

Good Housekeeping
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Sick of Being Sick?

14 research-proven ways to eat, drink, and even part to boost your immunity this season By Beth Howard

Winter bugs don't just make you feel miserable. Sick days create havoc at home and work. And those days can become weeks if a cold morphs into something more serious—a sinus or ear infection, or bronchitis. Flu can lead to pneumonia or worse, sometimes sending you to the hospital. And while antibiotics fight many of these secondary infections, there's no cure for the viruses that make you sick in the first place. That's why you need a good defense—immune boosters like these that really work.

Roll up your sleeve A flu vaccine is the best way to improve your "immune profile," says William Schaffner, M.D., president of the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases. The vaccine, which is between 70 and 90 percent effective in preventing the illness or reducing its severity, is reformulated every year in anticipation of what scientists believe will be the dominant circulating strains. But even if it's not a perfect match, you'll get at least partial

protection, Dr. Schaffner notes. Now is also good time to check recommendations for vaccination against 2009 H1N1 ("swine") flu.

2 Take up tai chi and qigong These Eastern systems of meditative movement could boost your body's response to a flu shot, a study from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign has found. Older adults who got the vaccine and then practiced tai chi and qigong an hour a day, three times a week, for three weeks had significantly higher flu antibodies than seniors who just got the shot.

3 Stay rested When volunteers in a study at Carnegie Mellon University were exposed to a cold bug, those who regularly slept seven or fewer hours a night were three times more likely to come down with sniffles than those who got eight-plus hours of rest. "We were surprised how little sleep loss it took to cause a big increase in cold risk," says lead study author Sheldon Cohen, Ph.D., professor of

9 Make room for mushrooms Research from Tufts University suggests that ordinary white button mushrooms can help ward off illness. In the study, the natural killer cells of mice that were fed these mushrooms became more active. The human "dose": two cups of raw or cooked mushrooms a day, though smaller amounts might help, too.

20
 MILLION
 Number of
 lost workdays
 due to colds
 every year