

Specialists remind the importance of reinforcing the immune system with a correct nutrition in mid-pandemic

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- Stress and anxiety, as well as fear, can be risk factors that impact our body's defense mechanism.
- Around 37.8 million Mexicans have deficiencies in their immune system.
- Equinacea purpurea, elderberry, Vitamin C, Vitamin D3, Zinc, and Beta glucans help guard the respiratory system.

In Mexico, 30% of people have some deficiencies in their immune system, poor nutrition being the main cause; this percentage includes the segment of the population who develops autoimmune disease at some point in their life.

According to a report from 2019 by the Department of Immunogenetics of Autoimmune Diseases, dependent on the Salvador Zubirán National Institute of Medical Sciences and Nutrition (INCMNSZ, for its acronym in Spanish), Mexicans have genetic susceptibility to autoimmune diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis, generalized lupus erythematosus, celiac disease, vitiligo, among others.

In light of the Nutritionist National Day in Mexico, Nutrition Coordinator at Bodylogic, Karen Cecilia Picazo Huerta, explained that the immune system is our machinery for protection against diseases, and its primary function is to protect us from microorganisms, viruses, and bacteria present in our environment; some that can make us sick, such as Coronavirus.

“The immune system our body's the natural defense against infections. The human organism, through a well-coordinated reaction, attacks and destroys infectious organisms –called antigens- from invading. Symptoms such as inflammation are the immune response to antigens. For instance, when a person has COVID-19, cough, phlegm or runny nose, and fever are the response and alert to destroy the virus invading the body. The immune system has the ability to distinguish the presence of viruses and bacteria”, explained Picazo Huerta, nutritionist graduated from Universidad del Valle de Atemajac (UNIVA).

For her part, the Medical Manager of Endocrinology and Nutrition at Grupo PiSA, Irma Luisa Ceja Martínez, detailed that SARS-CoV-2 virus inhibits the immune system's capacity to respond; on addition that COVID-19 has components with which it can “hide” from the immune system and avoid or delay an adequate antiviral response; which emphasizes the importance of strengthening our immune system.

“The immune system is deficient when it stops fulfilling its function of attacking and fighting diseases. It loses its abilities as we age, with a ban nutrition, and with the presence of chronic diseases. Strengthening it through a healthy and balances nutrition that includes good quality protein –whether of animal or plant origin-, vegetables, legumes, minerals, vitamins and other foods, in addition to sleeping well and being physically active, can make a difference”, affirmed Ceja Martínez, who is also an internal medicine specialist and governor of the American College of Physicians (ACP), in the Mexican Chapter.

Nutrition Coordinator at Bodylogic, Karen Picazo, also pointed that it is important to reinforce the immune system with special attention in the protection of respiratory tracts and lungs; complementing our intake with fruits and vegetables, or nutrition supplements that include: *Equinacea purpurea*, elderberry, Vitamin C, Vitamin D3, Zinc, and Beta glucans. These active components help guard the respiratory system.

“The consumption of these natural ingredients, vitamins, and minerals reduce the risks of complications from COVID-19, besides, they are an effective and safe medium to help the immune system fight the Coronavirus. Zinc and Omega 3 are critical components for the human organism and the immune system to work properly”, assured the nutrition specialist.

We can find Zinc in pumpkin seeds, liver, and fish; this last one also contains Omega 3. Vitamin C is present in oranges, tangerine, grapefruit, strawberry, and kiwi. It is important to consult a nutritionist or a health professional to assess in the adequate proportion for consumption; as well as complementing with nutrition supplements that help reinforce the immune system.

In the context of the pandemic, it is of paramount importance to follow the nutrition recommendations of doctors in order to anticipate any problem. Vitamins C and D3 are acknowledged as an important factor for metabolism. A low blood level of these components can be a risk factor to contract SARS-CoV-2 virus strain.

According to the recent census published by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI, by its acronym in Spanish), there are 126 million people in Mexico, and there have been 1'788,905 total cases and 152,016 total deaths by COVID-19.