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The Dietitian's Desk

Welcome to "The Dietitian's Desk!" This monthly newsletter is committed to providing insightful nutritional information and facts that promote a healthy lifestyle inside and outside of Sodexo's outstanding school nutrition program.

If you have any questions or comments, feel free to contact us at:

Amy.Krehely@sodexo.com

Meredith.Hesselein@sodexo.com



Rebuilding Your Immune System

Meredith Hesselein, MS, RDN

With cases of the winter cold, flu, and Covid-19 on the rise, you might be wondering if there is anything you can do to help your body fight off infections. The answer is yes and no, but you can truly only *strengthen* the powerful defense your body already has in place—the immune system. Your immune system is a complex system that defends the body from infection. But choosing the wrong foods or not getting enough rest can quickly weaken your immune system. So, here are some of our favorite foods to help your immune system function at its highest capacity:

- Citrus Fruits, Red Bell Peppers—High in vitamin C, a critical player in the immune system, these foods can also help absorb non-heme iron from plant-based foods. Your body doesn't produce or store vitamin C so it must be consumed regularly.
- Broccoli—Packed with vitamins A, C, E as well as other antioxidants, broccoli is best eaten raw or lightly steamed with a squeeze of lemon juice (see above about iron absorption!). Bonus, it's full of fiber!
- Garlic—Sulfur-containing compounds, such as allicin, are thought to have strong immune boosting properties. Onions, shallots, leeks, and Chinese chives also contain allicin.
- Yogurt—Contains live active cultures to regulate the digestive system and immune system, while vitamin D also helps regulate the immune system. Kefir is another option for those who experience discomfort from lactose intolerance.
- Turmeric—Curcumin, the orange-yellow component of turmeric known for its anti-inflammatory effects, has been shown to be a potent immunomodulatory agent.
- Green tea—High in levels of epigallocatechin gallate (EGCG), a powerful antioxidant, green tea can be a powerful immune system booster. Because green tea is steamed and not fermented like black tea, the EGCG is preserved.

NOTE: No supplement will cure or prevent disease.

Currently, no research supports the use of any supplement to protect against Covid-19 specifically. Wear a mask, wash your hands, and practice physical distancing.

Curried Squash, Lentil & Coconut Soup

1 tbsp olive oil
1 butternut squash, peeled, deseeded, & diced
1 cup diced carrots
1 tbsp yellow curry powder
½ cup red lentils
3 cups low-sodium vegetable stock
1 can reduced-fat coconut milk
Coriander and naan bread, to serve

Heat oil in a large saucepan, add the squash and carrots, sizzle for 1 minute. Stir in the curry powder and cook for 1 minute more. Tip in the lentils, the vegetable stock, and coconut milk and stir. Bring to a boil, then turn heat down and simmer for 15-18 minutes until everything is tender.

Using a hand blender or in a food processor, blend until soup is a smooth as you like. Season and serve sprinkled with roughly chopped coriander and some naan bread for dipping.

*Adapted from bbcgoodfood.com
Curried squash, lentil, and coconut soup
By Barney Desmazery*