

CHILDHOOD IMMUNITY



Tackling Childhood Immune Complaints

As every parent knows, having a sick child is certainly not fun and on top of that, it can impact on the health and wellbeing of the whole family. Whether it's due to sleepless nights, sickness spreading through the whole family, or needing time off school or work, sickness can take its toll. It is vital for children's immune systems to be in tip top shape to deal with whatever bugs are thrown their way, be it bacteria, viruses or allergens. So if your kids are getting sick with regular colds and flus, or are susceptible to eczema or wheezing or sneezing, then make it a priority to boost up their immunity and bring them back into balance.

Itchy, Scratchy, Sneezing and Wheezy

Does this sound like the characteristics of someone in your house? These complaints are common in many of our homes, with more and more kids being prone to allergies, hayfever, eczema or asthma, while others tend to pick up every bug that's going around. The good news is that certain herbs and nutrients play an important role in building robust immunity in children. These natural medicines work by providing symptomatic relief naturally, as well as by addressing underlying immune imbalances that can cause our kids to feel under the weather:

- **Albizia:** The anti-allergy properties of the herb Albizia are helpful for hayfever, asthma, sinus congestion and allergic skin conditions such as eczema and hives. It also strengthens the lungs and clears mucus.
- **Adhatoda:** This Indian herb has been traditionally used for hayfever, asthma and coughs, and helps clear the lungs and open the airways.
- **Astragalus:** possesses anti-viral activity and assists in the prevention and treatment of colds and flus.
- **Olive leaf:** is well known for its anti-microbial action, assisting to fight bacteria and viruses.
- **Vitamins C, D and zinc:** These nutrients provide the building blocks of the immune system and play a crucial role in regulating immunity, yet they are commonly deficient in children. Vitamin C boosts the immune system, improves lung function and decreases allergy symptoms, whereas Vitamin D may enhance the immune response to bacteria and viruses.

Close Connection to Gut and Immunity

Did you know that the digestive system is a close friend to the immune system? In fact, approximately 70% of the immune system lives in the digestive tract. So this means that taking good care of your children's digestive health will also assist in promoting a strong, healthy immune system. During the first two years of life, the immature immune and digestive systems are still developing. During this time, the integrity of the digestive tract can be reduced (sometimes known as "leaky gut"), and may allow undigested foods and toxins to

pass through this barrier and cause an immune reaction. In this way, "leaky gut" may contribute to the development of allergies and poor immune defence against colds and flus.

By strengthening the gut barrier, the immune system is able to respond with greater effectiveness. Marshmallow, turmeric and glutamine can help repair the mucus membranes throughout the digestive tract due to their anti-inflammatory and soothing properties. Zinc has been shown to improve digestion and is an important factor in the regeneration of the gut lining. Healthy detoxification can also build a happier digestive system, with the help of St Mary's thistle.

Bring in the Good Bugs

Probiotics are beneficial bacteria that are important in keeping the digestive system in balance and supporting a healthy immune system. The results from a scientific study of 248 children in daycare aged three to five years, showed those who consumed the probiotic strains, *Lactobacillus acidophilus* NCFM and *Bifidobacterium lactis* Bi-07 daily, had significantly less infections, shorter duration of cold and flu symptoms, and less days absent from childcare. The most useful probiotic for allergies is *Lactobacillus rhamnosus* GG (LGG®), which has been found to be effective in reducing the symptoms of eczema, allergic rhinitis and food allergy.

Diet and Lifestyle Suggestions

There are many dietary and lifestyle tips that can support strong immunity in kids:

- Increase fresh fruits and vegetables, protein and healthy fats as part of a well-balanced diet.
- Reduce inflammatory foods such as sugar, white breads, dairy, cakes and soft drinks that may suppress immune function and trigger reactions in sensitive children.
- Ensure children are getting enough rest, as sleep is vital to support healthy immunity.
- Encourage more 'green time' and less 'screen time'! Outside play can help strengthen the immune system, as well as support healthy physical development.
- Talk to your Practitioner about food or environmental triggers that may be exacerbating your child's condition. Common food allergens include gluten, wheat, dairy, soy, eggs and corn.

Talk to us today

You are not alone when it comes to childhood conditions. Children are constantly being exposed to bugs and viruses, particularly when attending childcare or playing with other children. Symptoms of asthma, eczema and allergies can also strip kids of energy and cause disruption to the smooth running of family life. Talk to your Practitioner today about what steps you can take to boost your child's immune system. These may include improving digestion, following a healthy diet and lifestyle and using specific immune enhancing herbs and nutrients. Build up your kid's immunity and set them up for a healthier, happier 2012 with less sickness and more fun and play!