

## Feature



## The foods to help you fight off the 'non-Covid cold'

Have you caught the cold that's doing the rounds at the moment?

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As many people make their slow and steady return back to the office or the classroom, you may have noticed a certain sniffle going around.

But don't fear – as chances are it might be not Covid, as there's a nasty cold going around at the moment that has everyone talking.

The volume of us mixing and socialising once again, coupled with a recent drop in temperature, has made the perfect condition for colds to spread once again.

Alongside practising regular handwashing and sanitising, there are a number of foods and vitamins you can incorporate into your daily diet that will help boost your immune system – and hopefully keep any nasties at bay.

East Anglian-based registered nutritionist and health coach Emma Jamieson has a trusted roster of foods that help her fend off colds and their effects at this

Dubbed 'the worst cold ever' by many, an East Anglian expert gives some top advice on what you should be eating to help boost your immune system this season. **Danielle Lett** finds out more

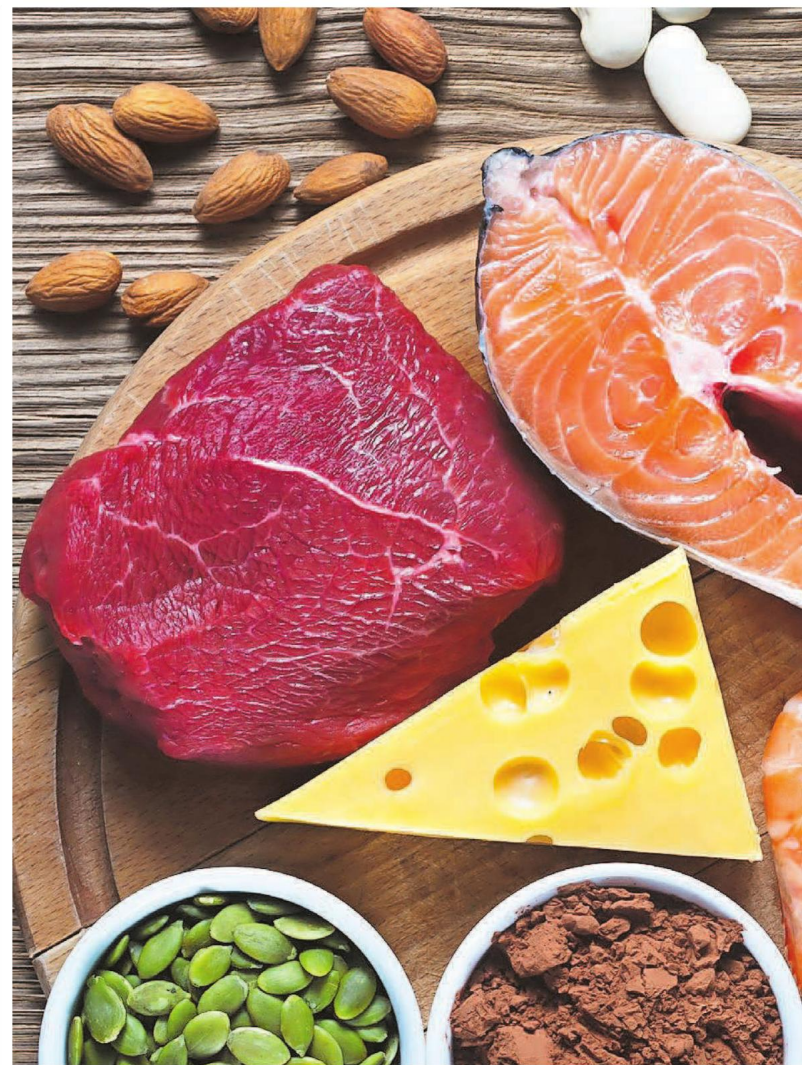
time of year.

But how important is that link between what we eat and our overall wellbeing? Very important, according to Emma.

"The foods we eat are the building blocks of our body. Protein is broken down into amino acids that we then use to repair and build, carbohydrates provide our cells with energy, and fats are the backbone of hormones and keep cell walls throughout our bodies in a healthy condition. Not to mention all the vitamins and minerals that we absorb from fruits, vegetables and other foods.

"A poor diet contains anti-nutrients, things that deplete our resources and can lead to ill health. Excess alcohol, smoking, caffeine and processed foods not only lack nutrients to contribute to our health, but require a huge effort to detoxify and eliminate them from the body.

