

The top 10

Common causes of
chronic conditions:
Why don't you feel like
you should?

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Adapted from Wellness Piece by Piece, by Pat Sullivan

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Why don't You feel like you should?

You Are Not Alone! In the United States alone, more than 125 million people suffer from some sort of chronic condition—ranging from chronic fatigue syndrome to cardiovascular disease, and everything in between.

“Chronic conditions” are defined simply as *any long-lasting health issues that have been resistant to a quick fix*. Typically, a chronic condition won’t put you in a hospital bed, but it can claim you as a member of the “walking wounded,” with symptoms ranging from mildly irritating, to almost totally debilitating.

Conventional medicine is for the most part, brilliant with *acute* care. And modern sanitation practices have made an incredibly beneficial impact on society. But the conventional medical system as a whole generally fails to deal well with *chronic care* because it does not have the patience to look at each patient in a holistic manner in order search out root causes. As a society, we’ve come to expect a “quick fix” for our medical concerns, and doctors aim to relieve symptoms, rather than address the underlying, root causes of those symptoms.

Pharmaceutical drugs, along with well-intentioned, but generic advice of “eat a balanced diet, get more exercise, and lower your stress” are far too commonly prescribed. Sometimes the symptoms abate. Oftentimes, side effects from the drugs trigger other chronic conditions that then require *more* drugs to be prescribed just to deal with the new symptoms. And on and on it goes...

Here’s What You Need To Know. Chronic conditions typically stem from 10 main causes. While it’s true that we are each genetically unique, and some of us are more predisposed to certain conditions than others, most of the factors related to the common causes of chronic conditions are under our control. And once they are discovered and resolved, you can greatly alleviate—or even reverse—many chronic conditions.

These are the top 10 causes for most chronic conditions :

1. Poor diet with impaired digestion.
2. Food allergies stemming from leaky gut syndrome.
3. Overuse and misuse of antibiotics .
4. Dysfunctional or exhausted immune, hormonal, and detoxification systems.
5. Brain injuries.
6. Heavy metals, particularly mercury from dental amalgams.
7. Chronic exposure to mold.
8. Chronic sub-acute infections resulting from bacteria, fungi, and viruses.
9. Thick blood caused by infections, heavy metals, or genetics.
10. Unresolved emotional and spiritual issues.

Chronic illness is like a web of issues that each of us can get stuck in. There is usually not just *one* issue. As you'll read, there are multiple factors involved that make it difficult to diagnose and treat your issues. There are also varying degrees of chronic illness, or "gray areas," ranging from subtle to extreme. You can have a little heart disease, or a lot of it. You can have a little cancer, or a lot of it. You can be a little fatigued, or chronically fatigued.

It is helpful to picture this concept as if your body's immune system is a bank account. Each time you make a deposit, the amount of money in your account increases. Conversely, when you make a withdrawal your balance decreases.

Over the years, every event that impacts the immune system in a negative way is basically a withdrawal. But the healthy things you do are deposits. And at any bank, if you withdraw more than you deposit, you *will* be overdrawn!

To take the analogy a step further, you cannot walk into a bank and demand the teller to deposit a million dollars into your account if you haven't earned it. Likewise, you cannot demand your immune system to become immediately stronger and healthier. It takes time to replenish your account. You can only deposit what you *earn*. And you must spend what you have earned wisely because there is no such thing as borrowing from someone else's "immune account."

REASON 1: Poor diet with impaired digestion

Today's Standard American Diet (SAD) contains many components that are making us sick. These ingredients include refined sugar, refined and "enriched" carbohydrates such as white flour, pasta, and white rice, partially hydrogenated oils (also known as trans fats), artificial sweeteners, chemicals, pesticides, and traces of heavy metals. Food manufacturers have found many ways to prolong shelf life, and increase calories in foods, at a severe cost to human health. We, as a society, have departed from eating nutrient-dense, low-glycemic, whole foods, and we are experiencing chronic conditions—sometimes in epidemic proportions.

On the other hand, many people believe that if they eat healthy foods, they *will* be healed. This is not entirely true. Eating healthy foods is just *one* component of nourishing your body. The other component is the healthy absorption of key nutrients that adequately sustain the body. When your digestive tract is sluggish, impaired, or injured, your body isn't able to process and absorb nutrients from the foods that you eat—even if you're making every effort to eat the best foods. The truth is you can become malnourished *despite* the fact that you're eating what you feel are the "right" foods. And when your body isn't able to adequately absorb nutrients from the foods you eat, all your body's systems become impaired, ranging from your cardiovascular system to your neurological system.

