

# Words on Wellness

YOUR EXTENSION CONNECTION TO NUTRITION AND FITNESS

## Can Foods Fight the Flu?



In the last two years, Americans have become more interested in “functional foods” to boost their immune systems. Unfortunately, there is no one magic food that will make you invincible to colds, flu, and COVID. Over the long run, though, two eating habits can cut your risk of catching contagious illnesses.

### **Limit foods high in sugar, salt, and/or saturated fat.**

Too much of these can keep your white blood cells from working as well as they should. Drink water, unsweetened tea, or milk more often instead of pop. Snack on fruits or vegetables; choose baked chips over regular; enjoy whole grain granola bars over cookies. Eat baked or grilled meats instead of fried.

### **Aim for at least 4–5 cups of fruits and vegetables a day.**

Fruits and vegetables are the main source of the vitamins and minerals you need to resist illnesses. For example, the tomatoes and kale in this month’s soup recipe give you lots of the antioxidant vitamins A and C. The lentils are rich in zinc, which is also important to immune health.

Interested in finding out more about foods and health habits that strengthen your immune system? Visit [Today’s Dietitian](http://www.todaysdietitian.com), [www.todaysdietitian.com](http://www.todaysdietitian.com), to read an excerpt from *The Family Immunity Cookbook*.

Source:

[Today’s Dietitian](http://www.todaysdietitian.com), [www.todaysdietitian.com](http://www.todaysdietitian.com)

## *Vegetable Soup with Kale and Lentils*

Serving Size: 1 1/3 cups | Serves: 6

### **Ingredients:**

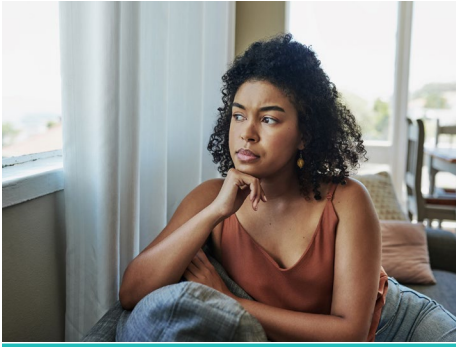
- 2 tablespoons oil (canola or olive)
- 1 medium onion, chopped (about 1 cup)
- 1 medium carrot (sliced 1/8 inch thick)
- 2 teaspoons garlic (minced)
- 4 cups water
- 1 cup dry yellow or brown lentils
- 1 can (14.5 ounces) low sodium chicken broth
- 1 tablespoon dried basil or Italian seasoning
- 1 can (14.5 ounces) no-sodium-added diced tomatoes or 2 chopped tomatoes
- 1 bunch kale (about 7 ounces)
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon ground black pepper

### **Directions:**

1. Heat oil in large pot over medium heat.
2. Add onion, carrot, garlic. Cook 5 minutes.
3. Add water to pot. Heat to boiling.
4. Rinse lentils in colander with water. Add to pot, simmer 20 minutes. Do not drain.
5. Add chicken broth, dried basil or Italian seasoning, and tomatoes. Cover and cook for 5–10 minutes.
6. Rinse kale leaves; cut out the main stems and discard. Cut leaves into 1” pieces.
7. Stir kale, salt, and ground black pepper into lentil mixture. Return to boiling. Reduce heat, cover, simmer for 3 minutes.

### **Nutrition information per serving:**

200 calories, 5g total fat, 1g saturated fat, 0g trans fat, 0mg cholesterol, 170mg sodium, 29g total carbohydrate, 12g fiber, 4g sugar, 11g protein. This recipe is courtesy of ISU Extension and Outreach’s Spend Smart. Eat Smart. website. For more information, recipes, and videos, visit [spendsmart.extension.iastate.edu](http://spendsmart.extension.iastate.edu)



[www.extension.iastate.edu](http://www.extension.iastate.edu)

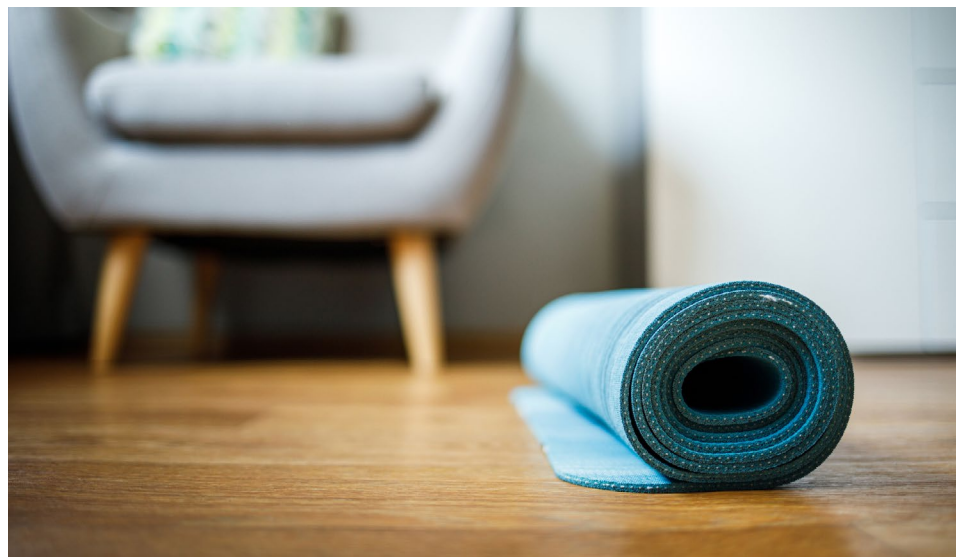
## Stressing Out Can Make You Sick

Too much stress is bad for your mental and physical health. Stress is your body's reaction to real or perceived threats. This "fight or flight" response releases chemicals that affect many areas of your physical health, including your immune system.

Chronic stress can lead to the following:

- Frequent muscle aches, headaches, or changes in sleep habits
- Greater frequency of colds and flu
- Increased sadness, anxiety, anger, or irritability
- Reduced concentration and forgetfulness
- Overeating or loss of appetite

The good news is that there are ways you can help lower chronic stress like eating well, moving more, and getting enough sleep. If you believe you are suffering from stress symptoms, check out one of these [free publications from the ISU Extension Store](#), [store.extension.iastate.edu](http://store.extension.iastate.edu), to help you cope. If you think you may need counseling to help you cope with your stress, contact the [Iowa Concern Hotline](#), [www.extension.iastate.edu/iowaconcern/](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/iowaconcern/), at 1-800-447-1985.



## Physical Activity Melts Stress

Does just thinking about getting more exercise stress you out? It may help you to remember that once you do start a physical activity regularly, you will be melting your stress away.

"Exercise produces a relaxation response that serves as a positive distraction," says Cedric Bryant, chief exercise physiologist for the American Council on Exercise. Getting enough physical activity can counteract the effects of stress. It strengthens your immune system. It helps ward off fatigue and illnesses. A 20-minute walk may energize you more than an afternoon nap!

Source: [WebMD.com](http://WebMD.com), [www.webmd.com](http://www.webmd.com).