

# 6 Ways to Fight the Flu

From Active.com

This year's flu season: longer, faster, nastier than before. Spring brings hope, but were not out of the woods yet.

Take matters into your own mouth power up your immune system to defeat those bionic viruses. Here are six strategies you can incorporate into your training diet now to help you fend off the flu and stay on your feet until the blooms pop.

## 1. Get Enough Calories

Maintaining enough calories daily is critical, says Lisa Dorfman, M.S, R.D., dietician, athlete and author of *The Vegetarian Sports Nutrition Guide* (Wiley & Sons, 1999).

(Athletic) people feel like they're not expending as much energy (in colder months), but they are," Dorfman says. "They expend more calories than other people because of their increased lean muscle mass. You need to get enough calories to prevent (your body from) using protein as an energy source.

Figure out your daily calorie requirement and stick with it. The average active adult needs at least 15 calories per pound of body weight and perhaps as many as 20 calories per pound, depending on training volume.

One way to up your intake, Dorfman suggests, is to eat dried fruits: Dried fruits can be a superior choice to fresh (fruit), because they're an easy way to get a lot of calories in one source. They're portable, and are a great source of iron, which helps build your blood.

## 2. Don't Skimp on Protein

The immune systems chief warriors, T-cells and antibodies, are made of protein and need a constant supply to run interference. Whether you get it from animal or plant sources or both, give protein your full attention. Look to lean meats and cheeses, fish, milk, yogurt, beans, tofu and soy.

Not sure how much you need? Follow Dorfman's formula for protein-need calculation for different kinds of athletes:

1. Find your body weight.

2. Convert your weight in pounds to kilograms by taking pounds and dividing by 2.2.

3. Multiply the following numbers by your kilogram number to figure out your daily protein needs.

- Strength athletes: kilograms x 1.2 - 1.7
  - Endurance athletes: kilograms x 1.2 - 1.4
  - Early training: kilograms x 2
  - Average active adult: RDA (Recommended dietary allowance) - kilograms x 0.8 grams
- For example: According to the formula, a 145-pound (66-kilogram) marathon runner might need between 79 and 92 grams of protein per day.

### 3. Be a Colorful Eater

Everyone knows fruits and veggies are pretty and pack tons of vitamins and minerals. But theres something else in those hues that may help you fight disease: fabulous phytos.

Phytochemicals are naturally occurring plant chemicals that give many fruits and vegetables their color and protect them from disease. Researchers are finding that they may protect us, too.

Phytos are being linked to the prevention of many forms of cancer, decreased risk of heart attacks and macular degeneration (a major cause of elderly blindness). There are several classes of phytochemicals, but you dont need to memorize them to get them.

Having a palette of colors on your plate makes it more likely that youll get a full range of phytochemicals, Dorfman says. Go for deep color in your fruits and vegetables.

Scour your market and pick the deepest-hued produce you can get your hands on.

### 4. Flavonoids

Also known as bioflavonoids, flavonoids are a kind of phytochemical that appear to actually attack and damage virus DNA. A recent study done by the University of Hawaii's Cancer Research Center linked consumption of two classes of flavonoids found in onions, apples and white grapefruit with reduced risk for lung cancer.

Other good flavonoid sources include citrus fruits, red wine, black and green tea, broccoli, tomatoes and soy.

## 5. ABCs of Vitamins

Get plenty of these vitamins to help strengthen your immune system:

A is critical for maintaining your body's front-line disease fighters: the mucous membranes in your nose, stomach and eyes. Lean sources come from the dark-green, red and orange hues of spinach, cantaloupe, carrots, sweet potatoes and squash.

The B vitamins (B6, riboflavin and thiamine) act as co-enzymes that combine with enzymes to make them active and assist with metabolizing protein, carbs and fats, Dorfman says. Use energy more efficiently by getting your B's from fish, seeds, nuts, green leafy veggies and lentils.

Vitamin C is mandatory for producing infection-fighting white blood cells. You know oranges and orange juice, but also get C from sources like strawberries, kiwi fruit, red peppers, spinach and sweet potatoes.

## 6. Help the Good Habits Work

Get enough fluid. Think of water as the vehicle to deliver your good nutrition message to your body. Drinking enough helps the body dissolve amino acids, sugars, minerals and other substances so that you can utilize them. Water also serves as a cushion and a lubricant for joints and a transporter of waste. Minimum is 1 liter per day; drink more if you're in training.

Limit alcohol. Your body uses B vitamins to break down alcohol, so when you indulge, your muscles are robbed of these metabolizers.

Be consistent. Your body loves consistency, Dorfman says. Try to maintain the same eating strategies all year long.

Incorporating all these healthy patterns into your daily diet will keep your immunity furnace burning and turning away viruses year round.