

HEALTHY MONDAY'S TOOL KIT: JANUARY 2026 EDITION



ESSEX COUNTY OFFICE OF PUBLIC HEALTH MANAGEMENT



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Verona, NJ 07044

TABLE OF CONTENTS

What is Healthy Monday's?	3
<u>Lesson 1: Healthy Hygiene Habits</u>	4
Steps to Washing Your Hands Flyer for Ages 5-12	6
Why You Should Always Cover Your Cough Flyer for Ages 12 and up	7
<u>Lesson 2: Immune-Boosting Nutrition</u>	8
Healthy Foods to Fight off Cold Flyer for Ages 5-12	9
Nutrition for Immune System Flyer for Ages 12 and up	10
<u>Lesson 3: Staying Active to Stay Healthy</u>	11
Fun Ways to Keep Moving in the Winter Flyer for Ages 5-12	12
Importance of Exercise During Cold/Flu Season Flyer for Ages 12 and up	13
<u>Lesson 4: Getting Enough Sleep/Rest</u>	14
The Power of Sleep for Staying Healthy Flyer for Ages 5-12 up	15
Sleep & It's Impact on The Immune System Flyer for Ages 12 and up	16





WHAT IS THE HEALTHY MONDAY CAMPAIGN?



While we are encouraged to prioritize our health every day, the Healthy Monday campaign provides a weekly reset. Healthy Monday is a public health initiative that encourages individuals and organizations to commit to healthier behaviors each Monday as a way to prevent chronic disease and build lasting habits.

In Essex County, the Healthy Monday campaign will focus on children and their parents by providing a weekly toolkit every Monday. Each month will highlight a new theme, with age-appropriate topics relevant to students in grades K–12.

Welcome to the Essex County Healthy Monday Campaign for the month of January, where the focus is staying healthy during cold and flu season.

LESSON 01: HEALTHY HYGIENE HABITS

Adopting healthy habits like washing hands and covering coughs are key practices to prevent the spread of germs and protect both individual and public health. Here's why these habits are essential and how to practice them effectively:

1. Washing Hands

- **Why It's Important:** Germs can easily spread through touch, especially when we come in contact with surfaces, objects, or other people who carry bacteria, viruses, or other harmful microorganisms. Washing your hands properly is one of the most effective ways to prevent the transmission of these germs.

How to Do It:

- a. Wet hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap.
 - b. Lather the soap on the front and back of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails for at least 20 seconds.
 - c. Rinse thoroughly with clean water.
 - d. Dry your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.
- **When to Wash:**
 - After using the bathroom.
 - Before eating or preparing food.
 - After coughing, sneezing, or wiping your nose.
 - After touching surfaces in public spaces.
 - After caring for someone who is sick.



LESSON 01: HEALTHY HYGIENE HABITS

2. Covering Coughs and Sneezes

Why It's Important: Coughs and sneezes can release tiny droplets containing germs into the air. These droplets can then be inhaled by others, especially in close quarters. Covering your cough or sneeze minimizes the spread of these germs and helps protect others from becoming sick.

How to Do It:

- Use a tissue to cover your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze.
- If no tissue is available, cough or sneeze into the elbow of your sleeve rather than your hands.
- Throw tissues away immediately in a lined trash can.
- Wash hands right after coughing or sneezing.

Additional Tips for Preventing Germ Spread:

- Avoid touching your face, especially your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Stay home when sick to prevent spreading illness to others.
- Disinfect frequently touched surfaces such as phones, doorknobs, and light switches.
- Wear a mask if you're feeling unwell, especially in public or crowded places, to prevent germ spread.

By adopting these habits, you help create a healthier environment for yourself and others around you.



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Wash, Rinse, Dry - Clean Hands, Happy You!

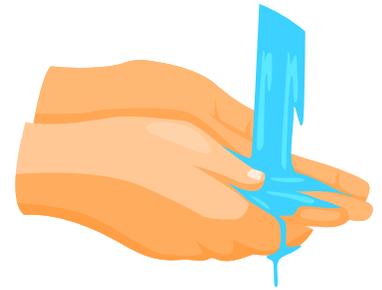
1

Turn the
water on.



