



Time and again, doctors are highlighting the importance of having strong immunity to keep coronavirus and other infections away. ARCHANA JYOTI tells you more

There is an adage: Prevention is better than cure. It still stands true, particularly at a time when the entire world is grappling with the deadly Covid-19 which has claimed over 80,000 lives and there seems to be no stopping. As a preventive measure from the virus that primarily affects the lungs and respiratory system, the importance of immunity has been stressed upon once again.

Strong immunity is necessary to fight any kind of foreign body or disease. People with poor immune system tend to be more prone to face the wrath of infections.

While following a healthy diet and lifestyle is the first and foremost way to strengthen one's immunity, there are certain foods and herbs that can speed up the process with their immune-boosting properties, say experts.

Luckily, we have Ayurveda treasure trove that needs to be explored once again, as a good immunity may perhaps sail us through the Coronavirus crisis, said Dr AKS Rawat, former CSIR scientist.

In fact, underscoring the need of good health and strong immunity, Prime Minister Narendra Modi too recently emphasised on the need to look towards our traditional medicine system. He said that he has been witnessing a rise in the discussion on topics related to fitness, staying healthy and boosting the immune system. “This is a great sign,” he said as he urged people to make the protocol by Union Ayush Ministry a part of their lives and also share them with others.

Sanchit Sharma from herbal products manufacturing firm, AIMIL Pharma agrees that immunity will be “our saviour” against the virus. “Also, a healthy immune system will help in recovery from the coronavirus infection, Sharma adds.

The firm offers herbal drug Fifatrol, a multi-drug combination of classical ayurvedic medicines and herbs like mrityunjay rasa, sanjeevani vati, tulsi and giloe which are some of the Ayurvedic herbs that are helpful in building the immunity and preventing the infection.

These herbs also help increase the production of interferons (proteins) and antibodies to generate an immune response against viruses and increase the rate of phagocytosis to destroy microorganisms, thus, increasing immunity from containing viral infections, Dr Rawat adds.

Dr Partap Chauhan, Director, Jiva Ayurveda advises not to panic. He tells you that fear and negativity reduces immunity. Excessive mental stress also affects our digestion and thus causes formation of “ama”, a toxic material that is responsible for causing many diseases.

“Maintaining hygiene is the best way to prevent the virus from entering the body. Wash hands often with soap and water, use sanitisers, cover nose while sneezing, and avoid visiting busy and crowded places. Performing *agnihotra/yagya* or burning *havan samagri* (a mixture of herbs) keeps home and environment free from germs,” adds Dr Chauhan.

Secrets to high immunity

To enhance the body’s natural defence system during the COVID-19 crisis, these are the measures suggested by the AYUSH ministry:

- Drink warm water throughout the day.
- Daily practice of yogasana, pranayama and meditation for at least 30 minutes.
- Use turmeric, cumin seeds, coriander and garlic in cooking.
- Take 10 gm chyavanprash in the morning.

- Drink herbal tea/decoction (kadha) made from tulsi, cinnamon, black pepper, dry Ginger and munakka – once or twice a day. (Add jaggery, natural sugar, and/or fresh lemon juice to your taste if needed)
- Golden milk – Half teaspoon turmeric powder in 150 ml hot milk, once or twice a day
- Nasal application – Apply sesame oil/coconut oil or ghee in both the nostrils (Pratimarsh Nasya) in the morning and evening.
- Oil pulling therapy – Take one tablespoon sesame or coconut oil in mouth. Do not drink, swish in the mouth for 2 to 3 minutes and spit it off followed by warm water rinse. This can be done once or twice a day.
- During sore throat/dry cough, steam inhalation with fresh mint leaves or *ajwain* once a day; clove powder mixed with natural sugar/honey can be taken two-three times a day. It is best to consult a doctor if symptoms of dry cough and sore throat persist.