

August 2013 | simplelifeabundantlife.com | Sarah | Family, Health & Wellness

Ways to Naturally Boost Your Kid's Immunity Before They Go Back to School

It's that time of year again. The stores are lined with notebooks, pencils, and crayons. The commercials for clothing sales are in full force, and teachers everywhere are setting up their classrooms. I used to teach in the public school system and the beginning of the year was always my favorite. There's something about the smell of new school supplies, the sight of your classroom with all the empty desks and bare walls, and the crackling sounds the pages of your new curriculum make when you thumb through it for the first time.

However, the beginning of the school year isn't all joy and laughter. With it comes the inevitable sickness. If you are a teacher or have school-aged kids you know what I'm talking about. When you put a bunch of kids together in a room for 6 hours a day after several months of vacation, the germs multiply like rabbits in the summer and you are flying through Kleenex boxes and drinking Vitamin C like it's going out of style.

I want to help you, dear friends. Nobody likes being sick. We especially don't like to see our kids sick. So let's be proactive about building up their immune systems now to give them a healthy start to the new school year. Here are some practical and natural ways to strengthen immunity that you may not have considered before.

Ways to Strengthen Immune System

Bone Broth

Have you ever seen *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*? You know how the father views Windex as a cure-all for everything? Well that's how I feel about bone broth. There's a reason chicken noodle soup is considered a good thing to eat when you are sick, there



READ MORE AT THE JUICE BAR

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Bone Broth

Have you ever seen *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*? You know how the father views Windex as a cure-all for everything? Well that's how I feel about bone broth. There's a reason chicken noodle soup is considered a great thing to eat when you are sick, there is magic in the broth! Well, OK, it's not magic. Really, it's vitamins, minerals, and gelatin. I give my kids bone broth in their sippy cups (they even ask for it now), cook rice and beans in it, and try to add it to as many things as possible. Bone broths are high in lots of minerals including magnesium, calcium, phosphorous, and silica.(source) Our immune systems need all these vitamins and minerals in order to function optimally. Bone broth is what I consider my kids' daily vitamin.

Good Bacteria

Wait? Aren't we trying to avoid bacteria? What I'm talking about is the good stuff that colonize in our digestive tracks. Hippocrates said, thousands of years ago, that "All disease begins in the gut." Modern science is finding that to be true. If you don't have a healthy amount of friendly gut bacteria, then your body will not be able to absorb all the vitamins and minerals from the foods you eat and the bad bacteria will take over causing all kinds of health problems. (Gut and Psychology Syndrome) This is a very simplified explanation because the purpose of this post is to give practical ways to build up the immune system and not go into the inner workings of our gut health which whole books have been written about.



In order to increase the good bacteria in our kids' guts (and therefore support their immune system), we need to be feeding them foods that are fermented and contain active cultures such as yogurt, kefir, sauerkraut (homemade, the store-bought kind does not contain active cultures), sour cream, and other fermented veggies. If your kids aren't used to eating fermented foods, you want to begin them gradually since they may experience die-off of the bad bacteria which can cause flu-like symptoms. If you don't want to make it, Bubbie's brand (affiliate link) contains live probiotics.

Ditch the Hand Sanitizer

We spend so much time trying to get good bacteria into our families diets that it would be a shame to have something wipe it all out. That is why we need to ditch the hand sanitizer. While hand sanitizer does kill bad bacteria, it also kills the good bacteria which is a huge part of our immune system. Hand sanitizers are also implicated in helping to create super bugs. Instead of hand sanitizer, just have your children wash their hands with soap and water or you can even make your own hand sanitizer using essential oils like this one, this one, or this one.

Butter

Did you know that vitamins A, D, E, and K are fat-soluble vitamins? This means that our bodies need healthy fats in order absorb these vitamins. Butter from cows that eat grass is high in vitamins A, D, E, and K and is a healthy source of fat. So if we want our children to have strong immune systems and not to suffer from vitamin deficiencies, we need to be making sure they are getting enough healthy fat. Coconut, raw pastured dairy, pastured eggs, grass-fed meats, fish, avocado, and nuts are other great sources of healthy fats.

Sun

It is a common fact that we absorb vitamin D through our skin through sun exposure. Our children need to spend some time every day outside in the sun without sunscreen in order to absorb vitamin D. And remember, vitamin D is a fat soluble vitamin, so if they are not eating healthy sources of fat, their bodies will not be able to synthesize the vitamin D as well. Here's a post I wrote about sun exposure.

Reduce the Sugar

Sugar has been shown to suppress the immune system when consumed in abundance. (source) Unfortunately, the American diet is riddled with sugar in one form or another, so even the careful consumer could still be ingesting a larger amount of sugar than they intended. I try to be really intentional about not letting my kids eat sugary foods during periods when I know they will be exposed to lots of germs. The good news is that schools are becoming better about offering healthier options to children, although the bad news is there is still a lot of sugar in the classroom. Here's a post I wrote about the dangers of sugar and how to reduce sugar in our diet.

Sleep

It is always important that your kids get enough sleep, but especially so when they may be under more stress or exposed to more illnesses. The National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute has this to say about sleep and our health:

"Your immune system relies on sleep to stay healthy. This system defends your body against foreign or harmful substances. Ongoing sleep deficiency can change the way in which your immune system responds. For example, if you're sleep deficient, you may have trouble fighting common infections. (source)

Making sure your kids are well-rested for the beginning of the school year not only helps them stay attentive and focused, but it also helps their bodies fight off infections.

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