SUPPLEMENTING YOUR CLEANSE

5 ways to boost your immune health  
Chantelle Drobot, ND
Cleansing keeps our bodies healthy. It's like the spring cleaning you do for your house once a year when you really pull out all the stops. When finished, things look good and feel good, and all of the garbage has been put out for pickup.

However, cleansing can stress the immune system, causing unwanted side effects. Here are five supplements that will aid the body during a cleanse and help the immune system stay on top of its game as well.

Before taking supplements during a cleanse, always consult with your natural health practitioner.

1. GLUTAMINE

This amino acid is a building block of protein; both the liver and the immune system require protein to function properly. Glutamine is fundamental to immune cell functioning. Research has shown that when lymphocyte or macrophage production is stimulated, this increase in immune cell production also increases the rate that the body uses glutamine.

Studies have shown that many of the immune mediators in the body are actually glutamine dependent, meaning that they require adequate levels of glutamine in order for the immune system to function effectively. If glutamine concentrations in the body are too low, immune cell production decreases substantially.

Interestingly, studies have also indicated that immune cell production increases significantly as glutamine is supplemented. There is consistent evidence supporting the position that increasing the body’s protein intake does not affect kidney functioning in people with healthy kidney systems. Glutamine can be ingested in foods rich in protein or taken by supplementation.

**Recommended dose**

Supplement with 1 to 2 g of glutamine a day with food.

2. CURCUMIN

Studied for its detoxifying, anti-inflammatory, and immune-stimulating capabilities, this component of turmeric provides its yellow-orange colour. Curcumin has been shown in studies to have antiviral, antibacterial, antifungal, antioxidant, and anticancer properties.

Studies have demonstrated that the herb may have the ability to regulate the activation of immune system cells, including T-cells, macrophages, neutrophils, and natural killer cells. When taken at low dosages, curcumin appears to be able to increase the antibody action of the immune system.

Researchers are studying curcumin’s ability to replicate the action of certain pharmaceutical drugs. Curcumin appears to inhibit certain immune processes in cells pretreated with it.

**Recommended dose**

Curcumin is consumed in foods containing turmeric and can be taken in supplement form at a dosage of 400 mg twice daily. Those on blood-thinning medications should consult their health care practitioner before taking curcumin.

“Milk thistle is known for its liver-protecting and antioxidant properties, but research indicates it may also have antiviral benefits.”

3. MILK THISTLE

This herb is best known for its hepatoprotective (liver-protecting) and antioxidant properties, but research indicates that it may have some antiviral benefits as well. In one study, milk thistle was shown to have significant antiviral benefits for patients with hepatitis C. Milk thistle improved the immune response by controlling pro-inflammatory mediators in patients’ immune systems, with no indication of side effects or toxicity.

**Recommended dose**

Dosage for milk thistle is generally 200 to 400 mg per day in divided dosages. Take no more than 200 mg at a time with food for the duration of a cleanse.
“Green tea calms the nervous system.”

**DETOX TEAS**
While undergoing a cleanse, try drinking tea. The following varieties are recognized for their detoxifying properties and are available at your natural health retailer.

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<th>VARIETY</th>
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| green     | > contains polyphenols called catechins  
              > promotes digestion  
              > calms the nervous system                                     |
| rosehip   | > contains vitamin C and antioxidants  
              > boosts the immune system  
              > eases dizziness and headaches                                  |
| lemon grass| > contains the antioxidant beta carotene  
              > acts as a diuretic  
              > improves skin tone                                                |
| camomile  | > contains the flavonoid apigenin  
              > relieves heartburn, bloating, and digestive upsets  
              > calms the nerves and aids sleep                                 |

Because **menopause** has more than 21 symptoms,* **Harmony®** has more than one herb.
4. ZINC
This mineral supports a number of different functions including cognition, reproduction, and immune system function. Zinc's role in immune support has been well documented. Studies indicate that low levels of zinc are directly correlated with impaired immune function, decreased resistance to pathogenic organisms, and increased incidence of acute infections, including pneumonia in the elderly.
Zinc, like vitamin C, also has antioxidant and anti-inflammatory functions. Supplementation with zinc in young adults and elderly individuals has been shown to significantly decrease oxidative stress produced by inflammatory mediators, molecules released by immune cells to protect against harmful invaders.
In addition to its role in prevention, zinc has been shown to shorten the time it takes to recover from acute infection. Research indicates that supplementation for one to two months may restore immune response and reduce the incidence of infection overall.

**Recommended dose**
Zinc should be taken in 30 mg dosages with food on a short-term basis. Consult your health care practitioner if you have type 1 diabetes or AIDS, as zinc supplementation may pose a health risk for these individuals.

5. VITAMIN C
This vitamin supports and stimulates the immune system. Research indicates that supplementation with vitamin C increases the body's ability's to fight infection by stimulating lymphocyte production. These immune cells fight off viruses and attack our own cells that have been compromised by viruses or cancer. Vitamin C also supports the antimicrobial (antiviral and antibacterial) actions of the immune system.
In addition to its immune-stimulating benefits, vitamin C is a powerful antioxidant. Research shows that vitamin C may protect the body against the oxidative stress that is created as the body mounts an inflammatory reaction and also may protect the body against chronic disease.

**Recommended dose**
Research indicates that dosages of 1,000 to 2,000 mg per day show good results with no side effects. Vitamin C should be taken with food, and only 1,000 mg should be taken at a time to ensure optimal absorption.

“Supplementation with vitamin C increases the body’s ability’s to fight infection by stimulating lymphocyte production.”

Chantelle Drobot, ND, practises at the Integrative Health Centre in Calgary. Her clinical focuses are hormonal issues, digestive disturbances, stress-related conditions, immune dysfunctions, and cardiovascular disease.

Available from leading Health Food Stores.