



7 Secrets to Prevent Sick Kids

It's frightening to know that over the past few decades we've seen a measurable increase in children with acute and chronic illness in the U.S. "Epidemiological [studies](#) suggest that as many as 1 out of 4 children in the U.S, or 15 to 18 million children age 17 years and younger, suffer from a chronic health problem." In a 2010 study, the number of children in the US suffering from chronic illness nearly [doubled](#) from 12.8% in 1994 to 26.6% in 2006. The major players: Diabetes, Attention deficit, and Asthma (being the most common).

Insane! I mean, we have so much technology, so much information at our fingertips, practically whatever we need/want can be made available to us. How can this be?

Unfortunately, our *foundational approach to prevention* as the key to health was swept under the rug years ago. With the introduction of reactive medicine and overprescribing of [antibiotics](#), junk food, screen time, pesticides, GMOs, household chemicals, school systems inundating children with standardized testing, less creative play, little allowance for boredom, etc, our children are overweight, overtired, stressed out, and completely deficient.

When it comes to acute illness, parents are running their children to the pediatrician's office or urgent care at the first sign of a cold. *We've lost our innate ability to parent our children when they fall ill*, and to make matters worse, You, the super parent, are also having to take time off from work and rearrange your schedule to accommodate your sick kiddo. If you have other children in the house, this means an all out germ war to keep the others from getting sick also, not to mention yourself and your spouse.

Stop the madness, protect your children from getting sick, it's easy, and here's how.

1. Go outside, soak up the sun and Play in the dirt. Seriously.

Asthma currently tops the list of pediatric chronic illness, affecting almost 1 in 10 children. According to the [CDC](#), 8.4% of all children in the United States today have chronic asthma, a substantial increase from [3.6%](#) in 1980. [Research](#) has recently shown a major source for preventing asthma is keeping your kids

outside, in a rural environment (they recommended farmland) as often as possible. Agrarian societies, those societies whose economy is based on producing and maintaining crops and farmland, have a markedly lower asthmatic population in comparison to industrial cultures.

Scientists have many hypotheses as to why this could be, and the most talked about reason is at a very young age when the immune system is still under development, the more foreign matter and antigens we come into contact with, the more diverse our immune repertoire becomes. The more sterile our environment, the less environmental peptides are available to create an effective regulatory network for immune function, resulting in higher incidences of inflammatory response to foreign invaders of our immune system. And inflammation is only a symptom shouting an underlying culprit responsible for ALL chronic disease.

And get this, [research](#) has shown that *Mycobacterium vaccae*, a bacteria found in soil, can stimulate the release of serotonin, our favorite mood enhancing neurotransmitter found in our brain and gut! And we all know the importance of adequate vitamin D intake while playing outside in the sun for our immune health and bone remodeling.

The take away:

- Allow your kiddos to play outside, run around without shoes and socks, feel the dirt and grass under their toes (doesn't have to be farmland, how about the park or your back yard).
- Dig in the dirt and make messes of themselves.
- Don't be so adamant about bathing every single day. I think I bathed once a week when I was a kid! Ha!
- Discontinue ALL hand sanitizers, which kill not only the bad bacteria, but also the very beneficial bacteria on our skin that is necessary to fight those foreign invaders.
- And the best time for adequate vitamin D intake from the sun is between 10am and 2pm. This does not mean sit by a sunny window, while indoors. Vitamin D from the sun's rays cannot penetrate glass.

2. Adequate Nutrition

O.K. I'm not the all-in doctor who says you can't feed your kid junk food at all. I do believe in moderation. If your kid has a condition currently, seek a medical professional's advice, and you'll need to

be more disciplined in your approach because moderation may not be appropriate for them at this time. Aside from food allergies and/or sensitivities, here's my suggestions:

- Eat out no more than 2-3 times per week.
- Limit foods from a box.
- Limit as best you can food dyes, especially anything red.
- Limit the junk food for after school snacks only (or mid afternoon if not in school), with the occasional after dinner dessert- just don't make it a habit.
- Try your best for grass fed/finished meats.
- Raw or aged dairy.
- While choosing eggs, look for "pasture raised" or at least "free range." - The [Egg Scorecard](#) from the Cornucopia Institute is a great reference when looking for quality eggs (buzzkill: Trader Joes as well as Whole Foods brands scored only 1 egg out of 4).
- Limit peanuts and pork.
- Buy organic if it's on the [dirty dozen](#) list or if it has the potential to be [genetically modified](#).

Breakfast is truly the most important meal of the day for your child and needs to consist of **brain food**. This means NO pop tarts, sugar cereal (any dried cereal, really), or high glycemic foods. Your kid will be in school all day, so focus and attention span are important. The necessary nutrients required for this are antioxidants, B vitamins, amino acids, and healthy fats. Each morning, I grab an item from each of the lists below, and this is my daughter's go-to breakfast. So SIMPLE.