One of the chief problems related to the digestive tract is the breakdown of the permeability in the small intestine, commonly referred to as *leaky gut syndrome*. The small intestine, which has a surface area larger than a tennis court, is designed to allow very *small* particles of digested nutrients to pass through its wall and into the bloodstream so that these nutrients can be distributed throughout the body. But numerous things can happen and the gut can become more permeable, allowing larger "less digested" particles to pass through into the bloodstream. The immune system then interprets these larger particles as foreign invaders, and it goes into overdrive (also known as a hyper-immune response).

Leaky gut is almost always involved in chronic illness and is actually a leading *cause* of many chronic conditions. Leaky gut starts a vicious cycle in which allergic sensitivities, toxic and hyper-immune activation, liver dysfunction, pancreatic insufficiency, and malnutrition occur.¹

The good news is that if you can heal the gut, you can dramatically improve almost any chronic condition. In order to heal your gut, it's important to understand the key factors that can damage your gut in the first place. Leaky gut can be triggered by:

- The overuse of broad spectrum antibiotics—Antibiotics kill ALL bacteria, even the good bacteria that protects the lining of your gut.
- The use of over-the-counter pain relievers, such as aspirin, ibuprofen, and acetaminophen, that can cause gastrointestinal bleeding and damage the lining of the intestinal tract.²
- The use of steroids, such as prednisone and corticosteroids.
- The overuse of alcohol.
- Common allergies and food intolerances such as wheat and/or dairy (also known as gluten, casein, and lactose intolerance) that can wreak havoc in the intestinal tract.
- Bacterial and fungal overgrowth, such as candida (yeast).
- Lack of adequate hydrochloric acid in the stomach. Many people unknowingly have *low* concentrations of stomach acid that hinder the body's ability to adequately digest food, and disrupts the delicate balance of good and bad intestinal bacteria.

Healing leaky gut requires several components:

- Avoid any gut-toxic drugs and allergic foods.
- Eliminate as much bacterial and fungal overgrowth as you can by using herbal antimicrobials, such as garlic, and if necessary prescription anti-fungals such as Diflucan[®].
- Use high-quality probiotics (good bacteria) for an extended period of time in order to restore the good organisms that should be dominant in your gut.
- Supplement with digestive enzymes, to facilitate digestion.
- Maintain a proper concentration of stomach acid (hydrochloric acid, or HCl). By effectively restoring the correct concentration of stomach acid, your digestive tract can break down food efficiently. When food fails to break down in the digestive tract, it putrefies, and aggravates leaky gut.

REASON 2: Food allergies stemming from leaky gut syndrome

People with allergies know that these allergies can wreak havoc on their immune system. In particular, wheat (gluten) and dairy (casein and lactose) intolerance can damage the digestive system and trigger a hyper-immune response.

For multiple reasons, allergy tests are actually somewhat controversial. In simple terms, the food allergy test basically exposes your blood and/or white blood cells to a number of different foods, and is then observed for a reaction. There are many different types of allergy tests that show contradictory results when they are run on the same person. And some allergy researchers believe that you can actually have a delayed reaction *days* after you eat the suspected food. This makes the task of allergy detection even more difficult.

If your blood shows signs of an allergic reaction, it is most likely that you have a leaky gut and that partially digested particles of food are floating around in your bloodstream. The allergic reaction is your immune system mounting a response to this foreign invader. As you work to heal your leaky gut you will find that many, if not most, food reactions simply go away because the digestion of your food becomes so much more complete.

Two of the most common current allergies are wheat and dairy. Casein is found in dairy, and gluten is found in most grains. The partial digestion of casein and gluten produces protein chemicals called “opioids.” Like opium, these chemicals bind to certain receptors in the brain and cause withdrawal type symptoms—in other words, cravings. That’s why people with wheat and dairy allergies will actually crave wheat and dairy.

