

# Nutrition Tidbits



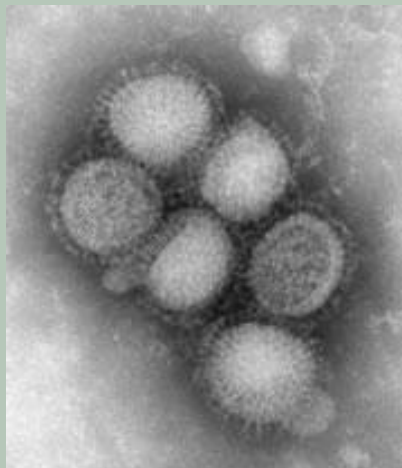
A Monthly Newsletter for patients at  
Family Medical Center at North  
Garland **DECEMBER 2009**

## Can You Prevent Flu With Food?

While there is no food that will magically protect you from catching the seasonal or swine flu, a healthy diet may reduce risk and help you recover faster if you come down with either flu virus. There are specific vitamins and minerals that have a direct effect on the immune system. Some of these are:

- Vitamin A
- Zinc
- Vitamin B6
- Selenium
- Vitamin C
- Thiamin
- Iron
- Vitamin D

The first reaction to this information may be to think about getting these in supplement form, but this is not the best option. The best option is to achieve optimum levels through food.



H1N1 or "Swine Flu" Virus, Source: CDC

## Nutrition for Immunity

Right around publication time of this newsletter issue, the H1N1 or "swine flu" virus has hospitalized about 30,000 people and has killed over 1,200 in the United States since August 30, 2009. The good news is that the amount of people coming down with the virus is now declining, which is in part due to the vaccinations that are being administered nationwide. But the fear for many Americans remains. The swine flu in combination with the season flu has many people on alert in order to prevent outbreaks in their own homes and communities.

There continues to be ongoing research on how a person's eating patterns affects their immune system. There is much we do know – certain vitamins and minerals can improve the body's ability to fight off infection (see "Boosting Immunity" on page 2). While there are specific vitamins and minerals that directly benefit the immune response, many of those same vitamins and minerals have relationships with other key nutrients. For instance, many require specific amino acids for transport. For example, zinc's absorption is enhanced by amino acids cysteine

and histidine. Others nutrients may require other vitamins to help absorption. An example of this would be calcium having optimal absorption when combined with Vitamin D. Scientists are particular amazed at the synergistic effects nutrients have with each other such as these mentioned, and even others that have yet to be discovered. That is why supplementation falls miserably short in providing human bodies exactly what they need in specific combinations. That is not to say that all supplementation is bad. What is recommended is to speak to your physician and/or dietitian before starting any routine supplementation. Some supplements interact with medications while others may be outright dangerous taken in some of the quantities for specific populations. Rather than complicating the matter, get back to the basics. Optimize your immune system by maximizing the nutrient-rich foods in your diet. Go to [www.mypyramid.gov](http://www.mypyramid.gov) and find diet out how many servings of each food group your specific body needs based on age, gender and activity level. If you have specific issues such as a need to lose

(Continued on page 2)

## Happy Holidays!

Well, the Holidays are upon us and that means great food and great company. Don't let your healthy lifestyle goals go by the wayside this last month. Learn how to enjoy all foods in moderation. Check out our November 2008 newsletter where we discuss ways to have a healthy holiday season. Ever wonder how a nutrition professional lives out the healthy living advice given to Americans? Consider following me on my new blog where I document my own personal healthy lifestyle adventures. It can be found at [www.angelalemond.blogspot.com](http://www.angelalemond.blogspot.com).

This issue of Nutrition Tidbits really drives home the need for all of us to have healthy food patterns. Regardless of shape, size, age or gender, we all want to stay well. Here's to hoping you and your family are living well through the 2009 Holiday Season. Happy Holidays from all of us at Professional Nutrition Therapists (PNT).



Angela Lemond, RD, CSP, LD  
Nutrition Therapist & Editor  
Professional Nutrition Therapists

## Boosting Immunity | Vitamins and minerals benefit different aspects of the immune system

	<b>Humoral Immunity</b> Antibodies and proteins that bind to and neutralize infections	<b>Barrier and Epithelial Integrity</b> The body's physical barriers to infection, including skin, lining of the intestine and airways, and flushing effects of tears and mucus	<b>Cell-mediated immunity</b> Immune cells that directly destroy bacteria, viruses and tumor cells	<b>T-cell cytokine production</b> Signal proteins that help immune cells communicate and be active
Vitamin A	■	■	■	■
Vitamin E	■		■	
Vitamin C		■	■	
Vitamin B-6	■	■	■	
Zinc	■	■	■	■
Selenium			■	■
Polyunsaturated fats			■	
Thiamin		■		
Iron	■		■	

Source: Anuraj Shankar, Harvard School of Public Health

(Continued from page 1)

weight or if you have pre-existing medical conditions, consider seeking out a Registered Dietitian (RD) in your area to customize a plan that is right for you. Some conditions require more of one nutrient or nutrients while others require limitations. Let trained professionals decipher that for you, especially if your past medical history is complicated.

### Maximizing Health Benefits Through Food

Here are a few tips on getting the most health benefits from your food during flu season:

**Variety:** Whether they're canned, frozen or fresh, adding more fruits and vegetables into your diet is a way to ensure you are getting the most nutrients and vitamins from your foods. Selecting foods from all of the food groups will also help you to get protein, calcium and fiber in your diet.

**Food Safety:** During flu season, how you eat is as important as what you eat. Following food safety rules can significantly reduce your risk of illness. Washing your hands before and after food preparation is the best way to ensure that you aren't spreading germs to others. Wash all vegetables and fruits before eating them.

**Healthy Lifestyle:** In addition to eating a healthy diet, get plenty of sleep every night. Physical activity is always an important part of staying healthy. If you can't go outdoors for some exercise, try to stay as active as possible by exercising indoors. Deal with stress in productive ways by talking about issues as they come up and confronting anger.

To find out more about how to prevent flu and other acquired illnesses, go to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention website at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).

### Foods High in Key Nutrients

**Vitamin A:** eggs, milk and liver. Carotenoids that convert to vitamin A in the body are found in orange and green fruits and vegetables such as carrots, cantaloupe, sweet potatoes and spinach.

**Vitamin E:** nuts, seeds and vegetable oils are best sources. Other sources include green leafy vegetables and fortified cereals.

**Vitamin C:** citrus fruits, tomatoes, potatoes are best sources. Others include red and green peppers, kiwifruit, broccoli, strawberries, Brussels sprouts and cantaloupe.

**Vitamin B6:** meat, poultry, fish and some fruits and vegetables such as bananas, potatoes and fortified cereals.

**Zinc:** oysters, red meat and poultry are best sources. Others include beans, nuts whole grains and dairy products.

**Selenium:** plant foods, nuts, meats and bread. Plant sources vary based on selenium content of the soil (highest in northern Nebraska and the Dakotas in the U.S.).

**Polyunsaturated Fats:** fish, nuts, vegetable oils

**Thiamin:** whole grains, nuts, fish, pork, beans

**Iron:** red meat, chicken liver, oysters, oatmeal