



Winter is coming! As the days start shortening it is time that we start to prepare ourselves for cold and flu season. As the colder temperatures drive us inside, our immune systems can also suffer as our bodies try to cope with the changing climate. That's why this is a great time of the year to make extra sure that you are eating healthy and taking good care of your body.

And Moonflower is here to help!

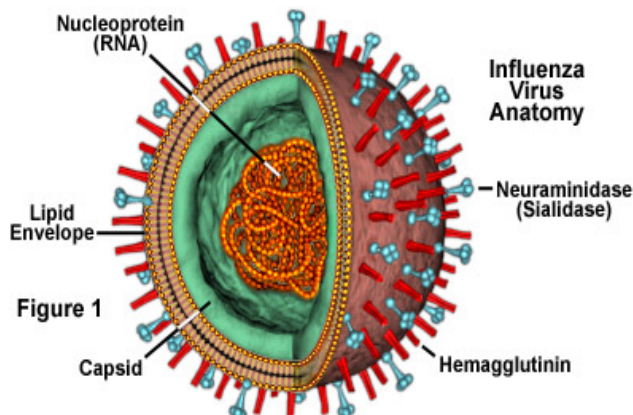
A few weeks ago Moonflower's own Emily and Travis had their first Moonflower Health Hour on KZMU (the next shows will be on Monday Nov. 11th and Dec. 2nd at 5pm) to talk about what the immune system is, how it works, and how to stay healthy this winter. It was a great show, but if you missed it, fear not! Below are many of the things that they mentioned that can help you make sure that this year's cold and flu season doesn't get the best of you!

What is the immune system?

The immune system is the most complex system that the human body has. From a western perspective it has 3 levels: physical barriers, the innate immune system, and the adaptive immune system.

Physical barriers are body parts like your skin, which keep bacteria and viruses from entering your body. White blood cells and other non-specific defenses against invaders are your body's innate immune system. Most multi-celled organisms have an innate immune system. By contrast the adaptive immune system exists only in jawed vertebrates, including humans, and is composed of lymphocytes, antibodies,

and other responses that are specifically tailored to the bacteria or virus that your body is fighting.



The traditional and holistic view of the immune system views sickness as a disequilibrium in the body,

caused by an imbalance of 'hot' and 'cold.' The changing seasons cause an elemental shift in the body, which can dampen the immune system. Recovering from an illness is about balancing the elements, and elemental manifestations, within the body.

What keeps an immune system strong?

The key to staying healthy for most of us is simple; a combination of exercising, getting enough sleep, and eating right.

Though any kind of exercise is beneficial, low-impact, low intensity activities like yoga and soft martial arts, are particularly beneficial for the immune system. Muscles are the pumps that move lymph fluid -a crucial component of the human immune system- through the body, so the long, slow muscle contractions of these exercises are ideal for boosting the immune system.

Sleep is when much of your body's internal maintenance takes place. Many studies have shown a lack of sleep depresses the body's natural ability to fight off infections. Healthy, fitful sleep is also important in brain function and dealing with stress.



When the cold weather comes around it's easy to give into your body's cravings for comfort foods. Resist those urges! Rather than giving in and eating buttery mashed potatoes and sausages, transform the craving into nutritious, digestible foods that are both building and nourishing. Food like curries, kitchari, and bone broth soups will sooth those cravings and give your immune system the fuel it needs to stay in tiptop shape.

Supplements are also a great way to make sure you are getting all the vitamins and minerals that you need. Good vitamins and supplements are key because many of the foods that we eat and the soils they are grown in do not contain all the nutrients that our bodies need.

Clearing waste from your body is also crucial to maintaining health, so be sure to stay hydrated and eat plenty of fiber.

What do you do once you're sick?

Though much of what keeps the immune system healthy is also what helps it once you are sick, there are also a number of things that you can do to help your body recover from sickness.

Rest and hydration are probably the two most important things. You need to make sure your immune system has all the energy it needs, so avoid strenuous exercise when sick. As your body fights the infection it needs a way to get rid of the all that junk. Drinking plenty of water, tea, and juice helps ensure your body can evacuate waste as it needs.

Making sure that your body has all the nutrients it needs when you are sick is key. In most cases supplements are the best way of ensuring this. Along with well-known immune boosters like Vitamin C and Zinc, there are a huge number of herbs (like adaptogens) and supplements for specific ailments that support lymphatic action. Garlic, especially raw, is also a fantastic immune booster that has a whole host of benefits. Keeping the good bacteria in your body healthy is also important to maintaining a healthy immune system, so be sure to eat and drink plenty of probiotics like yogurt, beet kvass, and kombucha.

Products, food, and supplements that do all these things and so much more can be found at Moonflower. When you come in, ask any of our helpful staff and they will be happy to help you find whatever you need, or make recommendations if you don't know exactly what you are looking for.

Everyone gets sick

Even if you do everything right you will get sick from time to time. It is a healthy part of being human, and it is in getting sick that the most advanced part of your immune system, the adaptive immune system, learns to identify harmful bacteria and viruses and create specialized defenses against them.

That said, most people can be doing far more than they are to stay healthy. This cold and flu season try changing your normal routine. Start exercising more. Start meditating or doing yoga. Start eating better. Start taking supplements. Even little steps can make a big difference.

