



Style

Wellness

Level Up Your Immunity

What to do to protect yourself as omicron rages, according to Hollywood's top doctors: 'Loading up on supplements isn't going to cut it' *By Elycia Rubin*

More than two years into the COVID-19 pandemic, with the omicron variant spiking cases nationwide, many people, including health-obsessed Angelinos, continue to look for ways to improve the strength of their immune systems. But top doctors caution that there are no quick fixes. "Although we are conditioned to ask for a prescription or a shot, improving the immune system involves attention 24/7 and not just with respect to COVID, but to our overall general health," says Dr. **Jennifer Ashton**, ABC chief medical correspondent and author of *The Self-Care Solution*. "Running to Erewhon for a shot of ginger and lemon along with loading up on supplements at the first signs of illness isn't going to cut it. Similar to a leaking roof, the majority of people only think about their well-being when it's threatened."

According to Ashton, there are three indisputable pillars that set up the immune system for success — eating clean, whole foods; daily movement and exercise; and getting solid sleep. "This requires daily work and commitment, not just little bits and bursts," she adds.



Health and wellness expert **Vicky Vlachonis** agrees and, like Ashton, is a proponent of an anti-inflammatory diet consisting of fresh fruits, vegetables, healthy fats and lean protein while avoiding refined carbohydrates, processed foods, alcohol and sugar as much as possible. Vlachonis is also a promoter of potent polyphenols through her new Saint Supply Living Elixir, a high-quality drinking oil made from olives from

ancient groves in southern Greece, touted by clients including **Jake Gyllenhaal**, **Gwyneth Paltrow** and **Beyoncé** (who's also an investor). "These plant-based phytonutrients safeguard against common health problems and the effects of aging," says Vlachonis. (A new study published in the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology* found that participants who drink more than half a tablespoon of olive oil each day have a lower risk of dying

from cardiovascular disease and cancer.) Another supplement, vitamin D, plays a key role in supporting immunity, and medical researchers are looking into whether a deficiency can increase the risk of several illnesses from a COVID-19 infection. "But at the end of the day, surviving COVID or really any other illness is about being in the best shape you can be," says Dr. **Jeff Toll**, who has a membership-based concierge practice in Beverly Hills. He says many people take more vitamins than their body can even absorb in the hope of boosting health. "I call it expensive urine," he says.

Toll stresses that "the number one thing that anyone could have done to protect themselves while working from home [during the pandemic] is getting into cardiovascular shape. When your heart works better, when your lungs work better, you are able to fight off something better."

Vinh Pham, the founder of Myodetox — research-backed clinics specializing in corrective exercise and myofascial treatments (with two L.A. locations) — agrees. "Given nearly everything is now done at home, our posture is slumped and we're less physically active, leading to an effect on our body's movement, health and sleep," he says. Adds Dr. **Scott Braunstein**, medical director of Solis Health Los Angeles, a

members-only medical concierge with offices in Beverly Hills and Santa Monica, "Exercise has been shown to decrease inflammation and improve immunity."

Ample sleep means getting seven hours or more per night. "Insufficient or low-quality sleep suppresses your immune system, making you more susceptible to infections, according to multiple studies," says Braunstein. Ashton and Vlachonis encourage short naps. "They play an important role in the rest and recharging pillar," says Ashton.

Although frequently overlooked, dental health plays a role in immunity as well. "Oral health and systemic health are related, as the mouth is the gateway to the body," says Dr. **Matt Nejad**, a biomimetic and cosmetic dentist whose clients include Beyoncé and Jay-Z. "The goal is to prevent periodontal disease, which is linked to an increase in susceptibility to viral infections and other systemic diseases."

So — in addition to eating all those whole foods, getting plenty of rest and moving one's body — don't forget to brush properly for a solid two minutes and floss at least twice a day. Of course, also visit the dentist for two professional cleanings every year. (Nejad says some patients may need more than two a year depending on their oral and periodontal condition.) [More](#)



Beyoncé is an investor in Saint Supply drinking olive oil.



MICRODOSING

Mushrooms Without the Hallucinations

The rising embrace of psilocybins, which legislators are pushing to legalize in California

Over the past few years, the acceptance of microdosing psychedelic fungi as a medical treatment has grown slowly but steadily. Microdosing psychedelics is a practice that involves taking generally one-tenth of a standard "trip" dose (by capsule, dropper or nasal spray), so that one's senses aren't affected to the point of full hallucination, but perception sharpens and serotonin is increased. And much like cannabis' transition from stigmatized plant to decriminalized cash cow, today's wellness industry is now embracing mushrooms as another form of nature's medicine.

