



Supporting your immune function with a healthy diet

Nobody wants to miss a game, race or competition because they are sick, do they?

Having a strong immune system will help us to reduce the risk of illness, and good nutrition practices play an important role.

Prioritise quality nutrition

Eat a variety of foods across all food groups to provide a wide range of nutrients. Specifically, eating a variety of brightly coloured **fruits and vegetables** will provide plenty of micronutrients (like vitamins and antioxidants) that are known to be beneficial for immune function.

Aim for at least 2 serves of fruit and 5 serves of vegetables every day.



In addition, eating **red meat** and their alternatives will provide the minerals iron and zinc, which are also important for good immune function.

Fuel appropriately

Under-fuelling (i.e. not eating enough) can compromise our immune function. Therefore, it is essential to consume enough energy to meet the demands of training loads. Specifically, make sure you are fuelling your training with **carbohydrate**-based snacks and top up during long sessions. On days with a higher training volume and intensity, you will need to consume more carbohydrate. A Sports Dietitian can guide you further.

DO

- ✓ Consider eating foods containing beneficial bacteria such as yoghurt, kefir and fermented foods like sauerkraut; or trying a probiotic supplement (your GP or Sports Dietitian can guide you on this).
- ✓ Head outside and get some fresh air and a little sunshine for **Vitamin D**.
- ✓ Get adequate and good quality sleep.
- ✓ Reach out as needed for **management of stress**.
- ✓ **Wash your hands**, especially prior to eating.

Don't forget personal hygiene & food safety

- Avoid sharing drink bottles and foods to prevent the spread of illness.
- At the conclusion of training, where facilities permit, hand washing/sanitising should be a priority.
- In camp settings, and where facilities permit, athletes should shower after training sessions before meals.
- In all situations, practise good food safety and safe food handling.

DON'T

- × Don't - consume excessive alcohol.
- × Don't - over-train. Ensure training loads are managed well.
- × Don't - bother with a multi-vitamin. A balanced diet should provide all the vitamins and minerals you need.

Putting this into practice

- Plan out your weekly meals, considering your training schedule where possible. Aim to vary your meals to ensure a wide range of nutrients.
- When making your shopping list, make sure to include appropriate snacks so that you can meet your recovery requirements.

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