

The COVID-19 pandemic has provoked anxiety and fear throughout the country and prompted many people to explore the best approaches to protecting their health. Proper nutrition is one way to help you stay healthy and strong. Eating a healthy diet helps to support a healthy immune system to fight off bacteria, viruses and many other illnesses.

Dr. Vijaya Surampudi, an assistant professor of medicine at the UCLA Center for Human Nutrition, shares some tips for how best to feed the body. “An ounce of prevention produces a pound of cure,” says Dr. Surampudi. “How you feed your body on a daily basis pays off in a lifetime.”

## Eating Towards a Healthy Immune System

### Nourish Your Body

Wisely choosing the foods you eat will help to support your body’s defense mechanisms. Focus on:

- Increasing your intake of vegetables
- Not drinking sugar-sweetened beverages
- Limiting the amount of red meats eaten
- Including healthy spices like cinnamon, oregano, turmeric and more
- Eating whole grains
- Incorporating healthy fats like avocado and olive oil

### Focus on Micronutrients

- **Vitamin A** helps regulate the immune system and protects against infections by keeping skin and tissues in the mouth, stomach, intestines and respiratory system healthy. Get this vitamin from such foods as sweet potatoes, carrots, broccoli, spinach, red bell peppers, apricots, eggs or foods labeled “vitamin A fortified” such as milk or some cereals.
- **Vitamin C** supports the immune system by stimulating the formation of antibodies. Reach for citrus fruits such as oranges, grapefruit and tangerines, or papaya, strawberries, red bell pepper or tomato juice.
- **Zinc** supports the immune system and may help wounds heal. Zinc can be found in lean meats, poultry, seafood, milk, whole grain products, beans, seeds and nuts.

### Create Consistency

One of the ways you can develop a rhythm of eating healthy is by “coloring your plate.” The more colorful your plate, the greater variety of nutrition you are getting.

#### Blue:

- Promotes healthy aging.
- Lowers the risk of some cancers.
- Improves urinary tract health, memory function and heart health.
- Reach for blueberries, blackberries, elderberries and more.

#### Orange:

- Maintains heart, vision and immune system health.
- Reach for pumpkin, sweet potato, carrots, winter squash, cantaloupe, apricots and more.

#### Red:

- Promotes memory function and urinary tract health.

- Maintains a healthy heart.
- Lowers risks of some cancers.
- Reach for tomatoes, pink grapefruit, red peppers, watermelon and more.

**Green:**

- Lowers risk of some cancers and heart disease, maintains vision health and protects against birth defects in pregnant women.
- Keeps blood cells, bones and teeth strong.
- Reach for collard greens, kale, spinach, broccoli, brussels sprouts, lettuces and artichokes.

**Avoid  
Supplements**

If you are eating a balanced diet, there is no need for supplements. Supplements are not packaged the same way as food, so we do not know what else is needed for adequate absorption and utilization by the body.

**Building Immunity is  
Multilayered**

Every part of your body, including your immune system, functions better when protected from environmental assaults and is improved by healthy living strategies, such as:

- Not smoking
- Eating a diet abundant with fruits and veggies
- Exercising regularly
- Getting adequate sleep
- Taking steps to avoid infection such as washing your hands
- Maintaining a healthy weight

We hope you find these tips and resources helpful. [UCR Healthy Campus](#) and the [Faculty/Staff Wellness Program](#) remains committed to the health and well-being of the campus community.

If you have any questions or would like more information, feel free to reach out to [healthycampus@ucr.edu](mailto:healthycampus@ucr.edu) or [wellness@ucr.edu](mailto:wellness@ucr.edu).

Stay safe and healthy!