It’s also important to note that the properties of food changes as it goes from raw to cooked. Some people, who may be allergic to pasteurized milk, are not allergic to raw milk. This is because raw foods already contain the enzymes necessary to digest themselves. In the case of raw milk, when it is heated above a certain temperature in the pasteurization process, these enzymes are destroyed. So when the pasteurized milk enters the digestive tract, some people cannot digest the milk because the enzymes necessary to do so have been removed.

Similarly, some people who are allergic to cooked eggs can eat raw eggs without a problem. Raw and/or undercooked food is actually easier to digest than foods that are heavily cooked and/or processed.

The Standard American Diet tends to have a lot of allergenic ingredients that are often “hidden” in heavily processed foods. That’s why it’s often difficult to avoid the foods that you are most allergic to. Digestive enzyme supplements taken before each meal may help the body digest the “hidden” foods that are causing trouble for many people with chronic conditions.

Reason 3: Overuse and misuse of antibiotics

In the intestinal tract, there are many highly beneficial bacteria that serve various purposes. For example, one reason some people don’t get sick when they eat spoiled food is that their intestinal tract is full of highly beneficial bacteria like *acidophilus* and *bifodobacteria*. Because of these healthy bacteria, the “bad” bacteria in spoiled food do not have room to multiply to the degree that they make that person sick.

These “friendly” bacteria are actually a vital part of our immune system. They play a critical role in breaking down food so that we can fully absorb the nutrients in the food we eat. Unfortunately, these “good guys” are wiped out by the overuse of broad-spectrum antibiotics. While it’s true that antibiotics can virtually be a lifesaver in acute infections, modern medicine tends to overuse broad-spectrum antibiotics as a “catch all” or “quick fix,” which wreaks havoc on the digestive and immune systems, and also creates an opportunity for “superbugs” to develop (bacteria that mutate and become highly resistant to *any* antibiotic treatment).

Broad-spectrum antibiotics kill bacteria without prejudice, meaning that they wipe out both the “good” bacteria and the “bad” bacteria in our bodies. The good bacteria, known as probiotics (*acidophilus* and *bifodobacteria* being two of the more common strains), are essential for optimal digestion and well-being. For those people who have overused antibiotics at *any* point in their lives, they generally have a severe imbalance of intestinal flora. That’s because the good bacteria are wiped out, and they *never* get replenished.

The Standard American Diet is sadly deficient in probiotics, and so we never get an opportunity to ingest enough good bacteria to keep all the bad bacteria at bay. The bad bacteria found in our food and environment multiply unchecked in our digestive tract.

In order to restore a healthy balance in the digestive tract, it is essential to continually restore the body's supply of probiotics. Some researchers estimate as many as 70 trillion bacteria live in our intestines. If you have a high percentage of bad bugs, adding just a few billion good bugs into this hostile environment will have very little effect. Anyone who has *serious* gut problems typically needs between 100 billion and 400 billion probiotics *per day*.

Reason 4: Dysfunctional or exhausted immune, hormonal, and detoxification systems

Hormones are amazing tools of the body. They work synchronistically so that the body runs smoothly and efficiently. When hormones are unbalanced, virtually every bodily system is affected. While it may be natural for our bodies to decrease the production of hormones over time, it is also possible that because of internal toxins, poor diets, and the like, our bodies lose the ability to produce these hormones as efficiently as they should *too early* in our lives. Our stressful, modern lives can trigger an imbalance of hormones, in particular cortisol, one of the key hormones the body produces in response to stress of any kind. The adrenal glands normally produce between 20 to 40 milligrams of cortisol per day, but they produce much more when the body is under a great deal of stress.

Cortisol does many things:

- It plays a major role in keeping blood sugar levels normal.
- It helps to control inflammation throughout the body.
- It helps to mediate allergies by controlling histamine in the body.
- It boosts the immune system when it is under any type of infectious attack.
- It helps regulate the thyroid hormones to control metabolism and body temperature.
- It significantly influences blood pressure.

The adrenal glands are part of an intricate system of glands called the HPA axis, made up of the hypothalamus, pituitary, and adrenal glands. The hypothalamus senses conditions in the body and when necessary, secretes a hormone that tells the pituitary to send yet another hormone to the adrenals. When the adrenals get this signal, they start secreting cortisol. When cortisol levels get too high, the HPA axis senses this, and sends a message to the adrenals to halt. In many cases, people with chronic conditions suffer from poorly functioning adrenal glands that don't produce enough cortisol.

