



BRICK BY BRICK

Nothing like an international viral contagion to snap people's attention back to the fragility of their wellbeing. The spread of the Coronavirus, COVID-19, is dominating every news cycle. As of March 5, 2020, the World Health Organization reports 95,333 confirmed cases and 3,300 deaths. Included in this count are 99 confirmed cases and nine deaths in the US. While the US numbers are relatively low, the reaction to them has been swift and extensive. People are changing travel plans, stocking up on hand sanitizer and donning masks.

While we are now at full attention and taking action, the immune system never stopped. It remained steadfastly on the defensive. This complex structure of organs, blood cells, tissue and chemicals, relentlessly protects us from infection or disease. That is unless it is overly burdened (depressed) and misses the target. Signs of a depressed immune system include recurrent infections, frequent colds, multiple allergies and taken to the extreme, autoimmune illness such as rheumatoid arthritis, lupus or Type I diabetes.

**"Rome wasn't built in a day, but they
were laying bricks every hour."**

- James Clear

Immune function is very sensitive to lifestyle factors. Some of the behaviors that contribute to a depressed immune system include high stress, excess consumption of sugar and allergenic foods, lack of sleep, inactivity, tobacco use, and irregular eating patterns. Two chronic conditions, obesity and high cholesterol, also contribute to suppressed immunity.

Whoa! Could susceptibility to infection relate to lifestyle choices? You mean to tell me that I could perhaps resist a viral infection without donning a mask, bathing in hand sanitizer or boosting my immunity with an IV infusion? Chances are, yes. The immune system functions best when governed by the parasympathetic nervous system. This branch assumes control over bodily functions during periods of rest, relaxation, meditation, and sleep. Here in the US, we ignore it as much as possible. We rely heavily on its overactive counterpart, the sympathetic nervous system. This is the fight or flight response stimulated by stress. We fuel the stress with quick hits of sugar, energy drinks, overworking and skimping on sleep and real human connection. Resultingly, we not only develop chronic conditions but we also lessen our ability to fight infection.

Here is what I know for sure. Fear doesn't lead to the sustained behavior change that strengthens immunity and supports good health. Fear leads to the search for magic bullets. And there are no magic bullets to strengthen our immune system. What we need are small actions practiced consistently. Think about it this way: If you take a multi-vitamin every day for a month, you have a much better chance of curing a nutrient deficiency than if you swallow the entire bottle all at once. Immunity and health are built, like Rome, brick by brick.

BRICK BY BRICK – DAILY BEHAVIORS TO BUILD THE IMMUNE SYSTEM

1. Get 7-8 hours of sleep.
2. Get outside for 15 minutes of sunshine.
3. Eat at least five servings of fresh fruits and vegetables.
4. Limit sugar.
5. Take a good quality vitamin and mineral supplement.
6. Write down three things that went well.
7. Laugh – hard!
8. Take three really deep breaths.



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Patricia M. Fuller has dedicated the last 20+ years to designing and delivering wellness programs. Her events earn consistently excellent ratings for her holistic approach and her real world application.

Prior to concentrating in wellness, Pat taught accounting and auditing as an adjunct professor at the University of Tampa. She earned her CPA designation in 1992 as a senior associate for Coopers & Lybrand. She has a Masters in Business Administration from the University of Utah.

Pat has a PhD in holistic nutrition. In 2010, she was board certified by the Holistic Nutrition Credentialing Board. Her areas of research include stress management and eating habits. She is a Certified Wellcoach and a member of the Institute of Coaching. She is an annual attendee to The Harvard Medical School Conference, Coaching In Leadership & Healthcare.

Have a Question? Email it to Dr. Pat: pfuller@bks-partners.com

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