Antioxidants:

Fruits

Blueberries

Raspberries

oranges

pecans

walnuts

hazelnuts

goji berries

dark chocolate

B Vitamins:

raw dark green vegetables

almonds

sunflower seeds

bananas

cottage cheese

avocado

eggs

cheese

sweet potato

organ meats

lean meats

fish

Amino Acids:

meats

nuts

seeds

cheese

dairy

beans/legumes

Healthy Fat Options:

avocado

coconut

nuts

seeds

eggs

The above are only examples. Next time you're at peace for a few minutes, without your kid(s) asking for attention, like when you're on the toilet, google more options!

My go-to meals for my Little:

Breakfast:

1/2 banana and/or 1 hard boiled egg, and in a baggie: raw almonds, raw cashews, goji berries, coconut flakes, dark chocolate pieces

Lunch:

We still need to think “focus” and “attention span” when it comes to your child’s lunch. They still have a few more hours of the school day left at this point. Pick foods from the above lists. Here is where I might also add a grain, such as rice, gluten free or whole grain bread, or rice crackers.

Example: Turkey sandwich made with Dave’s Killer Bread, slice of raw/organic cheese, sliced green/red peppers, and raw almonds

After school **snack** is when I allow for leniency: allow your kiddo any one or two things they desire from the fridge or pantry. Funny, my Little’s go-to after school is almost always an apple, but on occasion she’ll ask for an ice-cream sandwich!

Dinner:

Weigh heavily on vegetables and healthy fats, very light on complex carbohydrates, and moderate portions of protein. No matter how complex the carbohydrate, it always breaks down into the final glucose- which will inhibit growth hormone secretion during the nighttime, as well as keep your child’s brain awake.

3. Hydrate

I know this sounds elementary, however adequate hydration is the #1 area I find parents have trouble with in my clinic. Think about it, babies are born weighing in at 78% water, and as adults, we are 60% water.

Here’s the breakdown of % water for our vital organs:

Brain and Heart: 73% water

Lungs: 83% water

Skin: 64% water

Muscles and Kidneys: 79% water

Bones: 31%

Eat all the nutritious foods you want, but unless you ingest an adequate amount water to dissolve and transport nutrients and send them where they need to go, you can forget about health. Think about this, as long as we are living and breathing we are creating and ingesting toxicity, whether byproducts of our metabolism or environmental pollutants, and one of the few ways to transport this waste to be evacuated from our bodies is, you betcha, WATER!

What to do:

- Limit juice and soda. Start this early. If you introduce anything other than water to your child prior to age 4, you're doing them a major disservice. If you're already fighting the juice battle, negate their instant taste bud, sugar satisfaction by diluting the juice with water.
- Always have water on hand: when out running errands with your kid, at the park, at church, always. And ask them often to have a sip of water. This is a good habit to get into as a parent also, for your own nutritional sake.
- If you have RO water, you'll need to add a liquid multi-mineral.

**I only recommend pharmaceutical grade supplements. If your physician cannot order them for you, you can purchase them [here](#) by creating a free account and clicking on “RO Water (Minerals),” for both children and adults.

4. Adequate Supplementation

My motto is “*food is medicine.*” Unfortunately I have found it pretty tough to get in all of our essential nutrients on a day to day basis, especially when we need excess nutrients to metabolize and remove environmental toxins, more now than we ever used to.

I hear parents regularly mention their child can't get well and always has a runny nose and sniffles because they are in daycare. Although kids harbor more germs and have their hands in their pants and mouth more often than adults, this shouldn't mean your child should be perpetually sick. You just need to make sure your kiddo is getting enough vital nutrients like antioxidants and immune boosters to maintain their stable immune activity.

Here's my "go-to" list of supplements that I feel are foundational to a child's immune health:

1. **Omega-3 fish oil that is high in DHA:** For neurological and immune system development and support.
2. **Multi-species High Potency Probiotic:** Much of our immune system is located in our gut. The good bacteria necessary for keeping our immune system in balance has been compromised with the introduction of pesticides, GMOs, hormones, and antibiotics in our food sources, so I find it very necessary to supplement, especially if your child was born cesarean.
3. **Vitamin D:** For neuro-protective benefits, as well as immune and antioxidant purposes.
4. **Vitamin A:** For neuro-protective benefits, as well as immune and antioxidant purposes (dose two times per year for 14 days)
5. **Zinc:** I prescribe zinc around cold and flu season or when your child seems to be coming down with something (I don't recommend zinc as part of foundational year around because too much zinc will displace manganese, another vital nutrient)

All questions (including dosing) can be answered if you go to the specific products in our [store](#)!

