

PREVENTION OF INFECTIONS

We share our environment with countless billions of microorganisms - without them life on our planet would cease. Those in the soil are absolutely vital to the health of plants, including those that we eat. Our skin is covered with bacteria and there are 10 times as many in our large intestine than we have cells in our body - and the correct balance is absolutely vital for our health. However, as we all know, there are also plenty of organisms that cause disease, we call them "pathogenic" organisms.

Our body has many amazing mechanisms to stop pathogens invading it and to kill those that do breach it's defences. A healthy immune system is constantly vigilant, constantly deciding what is "foreign" and therefore bad for us and requires elimination, and what is "self" and therefore acceptable. The best protection against infections is good robust health.

When we catch an infection it is the result of one or more of the following:

- A weakened immune/ defence system - and this is the cause 95% of the time!
- An unusual breach of the defences (eg. deep dirty wound, contaminated blood transfusion, etc)
- An overwhelming exposure to or/and a particularly virulent organism

Five key things:

- Avoid exposure where possible - be sensible about cleanliness & hygiene and exposing yourself to at-risk environments.
- Live as healthy a life-style as possible (see below).
- Be actively involved in improving/resolving all your (& your family's) health problems - consult professionals to help you attain optimal health.
- Use specific preventative measures when and where appropriate.
- Treat infections effectively:
 - Address the causes of your weakened immune system.
 - Use antimicrobials when appropriate - whether natural or synthetic - for the treatment of infections, see my info: Antibacterials - Natural, Antibacterials - Synthetic (various), Antifungals - Natural, Antifungals - Nystatin, Antifungals - Amphotericin, Antifungals - Systemic, Parasites Intestinal (various).

PREVENTION - HOW TO STRENGTHEN YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM

First things first - always aim to treat the causes! If you suffer with recurrent or persistent infections seek to identify the causes and make sure you address these. The health of our protective barriers (skin & mucous membranes) and immune system are hugely affected by all the following factors (and this is not an exhaustive list):

Diet - make your diet the best it can possibly be - fresh, natural, wholefood, vegetable dominated, minimal sugar & additives, relatively low starch, as nutrient dense as possible, plenty of protein, as much organic as possible, etc. See: General Dietary Advice for more info.

Exercise - take plenty of regular physical exercise, (but *over*-training can impair immune function). See: Exercise for more info.

Sleep - get enough good quality sleep, for most of us this means 8 hours. See: Management of Insomnia for more info.

Stress - minimise stress by good self-pacing, regular rest periods, realistic & appropriate expectations, relaxation exercises, identifying and dealing with the causes, etc. Be happy & positive - ensure that your life regularly / frequently includes those things that are most important, fulfilling and nurturing to you. Remember that how well we cope with the stresses in our lives is also hugely affected by all the other health influencing factors in this list. See: Relaxation Essentials & A Simple Relaxation Exercise for more info.

Gut Health - in addition to an excellent diet, eat live yogurt or kefir (both easy & inexpensive to make yourself) or take a probiotic, especially after antibiotics; avoid antibiotics whenever possible and ensure excellent bowel function. The more tense and stressed we are, the less digestive enzymes or / and stomach acid are produced to digest our food - and these are essential not only to ensure optimal nutrition but also to kill off the bugs in our food or the mucus swallowed during a respiratory tract infection. See Gut Dysfunction, Food Allergy, Fungal Type Dysbiosis, Bacterial Dysbiosis, Leaky Gut Syndrome, Pancreatic Enzyme Insufficiency, Hypochlorhydria (low stomach acid) for more info.

Toxin Exposure - minimise tobacco, alcohol, chemicals (at home & at work) and drugs. Toxins, by definition, interfere with, block or put increased demand on our biochemistry. Our body is a wonderfully complex biochemical machine - for optimum health we need optimum biochemistry - which in turn is dependent on every other factor in this list, especially nutrition as that is the source of the raw materials for the biochemical machinery. See: Detoxification Program for more info.

Nutritional Deficiencies & Supplements

Nutritional deficiencies are very very common - either because of poor diet or / and poor digestion / absorption - both are very very common! Obviously the most important thing to do is to identify and resolve both of these but until this is achieved nutritional supplements are usually required.

Vitamins A, C, D & Zinc are particularly vital for immune function - so ensure a decent intake / levels of each.

For anyone who has almost any health problems or who wishes to boost themselves in the short term to reduce susceptibility to infections, I usually suggest taking the following (see: Nutritional Supplements - Recommendations for Adults & / or Nutritional Supplements - Recommendations for Children):

- A high quality **multivitamin and mineral supplement**, eg. One a Day (Biocare), Multi-Guard (Lamberts), VM75 (Solgar) for adults; Mum-2-Be (Higher Nature) or Prenatal Nutrients (Solgar) for women preparing for or during pregnancy; Dinochews (Higher Nature) or similar for young children.
- **Essential fatty acids.**
 - For omega 3 EFAs: Take fresh Linseed oil 5 - 10 ml daily. For children between 5 & 12 years give half this dosage. See my information sheets "General Dietary Advice", "Nutritional Supplements for Adults" and "Nutritional Supplements for Children" for more information. And eat plenty of linseed, walnuts, pecans & pumpkin seed - which are rich in omega 3 EFAs.
 - For omega 6 EFAs: Eat plenty of nuts (not peanuts) & seeds.
- Extra **Vitamin D**, eg. 2000 iu (50 mcg) daily during the winter months (and also in summer if you don't get much sunshine on a substantial amount of skin without sun block). It is almost impossible not to be vitamin D deficient in the UK winter due to the lack of sunlight - everyone in the UK should take extra. I have yet to see a multivitamin / mineral that contains enough - they still provide 400 iu or less. Vitamin D is essential for immune function - and the lack of it is a large part of the reason for the prevalence of winter infections. The dosage for children over 5 years is the same. See: Vitamin D

