

## 5 Things That Destroy Your Immunity

Source: *Epicor*



As the hot summer days come to an end and the weather starts to get colder, chances are you'll be stuck indoor more often and less active.

What's more, most of us tend to reach for comfort food this time of year. I know I've been guilty of this!

Keeping your immune system strong this time of year becomes even more important especially if your healthy habits tend to slip.

Here, check out these surprising things that can wreak havoc on your immune system and find out what you can do about it.

### **1. Sugar**

I have a serious sweet tooth. I love to bake and I live for my (small) piece of dark chocolate every day. When I go out to dinner, I'd much rather skip right over dinner and head right for dessert. It's ok to satisfy your cravings and indulge in an occasional treat, but overdosing on sugar can take a toll on your immune system. The average American eats 76.7 pounds of sugar each year! But it's not just straight-up sugar or added sugars that are the problem. Sugar is sneaky. It's in processed and packaged foods and things like salad dressing, tomato sauce, yogurt, peanut butter and energy drinks. The World Health Organization recently released new recommendations, which state that no more than 5 percent of our daily caloric intake, or 25 grams a day, should be from added sugars. But watch the sugar in fruit and some vegetables too, because even though it's natural, it can easily add up.

## **2. Stress**

Everyone has it, but when you're in a constant state of stress, it can destroy your immunity. Whether it's due to work, money, your health or the stress that comes with caring for an aging parent, there may not be much you can do to change your situation. But how you manage it can make all the difference. You may have to set up boundaries, prioritize or say "no" once in a while. Deep breathing, meditation, exercise and making time to connect with friends and have fun can make all the difference.

## **3. Sleep**

Although you make it a priority to eat healthy and exercise, sleep is probably the last thing on your list. Yet if you're not getting 7 to 9 hours of uninterrupted, blissful sleep that leaves you feeling refreshed in the morning, it can impact your immunity. In fact, a study in the journal *Sleep* found that severe sleep deprivation has the same effect on the immune system as stress.

But it's not just the amount of sleep, it's the quality. If you suffer from insomnia or another sleep disorder, or obstructive sleep apnea, which affects more than 18 million Americans, you'll never get the deep sleep your body needs. Make it a point to get into bed 30 minutes earlier each night, until you're clocking enough shut-eye. If you think you may have a medical condition that affects your sleep, seek out help from a sleep specialist.

## **4. An Imbalanced Gut.**

There are 100 trillion live microorganisms, or bacteria, that are living in our guts. When the good bacteria are balanced, your immune system is strong and armed. Some things can throw off this balance however, including antibiotic overuse, diet, chemical exposure and you guessed it, stress. One of the best ways to get the good bacteria is from food. Things like yogurt (watch the sugar!), kefir, sauerkraut and tempeh are all good choices. But you also need prebiotics, which are carbohydrates that cannot be digested and act as food for the good bacteria. Foods like bananas, asparagus and Jerusalem artichokes contain prebiotics, or try natural immune supplements with EpiCor, which have been shown to act like a prebiotic in sophisticated digestive models.

## **5. Your Outlook on Life**

Debbie downer? Try to see the glass half full and you could be healthier. In fact, a study in the journal *Psychology and Aging* found that optimism and finding the bright side of things can actually boost your immunity and increase life expectancy. So the next time you're tempted to be negative or see the downside of a situation, look for the silver lining. Your body and your mind will thank you!