

Inherent protection

Building a child's immunity system is the key to his optimum health throughout his life. ANEETA SUNDARARAJ finds out how

YOU may be satisfied with your child's mental development, but he seems to always be among the first in his group of friends to catch an infection. Worse, his recovery time is more prolonged than his peers.

If that's the case, there's a possibility that your child has poor immunity.

A child's immunity is based on the proper functioning of his immune system. Having good immunity is the body's defence against potentially serious infections from foreign matter, explains Tropicana Medical Centre consultant paediatrician and neonatologist Dr Anushree Narayanan.

To help children develop good immunity, parents need to monitor their children's diet. Dr Anushree explains that the gut is where food is digested and nutrients are absorbed into the bloodstream, so what remains is the waste that is expelled from the body. Aiding this process are bacteria that line the gut and, in turn, develop the immune system.

Though there's no medical proof that specific foods help boost a child's immunity, give him good nutrition daily, advises Dr Anushree. "This can be derived from a balanced diet — five servings of vegetables and fruit and appropriate portions of carbohydrates and protein."

Also, drink milk fortified with protein (to develop healthy muscle tissues), magnesium (to aid calcium absorption), calcium (to develop strong teeth

NAN Grow 3 Immunity Week presents
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and bones), vitamins B1 and B2 (to convert carbohydrates into energy) and vitamin B12 (to rebuild blood cells).

"Many brands of formula milk today are enhanced with probiotics and prebiotics to stimulate the growth of good bacteria in a child's gut. But some parents prepare the milk with boiling water and this kills all the good bacteria. Use lukewarm water instead," says Dr Anushree.

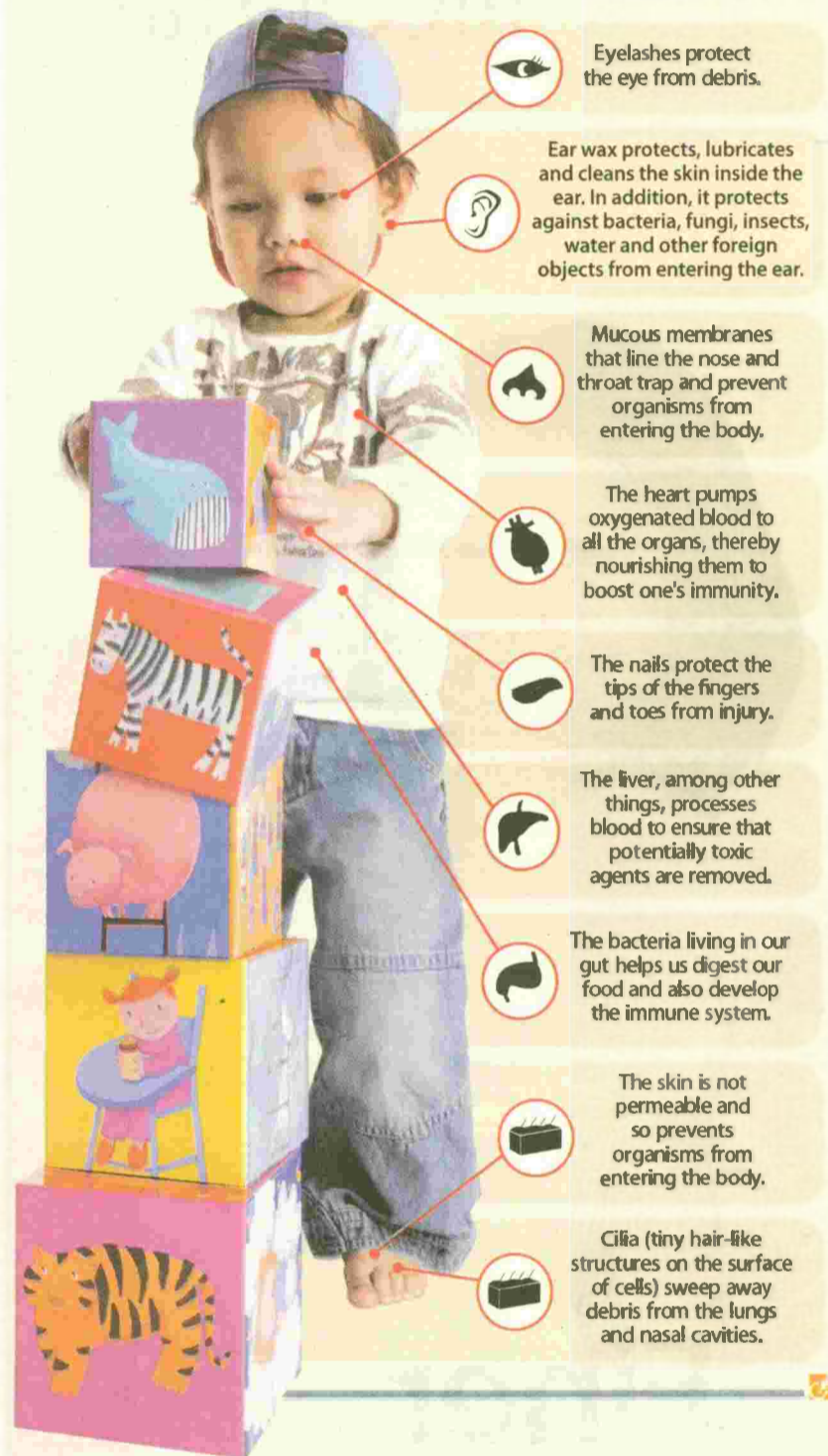
A child starts to develop his immunity in his mother's womb, so he has an "inherent immunity" when he's born.

Then there's active immunity, which is protection that a child develops throughout his life. There are two ways to acquire active immunity: By contracting the disease and developing immunity towards it, and through vaccination.

There's also passive immunity, which is protection that is "borrowed" from a source and lasts for a while. For example, through breast milk, a mother can transfer certain antibodies to her child and protect him against certain infections in early childhood.

Details on Immunity Week (July 29-Aug 6) at www.greattummy.com.my.

ANATOMY OF PROTECTION



Having good immunity means the body has a good defence against potentially serious infections.

Top five concerns

1. Bad nutrition: This arises when a child is a fussy eater and doesn't like fruit and vegetables. The nutrients in these are essential to maintain a child's immunity.

2. Lack of activities: Exercise helps stimulate the immune system. When a child spends all his time indoors, his immune system does not work at an optimum level.

3. Inadequate sleep: In addition to an afternoon nap, a child should have uninterrupted sleep of up to

10 hours at night.

4. Exposure to infections: Many children are placed in childcare facilities, which expose them to contracting infections from other ill children. Continuous exposure, which leads to prolonged infections, can impair your child's immunity.

5. Environmental pollutants: Exposure to environmental pollutants such as cigarette smoke hyper-activates the immune system and can be detrimental to a child's immune system.