- Extra **Vitamin C**, eg. 1000 - 3000 mg daily, preferably divided over the day; very few multivitamins/ minerals contain this much. During an infection increase this to up to 10 grams a day, taking a dose every 3-4 hours. Any form is fine, ascorbic acid powder is the cheapest, but if you are susceptible to stomach ulcers/ acidity, use magnesium or calcium ascorbate. If you develop loose stools adjust the amount and frequency so that you are taking the maximum you can tolerate and afterwards take probiotics. Vitamin C has anti-microbial activity. For children over 5 years, give half this dosage.
- Extra **Zinc**, eg. 15 mg daily for several months. Most multivitamins/ minerals contain up to 15 mg zinc - so this is in addition to that & most of us shouldn't need to take 30 mg daily in the long term - unless we have an inadequate diet - or have problems with digestion/ absorption in which case we may need more than the normal daily requirements are 15 - 30 mg. If you have little white patches on your fingernails it usually indicates you are zinc deficient. For children between 5 & 12 give 10 mg daily. Zinc is far better absorbed if taken mid-way between meals, for most people the most convenient time is last thing at night.
- Extra **Vitamin A**, eg. 10,000 iu (3 mg) daily for several months. *This **must not** be taken by women during pregnancy or considering (or at risk of) pregnancy, esp during the first three months.* Few multivitamin/ mineral supplements have more than 2000 iu these days because of this risk. Current official guidelines are extremely cautious and recommend not having a long term intake exceeding 5000 iu (1.5 mg) - at least for long periods. The Vitamin A recommended daily allowance (RDA) is usually set between 3000 & 5000 iu (900 & 1500 mcg). Vitamin A toxicity is rarely seen at doses of less than 100,000 iu (30,000 mcg) - doses of 100,000 - 200,000 iu are routinely used by doctors for treating acne. However some people are much more susceptible to vitamin A toxicity than others due to variations in their biochemistry (one mechanism is poor glucuronidation (the liver phase II detoxification pathway that processes vitamin A), this is the biochemical abnormality in Gilbert's disease. It is easy to measure blood vitamin A level.

Homeopathy

- *Constitutional homeopathy* - strengthens the whole system at a very fundamental level - the right remedy greatly improves your sense of well-being, energy, ability to cope, immune function and the vast majority of your symptoms because it has a deep multi-system strengthening effect.
- *Specific homeopathic prevention* - this uses homeopathic medicines that are specific to the infectious diseases one is trying to prevent. There is a long tradition in homeopathy of the use of homeopathic medicines to prevent certain specific diseases, and the clinical impression of myself and many other homeopaths is that it appears to confer a very useful degree of protection. However at present there is minimal "hard" objective scientific evidence that this type of homeopathic prevention of infectious diseases is effective. I do *not* recommend against conventional immunisation unless there are recognised medical contraindications. If you decide not to use conventional immunisations and to use homeopathic medicines as an alternative, it is entirely your choice, at your own risk and on an understanding of the risks involved - and I cannot accept any responsibility if you should contract one or more of these diseases.

Botanicals

There is a very wide range of natural herbal products that have excellent antimicrobial, or/and immune strengthening effects. Please see my information sheets:

- Natural Antibacterials
- Natural Antivirals
- Natural Antifungals

Immunisation

The number of infectious diseases that can be prevented (even if partially) by immunisation continues to rise. The duration and degree of immunity provided varies according to the specific immunisation - some have a very high

degree of efficacy and a long duration of action, some less so. Most have the potential for causing side effects and this also varies according to the specific immunisation. In addition to the live or dead organisms (or fraction of), all immunisations contain a variety of excipients which may include: thiomersal (an organic mercury compound), aluminium, formaldehyde (formalin), phenol and other phenolic compounds (eg. nonylphenols, octylphenols (eg. Triton X-100)), antibiotics (neomycin, gentamicin, polymyxin B), phenoxyethanol, glutaraldehyde, etc (see: www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vac-gen/additives.htm), all of which have the potential for harm and sensitivity reactions. As with any intervention, one is always trying to weigh up the potential benefits versus the risks - and there is still considerable controversy regarding both for many immunisations. Smallpox has been completely eliminated worldwide; some other diseases have been almost eliminated (tetanus, diphtheria) and others reduced in immunised populations. However there is still controversy over to what extent some immunisations have contributed to reduction in infection, morbidity and mortality rates for the diseases they are designed to prevent - and at what cost in terms of adverse reactions. Adverse reactions are almost always under-reported, especially if they are not severe or life-threatening, and are also rarely suspected if the reaction is delayed or less than severe.

RESOURCES

Information sheets are available from the office (full list on my website):

- General Dietary Advice
- Exercise for Health
- Relaxation Essentials
- A Simple Relaxation Exercise
- The Management of Insomnia
- Nutritional Supplements - Adults
- Nutritional Supplements - Children
- Gut Dysfunction
- Probiotics
- Stone Age Diet
- Food Allergy
- Electromagnetic Radiation & Health
- Geopathic Stress
- Fungal Dysbiosis
- Bacterial Dysbiosis
- Leaky Gut Syndrome
- Hypochlorhydria (low stomach acid)
- Pancreatic Enzyme Insufficiency
- Detoxification Program
- Influenza - Prevention & Treatment
- Antibacterials - Natural
- Antibacterials - Synthetic (various)
- Antifungals - Natural
- Antifungals - Nystatin
- Antifungals - Amphotericin
- Antifungals - Systemic
- Parasites - Intestinal (various)