

# Do I Have Lower Immunity Against Illnesses When I Get Older?

ADULT NUTRITION

ARTICLE

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The science shows that we are living longer; therefore, we have to stay healthy for an extended number of years too.

Statistics from 2020 shows that Malaysians age of 60 years old are expected to live until the age of 78.4 years for males, and 81.2 for females<sup>1</sup>.

Living longer doesn't mean we're still living healthy lives late in our years. Along with age comes the risk of illnesses: arthritis, heart disease, osteoporosis, Alzheimer's Disease, and even injuries from falls.

As you get older, your immune system changes, too. This crucial part of your body combines the cells, tissues and organs that work together to protect you from harmful substances—your body's defence against infections and illnesses. And, as you age, it gets weaker.

## What Happens When Your Immune System is Compromised by Age?

You get sick more often. The number of immune cells in your body decreases as you age. Also, the ones you do have might not communicate with each other as well as they used to. Therefore, they don't react as quickly to harmful substances such as bacteria or germs.

You take longer to recover. It takes much more time to shake off an infection, illness or injury. This is because the relative absence of immune cells slows down the healing process too.

You may develop an autoimmune disorder. This happens when your immune system mistakenly attacks healthy tissues in your body. Rheumatoid arthritis and lupus are examples of autoimmune diseases.

## What Can You Do to Improve Your Immune System?

Just because you're older doesn't mean you have to surrender to your immune system and accept the age-related adverse effects. Thankfully, there are several ways to boost immunity in your later years – from lifestyle changes to imbibing nutritional drinks.

- **Sleep well.** Insufficient or poor-quality sleep can lower your immunity, even if you're otherwise healthy. Get at least seven hours of sleep a night.
- **Reduce stress.** The more stressed you are, the more it affects your immune response. So keep stress levels low if you want a better-functioning immune system. Stress could also affect your sleep, so try to keep it at bay.
- **Maintain a healthy weight.** Carrying extra weight weakens your immune system. So keep your weight at a healthy level to improve immunity.
- **Get moving.** Exercise doesn't just keep you fit, it boosts your immune system too. Find a moderate activity that suits your lifestyle. Check with your doctor which form of exercise is best for you.
- **Get vaccinated.** Even if you have a weakened immune system, vaccines are still a valuable way to fight off illnesses such as the flu, or at least reduce the effects of it.
- **Stay away from germs.** If you know someone who's sick with a cold or the flu, don't meet them till they've recovered. You don't want to be exposed to germs unnecessarily and have to deal with being ill yourself. Also, wash your hands often to fight against any germs you might have encountered.
- **Watch what you eat.** Load up on healthy foods such as fruits and vegetables, and reduce your intake of fried and processed foods. If you're worried that your diet might not be meeting your nutritional needs, try an adult nutritional supplement like Enercal Plus.

Enercal Plus is rich in antioxidant Vitamin E. Together with other important nutrients like protein, Vitamin A, Vitamin C, Calcium and Vitamin D as part of balanced diet to support you in leading a healthy and active lifestyle.

Disclaimer: This content is shared for informational purposes only and not intended to be a substitute for professional/medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. We recommended that you always seek the advice of your healthcare professional for any questions you may have regarding a medical condition/specific situation.

## Reference:

1. The Abridged Life Tables, Malaysia, 2018-2020, published on 23 July, 2020.  
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