

Steady Through the Season

A grown-up food-first guide to everyday immune health: nourishing meals, warming caffeine-free drinks, sleep, movement, stress care and safer supplement decisions.

For adults · Plant-based · Designed for a realistic workweek

FOOD FIRST

PLANT-BASED

PRINT + USE

A practical wellness guide — not a promise to prevent or cure illness

Evidence-informed food ideas, routines and safety notes for everyday use. Updated September 2026.

Build defenses from daily habits

Immune health is supported by adequate nutrition, sleep, movement, recommended vaccination, hygiene and management of health conditions. More is not always better: high-dose supplements can cause harm or interact with medicines.

Keep the claim honest

These foods and routines support normal immune function and overall health. They do not guarantee that you will avoid an infection or replace medical care.

DAILY CHECKLIST

- ☐ Eat at least three colors of vegetables or fruit.
- ☐ Include beans, lentils, tofu, tempeh, nuts or seeds.
- ☐ Choose a whole grain or starchy vegetable.
- ☐ Drink water regularly; use urine color and thirst as practical cues unless fluids are restricted.
- ☐ Move in a way that fits your ability.
- ☐ Protect a consistent sleep window.
- ☐ Wash hands and improve ventilation when illness is spreading.
- ☐ Avoid smoking and secondhand smoke.
- ☐ Stay current with recommended vaccines and routine care.
- ☐ Take only supplements that fit an identified need or professional plan.

THE PLANT-BASED IMMUNE PLATE

Plants + vitamin C	Protein + zinc	Whole grains	Reliable essentials
Peppers, citrus, berries, broccoli, cabbage, tomatoes	Beans, lentils, tofu, tempeh, pumpkin seeds, tahini	Oats, brown rice, quinoa, barley, whole-grain bread	Vitamin B12; vitamin D as advised; calcium- and D-fortified soy beverage

A practical seasonal pantry

Shelf	Keep on hand	Why it earns space
Beans + lentils	Chickpeas, black beans, white beans, red and brown lentils	Protein, iron, zinc, fiber; easy base for soup, bowls and dips
Whole grains	Oats, quinoa, brown rice, barley, whole-grain pasta	Steady energy and flexible batch cooking
Color	Frozen berries, greens, broccoli, peppers; citrus, cabbage, sweet potatoes	Vitamin C, carotenoids and variety without relying on pills
Flavor	Garlic, ginger, turmeric, cinnamon, thyme, lemon	Makes nourishing food inviting; culinary use is different from concentrated supplements
Reliable add-ons	Fortified nutritional yeast, fortified soy beverage, iodized salt, seeds	Helps cover B12, calcium, vitamin D, iodine and healthy fats depending on the product

WEEKLY PREP

- ☐ Cook one pot of beans or lentils.
- ☐ Cook one grain.
- ☐ Roast two trays of vegetables.
- ☐ Wash one leafy green.
- ☐ Blend one sauce or dip.
- ☐ Freeze two single portions of soup.
- ☐ Place fruit where it is visible.
- ☐ Review supplements and refill only what you actually use.

Absorption helper

Pair iron-rich plant foods such as beans or lentils with vitamin C-rich peppers, tomatoes, citrus or broccoli. This helps the body absorb non-heme iron.

Warming cups with boundaries

Cup	Simple method	Know before you sip
Ginger–lemon infusion	Steep 3–4 thin ginger slices 7–10 minutes; add lemon.	Can worsen heartburn and may interact with blood-thinning medicines in concentrated amounts.
Cinnamon–apple simmer	Simmer apple slices and one small cinnamon stick 10 minutes; strain.	Food amounts are different from cinnamon capsules. Frequent large cassia doses may affect the liver.
Thyme comfort tea	Use a labeled tea product and follow its directions.	Not a substitute for evaluation of shortness of breath, fever or persistent cough.
Chamomile evening tea	Steep one tea bag 5 minutes; drink unsweetened or lightly sweetened.	Avoid with ragweed-family allergy; may interact with some medicines and cause drowsiness.
Golden oat cup	Warm fortified soy beverage with oats, ginger and a pinch of turmeric.	A food, not a treatment. Review concentrated turmeric/curcumin supplements with a clinician.

Essential-oil rule

Do not swallow essential oils or add them to tea. They are highly concentrated and are not interchangeable with culinary herbs.

SMART SUPPLEMENT QUESTIONS

- ☐ What specific need am I addressing?

☐ Is there a food or routine solution first?

☐ Does the dose exceed the daily value?
- ☐ Could it interact with prescriptions, surgery or a health condition?

