Meals to Strengthen Your Immune System

By Michelle Jones
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Health experts around the globe are working together like never before, and it’s beautiful to see. No matter where you live in the world, the recommendations are the same—wash your hands, practice social distancing, and make healthy choices to keep your immune system strong.

Plant foods are rich in nutrients and have positive anti-inflammatory effects on the immune system. So, one of the best strategies for keeping your immune system strong is to add plenty of plant foods to your meals.

#1 Try Unprocessed Frozen Food
Frozen fruits and vegetables are a great option when trying to get a quick meal on the table. They reduce the need to chop, so you can steam or bake them faster—some you can microwave directly in the bag.

#2 Use Canned Foods
When you want quick and simple meals, canned beans, tomatoes, and vegetables can be used together to make soups, chili, stews, and a variety of casseroles.

#3 Rely on Dry Basics
Dry beans and whole grains are perfect as a nutritious base for many meals and are easy to prepare. These can be cooked in Crockpots and Instapot with a fraction of the attention and time they would require on the stovetop.

#4 Choose Fresh Produce if Possible
When it comes to vitamin content, fresh is always a good choice. Make sure you wash all fresh fruits and vegetables before storing or cooking. Eating healthy starts with choosing the right foods. When preparing for the week, create a healthy meal plan that revolves around the produce that’s in season—this will make your immune system strong.

Peruvian Vegetable Soup

Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 bunch green onions, sliced
- 2 sweet red peppers, diced
- 6 carrots, diced
- 4 cups kale, chopped
- 2 zucchinis, diced
- 2 15 oz cans diced tomatoes
- 15 oz can black beans, rinsed and drained
- ½ cup quinoa, dry
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon dry cilantro
- 1 teaspoon garlic salt
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 6 cups water

Directions

In a large pan, sauté onions in olive oil over medium-high heat for 5 minutes. Mix in red peppers and carrots and cook for 10 additional minutes. Pour in tomatoes, and cook until mixture thickens, at least 10 minutes. Add beans, kale and seasonings, and cook for 2 minutes, or until kale is tender. Mix in quinoa, cumin, and cilantro—boil to a boil and simmer over medium heat for 20 minutes. Makes 4-3 cup servings.

Oatmeal and Fruit Breakfast

Directions

Combine oats with water or milk in a medium microwave-safe bowl. Stir until well mixed. Microwave on high for 3 minutes. Stir well. Top with fruit, nuts, and honey. Makes 2 servings.

Oatmeal Breakfast

Ingredients

- 1 cup old-fashioned rolled oats
- 1 cup water or milk
- 1 cup berries (strawberries, blueberries, raspberries, or blackberries)
- ½ banana, sliced
- 2 tablespoons walnut pieces

Baked Potato Ingredients

- 7 russet potatoes
- Olive oil
- Salt

Baked Potato Directions

Heat the oven to 425°F. Wash potatoes thoroughly. Pierce each potato with a paring knife a few times. Rub each potato with olive oil and sprinkle with salt. Place potatoes on a baking sheet. Bake for 60-70 minutes, or until potatoes are easily pierced with a fork.

Three - Bean Chili Ingredients

- 15 oz can black beans, rinsed and drained
- 15 oz can kidney beans, rinsed and drained
- 15 oz can pinto beans, rinsed and drained
- 3 14.5 oz cans diced tomatoes
- 1 5 oz can diced green chili peppers
- 1 6 oz can tomato paste
- 2 tablespoons chili powder
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- ½ teaspoon oregano
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 2 teaspoons garlic powder

Three - Bean Chili Directions

Combine all ingredients in a large pot and heat over medium-high heat for 10 minutes. You can mix all the ingredients in a Crockpot to cook on low for about 8 hours or on high for 3-4 hours.

Serve chili over potato. Top with diced avocado. You can serve with a tossed salad and some canned veggies. Makes 7 - 1 cup servings.

Baked Potato with Chili Lunch

Baked Potato Ingredients

- 7 medium potato
- Olive oil
- Salt

Baked Potato Directions

Heat the oven to 425°F. Wash potatoes thoroughly. Pierce each potato with a paring knife a few times. Rub each potato with olive oil and sprinkle with salt. Place potatoes on a baking sheet. Bake for 80-90 minutes, or until potatoes are easily pierced with a fork.

Three - Bean Chili Ingredients

- 1 15 oz can black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 15 oz can kidney beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 15 oz can pinto beans, rinsed and drained
- 3 14.5 oz cans diced tomatoes
- 1 15 oz can diced green chili peppers
- 1 6 oz can tomato paste
- 2 tablespoons chili powder
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- ½ teaspoon oregano
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 2 teaspoons garlic powder

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Combine all ingredients in a large pot and heat over medium-high heat for 10 minutes. You can mix all the ingredients in a Crockpot to cook on low for about 8 hours or on high for 3-4 hours.

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Peruvian Vegetable Soup

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- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 bunch green onions, sliced
- 2 sweet red peppers, diced
- 6 carrots, diced
- 4 cups kale, chopped
- 2 zucchini, diced
- 3 15 oz cans diced tomatoes
- 1 15 oz can black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 15 oz can kidney beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 15 oz can pinto beans, rinsed and drained
- 2 teaspoons chili powder
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- ½ teaspoon oregano
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 2 teaspoons garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 6 cups water

Directions

In a large pan, sauté onions in olive oil over medium-high heat for 5 minutes. Mix in red peppers and carrots and cook for 10 additional minutes. Pour in tomatoes, and cook until mixture thickens, at least 10 minutes. Add beans, kale and seasonings, and cook for 2 minutes, or until kale is tender. Mix in quinoa, cumin, and cilantro—boil to a boil and simmer over medium heat for 20 minutes. Makes 4-3 cup servings.

Oatmeal and Fruit Breakfast

Ingredients

- 1 cup rolled oats
- 1 ¾ cup water or milk
- 1 cup berries (strawberries, blueberries, raspberries, or blackberries)
- ½ banana, sliced
- 2 tablespoons walnut pieces
- 1 teaspoon honey (optional)

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