



# Supercharge your immune system to fight flu and COVID-19



**The best way to prevent flu is to get an annual flu vaccine as it helps to boost your body's immune system against the strains of influenza that are most likely to be circulating during the coming flu season. Reducing your chances of catching the flu this season.**

But that's not all you can do. When you take additional steps to boost your immune system, you can strengthen your defences against flu, COVID-19, and a host of other health conditions.

## Sleep more<sup>1,2</sup>

**Aim for 7-8 hours of sleep per night**

Getting enough sleep can help protect against getting ill, and a lack of sleep can impact negatively on your body's immune response<sup>2</sup>. So make sure you get enough sleep to increase your chances of staying well this flu season!

## Eat better<sup>3</sup>

**No single food or nutrient can protect you from flu, but a healthy, balanced diet helps.**

Maintaining a varied diet rich in nutrients like vitamin C, vitamin D, zinc, selenium, and iron plays an important role in immunity. Whereas eating a diet which is low in fruits and vegetables, and high in refined sugars, salt, and saturated fats can have a negative impact on your body's immune system. So, to support your immune system it is important to eat well this flu season.



## Move your body<sup>4,5</sup>

**Regular exercise can strengthen your immune system and could make you 40% less likely to catch a cold.**

Regular moderate exercise (when doing it, you should be able to talk, but not sing) improves the antipathogen activity of immune cells and increases the circulation of key factors in the immune response, temporarily strengthening your immune system. This response is cumulative so the more regularly you exercise the stronger your immune system will become. Be sure not to over-exercise, or exercise too intensely though, as this can produce the opposite effect.

So, to keep yourself fit and healthy this flu season make sure you exercise regularly, but stay firmly within your limits!



## Address stress<sup>6</sup>

**Learn to manage stress with practices like yoga and mindfulness meditation.**

When you're under stress, your body produces less infection-fighting lymphocytes. Moreover, stress can contribute to other conditions that suppress immunity, including poor diet and insufficient sleep. Try to meditate for 10 to 15 minutes three or four times a week. If you need help, talk with a doctor or counsellor.



## Stop smoking<sup>7,8</sup>

**You boost immunity when you stop smoking — even after as little as a month.**

Smoking reduces your body's ability to fight off infection and can lead to more severe and longer-lasting bouts of flu. The sooner you quit smoking, the sooner your body's immune system can regain strength; one study found measurable improvements after just 31 days, even in light to moderate smokers.



This year, protecting yourself from flu is more important than ever, and we are here to help. In addition to accessing primary care through your GP or our vHealth service, vHealth at Home, delivered by Qured, can provide flu jabs in the comfort of your own home (or other preferred location) within London zones 1 to 4. For more information, please email [corporate@qured.com](mailto:corporate@qured.com)

**Be a flu fighter.  
Protect yourself, protect others.**

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### Additional resources:

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4. Nieman DC, Henson DA, Austin MD, et al. Upper respiratory tract infection is reduced in physically fit and active adults. *British Journal of Sports Medicine* 2011;45:987-992
5. Nieman DC, Wentz LM. The compelling link between physical activity and the body's defense system. *J Sport Health Sci*. 2019;8(3):201-217. doi:10.1016/j.jshs.2018.09.009
6. McGregor BA, Murphy KM, Albano DL, Ceballos RM. Stress, cortisol, and B lymphocytes: a novel approach to understanding academic stress and immune function. *Stress*. 2016;19(2):185-191. doi:10.3109/10253890.2015.1127913
7. Meliska CJ, Stunkard ME, Gilbert DG, Jensen RA, Martinko JM. Immune function in cigarette smokers who quit smoking for 31 days. *J Allergy Clin Immunol*. 1995 Apr;95(4):901-10. doi: 10.1016/s0091-6749(95)70135-4. PMID: 7722172.
8. Godoy P, Castilla J, Soldevila N, Mayoral JM, Toledo D, Martín V, Astray J, Egurrola M, Morales-Suarez-Varela M, Domínguez A; CIBERESP Cases and Controls in Pandemic Influenza Working Group, Spain\*. Smoking may increase the risk of influenza hospitalization and reduce influenza vaccine effectiveness in the elderly. *Eur J Public Health*. 2018 Feb 1;28(1):150-155. doi: 10.1093/eurpub/ckx130. PMID: 29020390.