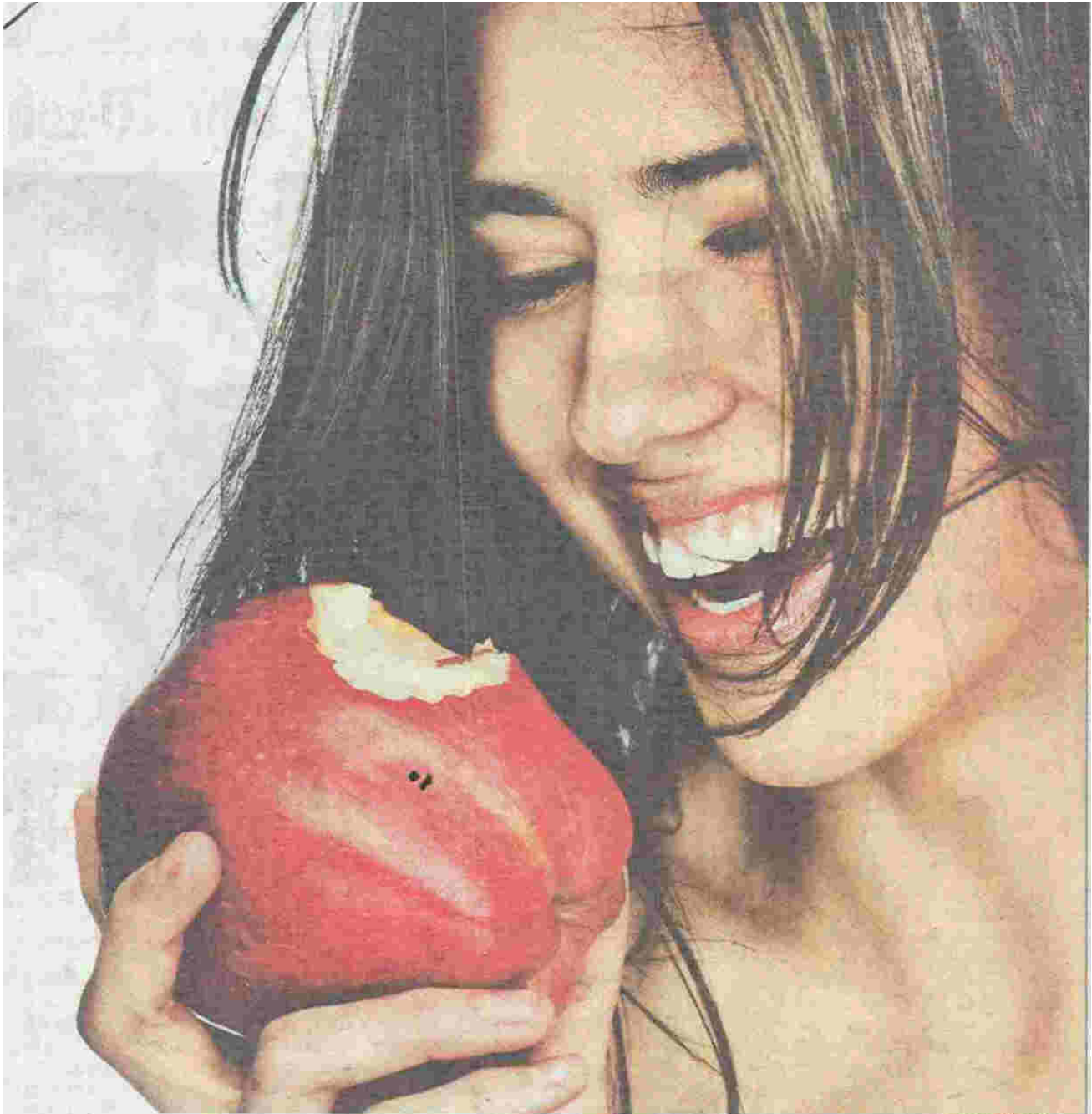


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IMMUNE BOOSTERS

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THINKSTOCK PHOTO

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IMMUNE BOOSTERS

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IMMUNE BOOSTERS

FIGHTING FOOD Don't reach out for medicine every time you're ill. Instead, boost your immunity with these super foods

