

83. TAKING CARE OF YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM

Natural health magazines can serve the wonderful purpose of public education. In fact, you could say that the popular press has been almost single-handedly responsible for awakening the general public to the entire field of holistic healing and alternative medicine. It certainly hasn't been our conventional doctors who have done it!

In recent years, no portion of the human body-and-mind, or "bodymind," has come under more intense journalistic scrutiny than that lympho-glandular network known as "the immune system." This is largely due to our rightful concern about AIDS and other ailments generally attributed to a weakened immune system.

Unfortunately, so little is really known about the immune system and its operation that we are forced to examine our entire "healthstyle," if we wish to find the actual keys to better auto-immune functioning. Let me start with diet, and use myself as an example.

I am a strict vegetarian -- actually, almost a vegan (one who eats only vegetable matter) - - and am in wonderful health. However, the secret to my wellness, I believe, is not so much what I consume, but what I *don't* put into my body. No-No's: Recreational drugs or even allopathic medicines of any sort; refined sugar or honey (I do use maple syrup or similar vegetable sweeteners, however ... but only in moderation); tobacco, of course, and alcohol; all dairy products, except a little butter; soft drinks (they change the pH of the body and this can do extensive damage); and anything to which I know I suffer an allergic reaction.

Along with avoiding all slaughtered food and virtually all egg products, that's my diet. I eat anything else that pleases me -- just avoid the No-No's. I also don't take vitamins, minerals, supplements or any "designer foods," such as those trendy, "high potency" substances that come in powder, capsule or similar form. My food is whole, natural and, whenever possible, grown organically within 50 miles of where I live ... preferably, in my own garden.

Since I don't go to doctors (outside of an emergency, such as to set a broken bone), I have learned a variety of simple techniques to heal myself and my loved ones. Several of these are methods for determining which substances might cause me to suffer an overt or subtle ("hidden") allergic reaction.

At the top of this list is a process called "muscle testing." This is explained in depth in each of the *Acugenics Self-Health Reports* published by our natural health educational organization, The G-Jo Institute (see www.g-jo.com). Briefly stated, it requires the person being tested -- the "testee" -- be holding a suspected allergen, while a "tester" tries to force down the testee's outstretched arm, as the testee resists.

Holding an allergenic substance will normally cause the testee's resistant arm to instantly become weakened and easily forced downward by even light pressure from the tester (whereas a "safe" substance leaves the arm strongly resistant).

There are many variations of this easy test, but several steps must be taken to do any of them properly. Yet it is a simple, effective means to protect one's health ... and particularly the immune system (since allergies are directly related to the immune functioning of the body).

To treat acute allergies, at The G-Jo Institute we suggest placing a small pair of "ear-ring

magnets" -- the type found in most shopping mall costume jewelry shops -- on the "allergy" point of the "auriculotherapy," or ear acupressure, system. Our organization offers an indepth Self-Health Report about accessing this very powerful and effective "micro-acupressure" system of the body. It fully explains the use of such magnets.

But for deeper or more chronic allergies, such as to dairy products, corn, and a number of other common substances, complete avoidance must be observed.

There are several other daily or regular practices I do to keep well and healthy. The first is exercise. Three times a week, I walk at least several miles (usually about four), combining a special Chinese "*qigong*" ("cheeKOONG") routine as I stroll. It is a simple breathing program, which helps build a rock-solid body while improving the blood.

Exercise is the 21st century alternative to the physical labor that the grandparents of most readers of this magazine did, by necessity, and kept well and healthy in the process. It doesn't have to be much exercise (or tedious work) to be effective -- just enough to bring about a light sheen of perspiration every other day, or so. I like walking; but it could as easily be swimming, yoga, biking or even gardening, done several times each week.

In short, it is less the quantity or type of exercise that counts, but that it be done regularly and consistently throughout life.

An even less taxing technique to directly affect the immune system is to take alternating hot and cold showers, each day. This is one of the few "natural" remedies which has actually been tested under scientific conditions and proven to be effective. Johns Hopkins University, some years ago, showed that such alternating showers, when taken daily -- first, heat; then finishing with as cold a wash as could be comfortably tolerated -- reduced the incidence of colds and flu after this regimen had been in place for at least 13 weeks.

Of course, this technique is nothing new. Scandinavians have been taking hot sauna baths followed by dips in chilly water (or even rolling naked in the snow!), for centuries. And I had my first exhilarating experience with this "Danish delight" at a summer camp in Wisconsin more than half a century ago.

In fact, ancient Romans -- particularly soldiers -- had communal bath houses where, first, one would take a bath (heated by a furnace in an adjoining room), then finish with a cold dip, in another, nearby tub, to stimulate blood circulation.

The heat is said to open the pores; and the cold is said to draw one's blood to the surface of the skin. It seems that virtually *any* method which forces blood to the skin's surface somehow stimulates the immune system; so to enhance a sauna's effectiveness, bathers often "scourge" themselves lightly with a leafy branch.