2

Get your
hands wet.



3

Use soap.



4

Scrub and rub
your hands
together.



5

Sing the
ABC's.



6

Rinse your
hands.



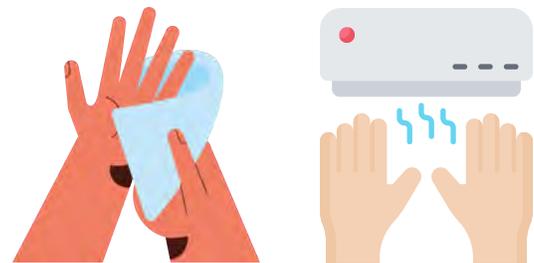
7

Turn the
water off.



8

Dry your hands.



Updated: 12/11/2025

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Cover Up to Stay Healthy: Coughing Tips!



C

over your mouth and nose with a tissue or elbow.

O

ffer a tissue to others if they need one.

U

nderstand the importance of washing hands afterward.

G

erms can spread easily, so always cover your cough.

H

healthy habits protect you and others from getting sick.



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LESSON 02: IMMUNE BOOSTING

NUTRITION

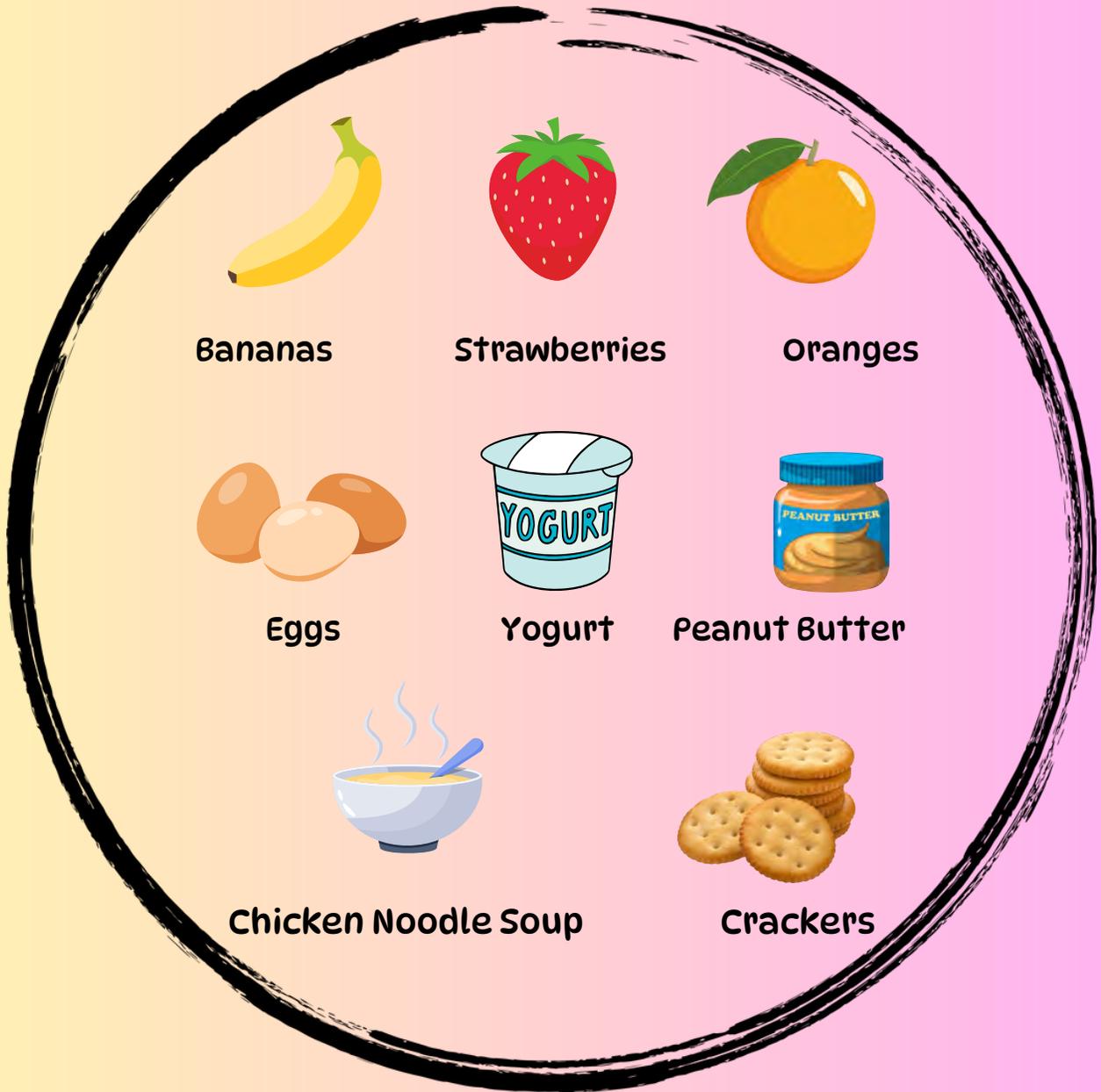
To support the immune system, especially in children from kindergarten through 12th grade, it's essential to incorporate foods that boost immunity and help fight off illness, like colds. Proper nutrition, along with a balanced lifestyle, plays a critical role in maintaining a strong immune system. Here's a guide to immune-boosting nutrition for children, broken down into key nutrients and food choices.

