Detoxification From the Four Main Burdens of Life

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Before people can achieve true wellness, they must liberate themselves from certain burdens that can affect overall health. In order to build a strong foundation, it's crucial to make certain that the gut is healthy, that the liver is functioning properly, that environmental and food sensitivities are under control, and that we've taken steps to reduce the effects of stress. Our bodies are comprised of interconnected systems, and if we haven't addressed each of these areas of health, then other aspects of health may suffer as well. Furthermore, full-body wellness is also dependent upon an effective detoxification program.

This article will address why it's important to tend to each of the above areas of health and how taking care of these areas can help achieve a greater degree of success in achieving other health goals.

Gastrointestinal Health

The gastrointestinal tract plays an important role in maintaining the health of the rest of the body. For example, optimal intestinal function is required in order for nutrients to be absorbed effectively. Additionally, a healthy stomach with balanced levels of gastric bacteria contributes to glowing skin,1-3 periodontal,4 heart5-7 and cognitive8 health, as well as normal levels of intraocular pressure.9-10

When the gastrointestinal tract is operating suboptimally, this can have implications throughout the body. Normally, a healthy intestinal lining serves as a gatekeeper, allowing properly digested fats, proteins and starches to enter the bloodstream. One way that substances pass into the circulatory system from the intestines is through the tight junctions (Desmosomes), spaces between cells that line the intestines that are normally sealed. However, when the intestinal lining becomes irritated, the junctions loosen and allow molecules, which are larger than those normally permitted, to pass from the intestines into the blood. This can trigger immune system reactions, since these large molecules are perceived as foreign. Additionally, this type of increased intestinal permeability or "leaky gut" syndrome is associated with environmental sensitivities, suboptimal joint, immune and pancreatic health, and gluten sensitivity. Leaky gut may also result in effects in areas as diverse as brain and cognitive function, digestive health, and feelings of lethargy or low energy.

The gastrointestinal tract also is responsible for triggering the primary immune response to orally ingested particles. This is because the gut-associated lymphoid tissue (GALT) contains 70 percent of the body's immune cells, spread along the intestine in Peyer's patches and the lamina propria.11-12

Furthermore, the Enterochromaffin (EC) cells in the intestines produce approximately 80 percent of the human body's total serotonin, indicating the GI tract plays a role in emotional well being.13

In my clinic, I routinely recommend that patients who want to support optimal GI health consume both a good probiotic, such as BioPRO™, and a combination of glutamine, DGL, N-acetyl glucosamine, marshmallow leaf and root, berberine, slippery elm, phosphatidylcholine, gamma oryzanol and cabbage powder (all found in GI Cell Support). These substances work in a variety of ways to enhance GI health by maintaining intestinal structure,14 supporting duodenal and upper GI health,15-16

creating a protective layer around mucous membranes,17-19 maintaining a balance of healthy GI flora,20-21 gently stimulating nerve endings in the GI tract,18,22-23 leading to mucous secretion that coats the delicate lining of the intestines, maintaining a healthy gastrointestinal environment24-25 and supporting colon and stomach health.26

Liver Function

Weighing 1.4–1.6 kg (3.1–3.5 lb), the liver is the largest internal organ in the body (the skin is the largest organ). The liver plays a crucial part in detoxification, protein synthesis and the production of biochemicals necessary for digestion. It is located in the right upper quadrant of the abdominal cavity, just below the diaphragm.

A sluggish liver can have profound effects on the state of health. A sluggish liver can be caused by a combination of different factors that impact the liver's numerous metabolic processes. One important cause of a sluggish liver is diminished bile flow within the liver, which may be due to blockages in the bile flow system. The ingestion of alcohol and drugs also can result in suboptimal liver function, as can exposure to environmental pollutants, which result in the production of free radicals. Optimal liver health is associated with enhanced energy, the absence of environmental, dietary and chemical sensitivities, healthy bowel movements, healthy cholesterol levels, being able to tolerate fatty foods, radiant complexion and a healthy weight.

To support liver health, I often suggest a combination of N-acetyl cysteine, trimethylglycine, Scutellaria baicalensis root extract, milk thistle, artichoke and (R)-lipoic acid (all found in HepatoGen™). N-acetyl-cysteine (NAC) increases the production of the critical antioxidant glutathione,27-28 which is important for liver health. Trimethylglycine is a Phase 2 conjugating agent, meaning it helps bind water-soluble substances to toxins. This makes the molecule intended for elimination more water soluble and therefore less toxic. If the molecule is large, it is then excreted through fecal elimination with the activity of bile. Otherwise, it is excreted in the urine.29

A number of in vitro and animal studies indicate that Scutellaria baicalensis can enhance liver health and help promote healthy cell turnover in the liver.30 Research shows that silymarin from milk thistle protects against glutathione depletion31 and increases liver glutathione status.32 In addition, milk thistle stimulates the production of bile,33 which is significant since bile acts as a vehicle to excrete toxins into the colon and out of the body. Artichoke has a similar effect to milk thistle with regard to stimulating bile flow, which has been demonstrated in several studies.34

