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## Chapter **1**

# Immunity: Your Ticket to a Stronger, Longer, and Healthier Life

**E**verything rises and falls on your immune system. When your immune system is strong, you avoid the pitfalls of disease, and your body expresses vitality and health. Your immune system is your shield — your most powerful protector.

Having your immune system operate at its best should be central in your life and the focus of your nutritional and lifestyle patterns. The secret to success is discovering practical tools and strategies to strengthen your immune system so it helps keep you healthy, lean, strong, and ageless.

# Super Immunity 101

What does it mean to have *super immunity*? Super immunity is when your body's greatest protector — its immune system — is working to the best of its ability to get and keep you well. Having your cells express their super immunity potential can even save your life. Your immune system casts a healing shield over you, protecting you from the simplest of challenges, like the common cold, to the most threatening, like cancer.

We're passionate about bringing the concept of immune boosting to the world because we've seen tremendous value in developing tools and healthy lifestyle practices that keep people in this super immune-healing cocoon. In the following sections, we introduce you to the concept of super immunity and how it can affect nearly every area of your life.

## Starting with your immune system

No matter what your goals are — whether they're to get well, stay well, lose weight, or fight aging — it all starts with creating the healthiest cells possible. Discovering the tools to help your body create these healthy cells may be one of the most important things you do for yourself.

Life can be complicated. It can be hectic, busy, and exhausting to you and your body. These things are just a few of the challenges your immune system faces. No one enjoys being stuck in bed with frequent colds, yet many adults in the United States are about two to four times per year. Simple infections can turn life threatening, and the flu can turn into a more serious and prolonged illness. People are concerned about a worldwide spread of viral illnesses, and cancers are at an all-time high (men have a 44 percent chance of getting an invasive cancer, and women, about 37 percent).



REMEMBER

Here's the good news: Research shows that you can make a difference in protecting yourself from these illnesses. Understanding how to eat and live better helps you strengthen your body's greatest protector so it knocks out disease and keeps you well before anything serious or life threatening has a chance to take hold. Of course, you do risk some side effects of having a strong and efficient immune system — you'll look and feel amazing!

## Boosting your immunity with nutritional excellence

When you start eating and living for vibrant health, it shows. You have less down time, and you enjoy life on an entirely different level. If you're suffering, take

comfort in knowing that eating your way to a stronger immune system will help you a great deal, and getting well really does start with nutritional excellence. Chapters 8 and 9 explain what it means to eat foods with superior nutrition.



TIP

Nutritional excellence happens when you eat foods with a *high nutrient density*, which means foods that have a lot of nutrients in relation to the amount of calories they contain. So with each bite, you're doing something positive to your body and strengthening that healing shield.

Unfortunately, the average American takes in about 60 percent of his calories from *low nutrient density foods* — processed foods that have added flavors, colors, sweeteners, rancid oils, and are a gluten-filled, flour-filled dietary mess. When you eat these foods, every bite weakens your healing shield and opens yourself up to disease and premature aging.

## Considering super immunity and modern medicine

According to former Surgeon General of the United States Dr. Richard Carmona, “Because of the increasing rates of obesity, unhealthy eating habits, and physical inactivity, we may see the first generation to be less healthy and have a shorter life expectancy than their parents.” That is an unbelievable statement — that this generation will be the first to *not* outlive their parents! This means that with all the drugs, surgeries, and advancement in medicine, we're not getting any better. And now, the problem has trickled down to children.

Drugs were never designed to get you healthier. They were designed to get you out of crisis mode. Even though people have been marketed to think that more medical care means a longer, healthier life, that simply isn't the truth. If you want health, that job is up to you. No shortcut or magic pill can do this for you. It's about the lifestyle you choose to live.

Another problem with looking to modern medicine to get well and stay well is that taking medications does nothing to change behavior. In fact, it's your behaviors or patterns every day that may be leading to you needing the medication in the first place. Relying on medication to make you feel better allows you to continue on the path you're on, no matter how destructive it may be to your cells and overall health. Don't let modern medicine be your permission for leading a life that isn't serving you.

## IMMUNE-BOOSTING SUCCESS STORY: DREW

Meet Drew, 56, horticulturist, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania:

Drew is the perfect example of someone who was a participant in his healing, which led to astonishing results. Drew's blood sugars were creeping up to alarming levels. He and his wife decided to take action and wanted to use effective strategies that were as close to natural as possible. They transitioned their kitchen into healthy, immune-boosting foods with lean meats, low-starch carbohydrates, some fruits, and healthy fats. Much to their surprise, they really enjoyed these foods and found the transition easy with so many great recipes. Drew's blood sugars started at 350 and, in just six months' time, have plummeted to the normal range of 90 to 110. Drew and his wife were even more shocked when they found his hemoglobin A1c (average blood sugars over the previous two to three months) went from 13.8 down to an astounding 6.6! Drew feels better than ever. Every spring, he'd get sick like clockwork, but that's a thing of the past. He no longer gets sick whatsoever. Through time, he has experienced deep healing and is noticing improvements in all areas of his life.