Documentaries and TV series like Netflix's *Fantastic Fungi* and Hulu's *Nine Perfect Strangers* also have helped set the stage for a more open mushroom conversation. In 2022, in California, State Sen. **Scott Wiener** is hoping to pass legislation that would allow the possession and sharing of some hallucinogenic substances — including magic mushrooms, MDMA and LSD. (In Oregon, the Oregon Psychiatric Physician's Association opposed legalization because psilocybin is not FDA approved and clinical trials are still ongoing.)

But academic research has accelerated: a small Johns Hopkins study found in 2020 that psilocybin treatments helped relieve depression. "What we have access to are medicines that have been used and tested for thousands of years, albeit through Indigenous communities," says **Douglas K. Gordon**, CEO of Silo Wellness, a legal psychedelic and functional mushroom company founded in 2018 in Oregon (the only U.S. state to legalize psychedelic mushrooms). The company hosts weeklong retreats (from \$3,195 to \$10,000) in Jamaica, where psilocybin has never been outlawed. Adds Silo's chief science adviser Dr. **Greg Bhatt**, "For microdosing, what you're getting is mostly a turning up of the lights, a opening of the mind." With the family of **Marley**, Silo also launched Marley One, a product line of tinctures made with non-hallucinogenic mushrooms such as lion's mane, purported to have health benefits.

And a company, L.A.-based Celia Collective, offers personalized guidance to clients who want to microdose (starting at \$300 a session). For **Aya Allison**, CEO of psycho-social research company Sunset Biociences, the use of psychedelics is about "connecting to the heart, period. It's been seriously misunderstood. And that's the thing that I feel like most cultures [understood] — the heart is the center of coherence." — EVAN NICOLE BROWN



Marley

6 of L.A.'s Best Spots for Outside Workouts

Want to get back out to the gym but still leery amid the omicron wave? In-demand celebrity trainers and fitness studios serve up plenty of safe and inventive outdoor options

1 Michael Kahn Private Training Gym
A certified trainer and yoga instructor to many execs and actors, including the stars of *Love, Victor*, Kahn invested \$50,000 to transform his Mid-City backyard and garage into a fully kitted gym. He offers strength and conditioning and yoga for up to four

people at a time. \$180/hour, reachable via Instagram: [mjkahn425](#).

2 Thompson Hollywood + Love Yoga
In partnership with Venice Beach-based Love Yoga, the new Thompson Hollywood hotel now offers complimentary Saturday morning rooftop yoga



to both guests and the public, topped off by mimosas and fresh fruit juice. Available through spring; 1541 Wilcox Ave.; secure a spot at [hollywoodyoga@thompsonhotels.com](#)

3 Vitru
This private Hollywood workout and recovery facility is owned by certified trainer

Johnny Fontana, who helped **Robert Pattinson** get Batman-ready. The outdoor space where he offers such classes as HIIT Circuit, Jiu Jitsu and Booty Burn is elevated and modern. \$30-\$45 a class, 629 N. Western Ave., [vitru.club](#)

4 Natural Pilates
Teaching a combo of



From left: Trainer Michael Kahn; a group class at the West Hollywood location of Natural Pilates.

classic and modern Pilates styles favored by stars like **Sylvester Stallone** and **Naomi Campbell**, owner **Laura Wilson** offers classes al fresco in West Hollywood and



Brentwood. \$29-\$40 a class (depending on plan), 8436 West 3rd St. and 11461 Sunset Blvd., [naturalpilates.com](#)

5 Hype Silverlake
Burn calories

with cycling and HIIT classes, held in a 5,000-square-foot shaded parking lot. \$15-\$22 a class, 1932 Hyperion Ave., [hypesilverlake.com](#)

6 Box 'N Burn
Sweat it out at this spot co-owned by Olympic bronze medalist and professional boxer **Tony Jeffries**, while learning proper boxing techniques. Outdoor classes are available on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays at Box 'N Burn's location in Santa Monica. \$27-\$30 a class, 1654 Lincoln Blvd., [boxnburn.com](#) — E.R.

Illustrations by **Matté Franchi**

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