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Basic Immune Strategy

Diet:

A whole foods diet, including raw fruits and vegetables (especially dark green leafy vegetables) will go a long way toward providing much needed nutrients and removing toxic burden from the body. This kind of diet should include lean protein sources such as fish, beans, poultry, bison, nuts and eggs. Some of these foods should be purchased organic (poultry and eggs) and GMO free (beans and nuts). The diet should include a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables – always GMO free. A good resource for knowing which fruits and vegetables to buy organic can be found at the Environmental Working Group website (www.ewg.org). They publish a list called the dirty dozen – and by buying the “dirty dozen” organic only, you can remove up to 95% of pesticide and other toxins from the diet.

Healthy fats such as olive oil, avocado and flax are a must to keep our cells communicating and eliminating toxins. Complex carbohydrates like whole grains, starchy vegetables like yams are needed for energy and fiber. Foods to avoid include all processed, packaged and preserved foods, sugar, caffeine, fried foods, foods with additives like high fructose corn syrup, BHT and MSG. Also, you should avoid your identified food sensitivities like gluten, soy, corn, dairy or any others to help reduce inflammation in the body. Your doctor can be very helpful in helping you create a diet plan that will act as a treatment in and of itself. Over 2,300 years ago, Hippocrates is quoted as saying “Your food shall be your medicine and your medicine shall be your food” (Hippocrates 460 BC – c. 370 BC.).

Detoxification:

It is important to cleanse and detoxify your body on a regular basis. This can be accomplished in several ways and is very different for each person. Suffice it to say that it is important.

Exercise:

Humans were built for motion. There is enough research to show that a few hours of exercise a day is ideal, but that is not practical for many people today. So, the bare minimum is 30 minutes, 60 is even better. You should work closely with your doctor to be sure you start on the best routine for you, whether that is walking, running, swimming, cycling, cardio (dance, aerobics), weights, etc. Consult with your physician before beginning any new exercise regimen. They can help you to decide what intensity level would be best for you.

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Sleep:

We do most of our repairing when we are asleep. So, it is very important to not only get enough sleep, 8-10 hours, but it needs to be a deep, restful, good quality sleep.

Breathing:

Drawing breath and therapeutic breathing are not the same. Long, deep, controlled breaths have been shown to be very healing: they calm the nervous system, improve immune function and create more positive emotions.

Stress Management

There are mountains of evidence showing that high levels of stress can severely depress immune function. So, it is of the utmost importance that people learn one or more stress relieving techniques and use them to help to manage their stress. Techniques include controlled and deep breathing, meditation, Yoga and Journaling among others. In fact, these are all good daily practices that will help you to better manage stress in general but can also be used during stressful situations to lessen the negative impact on your body.

Supplements

These are the top five recommendations

- Multiple Vitamin and Mineral – with proper forms of nutrients
- Essential Fatty Acids (Fish Oil)
- Probiotic – multi-strain, broad spectrum
- Anti-oxidant combination (Vitamin C, Vitamin E, CoQ10, Glutathione, NAC)
- Vitamin D (if low) – D3

Herbs

Choosing herbs to use is also a very individualized process. Herbs may help to alleviate symptoms, but like everything in holistic medicine, herbs are used to restore systems that are dysfunctional. When health is restored to the body, symptoms go away. This is because symptoms of illness are simply a sign that something is not working as it should. There are several herbs that have been used historically to help support immune function, whether it is from an acute infection or from chronic disease. Anyone with a diagnosed health condition such as hypertension or those who are pregnant, trying to become

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pregnant or breast feeding should consult with a trained professional before using any of the herbs listed.

Individual herbs are listed first, then some good combinations, a couple of immune soups/broths, a couple of good tea recipes and a few resources for buying herbs.

- ***Glycyrrhiza glabra (Licorice)***: licorice root is most well-known for helping a body overcome viral elements and for its role in supporting adrenal function. Used as a liquid extract or tea of the root, this herb has been shown to inhibit a variety of different viruses and seems to stimulate immune response overall. It should be paired with an adaptogenic herb such as Ashwagandha. (An adaptogenic herb can boost low function and quiet hyperfunction). Licorice root tea is very yummy, slightly sweet and can be used daily. It can be used both when someone is acutely ill or in an overall immune support strategy. Do not use if hypertension is a diagnosis.
- ***Ocimum sanctum (Holy Basil)***: This herb has been used for thousands of years in India and is called, Tulsi, or the “Incomparable One”. It makes an excellent substitute or replacement for licorice and so can be useful if a person does not like the taste of licorice or cannot use licorice because of hypertension. Its action in the body is on many different systems but for our purposes you should know that extracts of or the oil of Holy Basil are antibacterial (e.g. Candida, E. coli, Salmonella and Staph aureus) and may be useful when the immune system has been overwhelmed by a bacterial infection and needs some help. Not only can it reduce bacterial population directly, it has also been shown to increase the activity of various types of white blood cells. A nice action to note is that this herb also helps support and heal the adrenals and is a powerful antioxidant!
- ***Withania somnifera (Ashwagandha)***: is a very restorative and adaptogenic herb and it is often used in patients who are debilitated from either acute or chronic illness. It can help reduce inflammation of all kinds, calms anxiety, is relaxing and it can help restore normal sleep patterns. It will directly increase white blood cell and neutrophils counts. It is also antibacterial, anti-tumor and protects the liver from toxic substance damage. While it is at times used for acute illness, it usually takes 4 – 6 weeks to see an effect and is frequently prescribed long-term for immune system regeneration. For debilitated patients, it is often combined with stimulating herbs like Ginger or Cayenne.
- ***Eleutherococcus (Siberian ginseng)***: can enhance the stamina of the body and the mind when a person is under the stress of illness and is especially indicated for exhaustion, either physical or

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mental. It can increase endurance, oxygen metabolism of tissues, adrenal function and can modulate immune function. This is an herb like Ashwagandha, in that it could be used in acute illness but serves us best when used long-term and given time to show its effects. This is best used as a tincture.

- ***Astragalus membranaceus (Astragalus)***: We use the root of this herb which shows action in nearly all body systems. It is considered an immune modulator due to its ability to enhance, strengthen and normalize immune function, it reduces damage to the body from auto-immune damage and has been shown to act as a direct anti-viral. It enhances tolerance to stress and has been shown to speed recovery of deficient or depleted patients. This is a great herb to use, in combination with Elderberry, at the very first sign of any illness. When paired with some extra rest and nourishing food like home-made soup, it can often put you back on your feet in 24 hours! It is most effective as a tincture or as a very strong tea. If you are using it at the first signs of illness like a cold or flu, you could take 1 teaspoon ever three hours, along with 1 teaspoon of Elderberry syrup. If you use it long-term, you could drink a daily tea with about 1 tsp to 10 oz of water.
- ***Sambucus nigra (Black Elderberry)***: the flowers and berries of this herb provide excellent immune system support and balancing. This adaptogenic herb has also shown to act as an antiviral and antioxidant in the body. It can be used in combination with Astragalus and Ginger; the three act synergistically. It is an excellent formula for acute viral immune support (colds, flus or any viral condition) and can help support a body fighting a bacterial infection. Garlic and either Echinacea or Goldenseal are god additions in the case of a bacterial infection and an overwhelmed immune system. Black Elderberry makes an excellent tea or tincture, but it is frequently sold as syrup. A word of caution with the syrup, as it has a high sugar content and sugar, whether it is refined or natural, is an immune system depressant. Raw honey however shows immune system boosting effects and would potentially make a good base to add in Elderberry, Astragalus, Ginger and other herbs. The berries can be used long-term but the flowers should only be used long-term under the supervision of a qualified practitioner.
- ***Allium sativa (Garlic)*** - Garlic has long been used as an anti-microbial and stimulant of the digestive system. It has anti-viral, anti-bacterial, anti-fungal and anti-parasitic effects. It acts as a bitter to the digestive functions which, in essence, stimulate the release of HCl and pancreatic enzymes. Garlic has been used to treat dysentery and can treat the residual irritable bowel syndrome that can occur

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after a dysenteric infection. Because this herb also has such a wonderful effect on the cardiovascular system, it is excellent to use as a long-term and daily herb. A few important things to point out: do not use the pre-peeled garlic, as garlic starts to oxidize from the moment it is peeled. For the same reason, be very careful of the garlic extracts. Remember, you can eat garlic and it acts as a medicine too. Garlic is warming, so be conservative if your illness includes high fever.

- ***Echinacea angustifolia, Echinacea pupurea (Echinacea)***: Echinacea has polysaccharides that are known as immunomodulators. It has been shown to activate and increase the cytotoxic activity of macrophages, increase interferon production and the interleukins. It has also been shown to stimulate fibroblast activity, so can protect tissues against bacterial proliferation. It seems to block the ability of the bacteria to produce hyaluronidase. It also has exhibited the ability to stimulate macrophages to greater cytotoxic activity against tumor cells. Echinacea historically has been used to offset the effects of contaminated immunizations or to treat the side effects of immunization. The plant products that produce the tingling, numbing sensation to the tongue were categorized as diffusives. These plants have specific indications for areas of the body and tend to stimulate the lymphatic circulation. That is why Echinacea is so often indicated for exhausted, dull conditions where there is stasis. It can be used as a tea, tincture or capsule. One of the most important things to note is that you will get the most success during an acute situation if you dose this herb frequently, every 1-2 hours.
- ***Berberis vulgaris/Hydrastis canadensis (Barberry, Golden Seal)***: These herbs have an anti-microbial action against bacteria (E. coli, staph, strep, and cholera), parasites (Leishmania, plasmodia, amoebas, giardia, H. pylori, tapeworm, and ringworm) and viruses. The strongest action is when the herb touches the infected tissue directly, therefore the form used should be chosen carefully. If the inflammation/infection is in the mouth or throat, use a tea or tincture as a gargle and swallow. If the infection or inflammation is in the stomach, gall bladder or intestines, then powder is the desired form. Contraindicated for long-term use and in pregnancy.

Other good immune herbs:

- ***Arctium lappa (Burdock)***: good if there are liver and immune issues, nutritive herb.

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- ***Aloe vera (Aloe)***: immune modulating effect, immune stimulating actions in treatment of viral and bacterial illness, has also shown some anticancer action, reducing tumor size. Not to be used during pregnancy.
- ***Cinchona officinalis (Peruvian Bark)***: used by the indigenous population in South America (Peru) for treatment of fever. Quinine was isolated from Cinchona. During the less symptomatic phase, it will avert the oncoming fever. It will also treat diarrhea and neuralgia. Will alleviate the fatigue that follows hemorrhage and debilitating illness. Cinchona is also antimicrobial. It was used to prevent progress of colds. Contraindications: Congestive Heart Failure, acute inflammatory illness, pregnancy and lactation and those with ulcerative conditions of the GI tract should not take Cinchona. Also, it is contraindicated during acute inflammatory illness, with deficient secretions and during active fever.
- ***Tabebuia avellanedae; Tecoma curialis (Taheebo, Pau d'Arco)***: Tabebuia is a South American herb used to treat both acute and chronic illness. It may be used both internally and topically. The herb has been shown to exhibit anti-neoplastic activity and it is used to treat breast cancer, blood and bone marrow cancers. It is a primary anti-fungal, used both externally and internally. The naphthoquinones have shown anti-viral activity against Herpes type I and II and against influenza. Probably should not be used in Pregnancy.
- ***Thymus vulgaris (Thyme)***: Thymus is antiseptic and anti-bacterial, as well as possessing expectorant and spasmolytic actions useful in treatment of catarrhal or dry, spastic coughs. It also has mucolytic action, reducing the tenacity of mucus and enhancing expectoration. It reduces inflammation in dry coughs, calming the cough and soothing the mucus membranes. It works well for sinusitis and allergies when combined with Sambucus, Urtica or Euphrasia. It can be effective in treatment of asthma combined with Tussilago, Hyssopus, Lobelia or Grindelia. Consider Thymus for treatment of bronchitis, croup, Pertussis and pneumonia. Not to be used during pregnancy.
- ***Grifola frondosa (Maitake), Lentinula edodes (Shiitake), Cordyceps sinensis (Cordyceps), Paecilomyces hepiali (Cordyceps mycelium), Ganoderma lucidum (Reishi), Coriolus versicolor (Coriolus, Turkey tail), Phellinus linteus (Sanghuang)***: these are simply listed here because of their immune support action.

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Herbal Combinations:

These are some nice, well-balanced immune formulas. If there are specific immune weaknesses, your ND might include or exclude certain herbs. For instance, if the liver is needing support there may be some Burdock or Dandelion in your formula. But here are some general, basically good for everyone, formulas:

- **Everyday Immune Balancing:** Astragalus 1 oz, Elderberry 1 oz, 1 Tbsp finely grated Ginger, Ashwagandha 1 oz, either Licorice or Holy Basil 1 oz. Take 1 Tbsp per day.
- **Acute Formula:** Garlic, Ginger, Echinacea, Golden Seal, Thyme, Pau D'Arco – mix 1 oz each and take 1 tsp 3-5 times a day.
- **Chronic Formula:** chronic immune cases need to be individualized. However, formulas commonly include Ashwagandha, Eleutherococcus, Mushrooms and Holy Basil. But again, it really depends on the chronic immune issue at hand.

Soups and Broths:

- **Immune soup:** 3 cups chicken or beef broth, 4 cloves freshly minced garlic, ¼ freshly chopped onion, grated ginger to taste, ¼ cup grated carrot: Simmer 15 min >> remove from heat and add 2 tsp chopped fresh parsley, juice of ½ a lemon, several fresh shitake mushrooms >> cover and steam for 5 minutes.
- **Bieler's Broth (pH balancer = better immune function):** Boil the following in a covered pot until very soft: 2 medium zucchini, chopped handful of fresh green beans, 2 stalks of celery, chopped, 2 potatoes, unpeeled, chopped, 1 cup chopped carrots, 1 cup any other available dark green vegetable (collards, chard, kale, etc.), 1 cup tops (beets, turnips, radish, etc.), 1 and ½ quarts of water. Add cayenne, basil, oregano, plus other desired seasonings, except salt. Cover and cook slowly for 1-2 hours. Cool for 30 minutes, strain and drink only the broth. Drink 2 cups a day. You can compost the strained vegetables if you so desire.

Herbal Tea / Oxymel Recipes

- **General Immune tonic:** dried Elderberry berries ¼ cup, dried Chamomile Flowers ¼ cup, Astragalus Root ½ cup shredded dry root, dried Thyme ¼ cup, dried Ginger root 1/8 cup, dried Hibiscus Flower 1/8 cup. Mix well. Use ¼ cup of mixture to 8 oz of water. Pour almost boiling water into a pot that can be covered, allow to steep for 10 minutes, strain and enjoy!

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- **Oxymel:** 1 bulb fresh garlic, ¼ cup freshly grated ginger, 4 cups water, ¼ cup raw honey, ¼ cup apple cider vinegar. Peel and finely chop garlic cloves. Do not use the peeled and minced garlic sold in stores as this has already begun oxidizing. Freshly grate the ginger root. Add to the water in a large pot with a cover, heat to boiling and boil until garlic is very soft, about 20 minutes. Remove from heat and allow to cool at least 1 hour. Add the honey and vinegar, mix well. Store in the refrigerator up to 5 days. Gently reheat on the stove before drinking. ½ - 1 cup per day. Do not use in respiratory illnesses where heat predominates.

Resources for Buying Herbs

- Mountain Rose Herbs: <http://www.mountainroseherbs.com/>
- Blessed Herbs: <http://www.blessedherbs.com/bulk-herbs.aspx>
- Living Earth Herbs: <http://www.livingearthherbs.com/>

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