In addition, many people with chronic conditions—both men and women—experience low levels of DHEA, a precursor to testosterone. Testosterone and DHEA are crucial elements for many things, including the immune system and the brain. They are both key factors in muscle mass, energy, and have strong links to depression, weight gain, and cardiovascular disease. In fact, many times people gain weight because these two hormone levels drop so significantly. Thus, weight loss diets generally will not work without first balancing these hormones.

Another common hormone imbalance is due to an under-active or hyperactive thyroid gland. Many chronically ill people suffer unknowingly from hypothyroidism or hyperthyroidism, yet their thyroid function will appear to be within the normal range on most standard blood tests. This is because the range for normal is so wide to begin with, and “normal” is measured against a population that is generally unhealthy. Small supplemental doses of thyroid hormone will usually make a chronically ill person feel better fairly quickly.

Saliva-based tests have advanced significantly in recent years and are quickly becoming the gold standard for determining virtually all hormone levels, including DHEA, testosterone, estrogen, progesterone, cortisol, and thyroid.

IMPORTANT: You should NEVER self-treat your hormone levels. This includes avoiding natural supplements containing DHEA, pregnenolone, progesterone, androsterone (all natural hormone precursors), UNLESS you are directed to do so by your healthcare professional.³

Reason 5: Brain Injuries

Have you ever had a concussion? Been in a bad car accident? Suffered a sports-related head injury? Many of us have experienced some kind of brain injury in our lives. What you should know is that a head injury may have contributed to your chronic illness. Chronic conditions can be a direct result of brain trauma.

Some of us have thicker skulls than others, both literally and figuratively. So it's not likely you have spent much time thinking about how fragile the brain really is. For instance, we understand that extreme traumatic brain injury (TBI) is serious because it obviously results in visible physical impairment. However, in mild or moderate injury, the trauma is not so obvious. For this reason, most people (including some medical practitioners) consider non-extreme or mild traumatic brain injury (MTBI) as inconsequential in the long run because they see no symptoms proportional to those in TBI.¹⁰

To understand why brain injury can lead to chronic conditions, we need to introduce you some areas of the brain: the hypothalamus, pituitary glands, and the adrenal glands.¹¹

The Hypothalamus

The hypothalamus is part of the HPA axis, which consists of the hypothalamus, pituitary, and adrenal glands. These glands all work together and rely on one another. When one is malfunctioning, all are compromised and our health pays the price.

According to Medline Plus, the hypothalamus is an area of the brain that produces hormones that control thirst, hunger, body temperature, sleep, moods, sex drive, and the release of hormones from various glands, primarily the pituitary gland.¹²

The hypothalamus regulates homeostasis in the human body. In other words, it is in charge of making sure that everything in our bodies is always in balance, no matter what state we are in. It plays the key role in numerous functions and is a major link to the endocrine (hormone) and nervous systems. Damage to this structure results in disturbances in the production and regulation of our hormones, and can have a negative yet, initially, subtle effect on our health.

The Pituitary

Since the hypothalamus secretes hormones to stimulate hormone release from the pituitary gland, it is not surprising that functions related to this gland are negatively affected by a brain injury as well. The full impact of brain trauma on the pituitary gland has been under-identified and under-researched until rather recently, but it has now been fairly well established.^{10, 13}

The Adrenals

Since the hypothalamus and pituitary glands control the adrenal glands, it is also important to look at how insufficiencies in these can contribute to chronic illness. The adrenal glands sit atop the kidneys and are chiefly responsible for regulating the body's stress response. They do this by secreting cortisol and adrenaline, or in other words, by stimulating our fight or flight response. When these glands are malfunctioning there are many things that can be negatively affected.¹¹

SPECT and the Amen Clinic

Probably the best way to determine whether you have experienced brain trauma is be evaluated by the Amen Clinic. The Amen Clinic uses SPECT scans (single photon emission computed tomography) to image the metabolism of the brain. Brain trauma and other brain conditions can be readily diagnosed using SPECT scans. SPECT is one of the best tools for evaluating functional deficits from head trauma that are often not seen by other studies, leading to more understanding and more effective treatments for patients.¹⁴ While it is still rather expensive, your results may serve as an excellent, tangible resource.

