Worried that you’ll get sick? Strengthen your immune system through living smart: Balanced eating, regular sleep, exercise, and stress reduction can help keep you on the right track.

**Balance Your Plate**
- Nourish your gut bacteria by eating some foods from all food groups. The #1 cause of death of our Paleolithic ancestors was illness and disease – so add some starches back into the diet and feed those bugs. You can think of these “bugs” as barriers or fighters of infection.
- Include fruit and vegetables: they provide vitamins, minerals, phytochemicals and antioxidants that work together to keep you healthy and fight disease and infection.
- Don’t forget the Omega-3 fatty acids that are found in fish, nuts and flax seed oil which help stimulate immune activity of our white blood cells. These little guys literally eat up germs!

**Catch Some Zzzzs**
- Getting less than the recommended amount of 8 hours sleep per night lowers your resistance and makes you more susceptible to contagious illnesses like the flu.

**Keep Moving**
- Did you know that regular exercisers that eat a healthy diet to support their exercise are less susceptible to upper respiratory infections and colds?
- Exercise is also a great way to relieve stress! 30-60 minutes on most days of the week is plenty. If you over exercise, you’re likely to become fatigued and MORE vulnerable to bacteria and illness.
- If you’re getting sick, don’t exercise – let your body rest.

**Wash Your Hands**
- This is the most important thing you can do to prevent getting sick. Make sure to wash your hands after using the bathroom or sneezing and before meals.
- Use hand sanitizer if your hands aren’t visibly dirty. If you can see the dirt, it’s best to wash those germs down the sink with soap and water.

**Lessen Your Stress**
- Increased stress levels can lead to decreased sleep and poor eating habits, which ultimately lead to fatigue and illness. Find ways to relax and take time to do things that you enjoy and that make you happy.

Getting sick is never fun but if you make taking care of yourself a priority, you may avoid illness or at least lessen the severity if you do get sick.

Need ideas on how to eat well? Contact a Student Health Dietitian for a free nutrition counseling session at 919-681-WELL. Find ideas at our website: [http://studentaffairs.duke.edu/studenthealth/nutrition](http://studentaffairs.duke.edu/studenthealth/nutrition)