

2-2005

Mobilizing your Defense Forces

Winston J. Craig

Andrews University, wcraig@andrews.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/luh-pubs>



Part of the [International and Community Nutrition Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Craig, Winston J., "Mobilizing your Defense Forces" (2005). *Lake Union Herald*. 641.
<https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/luh-pubs/641>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Lake Union Herald at Digital Commons @ Andrews University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Lake Union Herald by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Andrews University. For more information, please contact repository@andrews.edu.

Mobilizing your Defense Forces

BY WINSTON J. CRAIG

Regular exercise and a positive mental attitude enhance immunity function.

Colds and the flu frequently come our way during the colder months. These acute illnesses account for about one-third of absenteeism from school and time lost from work in the United States. In the cold winter months, it is important to keep our resistance to infections high by having our immune system functioning at an optimal level. A battery of elite killer cells, such as T-cells, B-cells, and natural killer cells, stand ready to protect us against invading disease forces.

A number of lifestyle factors such as chronic stress, sleep deprivation, excessive fatigue, alcohol, and a high sugar diet can lower our resistance to disease. Since normal aging is accompanied by a decline in immune function, the elderly must be very careful to follow a healthy lifestyle. Poor eating habits leading to deficiencies of iron, zinc, vitamin A, or vitamin C can also impair the working of the immune system, producing a greater susceptibility to disease.

February is a month when SAD (Seasonal Affective Disorder) and cabin fever are all too common. During the extensive months of a northern winter we may experience depression along with the gray skies and shortened days with limited sunshine. Negative emotional states, such as depression and loneliness, are known to disable the immune system, while a positive mental outlook enhances immune function.

Nothing tends to promote health more than a spirit of cheerfulness and contentment. When the mind is happy

from a sense of duty well done, and there is the satisfaction of helping others, one will experience a surge of health (see *Ministry of Healing*, 257). Norman Cousins reminds us that hope and purpose are not merely mental states, they have electrochemical connections that play a major part in boosting the immune system.

A healthy immune system is safe-guarded not only by having a positive mental attitude, but also from eating plenty of fruits and vegetables rich in protective anti-inflammatory agents, getting adequate sleep, learning to relax, and drinking plenty of water. Echinacea and garlic can enhance immune function and protect against upper respiratory tract infections such as throat infections, colds, and flu. Vitamin C supplements are not really effective at reducing the incidence of colds, but they can somewhat diminish the severity and duration of colds.

Regular exercise is an important way to enhance immunity function. In one study, sedentary women who were asked to walk 45 minutes a day, five times a week, had less severe upper respiratory infections than women who did not exercise, and the colds and flu experienced by the exercising women lasted only half as long.

Winston J. Craig is professor of nutrition at Andrews University.