

# The immune-boosting powers of a Whole-Food Plant-Based Diet

By **Maryellen Stamos**,  
R.N., Health Coach

Can a Whole-Food Plant-Based Diet (WFPBD) boost your immunity? The short answer is: Yes! You can improve your immunity and reverse chronic diseases such as heart disease, Type 2 Diabetes, asthma, allergies, colitis, obesity, autoimmune conditions and cancer.

Yes, even cancer! Our immune systems protect us from cancer. The same white blood cells that fight infections also recognize abnormal cells before they become a tumor or cancer.

I have experienced only one mild cold since I adopted a WFPBD nine years ago. I have lowered my cholesterol, lost weight, and reversed an autoimmune condition. I did this by learning and then implementing the principles of eating and living taught by the doctors from the American College of Lifestyle Medicine.

Dr. T. Colin Campbell, Dr. Neil Barnard, Dr. Caldwell Esselstyn, Dr. Hans Diehl, Dr. Alan Goldhammer, Dr. Michael Greger, Dr. Dean Ornish, Dr. Joel Fuhrman, and Dr. John McDougall, to name a few, have done extensive research showing the many benefits of a WFPBD.

Adults living in the United States can expect to catch a cold 2-4 times a year, and children can expect to get 6-10 colds

annually. This is the reason we are encouraged to get a flu shot yearly. It is important for us to understand how we can improve our own immunity with a WFPBD.

The US death rate from infectious disease is now double what it was in 1980, up 170,000 annually. The Standard American Diet (SAD) is making us sick and weak, and it is killing us.

Certain plant-based foods will improve your immunity more than others. Dr. Fuhrman says to have greens, beans, onions, mushrooms, berries and seeds (GBOMBS) daily. These foods are high in nutrient density.

Here are the 25 Super Foods to include in your diet:

1. Collard, mustard, and turnip greens
2. Lettuce: Boston, romaine, red
3. Beans: all varieties
4. Seeds: flax, sunflower, sesame, hemp and green leaf chia
5. Kale
6. Brussels sprouts
7. Cabbage
8. Cantaloupe
9. Watercress
10. Carrots
11. Asparagus
12. Onions
13. Swiss chard
14. Broccoli
15. Tomatoes
16. Nuts: all varieties
17. Bok choy
18. Cauliflower

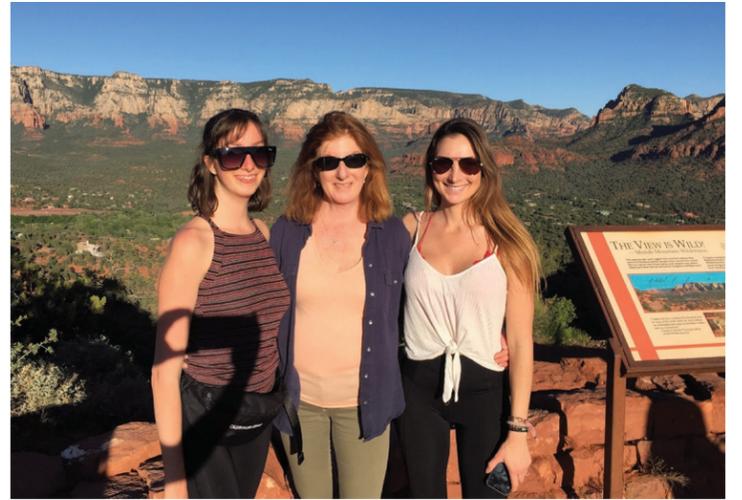
19. Berries: all varieties
20. Spinach
21. Bell peppers, red and green
22. Pomegranates
23. Arugula
24. Mushrooms
25. Grapes

Here are five simple way to incorporate these foods daily:

1. Eat a large salad.
2. Eat at least half a cup of beans.
3. Eat at least three fresh fruits.
4. Eat at least one ounce of nuts or seeds.
5. Eat at least one serving of green vegetables.

It is important to know that added sugar, oil and salt (SOS) increase inflammation in the body. Inflammation causes chronic diseases and lowers our immunity. We get all of the natural sugar, oil and salt in the plant foods.

SOS are addictive processed substances. They are not WFPB, and SOS make us crave foods that are not healthy. I have noticed that I no longer want foods that have SOS added to them. It makes the food too sweet, oily, or salty. This new appreciation for how your food tastes does not happen overnight. Your taste buds will change in a few weeks or months.



Maryellen Stamos with her plant-based daughters, Marianne and Jenny." *Photo courtesy of Jenny Stewart*

In conclusion, if you have a chronic condition, medications alone will not improve your condition. Medically managing your condition is not enough to improve your condition and your overall health; it actually lowers your immunity. This is one of the lessons we are learning from the pandemic: More people are dying of COVID-19 if they have preexisting conditions.

I teach WFPBD cooking classes through the Los Gatos-Saratoga Community Center through Zoom. I teach the principles of cooking a plant-based way without using sugar, oil or salt (SOS). I also work

with clients who have chronic health conditions as a nurse, health coach and Whole Food Plant Based Educator, to help them achieve optimal health. I am passionate about educating and supporting people on their journey to good health. This is a message of hope, especially during the pandemic. The key to your health is at the end of your fork. You can read more about me on my website at [realsimpleoptimalhealth.com](http://realsimpleoptimalhealth.com).

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