

## Foods That Fight Colds

By RealAge

Whether you're walking around with a box of tissues or curled up in bed with aches and the shivers, what you feed your cold or flu can speed your recovery. Here's how to maximize your body's virus-busting powers.

### 1. TRUST YOUR BODY

If you instinctively sip cup after cup of tea with honey and lemon when you're under the weather, your body knows exactly what it's doing. While any hot liquid will help loosen clogged nasal passages and soothe sore throats, **hot tea** also doses you with virus-fighting, inflammation-relieving antioxidants. (In fact, people who drank five cups of black tea a day for two weeks produced 10 times more interferon--proteins that fight viruses--than those who drank instant coffee. For tea lovers, five cups is about three mugs full--not that much.)

As for the **honey (the darker, the better)**, it's also thick with protective antioxidants. And a **big squeeze of lemon** in every mugful adds a little extra vitamin C to your virus-fighting kit, plus the tartness stimulates saliva, which makes swallowing easier.

### 2. TRUST YOUR GRANDMA

Cold researchers keep trying to figure out why **chicken soup** does a sick body good. One finding: cysteine, an amino acid that's released by cooked chicken. It's chemically similar to a bronchitis drug, *acetylcysteine*, and it works with other soup ingredients to reduce inflammation. Salty broth also helps thin mucus.

Chicken soup helps even more if you **rev it up with spices: garlic**, which has a well-earned reputation for squelching infection, and **hot red pepper**, which contains capsaicin, a powerful decongestant that intensifies the soup's sinus-clearing effects. Try this tried-and-true recipe.

### 3. TRUST YOUR TUMMY

Smooth, healthy, comforting--no wonder lots of sickies crave **hot cereal** or **cool yogurt**. Again, your body knows what it's doing. Oatmeal (like other whole-grain cereals) delivers three nutrients known to support your immune system: selenium, zinc, and beta-glucan. Yogurt with active cultures (aka probiotics or live healthy bacteria) helps fend off colds in the first place. One, *Lactobacillus reuteri* (found in Stonyfield Farm yogurt), seems to be especially protective.

Top your oatmeal or yogurt with **strawberries, nuts, and seeds**. You'll get a vitamin C boost from the berries and immunity-enhancement from the vitamin E, zinc, and selenium in the nuts and seeds. Extra selenium may be extra important if you have the flu since it seems to ward off lung inflammation.

Alternatively, stir **lots of cinnamon** into oatmeal or yogurt--it smells and tastes wonderful, and can help reduce fever, relieve pain, and kill germs. If nausea is adding to your misery, add a little **ginger** too, fresh or powdered. It's a proven tummy tamer and may take antibacterial action against any bad bugs in your respiratory tract.

**Once your cold or flu is over (whew)**, try keeping up some of these habits, especially drinking plenty of antioxidant-packed tea. Not only could it help prevent another bout but getting the right amount of antioxidants through diet or supplements can make your [RealAge](#) 6 years younger.

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