

# Boosting Immunity in Children



Recurrent or chronic ear infections, tonsillitis, respiratory tract infections, asthma, eczema, gastrointestinal or urinary tract infections are all indications of compromised or suboptimal immune function in children. There are concerns with the frequent overuse of antibiotics as they have potential side effects.

## Fever

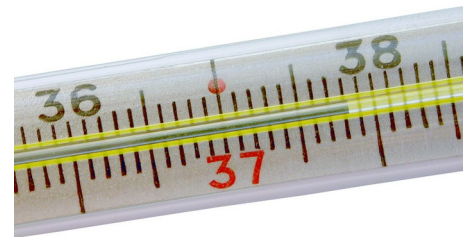
Fever is the most common symptom of illness in children. Most mild fevers in children are self-limiting. However fevers may also be an indication of more serious disease, such as pneumonia or meningitis. Also most parents are concerned about seizures if the fever gets too high. Therefore it is understandable that many parents seek medical advice at the first sign of an elevated temperature.

Fever is an important mechanism by which the body defends itself against pathogens. The increased temperature inhibits the ability of viruses and bacteria to replicate. Fever management therefore needs to focus on keeping the child comfortable throughout the fever.

## Red Flags

Fevers accompanied by other symptoms such as:

- ⊗ constipation and vomiting
- ⊗ extreme weakness
- ⊗ refusal to drink
- ⊗ very rapid pulse
- ⊗ fevers rising fast
- ⊗ If the temperature is over 38.3°C



can be signs of more difficult problems than a common childhood infection and medical advice should be sought.

## Fever Management

- ◇ Intervene only if the temperature is over 38.3°C in an infant, 39°C in a child
- ◇ never use aspirin. Never use ibuprofen for infants under 6 months old. Only use paracetamol if the temperature stays too high for more than 2 hours in an infant or 6 hours in a child
- ◇ Support your child with warmth, keep them hydrated with plenty of water, herbal teas and broths
- ◇ The onset of sweating will often resolve the fever, but do not force your child to be overdressed or heavily covered to stimulate this
- ◇ If your child is shivering or has cold hands or feet, do not attempt to lower the temperature as the body is still raising the temperature
- ◇ Make sure the child gets plenty of rest and sleep
- ◇ Long-term strengthen the immune system through diet, supplements as well as herbal remedies as required

## Strengthening the Immune system

### Diet to boost the immune system

Have your child's diet assessed for:

- ✓ Sufficient antioxidant rich foods
- ✓ Adequate protein - required for healthy immune function
- ✓ Nutrient dense wholefoods - contain a range of nutrients that work together synergistically to boost the immune system
- × Sugar content - sugar is an immune suppressant
- × Preservatives, colours and additives - these are not natural and should be avoided

### Nutritional Supplementation Specific Nutrients Required

- ⇒ **Zinc** - zinc functions as a co-factor in the body for many immune dependent responses
- ⇒ **Vitamin C** - decreased vitamin C leads to decreased immune function and increased risk of microbial infection
- ⇒ **Vitamin D** - vitamin D is a potent immune modulator with a great body of research highlighting this role. Vitamin D deficiency is becoming a huge issue with less time being spent outdoors and the success of the "slip, slop, slap" campaign
- ⇒ **Vitamin A** - is important in modulating the immune system as well as maintaining the health of mucous membranes
- ⇒ **Cod liver oil** - the essential fatty acids in fish oil help with immune cell regulation, cod liver oil has the additional benefit of naturally containing vitamin A and D
- ⇒ **Probiotics** - probiotics have been shown to influence immune response as well as decreasing allergic and inflammatory responses

There are many other nutrients that may be required. A consultation for a thorough evaluation of nutrients best suited for your child's needs is better than guessing. As well you have the peace of mind that you will have access to high quality nutritional supplements for your child

### Herbal Immune Boosters

Herbs have been used for centuries to help boost immunity. There is an impressive body of research confirming the immune modulating effects of these herbs. Most people have heard of the herb Echinacea as being a good immune stimulant. Unfortunately, many of the herbal supplements sold today are of poor quality. Often the wrong herb is in the product or the wrong part of the herb is used, making it virtually useless.

For this reason I am not listing a list of herbs for immune boosting, allergy, fever, infection, etc. Herbs prescribed by a trained practitioner will ensure that you get a product that is of guaranteed quality and matched to your child's underlying condition.

### **Immune Health Assessment For Your Child**

I would suggest that if your child is often sick, has asthma or allergy issues (eczema) it would be best to have a comprehensive assessment of your child's diet, gastrointestinal function and nutritional status. **Even if you have a one off assessment** you will be provided with an assessment of your child's deficiencies, dietary suggestions and access to high quality supplements that you can be confident in helping your child.