

Do you drink enough water?

If you are constantly parched or pass yellow urine, your body might not be as hydrated as you think it is. Charmaine D'Souza, naturopath and nutritionist, author of Kitchen Clinic, says, "Hydrate with plenty of water so that toxins can be flushed out of the system. Tea, coffee, aerated beverages are not to be accounted for while adding up the day's water intake. Add lemon or lime or orange slices to enhance the vitamin C content. The best way to know that your body is properly hydrated is to check the colour of your urine. It should be crystal clear or pale yellow."

Has your wound healed?

Delay in wound healing is never a good sign. Not only is your body low on nutrients but that exposed part under the skin is a major telltale sign of a weak immune system. Dr Anil Ballani, consultant physician at Hinduja and Lilavati hospital shares that recurrent infections are never a good sign and should be remedied immediately.

Got a dry nose?

This is a silent sign that you need to watch out for. Breathing in, if you don't feel the requisite mucus in the nasal passage, start worrying. D'Souza informs, "Mucus traps germs and viruses and removes them from the body each time we sneeze or blow our nose. A hydrated nose is a good defense against colds." To fix a dry one, she suggests, "regularly irrigate your nasal passages with a squeeze bottle of saline solution. Use a humidifier in the room to prevent a dry nose."

Is that a casual smoke/drink?

That stub of nicotine might feel cool between your fingers but that fag is not only going to cause cancer, but can make you more susceptible to ailments like pneumonia, influenza, lung infections, and wheezing. Consumption of alcohol also affects your immune system. And if alcoholic cirrhosis, hepatitis and liver failure are contracted, the immune system turns on the body's own tissues.

Are you in the dark about insomnia?

If you haven't been getting the mandatory seven to eight hours of sleep, as well as mental rest, your body might be bearing the wear-and-tear more harshly than you think, feels Dr Ballani. As per D'Souza, "Insomnia and dark circles under the eyes can be signs of depressed immune function."

Are you cold-sensitive?

If you are prone to frequent coughs and colds, have a sore throat, you might need to pay closer attention to your health. Especially so, if you have special sensitivity towards low temperature or can't bear cold climate, then those white blood cells (WBC) in your body aren't working hard enough.

Are you stressed out?

Be it appraisal or examinations or even heartbreak, such long-term stress conditions weaken your immune system's strength and ability to fight disease. D'Souza offers, "Reduce stress levels with yoga, meditation, jazz, ballet or whatever else helps you stay calm and stress-free." She also prescribes daily exercise — aerobic or cardiac type of activity as it helps in the circulation of blood and nutrients, and helps flush toxins out of the body through sweat, and urine and bowel movements. Daily workouts also increase body temperature to a healthier level around 97.3° Fahrenheit.

Are you carrying extra weight?

Excess weight is not only weighing you down but is affecting the immune system too. "It can be the reason for hormonal imbalances like polycystic ovarian disease (PCOD), and also of inflammation. This in turn impairs the immune system's ability to fight different types of infections," says D'Souza. Lose that weight to liberate your heart, brain, liver, gall bladder, and spleen from excess baggage.

Sweet tooth, is it?

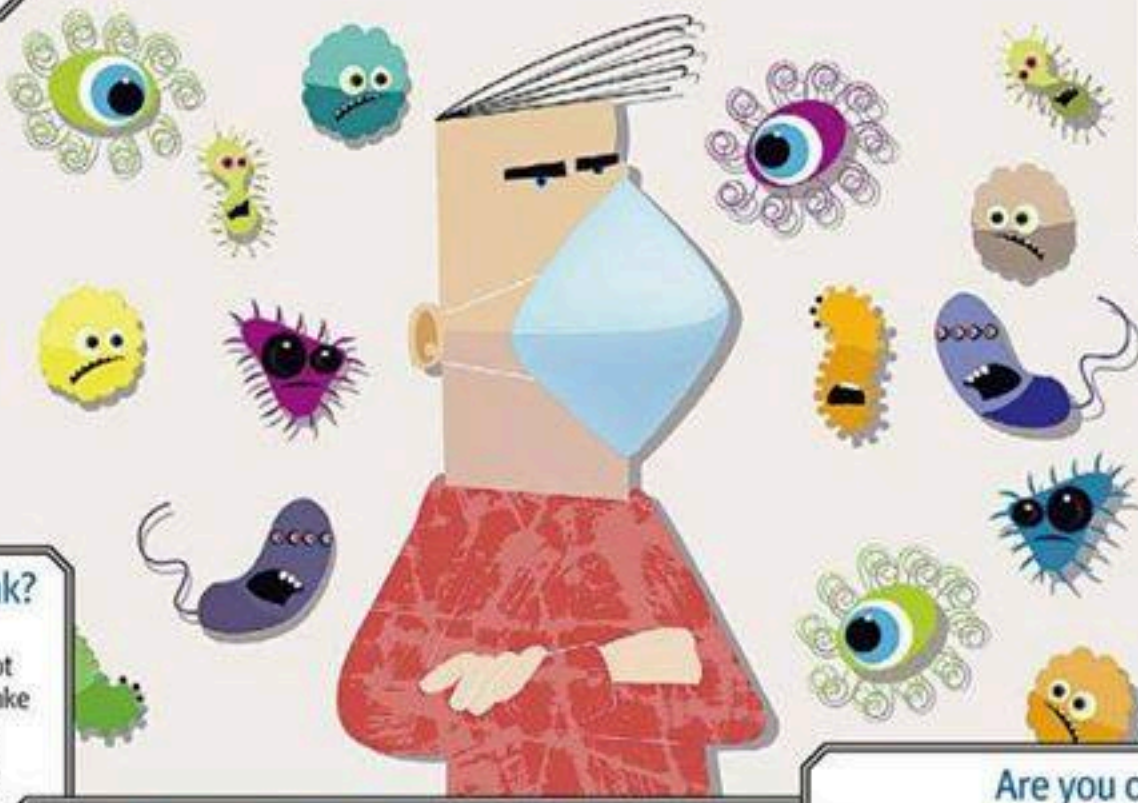
Doughnuts, cupcakes or mithai can impair your WBCs from performing their function of killing the bacteria for more than six hours after the consumption of a sugary snack. D'Souza suggests that you eat a portion of fresh fruit or a couple of dates or raisins or figs, which will cater to the cravings and provide minerals like iron.

A sign of the times



IMMUNITY STRENGTH

It's time to know why that infectious virus is entering your system and winning the fight against your body's defense system. We've put forth nine telltale signs that you should watch out for with the best solution to combat it



6 routines to keep disease at bay



1 Have a teaspoon of honey with a pinch of turmeric and 5 mint leaves every morning. Do this all year, and it will strengthen your immune system.



2 Green tea is a potent antioxidant, so drink a cup or two daily. Throw in a few strands of saffron for added benefits.



3 Put a couple of slivers of ginger and a teaspoon of cinnamon in your drinking water to serve as an immunity booster.



4 Vitamin C (citrus fruits, green chillies) and Vitamin E (whole grains, nuts and seeds) are excellent immune boosters and should be consumed together.



5 Echinacea is a powerful herb that stimulates the immune cells of the body. Have an echinacea tea or a capsule of echinacea daily.



6 Check your body temperature occasionally in the morning before you get out of bed. If your immune system is strong then it will never be below 97.3° Fahrenheit.

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