

Adequate Energy Intake

[Protein and energy malnutrition](#) are major contributors to a suppressed immune system. During a large calorie deficit, immune cell activity is reduced, leaving you susceptible to illness. Therefore, it's crucial to maintain an adequate energy intake for your daily needs and activity. If you are eating in a negative energy balance to lose weight (food intake < energy expenditure), eating sufficient protein and avoiding any nutrient deficiencies will help maintain immune function.



Avoid Nutrient Deficiencies

To avoid nutrient deficiencies, it's important to consume a wide variety of foods within the diet, especially nutrient dense foods such as vegetables and animal products. Another key nutrient involved in optimal immune function is dietary fat. Eating a very low fat diet (less than 20% of daily calories) has been shown to significantly suppress immune function in both [athletes](#) and the [general population](#).

Don't Restrict Carbohydrate Intakes

In order to maintain immunity, ensure adequate carbohydrate intake for energy needs and training. Aim to consume some carbohydrates soon after exercise and during prolonged exercise bouts of 90-minutes or longer. This [limits elevations in stress hormones](#) such as cortisol and may reduce the degree of exercise-induced immune depression.



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Keep on Top of your Hydration

Saliva acts as one of our 'first lines of defence' against germs. Maintaining a good hydration status can help [to prevent a reduction in saliva production](#). Check out our [hydration resource](#) for ways to optimise your hydration levels.



Maintain Good Hygiene Practices

To help minimise susceptibility to illness, good hygiene standards are advised although they are often neglected. Be vigilant with using hand sanitisers, cleaning water bottles adequately, hand washing before meals and post-exercise to help keep bugs at bay.



Don't Underestimate the Power of Sleep!

Research has shown that with [adequate sleep](#) (8+ hours/night), you are 3 times less likely to contract a common cold, or similar illness.



Find out which supplements might also benefit your immune system by downloading our [Supplements for Immunity](#) resource.

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