Key Nutrients for Immune Health

- 1. Vitamin C:** Helps stimulate the production of white blood cells, which fight infection.
 - Foods: Oranges, strawberries, kiwi, bell peppers, broccoli, tomatoes, spinach, and sweet potatoes.
- 2. Vitamin D:** Regulates the immune system and helps in fighting off pathogens.
 - Foods: Fortified milk, fortified cereals, egg yolks, fatty fish (like salmon, tuna, and mackerel), and sunlight exposure (important for vitamin D synthesis).
- 3. Zinc:** Essential for the production and function of immune cells.
 - Foods: Chicken, beef, pumpkin seeds, beans, lentils, cashews, chickpeas, and dairy products.
- 4. Probiotics:** Beneficial bacteria that support gut health, which is closely linked to the immune system.
 - Foods: Yogurt, kefir, kimchi, sauerkraut, miso, and other fermented foods.
- 5. Antioxidants:** Help fight oxidative stress and inflammation, which can weaken the immune system.
 - Foods: Berries (blueberries, raspberries, blackberries), spinach, kale, nuts, and seeds.
- 6. Omega-3 Fatty Acids:** Help reduce inflammation and improve immune response.
 - Foods: Fatty fish (salmon, mackerel, sardines), walnuts, chia seeds, and flaxseeds.



Fight Off Colds with These Super Healthy Foods!



Bananas

Strawberries

Oranges

Eggs

Yogurt

Peanut Butter

Chicken Noodle Soup

Crackers

These Foods Can Help You Feel Better When You're Sick!

