

Foods to Promote Immune Function

Athlete Scenerio

I am training for my first Ironman distance triathlon. Last month, I increased my training mileage and intensity. Earlier this year, I had a cold that limited my training and I don't want to be sick again. I take a multivitamin daily and am wondering if there is something else I can change in my diet to help me adapt and stay healthy while increasing my training volume.

Goals to Promote Immune Function

- Ensure adequate calories, protein, carbohydrate, and fat to maintain energy balance and support exercise energy expenditure.
- Consume carbohydrate before, during, and after long training sessions to offset the suppressive effect of exercise on immune function.
- Eat foods rich in antioxidants (colorful fruits and vegetables) daily to combat oxidative stress.
- Select lean protein foods, especially those that contain iron and zinc, to support immune function.
- Include foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids that possess anti-inflammatory properties.
- Ensure Vitamin D adequacy to promote immune defense.
- Choose foods that contain probiotics to enhance gastrointestinal and immune health.

Foods to Boost Your Immune System

- Fruits rich in antioxidants: oranges, cantaloupe, papaya, berries, apples
- Vegetables rich in antioxidants: sweet potatoes, broccoli, carrots, spinach, bell peppers, asparagus, onions, beets
- Protein sources: chicken, turkey, fish, beef, dairy, eggs, legumes, soy foods
- Sources of omega-3 fatty acids: salmon and other cold-water fish, nuts, seeds, plant oils
- Vitamin D sources: fatty fish (salmon, sardines, tuna), fortified foods (milk, orange juice, tofu, soy beverages, some cereals)
- Foods that contain probiotics such as Lactobacillus and Bifidobacterium: milk, kefir, yogurt

Written by SCAN registered dietitians (RDs). The key to optimal meal planning for athletes is individualization. For personalized nutrition plans contact a SCAN sports dietitian or Board Certified Specialist in Sports Dietetics (CSSD) by accessing "Find a SCAN Dietitian" at www.scandpg.org | 800.249.2875.



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Tips to Take With You

1. To maintain immune function, follow an eating plan that is well-balanced and meets your energy, carbohydrate, protein, and micronutrient needs.
2. Select a wide variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and protein-rich foods.
3. Consult a sport dietitian to determine fueling requirements to support your training volume and immune function.

Contact SCAN

Web site: www.scandpg.org
Voice: 800.249.2875