Reason 6: Heavy metals, particularly mercury from dental amalgams

Mercury is one of the most toxic heavy metals on earth, and it can be the “spark” that starts the fires of many chronic illnesses. According to two scientific studies published in 2003 and 2004, the following are the most common chronic health issues related to mercury poisoning: periodontal disease, immune system problems, allergies, asthma, multiple chemical sensitivities, epilepsy, blood conditions, stomach pain, multiple sclerosis, ALS (also known as Lou Gehrig’s disease), Alzheimer’s disease, lupus, Parkinson’s disease, depression, mental confusion, infertility, chronic fatigue syndrome, arthritis, tachycardia, schizophrenia, chlamydia trachoma, and a host of viral herpes infections.⁴

Most people can excrete toxic heavy metals from the body successfully. However, some people—especially those who suffer from chronic conditions—cannot excrete them efficiently enough and a build-up occurs. Recent research also reveals that those who cannot excrete heavy metals efficiently appear to be genetically predisposed to this condition. The APO-E 4/3 and 4/4 genotypes tend to be the worst excretors of heavy metals. Those people with this version of APO-E protein—abundant in the cerebral spinal fluid surrounding the brain—have the highest affinity for becoming ill from exposure to neurotoxic heavy metals, especially mercury when it is present in combination with others. When numerous metals are present in the body, they have a heightened “synergistic toxicity.”

In particular, mercury from dental amalgams and vaccinations can be very destructive to the human body. The issues involved in mercury toxicity are complex, and therefore it has become a highly controversial and debated topic.

Dentists still place 72 *TONS* of mercury in the form of “silver” fillings in the mouths of Americans each year.⁵ There is now a wealth of medical research revealing that mercury does in fact leach out of every filling. There have been thousands of extensively documented cases throughout the world where the removal of mercury amalgam almost immediately led to the disappearance of symptoms, or significant improvements in serious health conditions. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), dental amalgam fillings constitute the major source of human exposure to mercury.

A mercury filling contains roughly half a gram of mercury on average. On average, people have at least five fillings, or nearly 3 grams of mercury. In comparison, if only a half a gram of mercury is found dispersed in a 10-acre lake anywhere in the United States, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will not allow the fish from that lake to be eaten. The FDA and EPA place a ban on any food that contains a mercury level of just 1 part per million (ppm). Yet the average level of mercury present in the urine of a person with amalgam fillings is 1.9 ppm. Some people can actually have urine with up to 50 ppm of mercury—50 times the EPA's Critical Level.^{6,7}

It is interesting to note that dentists and dental personnel who are repeatedly in contact with mercury from dental amalgam fillings statistically experience significantly higher levels of neurological, memory, musculoskeletal, mood, and behavioral problems than the general population. Studies also show that dentists have higher suicide rates than the general public. In fact, some dentists have begun to voluntarily stop their use of mercury amalgams. Sweden, Japan, Germany and several other countries have outlawed, or are in the process of outlawing, the use of mercury. Several members of the United States Congress have proposed several bills that would ban the use of mercury amalgams, but none of these bills have ever made it out of committee.

Anyone who suffers from a chronic illness should consider having their dental amalgams removed. Removal of amalgams can indeed be costly, but staying chronically ill costs a great deal more. If you decide to have your mercury amalgams removed, it is vital that you find a dentist who is experienced at properly removing amalgams and replacing them with a substance that is compatible with your body—usually porcelain, plastic, or composite resins. If you do not have the means for this, you may qualify to become a beneficiary of the Jigsaw Health Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to helping needy individuals with the initial focus on subsidizing the removal of dental mercury amalgams. Visit www.JigsawHealthFoundation.org to learn more.

Reason 7: Chronic exposure to mold

Dr. Ritchie Shoemaker MD, author of *The Mold Warriors*, has provided some astonishing insights into the effects of biotoxins on chronic conditions. In particular, mold and lyme produce toxins that can make people chronically ill for months, *or even years*. Dr. Shoemaker has found that certain people have a genotype (HLA DR 14-5-52B) that makes them more susceptible to biotoxins than the general population.⁸

People with this genotype lack the ability to recognize biotoxins, tag them, and eliminate them from the body. Without this ability, the toxins continually circulate within the body. They constantly cause the immune and inflammation system to turn on—and never turn off—since the toxins never leave the body.

