

Paula Mee

INTRODUCTION TO NUTRITION

We have asked nutritionist Paula Mee about her thoughts on eating well this winter. We make many food choices throughout our lives, which have a major impact on our health and nutrition. A healthy and well balanced diet is about eating the right quantity and variety of foods from each of the main food groups. Good food choices will help you feel in control and in charge of your life, as well as give you energy, a healthy immune system and a slimmer waistline.

There are so many things I just love about winter; crisp cold mornings, fur-lined hats, soft woollen scarves, the smell of pine trees, falling snowflakes, hot drinks, cinnamon and cloves, cosy fires, turkey and cranberries, butternut squash, fairy lights, bear hugs, afternoon movies and.... of course the inimitable promise of Spring snowdrops.

This is also the time when the immune system needs a gentle support to prepare it for the challenging weather and busier days ahead. The immune system helps fend off harmful bacteria and viruses. The immune system is highly efficient and has many defences against the onslaught of outside invaders.

What we eat can have a direct influence in supporting our overall health. Here are some of the nutrients and foods I focus on as I embrace the winter months ahead.

Enjoy

Paula



immune supporters

Strengthen your natural defences this winter by including Probiotics, Omega 3 and Antioxidants in your diet.

PROBIOTICS

It's important to know that not all bacteria are bad. The intestine for example is the home to our "gut flora" where millions of different bacteria live, many of which are beneficial or "friendly". The gut flora is a natural barrier helping the bodys defences, making life harder for bad bacteria. In order to boost these friendly bacteria many people now make special probiotic foods and drinks part of their daily diet.

OMEGA 3

Omega 3 fats are also essential for immune health. They work by increasing

the activity of phagocytes, the white blood cells that eat up bacteria. These fats also help strengthen cell membranes, thereby speeding up healing and strengthening resistance to winter infections and bugs. Omega 3 fats can be found in oily fish (salmon, mackerel, tuna), linseed, walnuts and linseed oil.

ANTIOXIDANTS

Antioxidants are vitamins and minerals that remove harmful oxidants from the bloodstream. Oxidants, also known as free radicals, are the toxic by-products our bodies make when we turn food into energy. The table across lists some of the more important vitamins and minerals for keeping our immune health in tip-top condition, especially during the winter season.



important vitamins and minerals for our immune health

NUTRIENT	FUNCTION	FOOD SOURCES
Vitamin A (beta-carotene)	For healthy skin, hair and eyes. Helps the body resist infection by increasing the number of infection fighting cells, natural killer cells and helper T cells.	Sweet potato, carrots, kale, spinach, turnips, red & yellow peppers, winter squash, mango and cilantro and fresh thyme. Liver paté, fish, eggs and brussel sprouts.
Vitamin B2 (Riboflavin)	Release energy from carbohydrates, fats and proteins. Vital for growth and vision and a healthy immune system.	Roasted goose or duck, cheese, yogurt, eggs, meat, green leafy vegetables, fortified breakfast cereals, almonds.
Vitamin B6 (Pyridoxine)	Release energy from protein. Essential for a healthy nervous and immune system.	Smoked salmon, wholemeal bread, wheat germ, fortified breakfast cereal, liver, avocados, bananas, fish, meat, nuts.
Vitamin C (Ascorbic acid)	Protects against infection and enhances immunity. Vitamin C is important for the production of white blood cells, which fight off infection and interferon, the antibody that coats cell surfaces, preventing the entry of viruses.	Citrus fruits, redcurrants, cranberries, blackcurrants, strawberries, kiwi fruit, papaya, red chillies, broccoli, parsley, green leafy veg and peppers.
Vitamin E	Vitamin E is important for a healthy immune system. One function of Vitamin E is that it enhances the production of B-cells, the immune cells that produce antibodies that destroy bacteria.	Vitamin E rich foods are seeds, almonds, hazelnuts, pine nuts, brazil nuts, walnuts, avocado, vegetable oils and grains.
Iron	Essential for healthy red blood cells, oxygen transport, energy production and a healthy immune system.	Red meat, liver, fish and shellfish, turkey, chicken, eggs, spinach and green veg, wholemeal bread and fortified breakfast cereal.
Zinc	Improves immunity and healing. Needed for healthy eyes, skin, nails for growth and sexual development.	Oysters, crab and shellfish, other seafood, lean red meat such as beef, turkey, chicken, liver, kidney, lentils, some green veg, nuts, seeds and wheat germ.

Here's an example of a meal plan I follow in

Fruit & Nut Porridge

Make up 30g porridge oats to your liking with low-fat milk, then top with about 15g of dried fruit such as cranberries, raisins, blueberries, 5 whole almonds¹

Two thin slices of wholemeal toast⁴ topped with Manuka honey

Your preferred probiotic drink²

Cup of green tea or red bush tea¹



Lunch

Crunchy Cheese Toastie

Mix together (2 tablespoons, 80g) cottage cheese, (2 oz, 50g) chopped red pepper¹, some flat leaf parsley¹ and ground black pepper. Serve topped on 1 toasted wholegrain roll⁴

Big bowl of Carrot & Lentil Soup

Serve 225g fresh carrot & lentil soup⁵ with lots of chopped coriander

Mid morning

Cup of green tea or red bush tea¹, oat, dried fruit and seed biscuit



winter to keep my immune system healthy

Mid afternoon

Your preferred probiotic yogurt², topped with slices of pear and plum



Evening meal

A grilled fresh salmon³ or tuna steak³ seasoned with garlic, ginger or chilli served with crunchy vegetable stir-fry

Lightly stir-fry a selection of vegetables; a handful of mange tout¹, a handful of baby sweet corn¹, a handful of baby asparagus¹, 6 cherry tomatoes¹ and a handful of baby carrots¹.

Mix the juice of a lime, 1 teaspoon clear honey, 1 teaspoon soya sauce and 1 teaspoon sesame oil together and pour over your stirfry, cover and cook for a further 2 minutes until veg are crisp

One small glass of low fat milk



Evening

Cup of green tea¹ or herbal tea

Two squares of your favourite dark chocolate¹ (over 70% cocoa)



Key for Symbols

- ¹ contains antioxidants
- ² probiotic friendly bacteria
- ³ contains omega 3 fats and Vitamin D
- ⁴ contains B vitamins
- ⁵ contains zinc