REMEMBER

You have to be a *participant* in your healing to get results. Modern medicine isn't the answer. Always try to get the best results in your life; the *recipient* of health-care has to be the *participant* as well.

## Living Longer, Stronger, and Healthier

It almost sounds too good to be true, but, yes, you can live longer, stronger, and healthier when you discover how to eat and live in a way that boosts your immunity. When you stop poisoning your cells with unhealthy foods, you get rid of toxins and anything that your body can't use or eliminate. How quickly something leaves your body through your bowels says a lot about the health of that food. Certain foods cleanse you while others clog you. Eating foods that cleanse you keep you young, healthy, and beautiful, as you find out in the following sections.



REMEMBER

When you balance your plate with lean, healthy meats, seafood, vegetables, fruits, nuts, seeds, and naturally occurring healthy fats, like the ones shown in Figure 1-1, and cut down your sugar intake, you get stronger, leaner, and healthier. We discuss the power of immune-boosting foods in Chapters 8 and 9.

**FIGURE 1-1:**  
Immune-boosting  
foods.

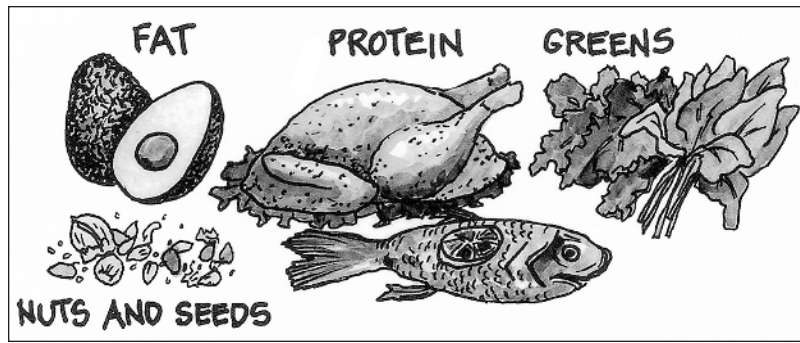


Illustration by Elizabeth Kurtzman

## Focusing on healthy cells

Healthy cells are different than cells under *oxidative stress* — the total burden of your cells by free radicals (unstable molecules responsible for tissue damaging and aging) in normal, everyday metabolism plus the added environmental stresses, like the toxins in air, water, or food. The biggest problem with oxidative stress is that it causes fatigue and premature aging. To turn back the hands of time and be youthful and vibrant, you have to eliminate the oxidative stress patterns placed on your body. You can do so by eating immune-boosting foods.

When you begin eating foods with nutritional excellence, your body starts to shed all its unhealthy cells. (See the discussion on cells in Chapter 2.) You begin to peel away layers of fat; you become leaner, stronger, and disease-free, and you defy your age. Immune-boosting foods do all these things and more:

- » Balance blood sugar and keep your overall sugar load down
- » Create a fatty-acid (omega-6 to omega-3) balance
- » Balance macronutrients (protein, fats, and carbohydrates)
- » Contain trace nutrient density (minerals)
- » Promote and maintain acid-base balance (how acid and alkaline you are)
- » Add robust amounts of fiber to your daily plate (for intestinal health)



REMEMBER

Modern-day processed and “convenient” foods won’t do the trick. People are sicker and fatter than ever and are more confused about what to eat than in any other time in history. But eating immune-boosting foods cuts through the clutter and helps you become very clear about the foods that move you toward health.

## IMMUNE-BOOSTING SUCCESS STORY: BETTY

Meet Betty, 83, mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother, Detroit, Michigan:

Betty is one of the most vibrant human beings on the planet. She's free of pain and, at 83, her activities aren't limited because of age. But it wasn't always that way. Betty was born premature and, as a result, was a weak, frail child. After she grew and was married, her husband suffered from heart disease, which was her catalyst for change. She became interested in finding a better way of living — a healthier lifestyle. She became intrigued with healthy foods and incorporated good nutrition into her cooking. Health became the forefront of Betty's life, and she raised her family with those food values, which are now paying off in spades. Betty lights up a room and is always on the go. Despite the fact that she endured hip replacement surgeries, she continues to exercise and maintain a positive outlook. She's 83 going on 60!

