



Texan Talk

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A Nutrition Newsletter

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ACHOO, COUGH, COUGH, SNIFF, SNIFF – Avoiding Those Pesky Winter Bugs

Intense training and all the activity surrounding game day can affect your body's immune system which may make you more vulnerable to whatever "bug" is going around. Although researchers are still figuring out all the details, changes in immunity have been shown to be related to elevations in stress hormones such as catecholamines and cortisol which rise during intense training and periods of stress – like the holidays. So, what does all this have to do with nutrition? Plenty! Eating properly can help you not only have the energy you need on a daily basis, but can give your body what it needs to fight off infections. Here are some tips for eating to maximize your immunity:

- ◆ Eat enough calories to maintain your weight. This is not a reason to over-eat and gain weight, but losing weight can negatively impact your immune function.
- ◆ Include lots of good carbohydrates in your meals. Carbohydrates are the fuel for your tank and make it

possible for you to give your all every day. Some items to look for would be: whole grain breads and pastas, brown rice, popcorn and oatmeal.

- ◆ When looking at your plate, divide it into five even sections. One of those sections, or just a little less of that section, should have lean protein in it. Your body uses protein to build muscle as well as to enhance your immunity. However, more protein is not better – particularly at the expense of carbohydrates. It is the combination of these two in the right amounts that help those white cells work.
- ◆ Drink a carbohydrate drink, like Gatorade, during workouts. You can alternate drinking Gatorade and water, but research has shown that the carbohydrates help with two things. First, it reduces the rise in stress hormones. Second, it stimulates saliva production which contains antimicrobial proteins. Both of these items can help your body fight off those bugs you may encounter.

- ◆ Do not mega-dose on vitamins and minerals. If you choose to take a multivitamin, look for one that has as close to 100% of the RDAs as possible. Mega-dosing can lead to toxicity and some serious physical side effects. Toxicities are common among pro football players, so check with Roberta to make sure you don't exceed what you need!

What about my gut? You may have heard that about 70% of your body's immunity is in your gut which includes your stomach and intestines. This is absolutely correct! So, what can you do to enhance the immunity of this part of your body? First, all of the tips provided above will also help with maintaining the immunity in your gut.

But, did you also know that your gut is populated with all sorts of good bacteria (microbiota) that help you stay healthy and digest your food? One way to help enhance immunity in this part of your body is to add probiotics to your diet. Probiotics populate your intestines with the good bugs that help you stay healthy. You can get probiotics by eating yogurt with "live" or "active" cultures (it should say on the package). There are also probiotics in pill form. Studies have shown that Lactobacillus GG, a type of good bacteria, can help enhance immunity in the gut. A good brand to take is Culterelle which is available only at CVS pharmacy.

And finally. . . Here are some extra tips to keep in mind:

- ◆ Be extra vigilant about washing your hands and/or using

antibacterial gels including in the weight room before and after your workout.

- ◆ Always wash your hands with soap for 20 seconds or use antibacterial gel before you put anything in your mouth – including when eating at the cafeteria, after practice and after you lift.
- ◆ Avoid contact with people who have symptoms of infection or are "coming down with a cold."
- ◆ Avoid hand-to-eye and hand-to-mouth contact to avoid transporting viruses/microbes to points where they can enter your body.
- ◆ Never, ever, pick up food with your hands in the cafeteria. Always use the tongs to serve yourself!

References:

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