An important element in keeping the immune system well and strong is to "erase" or "reverse" minor ailments before they become serious (any chronic or longstanding condition weakens the body's inner defenses). To accomplish this, I depend upon a handful of proven, effective methods and techniques which are at once simple, dependable and safe.

Topping my list is G-Jo Acupressure -- probably the most powerful "self-health" method I have encountered over my nearly 40 years of natural health research. As regular readers of this column know, G-Jo is a simple, three-step process by which certain, key acupuncture points are "triggered" (deeply stimulated) using only fingertip massage. Download a free Basic G-Jo

Training Chart from The G-Jo Institute's website www.g-jo.com for illustrations of six important G-Jo points.

Other methods I use to treat and "erase" suffering before it can become serious include homeopathy, isodopathy (the use of isodes or homeopathic-like remedies created from a sufferer's own bodily fluids), and a remarkable, prayer-based modality called "*Sanjeevini*" (see www.saisanjeevini.org).

Here, a simple prayer is thought or uttered for a few seconds as an eye-dropper vial of water, a small box of raisins, or virtually any other edible substance sits atop a "sacred diagram," such as that shown in the various diagrams found at that Sanjeevini website. Normally, a complete "treatment" involves "infusing" the Sanjeevini remedy with several dozen such diagrams. This "prayer medicine" is then taken several times each day.

Strange as it may seem, we have found this process to be remarkably effective in the five years we have been using and teaching it. Information on these techniques is also available from The G-Jo Institute.

In recent years, herbal and botanical remedies have become quite the rage. I make my own herbal remedies or solutions for a variety of purposes, though strengthening the immune system is not one of them. Nonetheless, many people believe that substances such as the widely-touted echinacea (purple coneflower), curcumin (a turmeric extract), elderberry, garlic, astragalus, reishi mushroom, cat's claw, and a variety of other plants, are helpful in boosting the body's defense mechanisms.

However, to one well-versed in the use of botanical remedies, the "herbs" sold in capsule or pellet form, handsome though their packaging may be, are -- like the 97 lb. weakling on the beach -- laughably puny. The "real stuff" is strong, lousy-tasting and generally unpleasant to take. Anything less is probably ineffective for more than just maintaining wellness.

It will come as no surprise to the health-aware person to learn that attitude also plays a crucial role in determining the state of the immune system. To me, the three most important elements of establishing, then maintaining a positive attitude are a humane diet, a sense of spiritual commitment, plus moderate though regular exercise.

But for a variety of reasons, even the most healthy of us has times of emotional distress. For those who can afford it, the conventional treatment for chronic emotional suffering is to seek out one of the various forms of psychotherapy, be it classical, New Age or simply weird. However, there is at least one very inexpensive alternative to the seeming endless trips to a psychiatrist or psychotherapist: *Bach Flower Essences*. And there are other flower essence knock-offs which knowledgeable friends say work as well, or even better, than Dr. Edward Bach's original extracts.

Simply stated, the sufferer, him- or herself, takes one of the kit's accompanying "diagnosis" sheets and checks off each of the feelings or emotions that seem to apply, noting the particular flower essence(s) related to that condition. An ideal situation would be to have a loved one *also* diagnose the sufferer, using the same criteria, and -- between the two -- screen up to six of the 38 remedies which seem well-suited for improving the sufferer's current state of mind.

Several drops of each, selected remedy are then added to the sufferer's water, meals or anything else s/he consumes and, in a remarkably short time, mental upliftment usually occurs.

And for sneaky parents who are frustrated by the attitude of a dissident child or teen, this is an ideal "medicine" to quietly slip into his or her orange juice at breakfast. Amazing results can happen ... and without any hassles! But you didn't hear it from me.

Massage can also be an excellent psychophysical means of toning up the immune system, especially if the masseur or masseuse is familiar with the lymph system. Paying particular attention to massaging the important lymph nodes can help restore balance by "draining the accumulated toxins" said to be trapped or filtered by the lymphatic system. This system forms an important cornerstone in our auto-immune defenses.

However, deep hand or foot massage -- even if self-applied -- can often act as an effective alternative to other-applied, whole-body massage. A key to this is to pay particular attention to any tender spots you might find in either hand or foot when you are massaging them. It is a wise and excellent practice to regularly combine hand and foot massage when doing other relatively passive activities, such as watching TV.

Annoyingly, perhaps, most studies of people who live to age 100 or older reveal they almost universally have one thing in common: They lead awfully ordinary lives. No health foods. No special diets. Nothing much to set them apart from their friends, neighbors and family members who *didn't* qualify for the list. A fair number of them smoke; most eat meat and the majority take a bit of alcohol, now and then.

Still, I am convinced that improving the quality of life, if not extending the length of it, is a worthy enough goal to commend practicing, as I do, a noble, immune-friendly healthstyle. I like to believe in the truth of the old adage: *The more you complain, the longer God makes you live.*