

Immune system

When the body encounters a foreign invader such as bacterium, virus or parasite, its first line of defense is the immune system. The immune system consists of different immune cell types in different organs that help the body recognise and respond to foreign invaders. The immune system performs three main functions: protect the body from these invaders, repel them and recognise them.

Children are vulnerable to infectious diseases such as influenza, hand-foot-mouth disease, as well as infectious diseases of the respiratory system and gastrointestinal tract because their immune system is not yet fully developed. Elderly people are also highly susceptible to infectious diseases due to their immune systems degenerating. Skin infections and allergies are common among the elderly.

A healthy lifestyle helps improve the immune system. A balanced diet that provides all the nutrients needed to keep the immune system functioning normally is also a plus. Vitamin A, B1, B2, C and E, and zinc are good for the immune system. Exercising regularly and moderately (say, three times a week) can strengthen the immune system.

Studies reveal that deep, long-term stress may affect certain hormones' level and, in turn harm the immune system. Reducing stress is, therefore, essential to keeping the immune system functioning properly.

For the elderly, it is important for them to always keep their skin clean and moist to avoid skin infections and allergies.