: chia, hemp, flaxseed meal, sesame seeds, chopped nuts, ginger, Maca, matcha, turmeric, seaweed, unsweetened cacao nibs, goji berries, whey powder, protein powder, reds/greens powder. Try sprinkling on salads, vegetable dishes, oatmeal, yogurt, smoothies.

### **Gut Health**

70-80% of your immune system lives in your gut. You can do a lot to support your gut microbiome and a healthy immune response by eating a whole foods diet along with practicing good sleep hygiene, moving and decreasing stress. You can cultivate a balanced gut ecosystem by increasing fiber and other prebiotic foods like:

\*Green tea

\*Prebiotic fibers from nuts/seeds like almonds, walnuts, pecans, chia, flaxseeds, hemp seeds, beans, oats, whole grains (like barley if tolerated), red/black rice, legumes and targeted fibers like inulin, acacia, prune powder.

\*Fermented foods, sauerkraut, kimchi, kefir, > 70% chocolate

\*Resistant starch foods, green bananas, cooled purple potatoes

\*Reds and green powders for smoothies

\*Chicory and dandelion root

\*Garlic and onion

\*Asparagus

\*Jicama

\*Cacao (unsweetened)

\*Targeted probiotics like Lactobacillus rhamnosus GG

### **Extra Nutrients to Include to Support Immune Function**

\*Selenium (found in Brazil nuts—only 2 per day)

\*Vitamin E: sunflower seeds, almonds, pine nuts, Brazil nuts, hazelnuts, wheat germ, salmon, avocado, red peppers

\*Magnesium: green leafy vegetables, nuts/seeds, chocolate, banana, tofu, whole grains, beans

\*Vitamin A: organic liver, cod liver oil, salmon, eggs, leafy greens, **Pro-vitamin A:** orange vegetables, kale, collards, Swiss chard, spinach, mango, canteloupe, pink grapefruit, papaya, apricot, tangerine

**\*DO NOT take vitamin A supplements at high doses unless you are being monitored by your physician or nutritionist. Vitamin A is a fat soluble vitamin and you can reach toxic levels rather quickly through supplementation.**

\*B vitamins: Whole grains, poultry, eggs, legumes, dark leafy vegetables, avocados, bananas

\*Vitamin C: Red, orange, green peppers, strawberries, kiwi, broccoli, citrus, kale  
*Supplementation 500 mg 2 X per day.*

\*Vitamin D: Note: *Vitamin D is crucial for immune function and boosts innate immune responses by induction of the human gene for cathelicidin, an antimicrobial peptide: Include tuna in moderation, mackerel, salmon, liver, egg yolks, fortified milk. Supplemental vitamin D3 at 1-4,000 IU per day. This is another fat soluble vitamin and can be a potent immune modulator. Please check with your healthcare provider or nutritionist.*

\*Zinc: Oysters, pumpkin seeds, whole grains, eggs, legumes, shellfish, organic meat and poultry. *Supplementation may be indicated if you are immunocompromised or sick. Zinc must be balanced with copper if taken long term. Check with your healthcare provider or nutritionist.*

\*High quality fish oil: *Nordic Naturals: check with your healthcare provider.*

***If you get sick with the flu or COVID-19, avoid:***

*\*Elderberry to avoid an aggressive immune response: I don't have current research on this, but my colleagues suggest that the effects of taking elderberry can backfire causing more severe symptoms. This is not the case in general unless you have some sort of immune regulation issue, so elderberry is often taken when flu virus is present. COVID-19 is a virus, but is not the flu.*

***If you get sick consider:***

*\*Extra vitamin C at 500 mg 2 X per day, zinc 15-30 mg per day, vitamin D3 2-4,000 IU per day.*

*\*Suck on zinc lozenges every hour for up to 6 hours.*

*\*Liposomal Glutathione or NAC (N-Acetyl Cysteine) to support glutathione production.*

\*Curcumin: To reduce inflammation—aches and pains by down regulating NFkB.

\*Xlear: Xylitol nasal spray to keep nasal passages clear.

\*Drink plenty of clear fluids and consider a source of electrolytes like coconut water. Chicken soup or vegetable broth can be nourishing and restorative.

\*Eat plenty of citrus as it contains Hesperidin, an antioxidant that may support a decrease in viral load based on research on SARS CoV2.

\*Hot epsom salts baths for aches and pains. Add lavender oil for relaxation.

\*For coughs, consider *Andrographis paniculata* and *Isatis indigotica* (check with your healthcare provider first). These are herbal remedies you can find in supplement form.

\*Consider drinking extra green and black tea as it may support a decrease in viral load based on research on SARS CoV2.

\*Consider rosemary as a seasoning or tea as it may support a decrease in viral load based on research on SARS CoV2.

***This information is for education purposes only. I cannot diagnose or treat illness or injury. Please consult your healthcare provider before making changes to your diet/lifestyle. Please don't take supplements without notifying your healthcare provider.***

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