

# Tune Up Your Health: The Holistic Approach

Many of my patients have been saying to me: "All I hear about in the news is shots and drugs. Is there a holistic approach for strengthening my immune system?" My answer is yes! Here are my suggestions:

- 1) Start by eating a balanced diet composed of whole, unprocessed foods without a lot of fat and simple sugars. A great place to start designing a balanced diet that is perfect for your age, gender and activity level is [www.mypyramid.com](http://www.mypyramid.com).
- 2) Get plenty of sleep. The experts recommend 8 hours of sleep a night, but a majority of Americans get far less than that.
- 3) Exercise on a regular basis. Both too little and too much exercise can weaken the immune system (you might have guessed that the problem for most of us is the "too little", not the "too much"). The experts recommend at least 30 minutes every day.
- 4) Maintain ideal body weight. Those excess pounds really zap our immune system.
- 5) Minimize your reliance on medications. Many common medications weaken the immune system (Just listen to the disclaimers in the TV commercials for examples). But you must work with your physician on this. Once your physician knows that you are willing to do take personal responsibility for your diet and lifestyle, they will generally be willing to minimize the number of medications that they prescribe.
- 6) Focus on the positive. Studies show that optimists are healthier and live longer than pessimists. And the good news is that anyone can cultivate an attitude of optimism. For most of us it is a lifestyle choice - not something that we were born with.

Here are some additional immune boosting remedies to take:

- B vitamins and protein because our immune cells need to divide very rapidly when we have immune challenges.
- Antioxidants because our immune cells create lots of free radicals.
- Vitamin D because it is vitally important for a strong immune system and most of us are not getting enough.
- Probiotics (healthy bacteria) because "bad" bacteria and yeast in our intestines can weaken the immune system.
- Omega-3 fatty acids to modulate the immune system once it has taken care of the invading bacteria or viruses.

Lastly, the flu shot is 66% effective in preventing the flu for people with a strong immune system and only 33% effective in preventing the flu for people with a weak immune system.

*Dr. Stephen Chaney*