

SUPPORTING YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM: THE KEY TO YOUR HEALTH

Here at the dawn of the 21st century, increasing numbers of people are expressing concern about the health of their immune systems. When examining this issue, it is helpful to review some of the factors which impact this important system. It is a regrettable fact that our society has seen fit to expose our species to more toxic chemicals in the last fifty years (including many in our foods) than in the prior 200,000 years of human history combined. At the same time, our lifestyle has subjected us to unprecedented levels of stress, with no relief in sight. We see steadily rising levels of chronic and degenerative diseases, including cancer, diabetes and autoimmune disorders, as well as countless individuals who report to their medical doctors their nebulous, hard-to-diagnose feelings of “unwellness.”

What do all these have in common? They are either contributors to, or results of, overstressed immune systems.

The prevalence of toxins in our daily environment is truly frightening. From our food supply, to our homes and offices, to the very air we breathe, we are exposed to countless toxic influences which cause our immune systems to react. For example, the radiation exposure on a single cross country flight in a high altitude jet aircraft is equivalent to that of a chest X-ray. When the immune system is continually bombarded with such challenges, we are rendered less capable of fending off the truly serious challenges to our health.

At the same time, we as a society are exposed to historically unprecedented levels of chronic stress. The demands of Corporate America, the continually fast paced lifestyles of countless families, the ever increasing demands of everyday living, and the means with which we choose to cope with these stressors (caffeine, alcohol, tobacco, processed sugar, white flour, over exercising, etc.) all combine to further challenge our immune systems, but in a different way. Each of the coping mechanisms mentioned above overtaxes the adrenal glands. When these glands are continually overactive over long periods of time, the body's ability to cope with stress gradually diminishes. The results can manifest in conditions anywhere from depression or other psychosomatic disorders, to asthma or allergies, to a variety of serious autoimmune disorders, depending on the length of stress exposure.

While our modern medical system can truly work miracles, the combination of the health insurance system and the use of pharmaceutical drugs impose strict constraints upon the practice of medicine and, therefore, upon the ability of the system to provide help to consumers. Because of these constraints, many medical doctors are simply unable to help someone who reports anything less than the clinical symptomology of a disease. As a result, many people slog through years of sub optimal health, their conditions gradually deteriorating until their health becomes the fulfillment of classically defined disease.

Does it have to be that way? Absolutely not! The good news is that there are many tools available to natural health professionals and their clients to address these health challenges before they deteriorate into more serious conditions. Naturopaths can help their clients adjust the level of stress in their lifestyles, including the foods they consume, and in the process provide some relief to their overworked immune systems. They can also recommend a variety of high quality, effective nutritional supplements to enhance

the effectiveness of their clients' diets in helping their bodies support their immune systems.

Additionally, naturopaths have access to several very effective modalities which can help the client address specific health concerns at the sub-clinical level, i.e., prior to the appearance of the classic symptomology of a disease. For example, there are a number of different modalities which can help a client's body enhance the functioning of its adrenal glands. Also, there are now nutritional products available which allow the body to more effectively modulate its immune system (as opposed to simply supporting it or boosting its function), thus rendering it more capable of addressing both the chronic and acute stresses our civilization imposes on it.

Finally, and perhaps most exciting, there are now assessment modalities which permit the natural health professional to better assess a client's state of health and, in the process, provide more specific and helpful recommendations to address immune system related health challenges. These assessment modalities do not require invasive procedures. Partnering with laboratories specifically tailored for this purpose, the naturopath can use the results of such assessments to construct a set of diet and lifestyle recommendations and a protocol of herbal, nutritional and botanical products specifically tailored to address the client's most pressing health issues, without any guesswork. Through the use of these and many other tools at their disposal, natural health professionals can help their clients enhance the effectiveness of their immune systems and, in the process, enjoy a lifetime of abundant health and energetic living.

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