



Wellness through lockdown: Essential vitamins to support our immune system

As with any cellular process or system within our body, our immune system also needs nutrients to power it. There are lots of micronutrients (vitamins and minerals) that aid our body's immune system, to help hinder infection, as well as clear infections and repair damage.

The key vitamins and minerals that are essential for our immune system are vitamins A, C, D, E, B2, B6, and B12, folate, iron, selenium, and zinc.

The great thing is that a number of whole foods are rich in these vitamins and minerals, have a look at our list below to check you're eating a wide range of these nutrient-rich food.

- Vitamin A: Orange veggies such as pumpkin, kumara & carrots, red capsicum, as well as egg yolks and dark leafy greens.
- B vitamins (including folate): wholegrains, legumes, nuts & seeds, meat, dairy, eggs, leafy greens, fruit & vegetables*.
- all different B vitamins have differing food sources, be sure to check out the NZ Nutrition Foundation website for more details.
- Vitamin C: red capsicums, citrus fruits, broccoli, kale, Brussels sprouts.
- Vitamin D: canned tuna, oily fish, eggs, whole grains.
- Vitamin E: nuts & seeds, avocado. Zinc: shellfish, nuts & seeds, chickpeas, peanuts, pumpkin seeds, beef.
- Selenium: brazil nuts, fish, eggs, whole grains, legumes. You can get all the selenium you need in one day from one brazil nut, it is recommended to eat no more than 3 brazil nuts each day.
- Iron: shellfish & fish, red meat, whole grains, legumes, broccoli, spinach, dried fruit.
- Macronutrients such as proteins, carbs and fats also play a role immune function or nutrient absorption, so eating a healthy, balanced diet is important.

Information provided is generic and not specific to every person. Nutrient status and immune function differs between individuals. Seek personal medical advice from your health professional, especially if you are aware of underlying medical concerns or if you think you may require supplement advice.

References

NZ Nutrition Foundation; <https://nutritionfoundation.org.nz/nutrition-facts>

Maggini, S., Pierre, A., & Calder, P. C. (2018). Immune Function and Micronutrient Requirements Change over the Life Course. *Nutrients*, 10(10), 1531. <https://doi.org/10.3390/nu10101531>

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/how-to-boost-your-immune-system>

In regards to the current global and national health situation, for accurate information on COVID-19, be sure to look to the New Zealand Ministry of Health: <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus>