

Strengthen immunity and fight coronavirus

FAHMIDA HASHEM

Fears about coronavirus have prompted online searches and plenty of misinformation about how to strengthen the immune system. As worries grow about the new coronavirus, online searches for ways to bolster the immune system have surged. One cannot avoid the risk of being affected by the virus, but the right diet is said to support the immune system so that it is ready to take on anything.

Building a healthy immune system is not rocket science, a lot of it is common sense. So, how do we support robust immunity? What to eat to help protect yourself from coronavirus? Nutrition experts reveal the foods and spices that boost your immunity and health fast. There are several nutrients that you can include in your eating plan that may help keep your immune system strong.

Ginger is an ingredient that may help decrease inflammation, reduce a sore throat and plays a powerful role as an antioxidant. Cloves help to fight cold and flu. Turmeric increases the body's antioxidant capacity and strengthens immunity. Turmeric



and cinnamon have strong anti-inflammatory properties and can be added to warm water, coffee and desserts. garlic is a popular remedy for colds, it has a strong anti-inflammatory effect.

Most people turn to vitamin C after they have caught a cold because it helps build up your immune system. It increases the production of white blood cells. Popular citrus fruits include grapefruit, oranges, lemons and limes. your body does not produce or store vitamin C, so you need daily vitamin C for

strong immunity.

Omega 3 fatty acids can reduce inflammation in the body. The lining of the cells is protected by this fatty acid. It thus keeps the immune system in check. It bolsters the immune system, so when there is a viral attack the body is prepared. Have walnuts and oily sea fish which contain omega 3.

Broccoli is supercharged with vitamins A, C, and E, as well as many other antioxidants and fibre which can fight diseases. Spinach is also packed with

numerous antioxidants and beta carotene, which may increase the infection-fighting ability of our immune systems. Like broccoli, spinach is healthiest when it is cooked as little as possible so that it retains its nutrients.

Yoghurt that has live and active cultures called probiotics stimulate the immune system to help fight diseases and promote beneficial bacteria growth in the gut. Almonds contain vitamin E which helps to prevent and fight off colds.

Our bodies need adequate

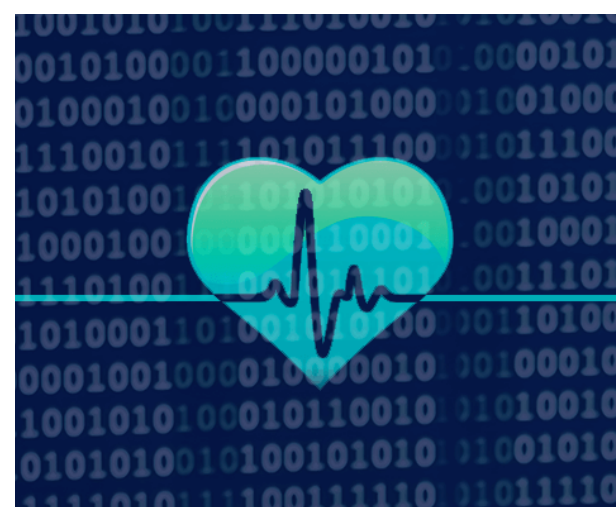
vitamin D to produce the antimicrobial proteins that kill viruses and bacteria. These proteins are particularly active in the respiratory tract. Vitamin D can be found in fatty fish, such as salmon, and milk or foods fortified with vitamin D.

Variety is the key to proper nutrition. Eating just one of these foods would not be enough to help fight off the flu/cold, even if you eat it constantly. Pay attention to serving sizes and recommended daily intake so that you do not get too much of a single vitamin and too little of others.

Prevention is better than cure. If you boost and strengthen your immune system, you will be able to prevent sickness naturally. Your immune system does a marvelous job of fighting off germs and disease. Also, you should practice good hygiene. There is no magic pill, or a specific food guaranteed to bolster your immune system and protect you from the new coronavirus. But there are real ways you can take care of yourself and give your immune system the best chance to do its job against this respiratory illness.

The writer is a nutritionist. E-mail: fahmidahashem60@gmail.com

HEALTH bulletin



All data can become health data!

Digitally tracking people's everyday activities creates a "digital health footprint" that puts one's privacy at risk, according to a JAMA Network Open study.

Researchers interviewed 26 experts about sources of digital information originating outside health care that could help build that footprint (for example, activity apps, text conversations, online banking).

The experts agreed that "all data can become health data." For example, a grocery store receipt could be used to predict a person's haemoglobin A1c level, or GPS coordinates could spot a visit to an abortion clinic. The experts noted that "the line between just general digital data and health data is going to become so blurred... and the regulations are not going to catch up." That could lead to "discrimination based off of just 1 or 2 streams of information."

The experts identified several risky elements of the footprint; for instance, there is a high risk for inaccuracy, the data can exist forever, and the information is highly marketable.

Antibiotic resistance: an ignored enemy in COVID-19

ŠARKER MOHAMMAD NASRULLAH, MD, SHADLY BENZADID AND AHMED HOSSAIN

The COVID-19 pandemic has already brought the world to its knees. Although the world is busy combating the obvious enemy, our other arch-nemesis is rising stronger than ever before during this pandemic. It is a threat with the ability to kill in greater numbers than any other human-known disease once it reaches its peak. Antibiotic resistance is this menace that we are facing.

