NUTRITION

NUTRIENTS FOR IMMUNE FUNCTION

Research has shown that those who are micronutrient deficient tend to suffer more infections than those who carefully monitor their nutrient intake through a healthy, balanced diet.

Micronutrients to take note of:

Researchers are currently studying immune response in relation to various micronutrients; the following is a list of those which you should try to get enough of to help your immune system function optimally:

- ***Vitamin A***

Deficiency in vitamin A has been shown to reduce immunity and increase the risk of infection. Orange fruits and vegetables like butternut, carrots, and apricots, as well as dark green vegetables like spinach and kale are high in vitamin A.

- ***Vitamin B6***

A deficiency of this vitamin has been shown to suppress certain aspects of the immune response and so increases the risk of infection. Dark green vegetables like spinach, as well as bananas and wholegrains are rich in vitamin B6.

- ***Vitamin C***

Much has been said about the immune boosting abilities of vitamin C, and its benefits include protection against deficiencies of the immune system. Most evidence suggests that vitamin C works best in combination with a healthy balance of micronutrients. Many fruits like citrus, strawberries, tomatoes, and kiwis are rich in vitamin C, as are bell peppers, cabbage, and broccoli.

- ***Vitamin D***

Vitamin D is synthesised by the skin through exposure to sunlight and has been shown to have positive effects in patients with certain types of cancer. The suggestion is that there might be some benefit for the immune system in general although this is not yet clear. Oily fish and dairy are rich in vitamin D.

- ***Zinc***

This is certainly the most important micronutrient for immune function but it's important to stick with recommended daily limits as excess zinc can negatively affect the functioning of the immune system. Zinc is available from poultry, beans, nuts, and dairy.