

DO'S AND DON'TS TO MAINTAIN YOUR IMMUNITY

by Maria Urso, PhD, O2X Specialist

The country is facing something that we have never had to deal with before as COVID-19 impacts every aspect of our lives. We have been inundated with information from the media, news outlets, retail stores, fitness centers, etc. regarding how we should move through space and time these next few weeks. Many of you started on your 1% journey with us recently, while others have been following along for months or years. Regardless of the amount of time you have been focusing on your goals, everyone is going to be forced to pivot as we adapt to our new cadence. Now, more than ever, it is critical to continue to nurture our mental, physical, and emotional well-being.

While we will dive deeper into topics as the days and weeks go on, today we wanted to share some initial pointers as you establish a new routine within the parameters of “flattening the curve.” There is already a lot of misinformation out there, and O2X continues to stand by its science-backed methodology during this time. Each day, it’s important to focus on some easy “Do’s” and “Don’ts” to maintain your immunity.

What you should definitely DO:

– Eat a diet high in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains

- If you are stocking up, hit the frozen foods aisle and select vegetables and fruits that you enjoy. They are just as nutritious as fresh counterparts.
- Rice, beans, and other dry whole grains are easy to store and do not seem to be flying off the shelves with the same frequency as frozen pizzas and snack chips. Select foods that are minimally processed (fewer ingredients) that contain higher values of protein and fiber.

– Prepare more food at home

- It is not yet clear if the virus can be spread by an infected person through food they have handled or prepared. If they have not washed their hands, you will be exposed to the virus.

– Take a multivitamin if you suspect that you may not be (or will not be) getting all the nutrients you need through your diet. You do not need to order expensive immune-boosting powders with supraphysiological values of Vitamin C (e.g. 6-8 times the daily amount). Those products can cause GI distress and diarrhea (cue the real reason for more TP!).

– Take a probiotic and increase your consumption of immune-boosting foods such as yogurt, ginger, turmeric and garlic.

– Continue to exercise regularly. Exercise boosts the immune system. Exercising outdoors will expose you to sunshine (Vitamin D synthesis) and fresh air, both components that will help to keep pathogen exposure lower. Aim for 30 – 60 minutes per day.

– If you are unable to exercise outside, try online videos or exercises in the O2X app or textbook. Bodyweight exercises build core strength and will continue to induce a training effect if you do not have access to weights in a gym.

– Do what you can to control your stress level. It is difficult to maintain a sense of calm when there is consistent exposure to anxious energy. Find time to be alone, take a walk, meditate, and remove yourself from the buzz of your surroundings. Simply taking 10 minutes in complete silence will help to maintain stress levels. Reduced stress will enhance your ability to fight illness.

What you should definitely NOT do:

– Do Not: Stock your freezer/pantry with nutrient poor food choices. Someone will have to eat them, and it will likely be you.

– Do Not: Spend the day drinking since you do not have work or school. Alcohol will lower your immunity and wreak havoc on your blood sugar levels (likely causing you to raid your stash of chips or ice cream)

– Do Not: Go for an IV infusion of any vitamin, mineral, or other purported supplement.

- While vitamins, minerals, and other micronutrients will help your immune system, super high levels will not protect you, and they may actually hurt you.

– Do Not: Share food or drink with others

- We know that the virus can spread through upper respiratory secretions.

– Do Not: Frequent the grocery store salad bar

- The virus is likely killed by cooking so warm foods should be ok (just be wary of the serving utensils that have been handled by others). It is not clear how long the virus can live on uncooked foods like salads or sandwiches.

– Do Not: Go to certain classes at fitness centers where it is difficult to maintain a reasonable distance (e.g. 6 feet). Certain gyms have decided to close for the next 2-3 weeks due to the higher risk associated with their programming (e.g. Boxing classes, circuit training with multiple shared stations, cycling studios etc).

– Do Not: Smoke or vape. Anything that puts a stress on your lungs will increase their vulnerability, especially to viruses that target the respiratory system.

– Do Not: Stop taking your usual prescribed medications. There is a rumor circulating that you should stop taking anti-inflammatories (NSAID: Alleve, ibuprofen, Motrin, Advil, etc.) if you are diagnosed since you may become sicker. This has not been validated. If you do not need to take these medications and just take them habitually (for normal aches and pains), you may consider stopping right now since we do not know how they impact your immune system's ability to fight this virus. However, if they are prescribed and needed, please continue to take them.

As we navigate these uncharted waters with you, we will do what we've always done and focus on providing you with science-backed ways to stay healthy, maintain the safety of your family and communities, and get 1% better every day.

Dr. Maria Urso is a scientific advocate for optimal health and nutrition. She followed her passion for science and health and obtained her PhD in human physiology from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. While that degree led her to a career as a scientist, first as an Active Duty soldier in the Army, then in Medical Affairs for industry, she continues to follow her passion for health and nutrition by serving as an advocate and educator. Her philosophy is that nutrition and fitness should be for life, not a single event (or outfit). To do this, we need to follow scientifically-sound and sustainable practices, not the latest story or fad from the media. Maria uses her education in biochemistry, physiology and nutrition, as well as personal experiences with competitive running to develop nutrition and exercise plans that make sense and allow her 'students' to eat and train for life. She understands that this is an ever-changing field, and staying on top of the latest research is critical. She has published over 30 papers in scientific journals and several book chapters, but she is most comfortable when using her scientific background to write or speak about nutrition and fitness practices. In her free time, Maria loves to run, swim, hike, adventure travel, and read.