

“The microbe is nothing, the terrain is everything”

The current rhetoric around COVID-19 is ‘find it and fix it’ akin to Louis Pasteur’s (1822 - 1895) ‘germ theory’. For those of us not involved in the ‘fight’ against the virus we may feel unable to do anything proactive. A contemporary of Pasteur’s, Antoine Béchamp (1816- 1908), advocated for prevention of illness by cultivating health through diet, hygiene and healthy lifestyle practices. He proposed that if the terrain (the body) were healthy a pathogen would not be able create illness. The story goes that on his deathbed Pasteur declared the terrain to be everything.

More than a hundred years on and we’re still learning about the ‘terrain’. Research on the human microbiome reveals a complex interplay between microbes and our health. Our bodies are complex, with an intelligence which responds to changes in equilibrium to restore balance and health. Whilst we are each unique, everyday choices about what we consume, our environment and lifestyle either contribute to our health or detract from it. So here are some very simple yet potentially powerful ways we can support our health at this time:

Eat a “Rainbow” of Fruits and Vegetables

Why? Fruit and vegetables are a rich source of antioxidants, vitamins, minerals, hydration and fibre. They support blood sugar balance, elimination of toxins, enhance our gut microbiome and are full of antioxidants. Each colour provides different antioxidant support so variety is key.

What? Aim for 7 - 9 servings per day. A serving is approximately: 1 cup cooked vegetables, 2 cups of uncooked leaves, 1 piece of fruit or half a cup of berries. Fruit can be high in sugar and fruit juice alone lacks the fibre that helps to balance blood sugars. Choose the whole fruit and aim for 5 veg : 2 fruit. Include herbs, spices, nuts, seeds and beans in your meals & snacks.

Stay Hydrated

Why? Our cells need adequate hydration to function well - this includes our immune cells.

What? The [NHS](#) suggests drinking between 6 - 8 glasses of water a day - ideally filtered. As we age our sense of thirst can diminish so older people are at greater risk of dehydration.

Avoid simple sugars and processed foods (especially processed carbohydrates)

Why? A [study](#) in 1973 showed that within 30 minutes of consuming simple sugar (like glucose, refined sugar, orange juice etc) there was a 50% reduction in white blood cell’s ability to kill germs.

Focus on Quality

Nutrient levels will be affected by how food has been grown, harvested, stored etc. Ideally eat foods free of pesticides, hormones and antibiotics. Shortening the time between harvesting and eating usually means higher nutrients - home grown is ideal. A fully organic diet can be expensive, but [The Pesticide Action Network UK](#) have a handy guide to help you prioritise.

Nourishing yourself

Stress and distraction limit our ability to enjoy food but also our body’s ability to effectively digest, absorb and utilise it. After all the effort of preparation make the most of the opportunity for nourishment - create an environment in which you can relax and enjoy your meal.

Lifestyle Activities to support your Immune System

- **Physical distancing** *not* social distancing. Social & emotional connections support our health!
- **Fresh Air and Moderate Exercise** can help boost production of specific immune cells.
- **Adequate Sleep** supports our mind and body ... and of course our immune system.
- **Relaxation** - stress management has been shown to reduce infection and severity of infection.

How’s your Vitamin D status? - A recent [Lancet Diabetes & Endocrinology](#) piece “Vitamin-D and COVID-19: do deficient risk a poorer outcome?” suggests circumstantial evidence is becoming overwhelming that those with very low vitamin D status have worse outcomes if infected with Covid-19. Vitamin D tests are widely available online and can be determined from a finger-prick/blood spot test. Please be aware that Vitamin D can be toxic in high levels. If you are on medications do check with your prescriber or pharmacist.

Additional resources to support you on your journey can be found here: <https://www.re-envision.com/resources/>