5. Good hygiene, reduce the chemicals on your child's skin and in their environment.

There are more than 80,000 chemicals [registered](#) for use today, and many have not been studied for toxicity by a government agency (about to change with the "recent" passing of the [Frank R. Lautenberg Chemical Safety for the 21st Century Act](#), however the catch up will take decades).

We are learning about new toxins everyday, ie parabens and triclosan, chemicals we once thought to be safe, but with recent research we know them to be endocrine disruptors and carcinogens.

Washington State's Children's Safe Products Act of 2008 requires makers of children's products containing [chemicals of high concern](#) to report these products. You wanna know the products in your home containing the most chemicals of concern —> Your child's [clothing](#). :(

I get it, there's too much information to have to research and figure out what is what, so the easiest way to get around this is to use natural ingredients in the first place.

The US Department of Health and Human Services has a searchable [database](#) if you're interested in the products you are currently using and their potentially harmful ingredients.

If you would like to make your own household cleaning products, I've got this covered here:

- [All-Purpose Cleaners](#)
- [Bathroom](#)
- [Dishwashing](#)
- [Kitchen](#)
- [Floor Care](#)
- [Furniture](#)
- [Laundry](#)
- [Air Fresheners](#)

If you are concerned your child may be affected by organic pollutants, there is a wonderful urine test I run on patients to determine body burden of these harmful chemicals, the GPL-TOX Profile (Toxic Nonmetal Chemicals). You can learn more here:

<https://www.greatplainslaboratory.com/gpl-tox>

6. Sleep

I get it, most households have both parents working, and we feel guilty we didn't get to see our kids much during the day. As much as you'd like to allow your children a later bedtime, remember it's not good for them, for many reasons, and certainly not for their immune health. Immune remodeling happens when our children are at rest, not to mention cognitive and brain structuring.

Sleep schedule [examples](#):

Newborn:

Your baby will sleep often right now, but baby will not sleep deeply. Newborn sleep is not well organized, neurologically right now. Your baby's sleep routine should be very flexible at this stage, as well as feeding. This time should be more "go with the flow of your baby."

6-8 months old:

Your baby “should” be sleeping 11 hours through the night and 3.5 hours of daytime napping, spread over 2-3 naps. On this note, my child did not sleep through the night until she was 2.5 years, so keep in mind this is only an example of “should,” recognized by most healthcare providers.

Sample Schedule (this is only an example, but seems to work well for most babies) –
(Shift earlier if your child wakes between 6:00 and 7:00 a.m.)

- 7:00 to 7:30 a.m. Wake-up. Upon waking, nurse/bottle feed/solids.
- 9:00 or 9:30 a.m. Morning nap, 1.5 to 2 hours. Upon waking, nurse/bottle/solids.
- 12:30 or 1:00 p.m. Afternoon nap, 1.5 to 2 hours. Upon waking, nurse/bottle.
- 3:30–4:00 p.m. (depends on previous nap time) Optional third nap, about 45 minutes to an hour.
- 5:00 or 5:30 p.m. Nurse/bottle feed/solids.
- 6:00–6:30 p.m. Start bath/bedtime preparations, which may include an additional bottle or nursing.
- 7:00–7:30 p.m. Asleep.

9-12 months old:

Your baby should be sleeping 11 hours through the night. At 9 months, naps should be 1.5 hours in the morning and 1.5 – 2 hours in the afternoon. At 12 months, naps should be 1 hour in the morning and 1.5 in the afternoon (remember these are only approximations, no worries if your child deviates a bit from this).

Sample Schedule (this is only an example, but seems to work well for most babies) –
(Shift earlier if your child wakes between 6:00 and 7:00 a.m.)

- 7:00–7:30 a.m. Wake-up. Nurse/bottle/cup and breakfast.
- 9:00–9:30 a.m. Morning Nap – Rule of thumb here is to put your child down for first morning nap 3 hours after they wake in the morning.
- 12:00–12:30 p.m. Lunch (nurse/bottle/solids)
- 1:00–2:00 p.m. Afternoon Nap – Snack (nurse/bottle/solids)
- 5:00–6:00 p.m. Dinner (nurse/bottle/solids)
- 7:00–7:30 p.m. Bedtime. Nurse/bottle.

13-18 months old:

Your child should be sleeping 11-11½ hours through the night and 2-2½ hours of daytime napping. At 13 months, there still may be 2 naps, but by 18 months, most children take just one nap in the afternoon. If you are still nursing, children often like to nurse before and after naps and before bedtime and upon rising (and hopefully you are either by pumping or actual nursing. Try to nurse until 2 yrs of age, according to the World Health Organization)

Sample Schedule (this is only an example, but seems to work well for most babies) –

(Shift earlier if your child wakes between 6:00 and 7:00 a.m.)

