

Immune-enhancing food



Nutritional therapist **Sally Wisbey** gives us her top five foods for supporting the immune system

Parsley is bursting with vitamin C which plays an important part in the immune system, helping to activate the number of white blood cells required to fight disease. Myristicin, a compound found in parsley, is rich in antioxidants which are required to shield the immune system from damaging free radicals.

Tip: Chop together a handful of fresh parsley and mint, mix together with lemon juice and olive oil and combine with cooked bulgar wheat for a delicious tabbouleh.

Shiitake mushrooms have been used medicinally by the Chinese for thousands of years due to their health-promoting properties. Rich in beta glucans, many studies show how Shiitake mushroom can either activate or suppress the immune system, supporting it in various conditions.

Tip: Chop and lightly stir fry with a little butter, garlic and fresh herbs.

Garlic is very beneficial for the immune system because it provides antiviral, antibacterial and anti-fungal properties helping to fight off many diseases. Allicin, the active ingredient in garlic, has been shown to promote cell death in cancer cells.



Tip: Antioxidant levels are dramatically increased when garlic is crushed. Add to pasta dishes.

Oily fish such as salmon, mackerel and sardines are rich in omega-3, helping to reduce inflammation and protect the lungs from respiratory infections. This essential fatty acid also increases white blood cells that eat up bacteria. Cod, tuna and shrimp are high in selenium which plays an important role in the immune system due to its high antioxidant levels.

Tip: Oven bake cod and serve with roasted vegetables and pine nuts.

Eggs are rich in high quality protein, composed of many different amino acids which have been shown to stimulate the immune system. Eggs are also a good source of zinc and selenium, required to fight infections and illness.

Tip: Buy organic to ensure high nutrient quality. Boiled eggs make a great snack.

■ www.sallywisbeynutrition.co.uk