

# Key Strategies for Enhancing Immune Health

Dr. Tom O'Bryan



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**Rebekah Kelley:** Welcome to the Humanized Podcast, all about personalizing your health. I am your host, Rebekah Kelley. Today I'm excited to introduce Dr. Tom O'Bryan. Before I introduce Dr. O'Bryan, I want to remind everyone to subscribe, to get all of our variety of casts in audio, video, and transcription at [HumanizedHealth.com](https://HumanizedHealth.com). I'd also like to thank our lead sponsor, Village Green Apothecary at [MyVillageGreen.com](https://MyVillageGreen.com).

A little bit about our guest: Dr. Tom O'Bryan is a recognized world expert on gluten and its impact on health. He is an internationally recognized and sought-after speaker and workshop leader, specializing in the complications of non-celiac gluten sensitivity, celiac disease, and the development of autoimmune diseases as they occur inside and outside of the intestines. Thank you so much for being with us, Dr. O'Bryan.



**Tom O'Bryan:** Thank you, Rebekah. It's a pleasure.

**Rebekah Kelley:** Today we're talking about immunity, which is a very important topic, especially with the pandemic. Having a strong immune system is important. So here is my first question: is a fever good or bad for you?

**Tom O'Bryan:** That's a really good question. Fevers are generated by your immune system. What I want everyone to remember is that your immune system is the armed forces in your body. It's there to protect you. There's an army, a navy, an air force, a marines, and a coast guard. We call them IgA, IgG, IgE, IgM... There are different branches of the immune system to protect you.

So, what is a fever? A fever is when your immune system says, there's too much of this bacteria, or this virus here. We need to ramp up the temperature a little bit because bacteria and viruses don't live in 101° or 102° or 103° temperatures. Fevers kill bacteria; fevers kill viruses.

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So, in general, yes, fevers are a very good thing. There are so many studies that talk about this in the medical journals. You, of course, want to monitor a fever. You don't want it to be over 103° for a day. If it gets above that, or if it's there for too many days, you might want to bring some support in to bring it down a little bit. But 101°, 102°, fine. Your body's doing its job, trying to get rid of a bad bug that got in there one way or another.

**Rebekah Kelley:** So, it's working like it's supposed to.

**Tom O'Bryan:** That's right. Now, sometimes it can get stuck, and it's ramping up too high, or it's not effective in getting the job done. Lots of reasons why that can occur and then you need to bring in some extra help.

**Rebekah Kelley:** So, it's actually working appropriately. Let's say we're running a fever, and we're a family. Obviously, we want to protect ourselves and build our immunity. Obviously, we can wash our hands to make sure that we're not giving it to others, but what else can we do to protect ourselves and our families?

**Tom O'Bryan:** If you've got a fever, there's something called the spleen pump technique. And it's just brilliant. This was published in 1952. In a hospital setting they chose, I think it was 70 people. They were in the cardiovascular ward, the liver ward, and the pediatric ward. They had done blood draws on them and they saw what their white blood cell count was. And they did this technique where you put your hands underneath the rib cage on the left side, right at the bottom of the rib cage, your hands are in the front and back. That's where your spleen is. And you just gently milk the spleen. You're just compressing the rib cage together just a little bit. With an infant, you're hardly moving at all; I've done this with newborns. It's extremely safe.

But with adults whose rib cages are more rigid, you've got to get in there and move it a little bit. The idea is you're milking it. You're just milking that side of the chest so that you're pumping the spleen.

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They drew the blood on these people. They measured the white blood cell count. They did the spleen pump technique for 3 to 5 minutes, really gentle. And if you're doing it to a child, they're just looking at you goo-goo eyed, you know, there's no distress whatsoever. And then they waited 15 minutes and they drew the blood again. There was an average increase of 30% of the white blood cells in the bloodstream. 30% increase of the soldiers going out to fight whatever there is to fight. Why? Because your spleen is a reservoir, it holds extra blood. And what you're doing is saying, "Come on guys, get out there and go to work!" It's like, you're giving them a kick in the pants; go to work, get out in the bloodstream!

So it's a very gentle, safe technique that any mom can do with a child, any partner can do with their significant other, their spouse. And it's always going to help; sometimes a little, sometimes a lot.

In my practice I've knocked out 105° fever. It was with my daughter; that's how I learned about this. My first year in practice, my wife called and said, our daughter has got 105° fever. So I just canceled the rest of the day. I went home. My wife had been cooking dinner, but she turned it off because our daughter was sick. I picked her up and put her on my shoulder; she was just dead weight, just limp. And she was really hot.

My wife had called the pediatrician. He hadn't called back. I'm walking around and saying, where's that doctor? Where's that damn doctor? Wait a minute; I'm a doctor! What would I do? I had just learned this technique the weekend before. So I did the spleen pump technique. My wife said, what are you doing? I said, I just learned about this from Dr. Goodheart. I'm doing this very gentle technique. I picked my daughter back up and we walked around. And maybe 8, 10 minutes later, we walked through the kitchen and my daughter just leaped to grab the pot of spaghetti. She was really hungry! We kind of looked at each other... and her fever was 99°.