In any liver health program, it's also a good idea to incorporate Gallbladder Support, which includes milk thistle (silymarin), dandelion root, beet root, phosphatidylcholine, the amino acid taurine, betaine, inositol, pancreatic lipase, plus alpha-lipoic acid for antioxidant protection, vitamin C for enzyme support and magnesium. This can assist with fat digestion and bile production. The pH of bile (>7) helps neutralize the acidified stomach contents coming into the small intestine. This alkalization is in part necessary to activate digestive enzymes produced by the pancreas. Dietary fats (or lipids) and fat-soluble nutrients such as phospholipids, vitamins A, D, E and K, and carotenoids need pre-treatment with bile before they can be absorbed into the body. Bile protects the intestinal cells that line the GI tract35 and has also been shown to play an important role in healthy bacterial balance in the GI tract.36-37

Environmental and Food Sensitivities

If our bodies are constantly being exposed to food and environmental items to which we are sensitive, it will be more difficult to effectively address other challenges when the body is preoccupied with sensitivities. Testing for environmental and dietary sensitivities allows for individuals to take steps to reduce exposure to offending substances, thus allowing the body's energies to be directed toward other aspects of health.

Emotional Health

Psychological stress can affect cognitive, immune and heart health. If we do not take steps to promote relaxation, any of these systems can be impacted. Animal and human studies have found that stress exacerbates neurological changes in the brain.38

Negative emotions and decreased social contact also are associated with development of the metabolic syndrome, as well as suboptimal heart health.39

Feelings of uneasiness also impact the immune system. Work-related stress, job loss or insecurity may affect both neuroendocrine and immune systems, with reduced natural killer cell activity reported in unemployed workers or in those with a high perception of job insecurity and/or job stress.40 Night shift work also was reported to affect immune health, and relaxation techniques have proven helpful in people with immune health imbalances.41

People who want to experience enhanced relaxation and a sense of calm often take steps to support adrenal gland health. In order to better understand your adrenal health, one can use a salivary hormone test (Adrenal Function Panel). Supplementing with Cortisol Control may then help support balanced cortisol levels, as it provides a beneficial combination of Relora® (a proprietary blend of a patented extract from Magnolia officinalis bark and a patent-pending extract from Phellodendron amurense) plus Sensoril®, a patented form of Ashwagandha (Withania somnifera) root and leaf extract standardized to 8 percent withanolides. Relora has been found to promote normal cortisol levels in human subjects and to support positive mood and reduce nervous tension.42-43

Combining Cortisol Control with adaptogenic herbs such as Eleutherococcus senticosus, Ashwagandha (Withania somnifera), and Schisandra chinensis (all found in AdaptaPhase® I) can be highly effective in promoting recovery from stress and supporting normal, stable cortisol levels.44 Schisandra and Eleutherococcus have been shown to increase endurance, mental performance and attention in patients with fatigue in several studies, likely by modulating the HPA axis and promoting healthy cortisol levels.45

Adding a number of other adaptogens (all found in AdaptaPhase® II) can offer additional relaxation benefits. These adaptogens include Aralia manchurica for occasional fatigue, mild weakness and metabolizing fat,46-47 Rhaponticum carthamoides, another adaptogen for mild fatigue, immune and mood support, and increased work capacity,48-49 and Rhodiola rosea, which has effects on mild fatigue and supports mood, immune and nervous system health.50-52

Detoxifying for Whole Body Health

If we want to achieve optimal health, we need to detoxify on a regular basis. I recommend that people detoxify at least quarterly, if not more often. I compare it to cleaning your house—if you only clean your house once a year, then dust, debris and clutter will prevail within your living environment (body).

In addition to supplementing with Gallbladder Support, as mentioned above, it is especially important to include nutritional therapy that supports all aspects of detoxification. However, any regimen that stimulates the cells to release stored toxins but does not support their elimination from the liver, gallbladder, kidneys and gastrointestinal tract can encourage the recirculation of toxins. Furthermore, fasting, without adequate nutritional support, encourages the release of xenobiotics from adipose and other tissues. This may result in significantly increased phase I activity without a concomitant increase in phase II activity, resulting in unwanted reactions especially in an individual who is already experiencing varying levels of suboptimal functioning.

The most effective approach is to use Detox 365, a multi-functional, hypoallergenic, rice protein-based supplement that is micro and macronutrient fortified to support detoxification. Detox 365 contains vitamins and minerals, amino acids, specific plant-based nutrients, multiple types of fiber, select probiotics and digestive enzymes. It also includes calcium-D-glucarate53 for hormonal balance and detoxification, Maca root for energy and adaptogenic support54, and essential fatty acids from chia seed and organic broccoli sprouts. The product also features Siliphos®, a patented and well-studied phytosome combination of milk thistle and phosphatidylcholine, which greatly enhances absorption of these two essential detox powerhouses,55 and Pectasol® modified citrus pectin for toxin-binding and unique immune-supportive qualities.56

Conclusion

In order to give the body the tools it needs to function optimally, it's important to address the above factors—GI health, liver health, environmental and food sensitivities and emotional well-being. It's only by enhancing these areas that the body will have a strong foundational basis for good health. Furthermore, detoxification is essential for overall wellness.

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