☐ Is the product independently tested?

☐ Have I told my clinician and pharmacist?

Four batch-friendly meals

Citrus Lentil Kale Bowl

INGREDIENTS

- Brown lentils
- Quinoa
- Chopped kale
- Roasted peppers
- Orange-tahini dressing

MAKE IT

Massage kale with a spoonful of dressing. Add warm lentils, quinoa and peppers; finish with orange segments and pumpkin seeds.

Ginger White Bean Soup

INGREDIENTS

- 2 cans white beans
- Carrot, celery and onion
- Fresh ginger and garlic
- Kale or spinach
- Low-sodium broth

MAKE IT

Simmer vegetables, ginger and garlic until tender. Add beans and broth; blend one cup for body, then stir in greens.

Sheet-Pan Tofu + Broccoli

INGREDIENTS

- Extra-firm tofu
- Broccoli and sweet potato
- Tamari or low-sodium soy sauce
- Sesame or olive oil
- Lemon

MAKE IT

Roast tofu and vegetables at 425°F until browned, turning once. Finish with lemon and serve over brown rice.

Tomato Chickpea Stew

INGREDIENTS

- Chickpeas
- Crushed tomatoes
- Cabbage or spinach
- Garlic and smoked paprika
- Whole-grain toast

MAKE IT

Simmer everything but the greens for 15 minutes. Stir in greens until tender; serve with toast.

A five-day grown-up plan

Day	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Reset
MON	Oats + berries + seeds	Citrus lentil bowl	Ginger white bean soup	10-minute walk
TUE	Tofu scramble + greens	Soup + whole-grain toast	Sheet-pan tofu + broccoli	Fill water bottle
WED	Soy yogurt + fruit + oats	Leftover tofu bowl	Tomato chickpea stew	Earlier bedtime
THU	Apple-cinnamon oats	Stew + cabbage slaw	Black bean sweet-potato tacos	Screen-free wind-down
FRI	Smoothie + nut-butter toast	Quinoa chickpea salad	Vegetable chili	Plan weekend movement

MAKE IT WORK FOR YOU

- ☐ Swap frozen vegetables when time is tight.
- ☐ Use low-sodium canned beans and rinse them.
- ☐ Double one soup and freeze half.
- ☐ Add more energy with avocado, tahini, nuts, seeds or whole grains.
- ☐ Adjust sodium, potassium, protein and fluids to medical guidance.
- ☐ Keep convenience foods that preserve the plan: frozen rice, canned beans, bagged greens.

Sleep matters

Adults generally benefit from a consistent sleep schedule. If snoring, insomnia, shift work or caregiving makes sleep difficult, a clinician can help address the cause rather than relying on sedating supplements.

When illness arrives

Supportive care

- ☐ Rest and drink enough fluid unless your clinician restricts fluids.
- ☐ Choose easy foods: soup, oats, rice, fruit, toast, tofu or mashed beans.
- ☐ Follow current respiratory precautions and stay home when appropriate.
- ☐ Use over-the-counter medicine only as directed and check interactions.
- ☐ Contact a clinician early if you are at higher risk for severe illness; time-sensitive antiviral treatment may be available.
- ☐ Do not replace prescribed treatment with herbs or supplements.

Get urgent help

Call 911 or seek emergency care for trouble breathing, chest pain or pressure, new confusion, inability to stay awake, blue/gray lips or skin, signs of severe dehydration, or another emergency warning sign. Contact a clinician for persistent or worsening symptoms or if you are pregnant, immunocompromised, older, or living with serious chronic illness.

Extra caution

Pregnancy, breastfeeding, kidney or liver disease, surgery, blood-thinning medicine, diabetes treatment and immune-suppressing medicine can all change what is safe. Review herbs and supplements with a clinician or pharmacist.

SOURCES + USE NOTE

CDC — Preventing Respiratory Illnesses: cdc.gov/respiratory-viruses/prevention

CDC — Preventing Spread of Infections in K–12 Schools: cdc.gov/children-and-school-preparedness/infection-prevention

NIH Office of Dietary Supplements — Immune Function: ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/ImmuneFunction-Consumer

NCCIH — Dietary Supplements for Children and Teens: nccih.nih.gov/health/tips/things-to-know-about-dietary-supplements-for-children-and-teens

HealthyChildren.org (American Academy of Pediatrics) — hydration, caffeine and cold/flu comfort guidance: healthychildren.org

USDA MyPlate — plant-forward meal planning: myplate.gov

This guide is general education, not medical advice. It does not diagnose, treat, cure or prevent disease. Individual needs vary. In an emergency, call 911.