

Nutrition

Eat Well, Stay Well

Five surprising immune-building foods that'll keep you strong all winter

BY JULIA MARANAN PHOTOGRAPH BY TED MORRISON

Lean beef

It's full of iron and zinc, two nutrients that help protect against infection by bacteria, viruses and parasites, according to Joan Salge Blake, R.D., clinical associate professor of nutrition at Boston University. Plus, beef is an excellent source of the antioxidant selenium (antioxidants defend and repair immune cells). Choose lean beef, and limit portions to 3 ounces.

Legumes

Like beef, beans and peas are good sources of immune-boosting iron and zinc, but they're also loaded with vitamin B₆, which helps create infection-fighting white blood cells called lymphocytes. You can double the amount of iron you absorb from legumes by combining them with as little as 25 mg of vitamin C—the amount in ¼ cup of broccoli, says Salge Blake.

Mushrooms

Asian mushrooms—including shiitake and oyster mushrooms—contain beta-glucans, carbohydrates that can spur production of virus-attacking white blood cells, a study in the *European Journal of Applied Physiology* found. White button mushrooms are rich sources of selenium and riboflavin (vitamin B₂), which help ward off bacterial infections.

Pumpkin

This seasonal favorite is full of beta-carotene, which your body converts into vitamin A—and that helps create white blood cells to fight infection. Animal studies suggest vitamin A may also enhance your body's response to the flu vaccine. Both pumpkin pulp and seeds protect against infection.

Wild salmon

It's a fine source of vitamin D, which your immune system needs to kill harmful bacteria and viruses, says John S. Adams, M.D., professor at the David Geffen School of Medicine at the University of California—Los Angeles. Eat fish at least twice a week. ■



CHEW ON THIS
By Brian Wansink, Ph.D.

STIMULATE GOOD EATING HABITS

Some foods can make you skinny—even if you don't eat them. In a study conducted by the Cornell Food and Brand Lab involving more than 700 cafeteria diners, the mere presence of healthier items such as bananas led about a third of participants to select healthier lunches—even if they didn't choose a banana. So-called trigger foods seemed to remind diners to eat more nutritious fare. So next time you're trying to lose weight, put a bowl of fruit or vegetables on the table; it might help you to say no to the fries.