

The Doctor Within - Part 6

Immune Boosters 9-14

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Other than catastrophic events outside your control, the Institute for Natural Resources says it *is* possible to stay healthier and younger for longer. The Doctor Within—your brain-body immune system—plays a big part in making that happen.

Here are the last 6 of 14 components considered to be immune system “boosters.”

9. **Sunshine.** *Sunlight is the best natural source for Vitamin D (acting like a hormone and likely playing a role in serotonin production) —NIH*

Sunlight is required for life! Lack of sunlight can lead to Seasonal Affective Disorder that can be associated with depression, problems with calcium/bones, and may be linked with Multiple Sclerosis. Overexposure can damage DNA and collagen, impact macular degeneration and cataracts, and accelerate skin aging. Do add protective clothing, a hat or umbrella, and sunglasses if out in direct sunlight, especially during the mid-day. Avoid sunburn, tanning parlors, and ultraviolet light.

10. **Nutrition.** *What you eat clearly impacts not only your risk of developing cognitive disturbances but affects potential longevity.*

—Norman Relkin MD, Cornell University

Lean toward a Mediterranean-style cuisine. Select plant-based, unrefined, and unprocessed foods. Select quality nutrition and eat when you are physiologically hungry. Avoid snacking and ingesting “empty” calories. According to T. Colin Campbell, PhD, plant protein is the healthiest type of protein. When you eat, how you eat, the type and quantity of what you eat and drink, and the atmosphere in which you eat all matter.

11. **Laughter.** *Laughter is the best medicine*

—Dr. Madan Kataria

Laugh at least 30 times a day—and last. People judged to be very happy reportedly laugh between 100 and 400 times a day; they tend to be healthier and often are very long lived. Mirthful laughter is beneficial to both your brain and immune system. Hone your sense of humor as it can trigger laughter—although you can simply choose to

laugh and alter your brain-body neurochemistry. Schedule regular opportunities for fun, variety, and laughter. It is “cheap medicine!”

12. Support Network. *Be around people who will help you grow* —Joyce Rachelle

You need some close friends whom you can trust. Choose them carefully because within three years you are at risk for picking up the habits of the four or five persons with whom you spend the most time. Studies have shown this to be especially impactful for happiness, smoking, health, and obesity. Remember, you also influence others! Studies of unstressed mice show the same brain changes after they have spent time being around stressed mice. Hang out with those who are smart, affirming, reciprocal, and are living a Longevity Lifestyle.

13. Stressors. *Under stress, the brain automatically ‘downshifts’ to a lower functioning level.* —Renate & Geoffrey Caine

Downshifting makes it more difficult to access cognitive thinking, especially in the prefrontal cortex right behind your forehead. Only 20 percent of the negative impact to your brain and body is due to the stressor or stressful event itself; 80 percent is due to your perception of it. If you cannot prevent the 20 percent, you can at least manage the 80 percent. When stressed, identify and assign it to one of three general categories to help you manage it more effectively: *eustress* (helps you grow if you have chosen the activity); *distress* (avoid it whenever possible); and *misstress* (you may be able to it once you are aware of it).

14. Life Satisfaction. *Life satisfaction is one of the most decisive factors for healthy aging and longevity* —David Schnaiter

Review your overall life. Identify and make time for things that have brought you satisfaction: nurturing and reciprocal relationships, things that trigger a sense of awe, ways to “give back.” Tap into your super-ego and take good care of yourself. For example, practice *healthy selfishness* and don your own oxygen mask first, even as you care about and help others! Hone your spirituality—the spirit in which you live life. Internalize that every brain on the planet is unique and dump criticism and unrealistic expectations of yourself and others.

Did you realize that gratitude has been shown to enhance life satisfaction? William A. Ward has been quoted as saying, “*You received a gift of 86,400 seconds today—have you used even one to say, ‘thank you’?*” Gratitude is the antidote for fear. Joy cannot coexist simultaneously in the brain with anger, fear, or sadness. Give thanks for your brain and for a body to carry it around. Thank yourself for doing everything in your power to keep them both working efficiently for as long as possible. Craft a personal life vision and move toward it, role-modeling wellness and longevity.

The brain can only do what it thinks it can do. Talk to your brain. Tell it what you want it to do. Thank it for helping you develop and maintain a longevity lifestyle that assists in strengthening your brain-body immune system.

Do you know how the immune defense system works?

That is addressed in Part Seven.