That's the first person I ever did it on. I've done it on hundreds of people now, in the last 40 years. Very safe. Very effective. Never going to hurt anybody. Bottom of the ribs on the left side. Nice big wide hand contact front and back. Just gently milk it a little bit. It almost feels like you're not doing anything, but it might help.

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**Rebekah Kelley:** Hopefully I won't have a fever, but I'm going to try that. What nutrients might help us maintain a strong immune system?

**Tom O'Bryan:** A really good question, especially during these trying times we have right now.

There are a few that a number of studies have talked about. The first one is zinc. Viruses have to get inside your cell in order to, well they don't really reproduce; it's called shedding. It's kind of like dandruff, you know, it falls off, so they're not reproducing. But to get more virus in your cells, or in your body, the virus has to get inside cells. If they get inside the cell, the amount of zinc inside the cell determines if they shed or not. And there have been a few studies on this that show, if you have high zinc levels inside your cell, the viruses are suppressed and they don't shed, or they shed minimal. So you want to have enough zinc, somewhere around 30 to 40 milligrams a day, a very safe amount. There are 18 different forms of zinc. Some are better than others, but any zinc is going to help. Just make sure you're getting some zinc first.

Next is vitamin C. Everybody knows that vitamin C helps the immune system. We've all heard that; for my entire life I've heard that. And some people say you can only absorb 500 milligrams a day of vitamin C. Well, one study was published in the 1980s and that's been disputed ever since. So I like to say, if somebody weighs about 130 to 140 pounds, about 5,000 milligrams of vitamin C a day. I take 8,000. It's just fine. Everybody's a little different, but it's very safe. But have vitamin C; have a good amount of vitamin C in your diet every day. It helps to support your immune system dramatically.

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Next is vitamin D. With this current scare, there were 790 people in one hospital setting that were admitted to ICU. They checked their vitamin D levels. If their vitamin D was 19.5 or below, every one of them died. If their vitamin D was 31 or above, none of them died. So, there are many different things that come into play, in terms of how sick you get and how your body responds. But you just want to make sure your vitamin D level is robust. Not just normal, you want to be robust, and that's between 50 and 75 ng per mL. That's the classification system in the US, ng/mL. The goal is 50 to 75. Have your doctor do a blood test for you for vitamin D. And if they won't, then just order the finger prick tests, you can order it on my website. You poke your finger, put a drop on a card, send it off, and they send you the results. It's extremely accurate.

But find out what your level is now for you and your family. And if it's low, start taking vitamin D, somewhere around 2,000 IUs for every 50 pounds in weight, somewhere around there is extremely safe. So if you weigh 150 pounds, that would be 6,000 IUs a day. Do that for a couple of months, then stop the vitamin D for a few days and do a finger prick again, to confirm that you've got your level up. If there's one test that's more important than any other test that I can think of, much more important than cholesterol every year, much more important is your vitamin D level. Every year you do that. So we've got zinc, vitamin C, vitamin D.

Next, the rainbow diet. It's critically important that you eat all the colors of the rainbow in your food selections. The colors are called bioflavonoids and polyphenols – sorry for the geek term – but they inhibit the virus from getting inside your cells. Remember I talked about the virus has to get inside your cell to shed. And if you have a diet high in polyphenols, the [COVID-19] virus has a much harder time getting through the ACE2 receptor. That's how the virus gets into the cells: the ACE2 receptor. The polyphenols sit in that receptor so the virus can't get in. So eat red beets, and red raspberries, and green broccoli, and green parsley, and cilantro, and lettuce, and blueberries, and purple cabbage... You know, all of those colors of the rainbow. It makes a huge difference in the long-term, in strengthening your immunity and giving you protection.

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**Rebekah Kelley:** Awesome. Are there any other nutrients that you want to increase, not just maintain to build immunity, or if you're feeling like you're coming down with something?

**Tom O'Bryan:** That's a really good question. Well, vitamin C is always safe. And actually, every patient, if they're coming down with something, I tell them to take 50,000 units of vitamin D once a week. So they ramp it up and we've never had a problem. It's extremely safe to do that. So vitamin C, vitamin D, and vitamin A is really important for your immune system function, especially for the lining of your lungs and the lining of your gut. Having adequate amounts of vitamin A is really important. So for that, eat sweet potatoes. Carrots are good; carrots are high in vitamin A, but don't just eat carrots or drink carrot juice, because you get too much of some of that stuff. Sweet potatoes are great for that, also.

**Rebekah Kelley:** Thanks, Dr. O'Bryan for these valuable insights. Dr. Tom O'Bryan can be found at [www.thedr.com](http://www.thedr.com).

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