

## Three natural sources of strength that bolster the immune system

Why it's worth taking the time to protect yourself against seasonal colds even on warm summer days



The sun is shining, the air is pleasantly warm, and the colds of spring are long since forgotten. At the height of summer, the last thing you want to do is cast your mind to the cold, grey winter ahead. Nevertheless, it's worth taking advantage of the warm summer days to give your body the strength it needs to face the strains of winter. Especially with regard to a widely mooted second wave of coronavirus in autumn, it makes sense to bolster our immune defences at an early stage. Here, we present three natural sources of strength that simultaneously refresh and fortify the body and soul.

## Heat

Even if summer spoils us with warm days and mild nights, enjoying a sauna is a worthwhile pursuit when it comes to health. The intensive heat of the sauna, alternating with the refreshing cooling of the plunge pool or a cold shower, provides effective training for the immune system, helping to get the body fit for the exhausting winter season ahead. Those who regularly enjoy a sauna are not only treating themselves to a welcome timeout, but also helping their own body to fortify itself effectively against potential pathogens. During a hot sweat bath in the sauna, the body temperature rises by around 0.5°C. The body uses cooling-off mechanisms to regulate the heat on the skin and begins to sweat profusely. It is now that the vascular training gets underway, and the heart begins to pump more vigorously. Blood supply to the skin is improved due to the "activation" of many additional capillaries, especially those just beneath the surface.

Cooling down after a sauna is especially important. The second phase of vascular training ensures that the circulation gains momentum and the metabolism is activated. The alternating thermal effects of hot and cold temperatures on the body and the cardiovascular system strengthen the immune system and build up additional defences. A refreshing cold shower or jumping into cold water are not just optional extras after a hot sweat bath – this process of cooling down is actually essential.

"Over the last few decades, studies have shown that regular sauna use leads to a significant drop in *susceptibility* to a wide range of cold and flu pathogens after two to three months – and a drop of as much as 50% after around six months," explains Professor Resch from the German Institute for Health Research. "Although there are no corresponding studies as yet, it's quite plausible that a well-trained immune system that stands up to attack by other respiratory viruses so effectively will also be better equipped to defend itself against the new coronavirus than an immune system that lacks a sauna as its sparring partner."

With this in mind, the summer months of August and September are the perfect time to resume your own sauna routine.

## Water

In summer, the element of water is all about the cooling refreshment offered by a quick dip. Even after a sauna, it does you good to swim a few lengths. But this method of cooling off after a sauna is just one of the health-promoting benefits offered by a swimming pool. People who swim regularly help to support their own immune system, stimulate their circulation, boost lung function, and strengthen the heart muscle. "Swimming works like a *lymph drainage*. It supports the *cleansing* of tissue and activates circulation, which can in turn supply tissue with fresh nutrients," explains Professor Resch.

## Salt

Natural and cleansing – for centuries, salt has been a popular and well-known natural remedy as well as a precious foodstuff. Professor Resch is also enthusiastic about its therapeutic benefits: "I've been fascinated by the natural therapeutic properties of salt and its use in the region of the lungs for many years." Used regularly, salt is another natural resource with the ideal properties to begin preparing the body for a disease-free – and carefree – winter even during the summer season. For example, salt inhalation is recommended as a way to cleanse the lungs, nose and throat. Professor Resch explains the effect of breathing in dry salt mist on the body: "Salt aerosol is hygroscopic. This term is used in chemistry and physics to describe the property of substances to bind to moisture from the environment. In the lungs, it works like this: when salt is deposited, it *draws* water through the mucous membrane and into the lumen of the lungs. As a result, the mucus lying in the bronchi and pulmonary alveoli is liquefied. Fine dust particles, bacteria and viruses are loosened and the lungs are therefore quite literally cleansed." This sort of "spring clean" is good for the lungs. The cleansing and disinfectant effect fortifies them against pathogens.

## Prevention is key – fortify yourself for the cold season

Summer temperatures make it difficult to image the cold autumn season ahead, but it's worth taking the time to strengthen the body's defences in preparation. With the three sources of strength set out above, you can begin to strengthen your immune system even during summer.

Image themes:



**Image 1:**

The SaltProX salt inhalation device comes in a handy format and fills the sauna cabin with fine salt aerosol. The size of the salt particles has a decisive effect on their distribution within the body. The smaller the salt aerosols, the deeper the salt-enriched air can penetrate into the lungs, where it has anti-inflammatory and disinfectant effects.

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**Image 2:**

Those lucky enough to be able to relax in a swimming pool of their own, can enjoy fresh air, water and carefree days with the family while also benefiting their health.

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— 90 °C

— 60 °C

— 40 °C