"Therefore, by looking at the vitamins and minerals that are key to immune health, it is clear that a diet full of fruits, vegetables, protein from seafood, meats, dairy and eggs and healthy fats can support our immune system and build resilience."



So which foods and minerals should we be adding to our shopping lists during this cold season?

According to Emma, the most important key nutrients are vitamins A, C, D, and zinc.

"These can boost the function of the different components of the immune system, as well as showing individual benefits for reducing the length of the common cold and supporting the health of the respiratory system."

Vitamin A can be found in a pre-form of the vitamin – beta-carotene – in a number of orange and green vegetables, such as carrots, spinach, butternut squash, kale, Swiss chard, cantaloupe, sweet potatoes, and apricots to name a few. It can also be found in oily fish, liver, and egg yolks.

"Consumed, it is then converted by the body into active vitamin A."

Vitamin A is known as an anti-inflammation vitamin thanks to its crucial role in enhancing immune function.

However, Vitamin A is not just important for your immune system – as it is also crucial for your vision, reproduction and a number of organ functions including the heart, lungs, and kidneys.

In addition, Vitamin C, while not proven to help prevent colds, can actually help speed up the body's recovery if you do happen to catch one this winter, and

shorten the length of time you suffer with one.

"It is found in a number of fruits and vegetables such as peppers, tomatoes, kiwi fruits, berries, broccoli, and other green vegetables."

But is destroyed by heat, so Emma recommends eating many of these foods raw to reap the benefits.

Another vitamin worth adding to your diet is Vitamin D.

This vitamin helps regulate the amount of calcium and phosphate in the body – and these are needed to keep bones, teeth, and muscles healthy. A lack of Vitamin D can lead to bone deformities such as rickets in children and osteomalacia in adults.

"Vitamin D is made by our bodies through the action of sunlight on our skin. Sadly, the sun at this time of year is not strong enough for this to happen optimally, so obtaining vitamin D from oily fish, dairy or mushrooms is recommended. To boost the vitamin D levels in your mushrooms, leave them out in daylight for a couple of days after buying them."

And finally, zinc is particularly key in supporting your immune system.

Found in cells throughout the body, zinc helps the immune system fight off bacteria and viruses. It is also needed to make proteins and DNA.

To give your diet a zinc boost, Emma recommends upping the





amount of seafood (especially oysters), pumpkin seeds, eggs and meat you consume.

"In addition, 70% of our immune system resides in our gut. Supporting our friendly bacteria with a wide range of brightly-coloured plant foods, or adding in fermented foods such as live yoghurt, sourdough bread and sauerkraut can help increase their numbers."

If the above all sounds daunting – there are a number of ways to help your body get all of the foods and vitamins it needs with overwhelming your plate.

"A daily smoothie containing some of the above would definitely help, as would warming soups and stews that are rich in vegetables. And don't forget to take time to relax and get outside for fresh air on a sunny day," adds Emma.

To find out more about Emma, visit her website.

**What is the difference between a cold, the flu and Covid?**

While the three are all very different illnesses, they often come with similar symptoms – and it can be easy to mix them up.

A cold, often known as the common cold, can be caused by a number of different viruses including rhinoviruses.

However, the flu can only be caused by influenza viruses.

According to the NHS website, a cold appears gradually whereas a flu will appear within a few hours. A cold, while unpleasant,

doesn't generally affect your day-to-day life and tends to clear up within three to seven days on average (but may last up to two weeks).

The flu however can be quite debilitating and could leave you bed bound for a week or two, dependent on your overall health.

Common cold symptoms include a blocked or runny nose, a sore throat, a headache, muscle aches, coughs, sneezing, a raised temperature, and a pressure in your ears and face.

Flu symptoms however include a sudden high temperature of 38C or above, an aching body, feeling tired or exhausted, a dry cough, a sore throat, a headache, difficulty sleeping, loss of appetite, diarrhoea or stomach ache, and nausea and vomiting.

Covid-19 is a respiratory illness caused by the coronavirus which first emerged in humans in late 2019. The most common Covid symptoms are a high temperature, a new, continuous cough, and a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste.

If you are worried you may have Covid-19 and are suffering from any of the above coronavirus symptoms, the best course of action is to self-isolate and take a PCR test (as lateral flow tests are for those who do not show Covid symptoms).

**To find out more about the common cold, flu, and Covid, visit the NHS website.**

Food such as seafood, seeds and spinach are high in zinc  
Picture: GETTY

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