

5 Tips for Helping Kids Stay Healthy this Winter, and Throughout the Year!

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Have you noticed how well kids can share when it comes to sharing the illnesses of the season? One might have the start of a cold, and immediately 10 more kids have it that same week. However, just because one child shares, doesn't always mean another has to actually "catch" what they are giving. As we move through fall and winter, it's time to ramp up our protective measures when it comes to keeping little ones healthy and strong through the cold and flu season. Here are five perfect ways to boost kids' immunity at this time of the year.

Eat Well to Feel Well – When it comes to children, we all know they can be picky eaters at times, but we still have to ensure they are eating for good health. Get the junk out of the house, and there isn't anything to say no to. This is a wonderful way to not only allow kids to build their independence, and help them to make their own healthy choices, but also to build up those healthy food taste buds!

Yes, yes, it's the holidays and kids are receiving candy and other indulgences more than ever during these months. However, the ingredients in those typical sweet treats are building up an inflammatory, and mucous filled, environment that will increase the potential for viruses or bacteria to set up shop.

1. **Avoid or minimize these top inflammatory foods and additives** from the diet of your little ones as much as possible.
 - **Sugar** – in the forms of added sugar and processed/concentrated juice
 - **Dairy** – this is a major culprit when it comes to kids' ill health. Children take in a major amount of dairy, and it can be hard to notice at times. When kids are healthy, a small amount of cheese may be ok every once in a while. However, when not feeling well, or getting sick often, cut it out altogether.
 - **Wheat** – many kids have an underlying intolerance to wheat, especially what is grown in the US, and will have much better attention and behavior when it is removed, or substantially limited, in their diet. Choose only organic, and sprouted where possible, when it comes to wheat.
 - **Corn** – likewise, corn is not the same as it used to be when most of us were growing up. It has been modified and tweaked with so much that it hardly has any of the nutrition that it once did. If you must include corn once in a while for a recipe, definitely keep it organic.
2. **Increase these top healthy foods**, go organic as much as possible.
 - **Dark leafy greens** like kale, spinach and chard, or other greens like broccoli and asparagus; add as many colorful veggies as are available at this time of the year (multi-colored carrots are super nutritious and super fun for kids to eat!)
 - **Rich colored fruits** like blackberries, blueberries, and raspberries; or red apples with the skin left on.
 - **High quality protein and fat.** If your family eats meat, then find a source that is organic and ideally pasture raised. Everyone should include good plant sources of protein and

fiber, however, if your family is vegetarian or vegan, be sure your child is getting optimal combinations to ensure proper protein consumption (this is a big topic, but if you are unsure that you are combining foods correctly as a vegetarian or vegan, set some time up so we can go over that). Healthy fat sources are olive oil, coconut oil, avocado, nuts and seeds, as well as fatty fish sources. If some dairy is tolerated in moderation, organic ghee or grass-fed butter can also be good.

Play Well to Feel Well – Our immune systems develop as they interact with our environment. That means kids not only need to come in contact with other children and their snotty noses, but they also must come in contact with outdoor microbes as well. As they pick up more and more, their protective immune system is building up a super defense. Another benefit to playing outside as much as possible, is access to that great big, immune boosting, ball of fire in the sky, the sun!

Did you know that our body makes one of the most potent vitamins needed for our immune systems to function optimally? That's right, our bodies produce Vitamin D, and if we get adequate sunshine throughout the year, then we make that in optimal quantities. Unfortunately, what happens often these days is that parents try to protect their children from the rays of the sun, and they slather those little bodies with sunscreen (often chemically laden sunscreen, unfortunately). There are definitely times when a child may need to be protected from too much sun, but it isn't every time they go out to play. Follow these guidelines for outdoor play

3. **Get Adequate Healthy Outdoor Playtime:**

- 60 minutes/day of outdoor playtime is necessary for children to exercise, get the wiggles out, and soak up healthy sunshine. Try to make much of this unstructured, like getting to the park or playing out in the yard.
- Depending on where you live, there may be better times to play outside than others. For example, if you live in the hot desert of Arizona, your best times to play outside in the summer are going to be earlier and later in the day. Definitely not at high noon! In the fall and winter, however, most of the day will be no problem to play outside. Make the best decision based on your knowledge of where you live. If you need some guidance, reach out to us for that.
- If you know that your ground is chemical free, and free of sharp items, let them go barefoot. There is scientific proof around the benefits of grounding and connecting to the earth through bare feet. Obviously, this can be very cold in the winter depending on where you live, and may not always be in the child's best interest.

Reduce Toxins to Feel Well – Our environment has a bigger toxic burden than ever before, and many of those make their way into our bodies all too easily. Our bodies are designed to remove toxic waste, however, often those residual toxins are taken up and stored in sneaky places like extra body fat. Sometimes those even lead to obesity in adults and children, and often we see early puberty in children because of these chemicals.

Children are coming into the world with a toxic burden already set up. Studies have found at least 200 chemicals in the cord blood of newborns, of which at least 180 are carcinogenic. These chemicals are present in mom and passing through the placenta. Which is why it is very important for mothers and

fathers to clean up their own bodies at least 3-6 months before conception. Once the baby arrives, it's important to minimize and avoid any additional toxins where possible, and continue to work on that throughout their life.

1. **Minimize Toxic Burden:**

- Eat clean, organic, and minimally processed food. Stick with whole fruits and vegetables as much as possible, and pasture raised and finished meat or wild caught fish. No Tuna or other fish potentially high in mercury, especially for children.
- Drink clean, filtered water. This may mean an RO system, or some other kind of filtration system. Remember to add minerals back into your water when you filter.
- Use glass, stainless steel, or cast iron for cooking and eating or drinking from. Avoid plastic as much as possible, and never microwave in plastic containers.
- Use air purifiers in bedrooms. We spend at least 8 hours in our bedrooms, that air quality needs to be in tip top shape. Clean rugs often and any dust in the bedroom. Change filters on the HEPA filtered air purifier regularly.
- This can be tricky, but if you are able to avoid clothing and bedding that has been sprayed with fire retardant, then try to do that. One way that can be very helpful is finding a great consignment shop for kid's clothes. Clothes that have been washed and worn multiple times will have reduced some of that chemical exposure. Plus saving money on kid's clothes never hurts!

Sleep Well to Feel Well – Did you know that our most influential time for healing and growth is during sleep? This goes for people of all ages, but is particularly important for children during these crucial growing years. Our entire body waits until we are asleep to get to work on processing everything that took place during the day. That is why children need so much more sleep than adults, and why adults should get at the very least 8 hours of sleep and definitely no less than 7 each night. Immunity is boosted from proper sleep as well. Our immune system and nervous system are very much interconnected, and if you lack sleep both of these systems will not work optimally. If you suspect your child is having difficulty sleeping, including waking throughout the night, let's talk to find out what is at the root of this concern. Often, we see food intolerances, and lifestyle or environmental obstacles are at the root of the problem.

2. **Get Adequate, Deep, Sleep:**

- Children ages 1-2: approximately 11-14 hours of sleep recommended
- Children ages 3-5: approximately 10-13 hours of sleep recommended
- Children ages 6-13: approximately 9-11 hours of sleep recommended
- Children ages 14-17: approximately 8-10 hours of sleep recommended

The tips above can be used throughout the year. Each season brings its own set of health burdens. When children have all around healthy immune systems, they can overcome whatever comes their way, and in turn make their system stronger. Remember to come in for homeopathic and botanical cold and flu remedies when needed. Always remember that our bodies are the best healing system and they are designed to heal themselves. Naturopathic medicine is designed to help the body do what it does best.