### Turning on your “super immunity” genes

Don't ever think that because you've had challenges in the past that you can't get healthier, look better, and live a better life. You can. You can create wellness and look amazing by giving your body the raw materials it needs and avoiding what it doesn't need.

You come into this world with your genes programmed for health. Developing bad habits and making poor choices risks your health. Remember: Your choices lead to sickness, not faulty genes or bad luck. In fact, your genes are nothing more than physical strings with a blueprint on them. Genes are either read or not read, and it's up to you how these genes are modified.

People can reprogram their genes, anytime they choose. This statement isn't fluff or soft science; it's based on a science called *epigenetics*. The fact is, every cell in your body is a programmable chip. Think of epigenetics like this: Your human gene (or genome) is like a computer. The *epigenome* found above the gene is like the software. If you're living in an environment that's congruent with how you're designed, you're all set. The software will run a healthy program. If you make choices that aren't congruent with your body's design, your outcome will be very different.

Epigenetics takes people from a place of hopelessness to a place of hope, because it doesn't matter what your situation is. Unless you're the less than 5 percent of the population with a true genetic defect, you have control of your life and your choices. You're in the driver's seat.

Nutritional excellence can make a deep impact. By eating immune-boosting foods, you're programming your genes to run a brilliant, healthy software. You're making the choice to give your body what it needs to flourish and create the healthiest cells possible. You're going to love how amazing you look and feel as a result!

## Choosing health



WARNING

If your body is forced to live in a way that's incongruent with a healthy, immune-boosting lifestyle, you'll continually move away from health. In fact, your body will start going through *adaptive physiology*, where your body attempts to adapt to whatever the stressor may be in your environment — smoking, drinking, eating unhealthy foods, being under constant stress, not exercising, eating lots of sugar, or even negative thinking — so you can survive. Whatever stressor your body faces, adaptive physiology will kick in to counterbalance the effects. It may even show up as some kind of chronic disease, such as high blood pressure, heart disease, or another illness. Eventually, if you don't remove the stressor from your environment, your body fatigues and stops working for you.

Think about it like this: If you're facing a threat (like running away from a wild animal), having high blood pressure and an increased heart rate is normal. You need these things to get you out of your threatening situation. On the flip side, when you're under this stress, your body doesn't need growth, so growth hormones shut down; you also don't need a working digestive system or a sex drive, so those functions shut down. So heart disease, high blood pressure, high blood sugar, or a digestive disorder may be *normal* given the environment your body is in; in fact, your body is doing exactly what it's supposed to do.

Be aware of lifestyle stressors, and work toward *choosing health*. The principles in this book and the immune-boosting recipes in Part IV are a great place to start.

## Boosting Your Immunity to Look and Feel Amazing

Most people adopt an immune-boosting lifestyle because they want to create health or get some of that energy back that used to be present in their life. What they find is they get much more. Their eyes start to glisten, their skin tone evens out, their hair gets shinier, and many lose weight and have a sense of happiness.

## IMMUNE-BOOSTING SUCCESS STORY: PAMELA

Meet Pamela, 55, registered nurse, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania:

Pamela began creating immune-boosting meals because she wanted to help her family. Her husband had high blood sugar, and even though her three children were older, she knew they needed to learn about eating real foods. What she didn't expect was what happened to her. She went from a size 8 to a size 4, and her whole body shape changed. She says, "I'm never sick, I have lots of energy, and I sleep soundly — something I haven't done in a long time. I have no wrinkles (the ones I had seem to have disappeared!), my eyes became very bright, I'm never bloated anymore, and my body feels stronger than it did when I was 25. My hair and nails now grow faster than ever before. Something good is happening inside. My kitchen is immune-boosting for life."

When your cells get the raw material they require to function at their best, magic starts to happen. If you want to boost your immunity, have perfect weight, and a youthful appearance, you have to have waste-free cells.



REMEMBER

Clean, healthy cells keep your body in balance and are the only way to get long-term health, weight loss, or a youthful appearance.

In this section, we talk about how boosting your immunity helps you look younger, increase vitality, get a good night's sleep, clear up skin problems, and soothe digestive issues. See Chapter 11 for full details.

### Looking younger

Boosting immunity foods not only keep you well but also keep you looking younger because you're ditching a lot of your sugar sources. You're no longer filling your plate or eating snacks with lots of sugar. You say goodbye to sugary carbohydrates, 100-calorie snack packs, or bottled drinks with artificial sugars.

