

Stay Strong This Season: Boosting Immunity Before Winter

Simple steps to strengthen your immune system and stay healthy as cold and flu season begins.

As temperatures drop and we spend more time indoors, the risk of catching colds, flu, and other seasonal illnesses increases. The flu infects millions of Americans each year, leading to an estimated **31 million medical visits** and up to **650,000 hospitalizations** annually. In addition, respiratory viruses like RSV and COVID-19 continue to circulate as the weather cools.

Taking **proactive steps** now can help **strengthen your immune defenses** before winter sets in. Your immune system works best when it's supported by **consistent, healthy habits** — not quick fixes. By fueling your body, getting enough rest, and staying active, you can **lower** your chances of getting sick and **recover faster** if you do.



- **Add omega-3 fatty acids:** Found in salmon, walnuts, and flaxseeds, omega-3s can reduce inflammation and support immune cell function.
- **Manage stress:** Chronic stress can suppress immune function. Try deep breathing, meditation, or daily walks to reduce stress hormones.
- **Check your vitamin D levels:** Especially important in fall and winter when sunlight exposure drops. Vitamin D supports immune response.
- **Get consistent, quality sleep:** Lack of sleep can make you more vulnerable to illness. Aim for 7–9 hours each night.
- **Keep moving:** Regular exercise boosts circulation and supports immune function.
- **Stay up to date on vaccines:** Annual flu shots and other recommended immunizations are key defenses against seasonal illness.

SOURCE: CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION