LIVING WELL WITH AN Autoimmune Disease

a whole body approach to healing
Autoimmune Disease - What Is It?

Autoimmune disease. We hear this phrase used as an umbrella term to describe numerous diseases - but what exactly does it mean for you?

We all depend on our immune systems to keep us healthy. Like a trusted friend, a well-functioning immune system comes rushing to your defense when your body is under attack by harmful bacteria or viruses. However, if you have an autoimmune disease, your immune system begins to act more like an enemy, turning on your body’s healthy organs, tissues, or joints and attacking them as if they were foreign invaders. Needless to say, this causes a number of troubling (and frustrating) health issues.

If you are suffering from an autoimmune disease, you are not alone. Approximately 50 million Americans are affected by autoimmune disorders. In spite of their prevalence, diagnosis is not always easy. In fact, you may have been experiencing symptoms for years without a definitive diagnosis. This may be because the symptoms of autoimmune disease can be vague and, at times, similar to those of other conditions.
Common Autoimmune Diseases

While there are many autoimmune diseases, here are a few of the more common autoimmune diseases along with their symptoms.

Thyroid Disorders

If your immune system is targeting your thyroid, it could result in Hashimoto's thyroiditis (underactive thyroid) or Graves' disease (overactive thyroid). Signs that you may have a thyroid disorder include weight gain or loss, fatigue, depression or anxiety, joint and muscle pain, sensitivity to cold or heat, hair loss, dry skin, shaky hands, insomnia, or bulging eyes.

Systemic Lupus Erythmatosus

This is the most common form of lupus and affects multiple body systems. If you suffer from Lupus, you may experience fatigue, joint or muscle pain, rashes (especially on your face), fever, or sensitivity to the sun.

Type I Diabetes

This type of diabetes is usually diagnosed during childhood and is caused when the immune system damages cells in your pancreas, affecting its ability to produce insulin, which helps to regulate your blood sugar levels. Signs of type I diabetes are fatigue, weight loss, excessive thirst, dry skin, frequent urination, frequent infections, and slow healing after injury.
Multiple Sclerosis (MS)

MS results when your immune system damages nerve fibers. Symptoms may include numbness or weakness in your limbs, pain or tingling, loss of vision, double or blurred vision, lack of coordination, slurred speech, dizziness, or fatigue.

Rheumatoid Arthritis

If your immune system attacks the tissues in your joints, it can lead to rheumatoid arthritis. You may experience swollen, painful, or disfigured joints, stiffness, fatigue, or weight loss.

Digestive Disorders

Both Crohn’s disease and Celiac disease affect your intestines. Signs that you may have one of these disorders include gas and bloating, weight loss, fatigue, diarrhea, anemia, and joint pain.

As you can see, symptoms tend to vary depending on which system in the body is under attack. They also tend to flare up and then subside for a while, making it difficult to determine if you have a health problem that needs attention or if you are just a little under the weather.

If you suspect you have an autoimmune disease, it may be helpful to keep a health journal - recording the nature and frequency of your symptoms. This can help to zero in on the problem and expedite a diagnosis.
The Downside of Conventional Medicine

You have your diagnosis, now what?

The traditional way to treat an autoimmune disorder is to prescribe medications, many of which will suppress your immune system. While this may provide you with relief, these medications can be expensive. They also have the potential to cause some pretty serious side effects, like weight gain, fatigue, frequent infections, and even cancer.

Possibly the biggest downside to treating your autoimmune disease exclusively with medication is that this approach focuses only on your symptoms and ignores some of the most important factors that contributed to your disorder in the first place.

Although there is a genetic component to autoimmune disorders, your environment and your lifestyle play a major role in telling the rogue genes to switch on and wreak havoc on your immune system. Medication that suppresses your immune response will not address these factors.

Rather than simply suppressing your immune system, you may prefer to work to support it and restore it to a healthy state by making some key changes in your lifestyle. We call this a whole body approach.
The Whole Body Approach

With the aim of feeling better and protecting your health for the long term, taking your whole body into account is the best way to approach autoimmune diseases. Instead of focusing on one part of the body that is symptomatic, it's often best to look at the big picture, including your immune system.

Your immune system is concentrated in your gut, so improving gut health is a must. Resolve any issues that you’ve been having with your gut, such as infections in your GI tract. Also, keep in mind the vital role your environment plays. What you’re taking into your body can have a helpful or damaging effect on your immune system. Make sure that your diet is balanced and nutrient-rich, and that you eliminate any toxins from your surroundings.

It can be difficult to manage these things on your own. Having a trusted nutritionist on hand, working with you and your body to find what works, can be a tremendous help. A nutritionist will be able to isolate and resolve any problems you’re having with your gut health, as well as ensure that your body is getting all the nutrients that it needs.
Avoid Your Triggers

Learning about and avoiding your triggers is an excellent way to manage your autoimmune disease. Here are some common triggers you may want to steer clear of.

**Stress.** Let’s face it - we lead stressful lives. Chronic Stress can lead to long term inflammation and eventually autoimmune disease. You may not be able to cut down on the demands you face at work, and your family responsibilities may leave you feeling totally spent. However, you can work to manage and relieve stress so as to avoid a flare-up. Practice yoga or deep breathing, go for a short walk, or relax in a quiet place with a cup of tea. The result is a better frame of mind, a reduction in your body’s production of stress hormones, and relief for your immune system.

**Lack of sleep.** We all know how difficult it can be to get a decent night’s rest, but if you are trying to manage an autoimmune disease it is especially important to get the recommended 7-9 hours of sleep per night. It may mean leaving that last load of laundry for the next day or going to bed instead of staying up to watch your favorite late-night show on TV. Whatever your situation, sleep needs to be a priority. Set a sleep schedule and stick to it!
Toxins. We are surrounded by pollutants and toxins. These toxins can build up in your fat cells, leading to increased reactivity of your immune system. While you can’t do anything about air pollution from the factory three towns over, there are other toxins that you can control.

Throw out your harsh cleaning products and use natural ones instead. Reduce your exposure to mercury by limiting the amount of mercury-containing fish you eat. You may also want to check into removing any old mercury dental fillings. Eat more organic foods, and avoid eating processed foods, which are loaded with chemicals. Not sure where to begin? This article will help you get started.

Food sensitivities. Some foods can cause inflammation which can result in autoimmune issues. This varies from person to person, but some of the common culprits include gluten, sugar, and dairy. A blood test can reveal if you have a specific food allergy. However, you don’t need to be allergic to a food for it to trigger a negative immune response. You may want to consider systematically eliminating potential problem foods for a time in order to determine if any of them are contributing to your symptoms.

Feeling overwhelmed? A nutritionist can provide the guidance you need to determine which foods may be affecting you.
Natural Relief for Your Autoimmune Symptoms

You may have noticed that many triggers of autoimmune disease are rooted in chronic inflammation. Use these natural remedies to help you decrease inflammation and find relief from the negative autoimmune response which it can cause.

**Onions.** Onions contain quercetin and allicin, which both have anti-inflammatory properties. They can also help to increase your levels of glutathione, a nutrient which is frequently deficient in people with poor health and which may help to reverse autoimmune response.

**Turmeric.** Curcumin, the active ingredient in turmeric, both reduces inflammation and dampens autoimmune response. It has been shown to be especially effective in managing the symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis.

**Green tea.** Green tea is a natural anti-inflammatory. If you are a person who enjoys relaxing for a few minutes with a cup of tea, including it in your routine may have the added benefit of helping you to reduce stress.

**Omega-3 fatty acids.** Omega-3’s are one of your best natural weapons against inflammation. Good sources include oily fish, walnuts, and flax seed.

**Vitamin E.** This vitamin can help to protect you from cytokines, proteins which regulate immune response. Green leafy vegetables, avocados, sunflower seeds, and almonds are all excellent sources.
You Can Feel Better, We Promise

Contrary to what you may have been told, having an autoimmune disease does not automatically doom you to a poor quality of life. A full, healthy life is possible, and you can even do it naturally!

If you learn how to manage your stress, reduce your toxic load, and follow the right diet plan, you can manage the symptoms caused by your autoimmune disease. You may be surprised at how quickly you find relief.

Working with a certified nutritionist, helping you create the plan that is right for you, is an excellent first step on your road to recovery.

Why not get started today?
It's Time to
FEEL GOOD AGAIN
ARE YOU READY TO TAKE THE NEXT STEP?

We’re so happy you've downloaded our guide living well with an autoimmune disease! We hope that the information contained here has been practical for you.

If you’d like to learn more about autoimmune diseases or would like to jump-start your healing process with a customized nutrition plan, please schedule your free consultation now.

Request your consult now!

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