Antibiotic resistance is a phenomenon where a germ becomes resistant to antibiotic treatment. A germ can be a virus, bacterium, fungus or parasite. Microbes can store information about antimicrobials in their genes. They use this knowledge to mutate and upgrade their defense to become stronger than the drugs used to kill them.

Indiscriminate use of antibiotics leads to the development of resistance in the germs when they are prescribed irrationally without proper indication of the drug. Using broad-spectrum antibiotics too frequently is yet another reason. Studies also show that almost 20-50% of all the antibiotic treatments are either inappropriately indicated or questionable.

Moreover, people often do not follow the prescription properly, stopping the medicine earlier than the prescribed period. The availability of over-the-counter antibiotics has also led to self-medication and excessive use. In



either case, if a drug is taken for an inadequate period or in an inappropriate dose, it eventually results in the development of resistance.

COVID-19 is a viral disease that greatly weakens the immune system of severely affected patients, making them susceptible to secondary infections by other germs. But it is not possible to test all the patients for coinfections as manpower is already short and focused on managing the emergencies.

Therefore, antibiotics are being used widely to prevent possible infections as well as for treating critical cases. Data show that less than 10% of COVID-19 patients have secondary viral or bacterial infections, whereas almost 70% of them are receiving antimicrobials as treatment or prophylaxis.

When the clinician does not have all the necessary information about the pathology of the infection, s/he inclines towards prescribing antibiotics even more. On the other hand, patients frequently demand a prescription of antibiotics in fear of the disease, thinking it would save them from greater suffering and cure them faster. Media reports about a few drugs, allegedly effective in treating COVID-19 without any reliable clinical evidence or trial, have only added fuel to this fire.

Despite the major setback in the global struggle to keep antibiotic resistance in check due to COVID-19, we must not loosen our grip on the leash. Appropriate and systematic testing of COVID-19 patients with symptoms of possible bacterial coinfections should be conducted to choose the proper treatment regimen as far as possible in the present circumstances. Antibiotics should not be consumed at any cost without professional medical advice. We can surely win over this crisis with great effort and some hope like many others we have overcome before.

The writers are researchers from the North South University Global Health Institute, Bangladesh.

VIRTUAL CONFERENCE



Important HIV prevention, treatment and cure research unveiled at AIDS 2020

Leading HIV researchers announced important new developments in HIV research at the 23rd International AIDS Conference (AIDS 2020: Virtual) held recently. This includes what may be the first report of an adult with HIV to achieve long-term HIV remission without the need for a bone marrow transplant and new data showing that long-acting injectable cabotegravir is superior to daily oral Truvada for pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP).

Other announcements included promising new insights on PrEP's impact on reducing HIV incidence in rural Kenya and Uganda, encouraging data on the potential link between dolutegravir and neural tube defects, and positive results in a trial comparing multidrug antiretroviral therapies.

"Since 1985 the International AIDS Conference has helped answer the most pressing research questions in HIV, and this year is no different," Anton Pozniak, President of the International AIDS Society and International Chair of AIDS 2020: Virtual, said. "The studies presented at AIDS 2020: Virtual advance our knowledge on multiple fronts, knowledge that can potentially help the communities and regions most impacted by HIV worldwide."

Dhaka trial recommends Favipiravir in COVID-19 treatment

STAR HEALTH REPORT

Bangladesh Society of Medicine (BSM) has found the effectiveness of Favipiravir as the first possible clinically proven drug for the treatment of people infected with COVID-19, says a press release.

After ending trial in Wuhan province of China and Russia, the Dhaka trial revealed similar kind of effectiveness of the Favipiravir in treating the COVID-19 infected patients.

"To evaluate usefulness and safety of favipiravir in treating the COVID-19 patients, we have conducted a double-blind, placebo-controlled randomised clinical trial for the first time in Bangladesh and we named it as Dhaka Trial," said Principal Investigator of the trial, Dr Ahmedul Kabir, Professor of the Department of Medicine, Dhaka Medical College and Hospital.

Beacon Pharmaceuticals Limited, Bangladesh has manufactured 'Favipira', a preparation of Favipiravir for the treatment of COVID-19 patients.



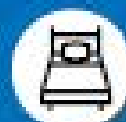
PHOTO: COURTESY

A speaker is talking at the dissemination session of the Dhaka trial on Favipiravir. Although there is no specific prescribed medicine in the world for treating the COVID-19 patients till the date, 'Favipira', a preparation of Favipiravir showed some promise.



HOW TO HOME QUARANTINE

The home quarantined person should:



Stay in a well-ventilated single-room preferably with an attached toilet



Needs to stay away from elderly people, pregnant women, children



Restrict his/her movement within the house



Under no circumstances attend any social/religious gathering



Wash hand frequently with soap and water or with alcohol-based sanitizer



Avoid sharing household items like dishes, glasses, cups, utensils, towels, bedding



Wear a surgical mask at all time. The mask should be changed every 8-8 hours



Dispose off used mask in a closed bin and bin should also be handled responsibly



If symptoms appear, he/she should immediately inform the nearest health centre



In Search of Excellence