

Psalm 139:14 “I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made...”

If you are stuck at home like millions of other Americans right now, you may be wondering what you can do to keep your immune system in top shape in order to avoid getting sick. Regrettably, there are no “quick fixes” and many of these suggestions involve the way you live your life every day. However, there are some things you can keep in mind during your stay at home that can help maximize your chances of staying healthy. The good news is our Father created us with an amazing and extremely complex immune system. There are some things we can do to help maximize its efficiency.

- **Wash your hands**

I know you have probably heard this thousands of times by now, but it’s just that important. **Isaiah 1:16 “Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean...”**

- **Stress less**

It’s probably safe to say we all have a heightened level of anxiety right now. Some stress is normal and is not always a bad thing as it can motivate us to take positive actions to protect ourselves (such as hand washing, see above^^^). However, high levels of stress, especially over long periods of time, are hazardous to our health. You can truly make yourself sick with worry and fear. A stress hormone called cortisol is released during stress and over time it can have counterproductive effects on your immune system. It is important to find an outlet to release stress during these trying times. Some ideas are physical activity, calling a friend or family member, play relaxing or upbeat music. I always tell my kids (and myself) to turn your worries into prayers. Don’t try to handle your worries by yourself. Talk to the Lord and to other Christians. If you don’t know who to talk to, call the church office. They can help get you plugged in with someone that can help. Phone conversations, text messages, and FaceTime can replace face to face visits during this time of crisis.

1 Peter 5:7 “Cast all your cares on Him, because He cares about you.”

- **Get plenty of sleep**

One of the easiest ways to boost your immune system is to get enough sleep at night. Studies have shown that a lack of sleep is directly harmful to your immune system. If you are not getting adequate sleep, your immune system can be compromised and you will not be able to fight off infections as well. Adults need 7-9 hours of quality sleep per night. Children and teens need even more because they are growing. If you are sick or recovering from surgery or an injury, you will also need more sleep than normal.

Psalm 3:5 “I lie down and sleep; I wake again, because the Lord sustains me.”

- **Get up and move**

Conversely, don’t lay around all day long. Gyms and other workout facilities are closed and this time of the year often brings cool, wet weather. Don’t fall into the trap of laying on the couch for hours on end binge watching movies. It’s ok to watch an occasional movie or a TV show to help pass the time, but it’s very harmful to your health

to spend your entire day doing it. Our bodies are not designed to be lying flat all day long. Health care professionals have known this for a long time and that is why they insist that patients get up out of bed even after major surgery. Just after one week of complete bed rest our bodies can suffer major consequences such as loss of muscle mass, loss of bone density, increased risk of kidney stones, decreased lung function, and increased risk of blood clots (just to name a few). Regardless of your age, commit to finding some kind of physical activity every day-- take a walk, pull some weeds, find some stairs to climb, put on some upbeat music and move. Experts believe that a sedentary lifestyle is as bad for your body as smoking.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 “Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your bodies.”

- **Get sunshine when you can**

Not every day this spring will be cold and wet. Keep watch of the weather forecast and look for the sunny days. When we do get those occasional days full of sunshine get outside and enjoy them! If it is cool outside, bundle up (by the way, cold weather won't make you sick—viruses and bacteria do that). If you can't get outside, open your shades and sit by a sunny window. Sunshine has multiple benefits. When you are in the sun your brain produces a chemical called serotonin which is associated with better moods. It also is one of the best sources of vitamin D for your body. Vitamin D is linked to immune and bone health. UV light is used to kill microorganisms in hospitals and laboratories.

Ecclesiastes 11:7 “The light is pleasant, and it is good for the eyes to see the sun.”

- **Eat lots of plant- based foods**

Good nutrition is a great way to boost your immune system. Try to eat mostly plant products (vegetables, fruits, nuts, whole grains, seeds). Plant products are full of natural antioxidants and probiotics to help your immune system (sorry, none of that in Doritos). It's going to be tempting to eat junk food out of anxiety and/ or boredom. Cut down on added sugar consumption. Recent studies show that sugar intake adversely affects immune function. If you are craving a sweet, grab a piece of fruit instead. Don't overeat, don't smoke, and if you drink alcohol, do so in moderation.

Philippians 3:30 “their end is destruction; their god is their stomach...”

Our heavenly Father has created our bodies to withstand a lot if we take care of them. Many aspects of our health can be controlled by choices we make. My hope is that we can all find ways to keep our bodies strong during this time and take care of our “temples”.

Feel free to contact to contact me with any comments or questions! You can call or text me at 731-225-0719 or email me at shannongu3@bellsouth.net.

In Him,
Shannon Guthrie, RN, MSN