

## **Boosting the Immune System**

With the flu and colds around, people are often looking for something to boost their immune system so they don't get sick. What works? And what doesn't?

### **Vitamin C – What is it and Where does it Occur Naturally?**

- Vitamin C is essential for growth, repair and a healthy immune system.
- It occurs naturally in citrus fruit, broccoli, raw cabbage and strawberries.

### **Does Vitamin C Help Prevent Colds and Flu?**

- Research has shown that taking Vitamin C can reduce the time you're sick by 1-2 days.
- Taking too much Vitamin C can cause nausea or vomiting.

### **Zinc – What is it and Where does it Occur Naturally?**

- Zinc is a naturally occurring element found in meat and eggs. We need it for healing, mental health and a strong immune system. Vegetarians and vegans may need supplementation.

### **Does Zinc Help Prevent Colds and Flu?**

- There is some research indicating taking extra zinc as you start to get symptoms will reduce the time you're sick by 1-2 days.

### **Vitamin D – What is it and Where does it Occur Naturally?**

- Vitamin D is essential for strong bones, mental health and a robust immune system.
- Our bodies make Vitamin D from exposure to the sun. Most people in Ballarat need Vitamin D supplements during winter.

### **Does Vitamin D Help Prevent Colds and Flu?**

- Taking Vitamin D once you get sick won't reduce the symptoms. However, having healthy levels of Vitamin D in your body will help maintain the immune system to fight illness.

### **Echinacea – What is it?**

- Echinacea is a plant from the daisy family. It is often sold as an immune boosting supplement.

### **Does Echinacea Help Prevent Colds and Flu?**

- There is limited evidence that echinacea may reduce the symptoms of upper respiratory tract infections. There is no evidence that it is useful in preventing infections.
- Echinacea can cause rashes or trigger allergies in some people. It may also interfere with some medications such as blood thinners, antidepressants and antibiotics.

### **Garlic – What is it?**

- Garlic is a naturally occurring herb also sold in supplement form.

### **Does Garlic Help Prevent Colds and Flu?**

- Garlic is rich in allicin which has been shown to stimulate the immune system but only in laboratory experiments. No significant benefit has been found outside the laboratory.
- High levels of garlic (e.g. garlic pills) may interfere with medications such as blood thinners.

### **What is the Best Thing to Eat to Boost the Immune System?**

- The best boost for the immune system is a diet rich in fresh fruit and vegetables. In winter we often cut down on these – especially fruit.