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More Evidence That Stress is Major Factor for Infections

**By Dr. Joseph Mercola
with Rachael Droeg**

Chronic stress, which has been called America's number one health problem, is not something to take lightly--it can have profound effects on your immune system and your overall health. Estimates have placed stress-related problems as the cause of 75 percent to 90 percent of all primary care physician visits.

Among adults, job worries are often among the leading contributors to stress, but increased crime, violence, peer pressures leading to substance abuse, social isolation, loneliness, family problems and a loss of religious values can also create problems, even among children, teenagers and the elderly.

Most people associate stress with worry, but stress has a much broader definition to your body. Any kind of change, whether it be emotional, environmental, an illness, hormonal or just pushing yourself too hard, can be stressful. Even positive events, such as getting a promotion or taking a vacation, can be stressful and can gradually weaken your health before you realize what is happening. If you have recently experienced a change in your sleep patterns, feel fatigued, anxious or a lack of enjoyment for life, or have multiple aches and pains, you're likely overstressed.

It was recently discovered that people under chronic stress had above-normal levels of interleukin-6 (IL-6), an immune-system protein that promotes inflammation and has been linked with heart disease, diabetes, osteoporosis, rheumatoid arthritis, severe infections and certain cancers.

It appears that stress increases levels of IL-6, which in turn accelerates a variety of age-related diseases. Further, stress can weaken a person's immune response, leaving them more susceptible to infection, and can lead to unhealthy lifestyle habits. For instance, stress often leads people to overeat, lose sleep, and neglect exercise, all of which can create health problems on their own.

According to David Holland, M.D., the medical communications director at MediaTriton:

"There is a whole new field called "psychoneuroimmunology" that studies the effects of psychological stress on the immune system. Scientists in this area have demonstrated alterations in the normal function of immune cells in animals during times of stress.

Excessive physical stress also changes our immune cell profile. Increased upper respiratory tract infections occur in athletes who overtrain, and a decreased cell-mediated immunity has been demonstrated in such athletes.

Without a properly functioning immune system, our bodies are vulnerable to invasion by opportunistic germs such as fungi, viruses and bacteria. By

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taking an antimicrobial like garlic, some scientists have been able to prevent immune suppression in psychologically stressed mice."

It's not practical to advise people to avoid stress because--let's face it--we all have it. What is practical, however, is to emphasize the importance of dealing with stress before it takes a toll on your health. It appears that stress impairs the immune system, which allows underlying infections to cause damage.

There is ever increasing evidence that most diseases have an infectious component. Such is the case with most autoimmune disease like rheumatoid arthritis (RA), which--like most all other diseases--is a result of things that happen, or more frequently, things we allow to let happen to us, such as stress overload.

I have successfully treated many thousands of patients with RA with the [antibiotic protocol](#) that I refined from Dr. Brown.

His belief was that mycoplasmas significantly contributed to the illness and was helped with antibiotics.

Many tens of thousands of patients have been improved with this therapy, and I have observed that it works far better when one is following the nutrition plan. Further fine-tuning your diet with Metabolic Typing will also result in significant benefits.

[NST](#), a profoundly effective and gentle structural rebalancing technique, improves the condition further and can drastically improve any remaining aches or pains. Another option, which is beneficial for RA as well as stress, is the [Emotional Freedom Technique \(EFT\)](#).

Most milder cases of RA can be resolved using EFT, a psychological acupressure technique, without the need for antibiotics. EFT can also help you to channel your stress-related thoughts and leave you feeling calmer and more able to face your challenges. You can view my free 25-page [EFT report](#) to learn how to perform EFT.

Other relaxation techniques can also be useful when stress becomes overwhelming. Yoga, a psycho-physical discipline, can lead to mental clarity, greater self-understanding, and a feeling of well being, along with improved physical fitness. Many people experience benefits not only because of the physical stretching and muscle strengthening but also because of the meditative state that is encouraged.

Meditation is another technique that will allow you to calm your mind and fight stress. Meditating can help you to focus your thoughts on relaxing images or principles. It can also help you to examine your daily life and determine what activities are contributing to your stress. Adding deep, controlled breathing can heighten your relaxation.

Finally, it's important to recognize that stress can be a good thing. It boosts your adrenaline and gives your body a natural push to get things done. The key is to be aware of your stress level and get things under control if stress starts to take over.

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