More specifically, mold and lyme (found in lyme disease) produce a fat-soluble toxin that gets tied up in a cycle where it kicks off the body's inflammatory cascade, and attaches to the brain and nervous system (making it also a significant neurotoxin). The toxin also binds to cholesterol, making it difficult to eliminate effectively from the body since the body generally wants to hang on to—and reabsorb—cholesterol.

One major problem for people who are genetically predisposed *not* to recognize biotoxins is that they can't really get away from them, because they exist readily in the environment. People with chronic fatigue syndrome and other "fatiguing" type conditions feel like they have the flu all the time, mainly due to chronic exposure to mold found in everyday living. And their situation becomes even more desperate because most doctors are totally baffled by chronic conditions due to biotoxins, and don't know how to treat them.

The symptoms of chronic mold exposure are extensive. Anyone who has eight of the following symptoms should consider mold as a suspect in causing illness:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fibromyalgia • Respiratory distress, coughing, sneezing, sinusitis • Difficulty swallowing, choking, spitting up (vomiting) mucous • Hypersensitivity pneumonitis • Burning in the throat and lungs (similar to acid reflux and often misdiagnosed as such) • Asthmatic signs; wheezing, shortness in breath, coughing, burning in lungs, etc. • Irritable bowel syndrome, nausea, diarrhea, sharp abdominal pains, stomach lesions • Bladder, liver, spleen, or kidney pain • Dark or painful urine • Dirt-like taste in mouth, coated tongue • Food allergies/leaky gut syndrome/altered immunity • Memory loss; brain fog, slurred speech, occasionally leading to dementia • Vision problems • Swollen lymph nodes • Large boils on neck (often a sign of anaphylaxis) • Yellowing of nails, ridges, or white marks under nail • Thyroid irregularities, sometimes leading to complete dysfunction; adrenal problems • Headaches • Anxiety/depression, heart palpitations - confusion, PTSD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extreme blood pressure, cholesterol, or triglycerides irregularities • Ringing in ears, balance problems (very common), dizziness, loss of hearing (aspergillus niger) • Chronic fatigue (also included under this classification directional confusion) • Intermittent face flushing; almost always systemic, called the Mylar Flush (neurological) • Night head sweats, and drooling while sleeping, profuse sweating • Multiple chemical sensitivity; only upon exposure to Stachybotrys and Chaetomium • Nose bleeds (stachybotrys) • Bruising/scarring easily; rash or hives, bloody lesions all over the skin (Often systemic, see images; skin) • Reproductive system complications; infertility, changes in menstrual cycles, miscarriage • Sudden weight changes (Detoxifier genotypes tend to gain weight, non-detoxifier genotypes tend to lose weight) • Cancer • Hair loss, very brittle nails, temporary loss of fingerprints (in rare cases) • Joint/muscle stiffness and pain • Irregular heart beat/heart attack • Seizures, inadvertent body jerking, twitching, inadvertent facial movements or numbness in face • Hypersensitivity when re-exposed to molds, which can lead to anaphylaxis • Anaphylaxis upon re-exposure to mycotoxin producing molds
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Surprisingly, Dr. Ritchie Shoemaker has found that mold can be treated with a medication called Cholestyramine (CSM), a non-absorbable anion-binding resin used to lower cholesterol for over 40 years. The physicochemical properties of CSM enable it to bind to a diverse variety of toxin molecules, including biotoxins.



Reason 8: Chronic sub-acute infections from bacteria, fungi, and viruses

Research is now pointing to a strong correlation between chronic infections and cardiovascular disease, ulcers, cancer, autoimmune diseases, and a multitude of other chronic conditions that were once thought to happen for *no apparent reason*. The immune system does a miraculous job of responding to any acute infection. When we get sick with a cold, the immune goes into action to fight a foreign invader. Once the immune system is triggered to respond, we normally experience inflammation in the form of visible symptoms: a runny nose, head congestion, fever, cough, etc. After a few days, cold symptoms subside. At that point, the immune system has done its job, so it can shut off and rest for a while.

However, when your body is continuously bombarded by long-term chronic infections, you experience *silent inflammation* that invariably causes an array of vague, or seemingly minor symptoms that are often difficult to categorize or diagnose. Silent inflammation due to chronic long-term sub clinical infection is now being considered the “silent killer” of America. The vague, chronic symptoms of silent inflammation can go on for months *or even years*, wearing down the immune system to the point where it starts to malfunction, mistakenly attacking tissues and organs (known as autoimmune disease).

