



6 Ways to Bounce Back from Illness Faster

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Nothing humbles a person quite so fast as getting sick. Where once you felt confident, capable, and ready to take on the world, suddenly you're curled up beneath a mountain of snotty tissues.

The bad news is that it's simply not possible to snap your fingers and be well again. The good news is that a few tried-and-true strategies may help you recover more effectively from illness. Whether you're suffering from the common cold, the flu, or pretty much any other mild illness, here are six ways to bounce back faster.

Sleep a lot.

We all know sleep is important when we're sick, but it bears repeating. Getting plenty of rest is arguably the most important strategy when it comes to bouncing back from an illness. Aim to add at least an extra hour to your normal sleep time whenever you feel illness creeping in, either by going to bed earlier or sleeping in later (or ideally both). If possible, sneak in a few small naps during the day to give your body a break and provide it with additional opportunities for rejuvenation.

If you're sick on a workday, call in sick if possible. This is important for two reasons: It will allow your body to rest and recover without having to undertake the stressors and demands that entail going to work. And it will reduce the chances that your coworkers catch whatever you have—which would not only be unfair to them, it would also increase the likelihood of the illness circulating through the office and making it back to you when you're in the vulnerable early stages of recovery.

No matter when you sleep, set yourself up for quality sleep with the following strategies:

- Keep the curtains drawn in order to create a dark environment, which is ideal for sleep quality.
- If your family members or roommates are around, ask them to keep volume to a minimum so your sleep environment remains quiet—this is also essential for quality sleep.
- Make sure you're prepared with plenty of layers on the bed, since your body temperature is likely to fluctuate wildly when you're sick.

Stay hydrated.

Here's another strategy that most of us have heard before—and there's good reason for that. Drink more water!

Staying hydrated is critical for fighting off illness. That's because illness tends to result in the loss of bodily fluids (in the form of sweating, vomiting, diarrhea, and so on), so these fluids need to be replenished for the body to maintain optimum function. Fluids are also essential for flushing out toxins from the body. Aim to consume plenty of good-for-you fluids in the form of water, sports drinks, broth, and teas. There's some evidence that hot liquids (e.g. teas) can help thin out mucus, which makes it easier for the body to get rid of it.

Eat well.

When our bodies are fighting off illness, they need all the help they can get. Much of that help can come in the form of what we put into our bodies (or withhold from our bodies) in the way of nutrition. To that end, it's helpful to keep the following pointers in mind:

- Cutting back on sugar is a great idea when you're sick (and all the time). That's true for two reasons: First, because sugar provokes inflammation in the body, which is the last thing your body needs when it's already combatting inflammation in the form of infection. Second, there's some evidence that sugar consumption may actually inhibit white blood cells' ability to effectively fight off infection.
- Spicy foods (such as those containing chili peppers or cayenne) have anti-viral and anti-bacterial properties, which make them ideal for when you're sick. As an added bonus, these spices can help clear out sinus congestion.
- In addition to spices, certain vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients may promise an extra boost for a struggling immune system. These include zinc, selenium, vitamin D, vitamin C, echinacea, ginger, turmeric, garlic, and probiotics.
- Even if you lose your appetite when you're sick, it's important to eat. Consuming plenty of nutrients is essential for providing your body with the fuel it needs to effectively fight off illness. If you can't stomach the idea of chicken soup or spicy curry, consider drinking your nutrients in the form of green juices or smoothies.

Hit the shower.

When you're feeling sick, it's easy to stay bundled in the bedsheets and skip showering for a few days. But dragging yourself to the shower might actually help you recover faster. Standing in the steamy shower can help clear up congestion and thin mucus, which makes it easier for the body to expel. The hot water can also help soothe achy muscles and promote relaxation, which can facilitate getting that much-needed rest.