FIVE SUPERFOODS THAT BOOST IMMUNITY

1 YOGHURT

Natural probiotics found in yoghurt maintains gut health by restoring the balance of beneficial bacteria needed for optimal nutrient absorption. Supplements, such as Mother Dairy's probiotic dahi or Yakult's fermented drink, also work.
Serving: One bowl a day of yoghurt or one drink a day

2 VITAMINS A AND C

Vitamin A is found in all foods coloured red, orange and yellow, such as mangoes, papaya, pumpkin, carrots and sweet potatoes. Vitamin A deficiency can lead to damage in the mucosal linings of the respiratory, gastrointestinal and genitourinary tracts, which are the body's first defense against bacteria and viruses. Vitamin C, a well-established immunity booster, is found in citrus fruits such as amla, lemons, oranges and mangoes.
Serving: A mango or papaya and a glass of fresh lime a day.

3 FISH AND SHELLFISH

Selenium, found in shellfish such as oysters, lobsters, crabs, and clams, helps white blood cells produce a protein - called cytokines - that helps clear flu viruses out of the body. Fish oils have omega-3 fats, that lower inflammation and protect the respiratory tract and lungs from infections.

Serving: Fish or shellfish twice a week (unless you're pregnant or planning to be).

4 GARLIC

Garlic contains allicin, ajoene and thiosulfates, which are compounds that fight infection, with one British study reporting that it lowers risk of viral infection by two-thirds.

Garlic also protects against colorectal and stomach cancers.

Serving: Two crushed garlic a day (add to cooked food or if you hate the smell, take supplements)

5 MUTTON, POULTRY, PORK

Meat and shellfish like oysters are loaded with zinc, which is needed to develop white blood cells that fight invading bacteria and viruses. Vegetarians should get their zinc supply from yoghurt and milk. Meats have iron - vegetarian sources are green, leafy vegetables, lentils and kidney beans - needed to fight infection. Since zinc may limit the absorption of iron, increase consumption of iron-rich foods so the one nutrient doesn't nullify the benefits of the other.
Serving: Red meat twice a week (if you are healthy), or poultry thrice a week.



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We've all grown up hearing that an apple a day keeps the doctor away. Experts, however, say an apple-alone is not enough to keep you healthy when the air is choc-a-block with viruses, bacteria and fungi.

The easiest way to boost immunity is to eat right. "Eat freshly-cooked food and avoid eating out. Home-cooked light food boosts the metabolism, which in turn increases absorption of nutrients, this boosting immunity," says Dr Shashi Bala, consultant, ayurveda, Moolchand Medcity.

Increasing the intake of ginger and black pepper helps, according to ayurveda. "Ginger, known for its anti-fungal, antibacterial and pain-relieving properties protects against flu, fever, headache and gastroenteritis. It also improves blood circulation, reduces nausea, and aids digestion," says Dr Bala. She recommends drinking a concoction of crushed ginger mixed with peppercorns to improve digestion.

The other big immune-boosters are garlic, which contains the active ingredient allicin that fights infection and bacteria, and citrus fruits. Amla, lime, lemon or oranges should be had every day for your daily dose of vitamin C, an immune-strengthener which has to be replenished every day as it is not stored by the body.

Nuts such as almonds, walnuts and pistachios should be included in your daily diet, says Dr S.C. Manchanda, senior cardiologist and head yoga and lifestyle clinic at Sir Ganga Ram Hospital.

Ritika Samaddar, chief dietician at Max Healthcare, strongly advises people to go off refined sugar and processed foods. She says, these foods release a lot of toxins, which need to be flushed out of the system. The immunity is automatically lowered as the body gets really stressed in the process of removing them.

You can't do without aerobic exercise to be fighting fit. "No foods can replace a good dynamic exercise schedule of exercise, about 30 to 40 minutes of brisk walking or running. Practically all exercise done regularly wards off tension," said Dr Manchanda.