

5 WAYS TO BOOST YOUR child's health



Our natural health experts offer some top tips for kids' health

For immunity support

Colloidal silver is a natural remedy worth considering as a means of supporting your child's immune system, whilst helping their gut health at the same time. "Colloidal silver can help to boost the immune system, which will help to fight against the common cold and flu," explains naturopathic nutritional therapist Jenny Tomei (www.nutriseek.co.uk). "However, unlike antibiotics, it does not kill off good bacteria in the gut. These helpful bacteria, known as gut flora, support immunity and proper digestion. Aggressive antibiotics, while helpful if you have a serious infection, can wipe out many good gut bacteria, leaving those immune to antibiotics to flourish. Colloidal silver kills pathogenic bacteria, viruses, fungi and yeasts. It is the most versatile natural antibiotic and can be used with children. With children, the recommended dosage is as follows:

- 0–2 years: single drops to 5ml per day
- 2–6 years: 5ml–10ml a day
- 6–12 years 10ml–20ml a day."



For digestive help

Another way to help support your child's digestive system and immunity is to encourage them to eat fermented foods. "Eating fermented foods will introduce beneficial bacteria into the digestive system," says Jenny. "This will aid better digestion, nutrient absorption and help contribute to a stronger immune system. Fermented foods also contain essential B vitamins, which are vital for energy and mood." A simple way to encourage your child to eat fermented foods is through making a smoothie from kefir and adding some fruit, nut butter and honey. "To make kefir, all you need is some milk kefir grains and some semi-skimmed or whole milk," says Jenny. "You simply put the grains in a glass jar and add the milk. Cover the mixture, place in a warm spot to allow the bacteria to grow, and give it time to culture, which is normally around 24 hours or until it tastes sour. You then strain the kefir grains from the mixture. You can reuse the grains and restart the process."

For fevers and infections

"Parents should consider herbal medicine because it offers a safe, effective way of treating their child's illness," says medical herbalist Hannah Charman (www.physichealth.uk). "It can also be used to help prevent them from getting sick, and in addition, kids also love making their own remedies. Catnip tea is a traditional remedy for children with fevers and infections. It's often compared to Calpol for its ability to relieve aches and pains and reduce temperature, but it can also help unblock stuffy noses and settle upset tummies. It's good to have a plant in a sunny spot of the garden for fresh tea, or to dry leaves for winter. To make the tea from dried herbs, for babies and young children, use a teaspoonful per mugful of hot water. Cover and infuse for 5–10 minutes in a teapot or cafetière. Give a small amount with cool water so it's still warm but not too hot to drink. Breastfeeding mums can drink the tea themselves, starting with small amounts."



For healthy teeth

“Tooth decay is the most common reason for hospital admission for children aged five to nine years,” explains registered nutritionist Sophie Thurner (www.sophiethurnernutrition.com). “Too much sugar, especially sugary drinks, is the major cause for dental caries in children. Fizzy drinks can contain large amounts of sugar, which will increase the risk of tooth decay. Not only are they packed with sugar, both the sugary and the sugar-free versions are acidic, which makes teeth weak and vulnerable to attack from bacteria, leading to cavities. Even unsweetened juices and smoothies contain sugars and acids, so although they can contribute towards their five-a-day, it is recommended that children only have one small glass (about 150ml) of fruit juice or smoothie each day. If you do give fruit squash or sugary drinks to your child, make sure to dilute them well (minimum five parts water to one part squash). Ideally have your child drink water thereafter. Rinsing the mouth by drinking water helps wash away the residual sugar on the teeth, making the enamel less vulnerable for attack.”

For bone strength

“Children go through major skeletal changes,” explains Sophie. “Not only do they undergo growth spurts, bones also become denser during childhood. The level of bone density accumulated in childhood is crucial and affects bone health and the risk of osteoporosis in later life. Therefore, it is very important for children to have an adequate intake of the two most important nutrients for bone health: calcium and vitamin D. The best source of calcium in food is dairy. Good examples of dairy include home-made yogurt-based smoothies or milkshakes with fresh berries or banana made with full fat or semi-skimmed milk. Fully skimmed milk is not suitable as a main drink until a child is five years old because it does not contain enough calories or vitamins. Plant-based sources of calcium include fortified soy milk, bread and cereals, as well as dark green leafy vegetables, pulses and some dried fruits, seeds and nuts. Beware not to give children too much fibre in one sitting, as their small stomachs cannot cope with too much and it can also reduce the amount of calcium absorbed.

All children should receive daily supplements with 10 micrograms of vitamin D. Up to five years this should be done all year round. From then on between the months of October to March should be enough if they spend time outdoors in the summer months.”

TRY THIS!
 “One of the best things you can do to support your child’s immunity is to give them a daily probiotic,” says Raihane Palagi, BioCare’s Clinical Nutrition Advisor (www.biocare.co.uk). “The bacteria *lactobacillus acidophilus*, *bifidobacterium bifidum* and *lactobacillus rhamnosus gg* have been shown to prevent and help fight respiratory tract infections in children.”

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