

Spruce Up Your Healthy Habits This Fall

By Lynn Allison

Fall is a perfect time for a health reset. The keys to starting anew include taking advantage of fresh, seasonal foods, staying active, getting enough sleep, and managing stress. Here are some tips from experts on how to get the most out of fall and boost your immune system to ready yourself for the winter months ahead:

Embrace Seasonal Produce

Fall offers an abundance of nutrient-rich fruits and vegetables such as apples, pumpkins, and sweet potatoes that provide vitamins and antioxidants. Lyssie Lakatos, a registered dietitian, nutritionist, and co-author of “The Nutrition Twins’ Veggie Cure,” notes that pumpkins are packed with beta-carotene, a powerful antioxidant that’s necessary for a strong immune system, healthy skin, and mucous membranes as well as offering protection for eye health and vision. Pumpkin seeds are nutrient-dense and a good source of zinc, which is vital for a strong immune system.

Harvested in autumn, apples are the ideal fall fruit. David Friedman, a clinical nutritionist, says that apples contain both soluble and insoluble fiber to aid digestion, promote heart health, and help maintain stable blood sugar levels. Apples have been shown to reduce the risk for diabetes, cancer, and asthma while boosting brain and gut health, adds Lakatos.

Sweet potatoes are another excellent seasonal choice, says Friedman, bestselling author of “Food Sanity: How to Eat in a World of Fads and Fiction.” These tasty spuds are packed with vitamins A, C, and B6, contributing to healthy skin, immune function, and brain health. They’re also a good source of potassium, an essential mineral that supports heart health and regulates blood pressure.

Get Active Outdoors

“Take advantage of the crisp fall weather by engaging in outdoor activities such as hiking, biking, or even brisk walks,” says Friedman. “This helps improve your fitness and allows you to soak up sunlight and vitamin D, which many people become deficient of during the fall and winter months.”

Prioritize Sleep

As we turn the clocks back this fall, many people experience sleep disruptions. Fall allergies and temperature fluctuations can also wreak havoc with our internal clocks and sleep-wake patterns, says Friedman. “It’s crucial to maintain a consistent sleep schedule and aim for seven to nine hours of sleep.”

Manage Stress

Fall can be stressful because of back-to-school demands, seasonal changes that affect your mood, and holiday plans. “Try to cope with fall-related stress by incorporating stress-reducing activities such as meditation, yoga, or spending leisure time surrounded by fall foliage,” says Friedman.

Stay Social

The fall and winter season, which can be isolating for many people, are traditionally the worst months for depression and loneliness, says Friedman. Humans are social beings, and meaningful social connections play an important role in maintaining optimal brain function. “It is crucial to prioritize social connections and actively seek out opportunities for social interaction.”

Turn Back the Clock on Aging With Bone Broth

Daryl Gioffre, clinical nutritionist and board-certified chiropractor, says that bone broth is a powerful anti-aging superfood that works wonders during the fall season when enjoyed as a comforting soup. “Its rich nutrient profile including collagen, vitamins, and minerals will strengthen your hair, skin, and nails while promoting joint health and overall well-being,” he tells *Health Radar*. “As the weather cools, the warmth of bone broth soup brings a sense of comfort while its immune-supporting amino acids proline and glycine help protect your cells and body against seasonal illnesses.”

Get a Flu Shot

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that everyone 6 months and older should get a flu vaccine every fall. The CDC estimates as many as 52,000 people may die annually from influenza. Check with your healthcare provider to see if you should also get the updated COVID vaccine and/or the newly approved RSV shot. □