

Exercise - colds and flu

Question: Can exercise help you avoid colds and flus?

Answer: Yes. At least one study suggests that regular exercise can cut in half the number of days a person suffers from colds and the flu. Exercise helps the disease-fighting white blood cells in the body to move from the organs into the bloodstream. Overall, you can improve your immune system by eating a proper diet, getting sufficient rest, reducing stress, and exercising regularly. This will decrease your chances of getting a cold or the flu.

- **Avoid rapid weight loss.** Low-calorie diets, long-term fasting and rapid weight loss have been shown to impair immune function. Losing weight while training heavily is not good for the immune system.
- **Obtain adequate sleep.** Major sleep disruption (e.g., three hours less than normal) has been linked to immune suppression.
- **Avoid over-training and chronic fatigue.** Space vigorous workouts and race events as far apart as possible. Keep "within yourself" and don't push beyond your ability to recover.
- **Wash your hands frequently.** This is often your best prevention. Don't forget your fingernails.
- **Avoid putting your hands near your eyes, nose or mouth.** Most bacteria and germs are spread from a surface to your hands to your face not by air.
- **Get a flu shot.** Especially if you have a weakened immune system.
- **Get enough sleep.** Lack of sleep can reduce immune functioning making you susceptible to sickness.
- **Drink more water.** In the fall and winter, it is easy to overlook your thirst and get dehydrated. Make sure you consume 8 glasses a day.
- **Continue a moderate exercise program.** Try to maintain a consistent exercise routine
- **Limit alcohol intake.** Alcohol can be dehydrating which, in turn, may decrease your resistance to bacteria.
- **Finally, listen to your body.** If you are less than 100% you will feel better and recover faster if you let yourself rest, and consume plenty of Vitamin C. My preference is Emergen-C. I take it about 3 packets daily. Each pack has 1,000 mg of Vitamin C. I feel more energetic, and my immune system is stronger than ever. This is very important for me since my profession as a fitness trainer depends on a strong immune system. Try one on your next visit to Shapes! You will feel more energetic and be healthier throughout the cold and flu season.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Berry

Fitness Coordinator (Shapes Fitness for Women)