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INTEGRATIVE MEDICINE

LONG TERM IMMUNE HEALTH

While we have covered the majority of factors that affect your immune system, we cannot ignore these additional players:

Environmental Toxins

The role of environmental toxins plays a significant role in our health and I am sure we will learn more about this in the years to come as the science and data accumulates. Toxins in our food, body care products, air, water and household supplies all contribute to our toxic load.

DUMP or DIVE: Assess Your Toxic Load

Is there a link between chemicals and your immune system? How do you keep your family safe without going insane! These are common concerns for my patients and my family. It is frustrating to live a healthy lifestyle but feel defeated by the fear of a TOXIC chemical load. From household products, food quality and personal items like skin care and makeup, we all want to know which products are safest and most effective to use.

There are four main places where harmful chemicals can reside: food, pesticides, air & water, and body care products. Use our Dump or DIVE guide to know which items to keep and which to dump.

Food

The biggest risk of chemical exposure in food is from the use of pesticides, loading our food with the chemical compound organophosphates. Organophosphates are linked to poor cognition, memory and inattention.

Heavy metal contamination is also a concern, especially with poor quality food and larger fishes like tuna or grouper. The storage of food in plastic containers increases our exposure to BPA (bisphenol A) and phthalates, another villain in the toxic load saga.

DUMP

- Non-organic foods with fungicides, herbicides, fertilizers, antibiotics, hormones, artificial flavors and sweeteners.
- Don't eat fish with a high mercury content.

DIVE

- Seek organic produce, especially avoiding the dirty dozen (ewg.org) and organic meats and dairy.
- Limit large fish intake (with typically higher mercury count) to 2x per week.
- Don't store food or re-heat food in plastic containers.

Home

Your home can be a hotbed of environmental chemicals. Endocrine disruptors, nitrites, ammonia, volatile organic compounds (VOC) and BPA can be found in household cleaners, paints, carpet and the insecticides used to keep bugs out of the home.

DUMP

- High VOC carpets made with petroleum products or toxic chemical finishes and high VOC paints.
- Household cleaners with a high plastic rating that increase phthalates and BPA, both endocrine disruptors in your home. This is the triangle on the bottom of your cleaning products. Avoid products with a number over 2.

DIVE

- Look for low VOC carpeting with natural fiber wool, cotton rugs and low VOC paint.
- Use glass cups and plates instead of plastic.
- Use nontoxic insecticides within your home, especially the kitchen and the bedroom where you spend the most time.

Air & Water

The air we breathe, the water we drink- yes, another load of chemicals. Ozone inhalation and VOCs are in our air as well. In our water, we know that we are often exposed to arsenic, fluoride, and chemicals from manufacturing plants that may be linked to disease.

DUMP

- Limit outdoor exposure and exercise during high temperatures or smog alerts in your city.
- Minimize use of tap water in your home for drinking and bathing.

DIVE

- Drive low emission automobiles and limit inhalation of gasoline and vapors from chemical plants.
- Enjoy the outdoors in the Summer- but in the early morning hours or late evening.
- Use a water filtration system in your home, especially on drinking and bath/ shower water faucets.

Body Care Products

We want to look and feel great, but at what price? Parabens, propylene glycol, hydantoin, and sodium laurel sulfates- more big words to learn but major personal care chemicals. (5) Beyond reading labels, here are a few quick tricks to pick the right products for you.

DUMP

- Makeup or skin care with parabens and propylene glycol.
- Products with synthetic colors.
- Excessive use of perfumes.

DIVE

- Natural or organic makeup and skin care. Seek labels that say paraben free or free of propylene glycol.
- Shampoo and conditioners without sodium laurel sulfates.
- Minimal use of perfumes and fragrance.

STILL NOT SURE OF YOUR TOXIC LOAD? TAKE MY SURVEY AND LEARN MORE ABOUT WHAT YOU CAN DO TO KEEP YOUR FAMILY SAFE FROM CHEMICALS.

A woman with long brown hair is sitting on a bed, looking down with a thoughtful or somber expression. She is wearing a white t-shirt and grey pants. The background is a bright window with a view of greenery outside.

INFLAMMATION

Chronic inflammation places a body burden on your immune system. Many diseases of inflammation (the majority of what we see in practice today), all impact the immune system. With inflammation, the immune system is compromised and cannot mount an appropriate response to invaders.

In the lab guide, I have included markers of inflammation as a part of an immune health assessment. These include crp, homocysteine, sed rate and a low white blood cell count.

Here are the most common signs and symptoms of poor immune health:

- Brain Fog
- Joint Pain
- Rashes
- Digestive Issues
- Hormone Imbalances
- Mood Shifts
- Weight Gain

Diseases of Inflammation Include:

- Autoimmune Diseases
- ADHD
- Cancer
- Diabetes
- Cardiometabolic Disease
- Obesity
- PCOS

Most inflammatory processes begin in the gut. The diet, nutrient support and herbal recommendations all target gut health and inflammation- supporting and protecting your immune health.



STRESS/TRAUMA

Lastly, the role of stress and trauma is significant when it comes to overall immune health. We know in research that stress depletes immune function, interrupts sleep and hormone balance, alters digestive health and throws your chemistry out of balance.

Creating a self care and stress management plan is critical in achieving overall health and immune health. Budgeting time for nurturing you- whether it's acupuncture, massage, counseling, or energy work, is mandatory to mitigate the effects of stress on the immune system. Building a team to help you navigate stressors is important as well.

Signs and Symptoms of Stress

- Repetitive thoughts
- Trouble Sleeping
- Heart Palpitations
- Gut issues/ IBS
- Brain Fog
- ADHD
- Crying spells
- Isolation/ Withdrawal

Build Your Stress Management Plan

Daily Goals (circle 1-2 and commit to for 10 min)

- Meditation
- Journaling
- Prayer
- Nature Walks

Weekly Goals (schedule weekly- more appointment based)

- Massage
- Acupuncture
- Counseling
- Hypnosis
- Date Nights

Monthly Goals (1-2x per month)

- Getaway weekend with friends
- Community dinners
- Volunteer
- Spa day, 1/2 day

Put all these pieces of your health together for a comprehensive approach to your immune system and keep you and your families healthy and vibrant.