Eating sugar causes you to have dull, wrinkled skin because of the *glycation* that occurs. The sugar in your bloodstream attaches to proteins to form harmful molecules. The more sugar you eat, the more harmful molecules are created. These molecules then damage your collagen, which is what keeps your skin firm and resilient. When this damage happens, you get saggy, dry, and wrinkled skin — definitely not a youthful look!

Also, when eating nutrient-dense foods, your cells lose waste, gain health, and make elimination easy, making your skin, eyes, and energy come alive. This kind of radiance is the cornerstone of a youthful appearance.

## Increasing vitality

The body benefits immeasurably from superior nutrition. It keeps your cells clean and detoxification pathways clear; your body eliminates easily, and all your body's systems and functions begin to balance.

Just think of how many days you felt listless or sluggish and didn't have the energy to do what you wanted that day. Chances are pretty good that maybe your diet created an imbalance in one of these areas. Following are some of the properties of immune-boosting foods that keep you looking and feeling young and give you energy and vitality:

- » Your blood sugar becomes balanced so you don't have energy swings throughout the day that make you cranky and tired.
- » Trace nutrients (minerals) and macronutrients (fats, proteins, and carbs) become balanced, providing you with stable energy resulting from balanced, real food nutrition.
- » Immune-boosting foods are low on the food allergy scale, so they're less likely to provoke food sensitivities that can make you fatigued.
- » Immune-boosting foods promote a balanced pH, which promotes healing.



TIP

Immune-boosting foods give you vitality that will become the norm in your life, not the exception.

## Getting a good night's sleep

One of the most priceless factors when eating and living a healthy lifestyle is improved sleep. After your body adjusts to eating cleaner, more nutrient-dense foods, you'll find that your sleep is deeper and more restful (see Chapter 11 for details).



REMEMBER

Getting quality sleep is one of the more common frustrations of many of our patients. Maybe you have trouble falling asleep, or you wake in the middle of the night unable to drift back to sleep. No matter what the scenario, eating healthy, immune-boosting foods will completely change the quality and duration of your sleep. Here's why:

- » You're getting foods loaded with minerals, which are grounding and calming to your body.
- » When your blood sugars are more balanced, you don't get that blood sugar dip in the middle of the night, causing your body to release hormones to restore blood sugar, which disturbs sleep.
- » Healthy foods contain B vitamins, which are great for calming nerves and balancing the nervous system for restful sleep.
- » Some of the healthier foods, like eggs, turkey, nuts, fish, and some fruits, contain an essential amino acid called *tryptophan*, which helps promote sleep.
- » When eating foods with superior nutrition, your body naturally regulates hormones and signals associated with hormones that, in turn, help you sleep better.

If you have sleep issues, eating foods with superior nutrition can be your all-natural sleep aid. It works, and there are no nasty side effects.

## Clearing up skin and digestive issues

So many problems we see in our practice come down to healing the intestinal track, because an unhealthy gut is responsible for many people's problems. Your gut is filled with bacteria. Incredibly, your intestinal track is about 10,000 square feet of surface area, and within this surface area are literally trillions of cells (bacteria). Your job is to feed these cells with the right raw material and nutrients so your intestinal bacteria are plentiful and strong.

Think of all those cells as your soil. If you pot a plant that lacks nutrients or is diseased or toxic, that plant won't thrive. The same goes for you. So many people are run down or have intestinal discomforts, acne, or skin rashes because they have a deficient and toxic intestinal track.

To become vibrant and healthy and to eliminate so many of the digestive problems and skin issues, you have to first create healthy soil. The superior nutrition in immune-boosting foods begin to cultivate that healthy soil. In Chapter 7, we cover immune-related conditions, including leaky gut syndrome, acne, and other skin conditions.

## IMMUNE-BOOSTING SUCCESS STORY: JENNIFER

Meet Jennifer, 39, business owner, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan:

Jennifer grew up eating healthy food. As she reached adulthood, she carried out the same pattern. She purchased her foods from health food stores and ate the “healthier” versions of foods, or so she thought. Even though she was eating foods from health food stores and the healthier sections of the food market, she continually battled her weight and had chronic congestion. What she came to realize was that just because foods are found in a health food store or marketed as “healthy,” it doesn’t always mean they’re foods you should be eating. When Jennifer started eating immune-boosting foods and understood what superior food nutrition really meant, she began to look better than ever — and lost 25 pounds and 8 percent body fat to boot! She has more energy and says, “I just feel clearer and more balanced. Having this awareness has been an amazing eye opener and will be of value to me for the rest of my life.”

You’ve found your nutritional blueprint. It’s eating the nutritionally superior immune-boosting superfoods. When you fill your plate with these foods, your body will respond in a way it never has before. You’ll literally come alive and plug back in to get healthy, stay healthy, and de-age.

