



Build your inner strength

By Trish Stratus, Stratusphere Yoga Studio Proprietor

Trish Stratus is a long-time yoga practitioner and studio proprietor in Vaughan, Ontario where she runs several different styles of yoga and pilates classes. One of her most popular and fastest growing classes is her prenatal classes. Offered regularly on her schedule, this weekly class offers moms-to-be a way to maintain their fitness during pregnancy, which plays a significant role in having a safe and comfortable birthing process. The class also provides the support and company of other pregnant women as well as the expertise of Team Stratusphere member and instructor Lisa. Whether you are new to yoga or already an experienced practitioner, Trish Stratus shares her thoughts on prenatal yoga and why doing it is wonderful for both mother and her baby.

Flu season. It's here and with all the H1N1 buzz, it may seem that this season, it's going to be tougher than ever to battle through. But really, I personally will approach this season the same as I do every other and that is with a preventative mindset. The great news is all the arsenal we need is right at our fingertips. The choices you make about what you eat and how you live will ultimately dictate how you will fare against seasonal viruses. As the saying goes, the best defense is a good offence, so taking the steps to boost your immune system will give you the best chance to experience optimal health and wellness not only during flu season, but throughout the year.

There are many things you can do to improve your body's ability to fight disease. By incorporating healthier patterns into your daily living, like how you nourish your body, how much physical activity you get and certain simple

lifestyle changes, you can easily get those white blood cell soldiers ready to fight ... and win!

You are what you eat. By eating a varied and balanced diet that includes lots of fresh fruits and vegetables you prime the body's defenses from the inside out. Eating certain foods will ensure you get the nutrients that help strengthen the immune system:

- Citrus fruit, broccoli, tomatoes, red, yellow and orange peppers (vitamin C)
- Garlic (acts like a natural antibiotic, active components block the enzymes that lead to infection)
- Whole grains (zinc and vitamin E)
- Bananas (vitamin B6)
- Sweet Potatoes, carrots, spinach (sources of beta-carotene, which is a form of vitamin A that helps produce white blood cells. You can also add these immune enhancing products to

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help prevent or shorten the duration of common colds and flu:

- Vitamin D
- Vitamin C
- Echinacea
- Goldenseal
- Probiotics

In addition to what you eat, certain lifestyle changes can help support your immune system, including:

- Washing your hands. Wash thoroughly and often with warm water and soap to avoid both passing on and picking up cold viruses.
- Getting enough sleep. At least 7 or 8 hours of sleep is recommended, any less makes you more susceptible to getting sick.
- Reducing and managing stress. Long periods of stress or chronic stress can raise cortisol levels (the stress hormone) which can weaken the immune systems' ability to fight off cold or flu symptoms.
- Eliminate sugar and processed foods from your diet whenever possible. Sugar consumption has an immediate, debilitating effect on your immune system.

Another way to not only help ward off a cold and flu virus but also attack it is physical activity. Regular exercise appears to jump-start the immune system by increasing the number and aggressiveness of certain immune cells. Yoga in particular provides many healing benefits that help improve immune function:

- Twists and inversions stimulate the lymphatic

system, which is rich in white blood cells and plays a vital role in your immune system

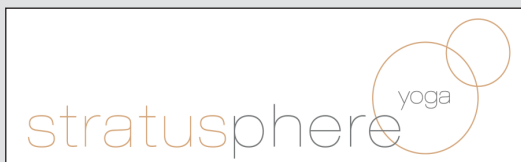
- Certain poses compress the organs, this helps massage and rejuvenate immune organs and channels.
- Inversions and forward bends (like downward dog) improve the flow of the sinuses and help flush mucous from the lungs.
- A regular yoga practice reduces high levels of cortisol in the body which can increase the body's vulnerability to infections.



- Deep breathing techniques increase the flow of oxygen into the lungs, which helps in alleviating colds, asthma, sinus congestion and allergies.
- The cardiovascular work that is required in yoga helps remove toxins through sweat. This detoxification process can also be achieved by doing yoga in a heated room.

All of these are possible kinds of natural, preventative approaches to help build up our natural defenses and improve overall immune health. So before you reach for the cold and flu medications

remember that the solution lies in prevention instead of the cure. Let's not forget that the body has an amazing innate ability to heal itself. Years and years ago, we didn't have antibiotics or flu vaccinations - but, we did have whole foods and we did have yoga.



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