

The aim in this COVID-19 pandemic is to keep transmission at a minimum. Not only the amount of people it is transmitted to, but also the amount that is transmitted. A smaller amount of exposure is much easier for our immune systems to handle. If we are exposed, certain foods can help us be resilient to the damage and complications that viral infections can cause. Proper care of yourself and family can keep you in the safe zone even if you have been exposed. Foods, herbs & spices as well as plant medicines can bolster our genes and sound off immune protecting cascades to better take on intruders. It is important to minimize the foods that hinder our immunity i.e. sweets, foods that are mucous producing (processed foods, wheat, dairy corn etc) These less than healthy food can counteract the positive affect the following foods can have to protect us.

In the art of medicine, across cultures, heat has recuperative properties. Temperature hot and/or spicy hot can chase away a raspy, sore throat, relieve congestion of the sinuses and bronchus or relieve pain. During this pandemic, especially while the pernicious forces of cold and damp are still upon us as we transition from winter to spring, keep you and your family dowsed in heat. Consume a stream of hot lemon water, teas, broths, steaming soups, stews & whole grain cereals (amaranth, millet, oats etc). Load up warming spices in your dishes: cayenne, turmeric, chili peppers, nutmeg, cloves, ginger, garlic, cinnamon, black pepper and cumin . Sit by the fire, spend extra time in a hot shower or bath. Indulge in a sauna or steam if you can. Put on extra layers, make sure you have good socks for when the temperature dips down. Heat is a protector of your constitution.

Phytonutrients are found in vegetables, fruits, herbs, spices & teas: These substances enhance our body's biochemical, physiologic processes. Of the 6 major phytonutrient groups, flavonoids, carotenoids, ellagic acid & resveratrol are linked to improving immune system function.

Flavonoids are a sub group of the phenol class of phytonutrients. They are rich in apples, onions, coffee, grapefruit, tea, berries, cacao, chocolate, black beans, white beans, red wine, broccoli, cabbage, kale, leeks, tomatoes, ginger, lemons, parsley, carrots buckwheat & cloves. Flavonoids have been found to increase resistance to viruses by preventing cellular damage.

Carotenoids(*alpha and beta carotene, lutein, zeaxanthin, lycopene*) are found in yellow, orange & red foods (sweet potatoes, carrots, winter squash, pumpkins, tomatoes) & have antioxidant properties that boost the immune system in a number of ways. It is a precursor for vitamin A which protects mucous membranes. They increase intercellular communication which is crucial to reducing the amount of cellular damage from a viral infection.

Resveratrol found in grapes, berries and nuts as well as chocolates is an important cell defender during a viral infection. It down regulates destructive, pro inflammatory mediators while increasing interferon.

Ellagic acid found in pomegranates, blackberries, raspberries, cranberries, grapes, pecans and walnuts help knock out trespassers on our mucous membranes just as they enter our bodies and before they can get into our cells.

In addition, medicinal mushrooms: shiitake, ganoderma/reishi, turkey tails, chaga, cordeceps, lions main, maitaki have special saccharide compounds that improve our cell mediated immunity. Add them to some of those hot dishes, make a broth and mix it with your tamari, soy, teriyaki or liquid amino sauces. Blend the mushrooms with the broth and make a thick base for stew. If you cannot get them fresh, you can buy them dried from Asian Grocers and reconstitute them. You can even take them by capsule and chase it with a hot beverage. Next up: Plant Medicines for Protection. Stay Tuned!