One common type of chronic infection is candida, or yeast overgrowth. The typical Standard American Diet actually encourages the growth of candida, because candida feeds on sugar and simple carbohydrates. By eating a diet high in refined sugar and refined carbohydrates, you are actually feeding and further populating yeast. And if you’ve overused antibiotics, you don’t have enough “good bacteria” in your gut to keep the overgrowth of candida in check. What’s more, the Standard American Diet is sadly deficient in good bugs, so unless you’re supplementing your diet with probiotics, you’ll never get enough good bugs to ward off candida.

When the immune system is overloaded by other factors, such as infections of other types of bugs, environmental contaminants, and heavy metals, clearing up chronic infections can become a challenge—something that requires persistence and perseverance to attack the problem on multiple levels.

Reason 9: Thick blood caused by infections, heavy metals, or genetics

There are a number of situations where the blood becomes “thicker” than it should. This condition is known as hypercoagulability, or thick blood. At a certain point, thick blood becomes very obvious. If you have your blood drawn, and it comes out very slowly, thick blood may be the culprit. If your blood is much thicker than it is supposed to be, it cannot effectively deliver oxygen and nutrients throughout the body. Interestingly, a high percentage of people who suffer from thick blood also suffer from chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS). In one study, 90% of CFS patients were aided dramatically by the use of blood thinners.

Blood thinners prescribed by a healthcare professional may be very effective in resolving thick blood, and may help alleviate chronic conditions. If you decide to use blood thinners, care should always be taken, since blood thinning may cause an inability of the blood to clot and result in excessive bleeding.

Interesting research has also suggested that infectious agents can actually work to create a thick blood condition. When the blood is thick, these agents are able to hide from the immune system. Conversely, the immune system depends on excellent circulation to efficiently move white blood cells throughout the body so it can fight these agents. The immune system cannot attack infection if it cannot deploy its troops to all areas of the body. So when the thick fibrin layers that make up hypercoagulation in the blood are dissolved, the immune system can finally attack the infections that are lurking there.

Nattokinase, systemic enzymes, magnesium, and omega-3 oils are good natural supplements that will help to thin the blood. (But in the case of nattokinase, beware that it is a soy by-product and may cause an allergic reaction in some people. This is rare, but it is possible.) Correcting thick blood can be a major breakthrough for chronically ill people.⁹

Reason 10: Unresolved emotional and spiritual issues

Just think about how much happens inside and around us that we do not even see. Our thoughts, will, and emotions are unseen; yet they are what truly make us human. Our body houses the unseen 'us,' and therefore our spirit affects our body, oftentimes in profound ways. Conversely, if something is wrong physically, for example a nutritional deficiency, our ill health can affect us spiritually and emotionally as well. So both the physical and the spiritual elements of our lives are very important to our health. In fact, they are integrated and inseparable.

Accordingly, the power of prayer can have a profound healing effect upon the body. In a report released in May 2004 by the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM), prayer is in three of the top five positions of complementary and alternative therapies. This report also shows that seventy-five percent of the adults surveyed have used prayer specifically for health problems.

But while scientific research from notable establishments—such as Duke University's Center for the Study of Religion/Spirituality and Health—are now proving the effectiveness of prayer, it is very important to recognize that *physiological symptoms usually stem from physiological problems*.

While some problems are legitimately psychological and/or spiritual, oftentimes the body can detoxify and heal itself if it physically receives what it needs. And putting a focus on correcting physiological problems will frequently alleviate psychological problems as well.

Summary

Treating chronic conditions is like putting together the pieces of a puzzle. Once you find the root causes of your chronic conditions, you're able to start making big health improvements—so that you feel better, *and stay better*.

So carefully consider each of these ten common causes for chronic conditions. If you want to drill down deeper into any of these, more detailed information is available online for free at www.JigsawHealth.com.

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2. Food allergies stemming from leaky gut syndrome.
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5. Brain injuries.
6. Heavy metals, particularly mercury from dental amalgams.
7. Chronic exposure to mold.
8. Chronic sub-acute infections resulting from bacteria, fungi, and viruses.
9. Thick blood caused by infections, heavy metals, or genetics.
10. Unresolved emotional and spiritual issues.

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