

March is National Nutrition Month!

By Anne Praino



March is National Nutrition Month — the perfect time to pay extra attention to what we eat!

This educational campaign was created by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics and it focuses on the importance of making smart food choices and developing sound eating habits.¹

We have all heard it before “you are what you eat.” When we take a step back and reflect on that statement, we may not like what we see. If you happen to be someone who indulges in a high sugar, high sodium, and high trans-fat diet—the picture may not be so pretty. In addition, we have been told for years that good nutrition has positive effects on both our mind and our body. Eating a smart, healthy diet will increase our energy, promote sleep and can also provide mental health relief. When you eat better, you feel better. It shows in your smile, your skin and ultimately, your attitude.²

One of the maybe not-so-obvious or talked about benefits of good nutrition is recognizing that certain foods not only taste good but can also boost your immune system thus preventing minor and sometimes major illnesses. Good nutrition can play a role in not only protecting us from the winter cold, the seasonal flu and the dreaded allergy season, but it can also assist in preventing abnormal cell development and even cancer.³

Many of us know of “old wives’ tales” that speak of potions, pills or behaviors that will boost our immunity. Taking loads of Vitamin C to prevent an oncoming cold, using elderberry to fight the flu or wearing garlic around your neck—which I suppose could keep anything away! But is there any truth to the notion that **eating certain foods can protect us against something as elusive as our immune system?** The immune system, in order to function effectively, requires balance and harmony. Researchers continue to explore the effects of diet, exercise, and age, among other factors, in both animals and humans — to discover if there is a direct link between lifestyle and diet habits and enhanced immune function.⁴

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The combination of March being National Nutrition Month and diet being one of the keys that scientists believe may enhance immune function led us here. **So, what are some of these examples of these magical foods that are not only making us feel better each day but are helping to prevent sickness? Whole grains**—these fiber rich, vitamin laden foods contain several substances that have been linked to a lower cancer risk. Recently, researchers conducted 40 studies and found that the risk for cancer was reduced by 34 percent on average in people who ate large amounts of whole grains compared to those who ate small amounts.⁵

Nuts: We think of them as little protein powerhouses, but nuts have additional superpowers as well. They are rich in antioxidants such as Vitamin E and Omega 3 fatty acids; studies show a link between eating nuts resulting in a lower risk of chronic disease. Eaten by the handful at your desk or slathered on some whole grain bread in your child’s lunchbox, nuts are easily accessible not only to eat but in a form that all ages can appreciate and enjoy. Let’s just mention one last immune boosting food to broaden the imagination—**Chocolate**. Yep, you heard me, chocolate. Cocoa is classified under the “immune boosting” food group as studies have shown that eating cocoa may reduce the risk of heart disease, raise our good cholesterol levels and possibly reverse blood vessel damage in people with diabetes.⁶

So, there it is—we named just a few and we hope you’ll do your homework to find more immune boosting foods. [The Tycor wellness challenge for March is to eat one of these foods every day.](#) There are plenty to choose from and not only will it hopefully expand your palate, but we hope it will serve as a preventive tactic to keep you healthier and stronger all year long.

Sources

¹ <https://www.eatright.org/food/resources/national-nutrition-month>

² https://www.selfgrowth.com/articles/benefits_of_good_nutrition.html

³ <https://www.eatright.org/food/resources/national-nutrition-month>

⁴ <https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/how-to-boost-your-immune-system>

⁵ <http://www.eatingwell.com/article/8762/healthy-immunity-diet-guidelines/>

⁶ <https://www.verywellfamily.com/best-foods-boost-immune-system-4020423>