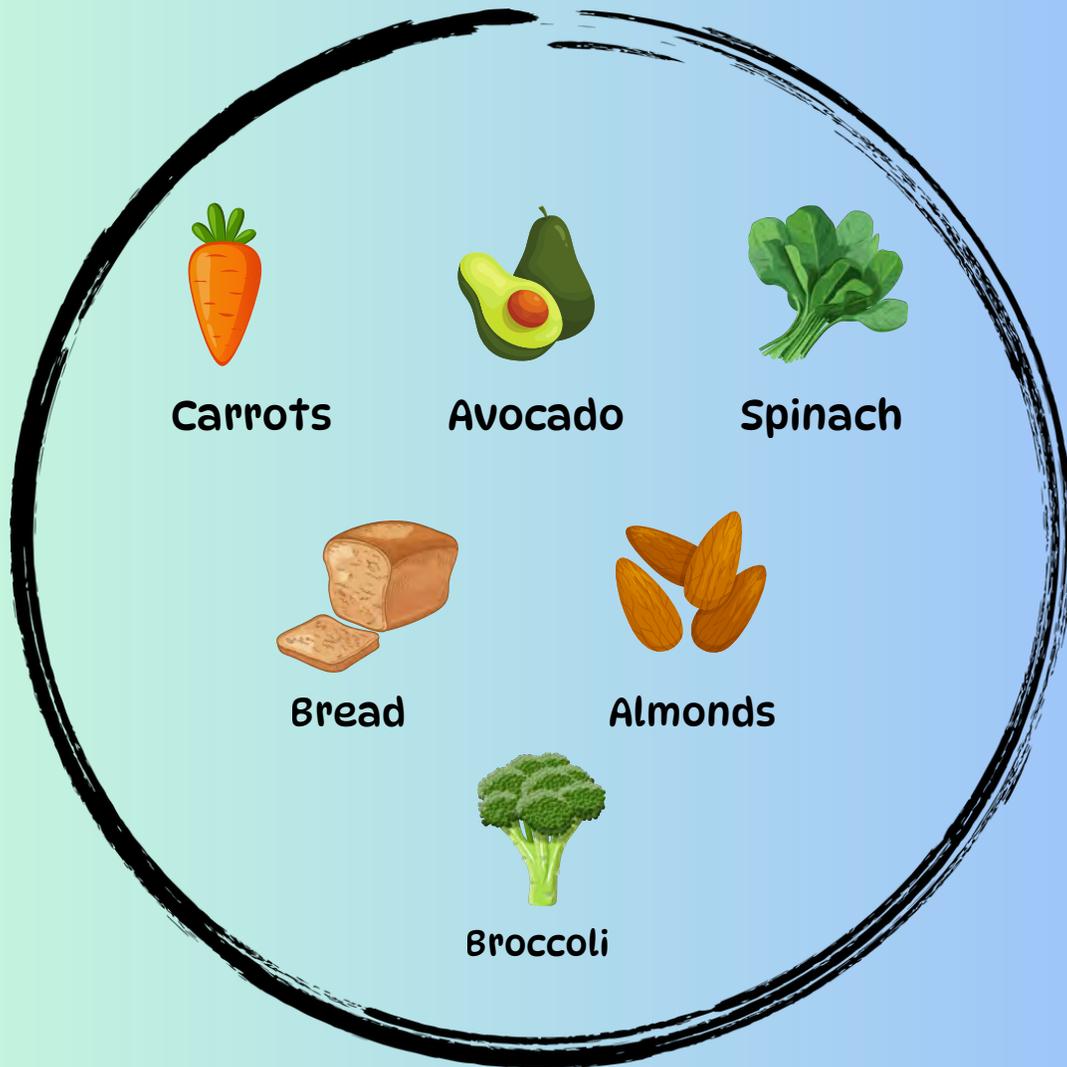


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Boost Your Immune System with Proper Nutrition!



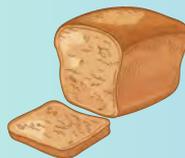
Carrots



Avocado



Spinach



Bread



Almonds



Broccoli

**Certain foods may help to strengthen your immune system.
If you want to learn how to prevent colds, the flu, and other infections, start
by going to your local grocery store.
Plan your meals to include these immune-system boosters.**



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LESSON 03: STAYING ACTIVE TO STAY HEALTHY

Staying active is essential for children and teens from kindergarten through 12th grade to promote physical health, mental well-being, and academic success. Regular physical activity helps build strong bones, muscles, and joints, improving cardiovascular health and maintaining a healthy weight, which can prevent childhood obesity. It also strengthens the immune system, helping the body fight infections, and enhances flexibility and balance to prevent injuries.

Mentally, physical activity has powerful benefits, reducing stress, anxiety, and feelings of depression. It releases endorphins, boosting mood and promoting better sleep, which is crucial for focus and academic performance. Staying active also improves cognitive function, increasing attention, memory, and critical thinking skills, which contribute to better academic results. Additionally, regular exercise builds self-esteem as children master new skills, fostering confidence.

Socially, physical activities like sports or group exercises teach valuable skills such as teamwork, communication, and cooperation. They provide opportunities to form friendships and develop social networks. Moreover, staying active encourages discipline, responsibility, and goal-setting, which are important life skills.

Long-term, staying active helps instill healthy habits that can last into adulthood. It reduces the risk of chronic diseases like heart disease, diabetes, and arthritis and prevents a sedentary lifestyle, which is linked to various health problems. Physical activity is also fun and enjoyable, whether through sports, outdoor play, or dance, ensuring kids stay engaged and excited.