- 7:00–7:30 a.m. Wake-up. Nurse/cup and breakfast.
- 9:00–9:30 a.m. Start of one-hour morning nap if she's still taking one. She'll probably want a snack right after the nap.
- 11:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m. Lunch (depending on morning-nap timing).
- 12:30–1:30 p.m. Start of afternoon nap. About an hour and a half if it's a second nap, about two to two and a half hours if it's the only nap of the day. Snack after nap.
- 5:00–5:30 p.m. Dinner.
- 6:00–6:30 p.m. Start bath/bedtime routine.
- 7:00–8:00 p.m. Bedtime.

18 months- 2.5 yrs:

Your child should be sleeping 11-11½ hours through the night and 2-2½ hours of daytime napping. By age two, 11 hours through the night and 2 hour nap in the afternoon.

Sample Schedule (this is only an example, but seems to work well for most babies) –

(Shift earlier if your child wakes between 6:00 and 7:00 a.m.)

- 7:00 a.m.–7:30 a.m. Wake-up and breakfast.
- 12 p.m.–12:30 p.m. Lunch.
- 12:30 p.m. – 1:00 p.m. Start afternoon nap.
- 5:00 p.m.–5:30 p.m. Dinner.
- 6:00 p.m.–6:30 p.m. Start bath/bedtime routine.
- 7:00 p.m.–8:00 p.m. Bedtime.

2½ – 5 yrs old:

Between 2 and 3 years of age, your child should get about 10½ of sleep through the night and a 1½ hour nap in the afternoon. By age 4, your child should get 11½ hours of sleep through the night and 45 minutes of rest in the afternoon. By age 5, your child should get 11 hours of sleep through the night and 45 minutes of rest in the afternoon.

5 yrs — teen:

Not less than 9 hours per night.

7. Manage your child's stress

There's no question the debilitating side effects of stress when it comes to adults, so remember our kids wear stress just the same BUT they are much less equipped than we are to manage it. Any stress placed on the body and not handled appropriately, whether physical or mental, can cause inflammation.

Inflammation is the #1 cause of a weakened immune system.

Stress Culprits to remember and reduce:

Adult Stress

The stress our kids place on themselves is plenty enough, so let's just give ourselves gentle reminders that our children are young and not ready for the adult stress we tend to place on them ie. adult arguments, finances, and health problems to name a few.

I read this article once that was so personal to me about how important the morning routine is for a child. Until reading this article, my daily morning routine went something like: hit alarm a few times, rush out of bed *quickly*, jump in shower *quickly*, pack lunches *quickly*, wake my kid *quickly*, yell out demands for her to follow *quickly*, "brush your teeth," "get dressed," "hurry up," etc.... You get the idea. And I know I'm like most parents. I didn't even realize it, but before my daughter was able to get to school, she was inundated with **MY** stress of "hurry up." School is tough. New things to learn and comprehend, teachers telling you what to do constantly, pointing out the incorrectness, making new friends, keeping friends, potential bullies, making conscious efforts to "fit in." She doesn't deserve my stress. My stress is just that- **MINE**.

Screen Time

I don't think I should have to say much here. I can't stress enough (no pun just for fun) the importance of limiting your child's screen time. Recently published in [PubMed \(FREE full text\)](#):

“The negative effects that accompany the current culture of early screen exposure are extensive and need to be considered as technology continues to enter the home and inundate social interactions. Increased levels of early screen exposure have been associated with decreased cognitive abilities, decreased growth, addictive behavior, poor school performance, poor sleep patterns, and increased levels of obesity.”

Lack of Sleep

Children NEED an appropriate amount of sleep. Please refer to #6 above. It's obvious a lack of sleep decreases our body's ability to fight off infection. THE END.

Activities

Yes, yes... we feel it's important for our kids to be in multiple activities nowadays. Prior to signing your child up for a sport or an activity, STOP and ask yourself:

1. Is this something my child wants to do, or is this what I want them to do?
2. How many other activities is my child already committed to?
3. How will committing to this new activity affect my own stress level?

Keep in mind, we as parents are human. Do your best. If you can implement just a few of the above strategies, your child's immune health will greatly benefit!

Household Chemicals Resources:

- [US Department of Health and Human Services](#) – Household Products Database
- [Federal Emergency Management Agency](#) – Household Chemical Emergencies
- [Cleveland Clinic](#) – Household Safety (Household Chemicals Chart: Whats in my House?)
- [Environmental Working Group](#) – Guide to Healthy Cleaning
- [Presidential Executive Order-13045](#) – signed 1997
- [EPA Children's Environmental Health](#) – drafted document, July 2, 2014
- [SaferChemicals.org](#)

References:

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