In summary, physical activity is vital for the growth, health, and well-being of children and teens. It supports physical, mental, and emotional development, boosts academic performance, and helps form positive social relationships. By staying active, children and teens build lifelong healthy habits that set the foundation for a happy and healthy future.



Fun and Creative Ways for Kids to Stay Active This Winter

Indoor Activities



Having a Dance Party



Doing kid's Yoga

Outdoor Activities



Building a Snowman with friends



Taking a walk with your family



Try Ice Skating or Sledding



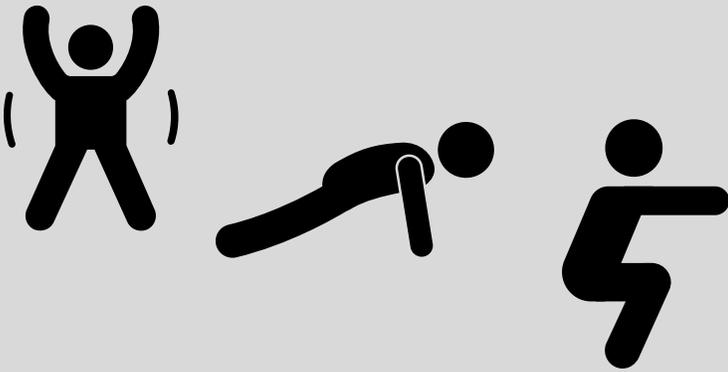
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Stay Strong This Cold & Flu Season: The Power of Exercise for Your Health!

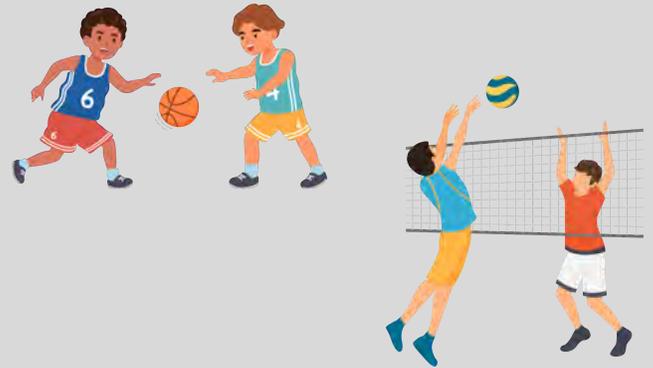
Indoor Workouts:

Try jumping jacks, push-ups, or squats. These exercises can help keep you fit without needing to go outside.



Join a Sports Team:

Many schools offer indoor sports like basketball or volleyball. Staying active with teammates is a great way to stay healthy.



Stretching & Yoga:

Stretching and yoga can help improve flexibility, reduce stress, and keep your immune system strong.



Challenge Yourself:

Set small fitness goals, like doing 10 push-ups or running a certain distance. Track your progress and celebrate your success!



These activities not only help your body stay strong but also keep your immune system in top shape to fight off illness!



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LESSON 04: GETTING ENOUGH SLEEP/REST

Getting proper sleep and rest during the cold and flu season is essential for children and teens, as it helps strengthen the immune system. Sleep supports the body's ability to fight off infections, allowing the immune system to function at its best. When children rest, their body produces immune cells that help protect against viruses, reducing the likelihood of getting sick or recovering faster.

In addition to boosting immunity, adequate sleep improves overall health and well-being. Rest helps regulate mood, reduce stress, and improve focus, which is especially important during the school year. Children and teens who get enough sleep are more likely to perform better academically and engage in social and extracurricular activities with energy and enthusiasm.

Sleep also supports physical and mental recovery. When children and teens are well-rested, they experience better energy levels, improved memory, and enhanced concentration. Proper rest is key to maintaining physical stamina and emotional balance, especially during the busy, stressful cold and flu season, allowing them to stay healthier and feel more resilient.



Sleep Tight, Feel Right: Stay Strong and Healthy!

zzzz Sleep Builds Strong Bodies



Keeps Your Brain Sharp

Helps You Feel Happy

Better Mood, Better Day



Sleep Helps You Grow



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