

Diet and Immune System Are Intrinsicly Linked

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A.J. in Sagaponack asks: I seem to be always sick with something and not healing well. Any thoughts?

As I [previously reported](#), nutrition is one of the key elements necessary for the proper functioning of our immune system. A responsive immune system depends upon an intact biochemistry, at the cellular level, and for things to function biochemically well a steady supply of nutrients are needed as well as an efficient process for eliminating toxins. There are two main issues relative to our nutritional status. The first is that of an absolute nutritional deficiency. Fortunately, except for VERY sick people or people with VERY restricted diets, most people get a reasonable level of nutrients from a broad and varied diet. If your system is under stress or symptomatic of some medical issue then additional supplementation becomes necessary, but given the right diet most of us can compensate pretty well most of the time.

The second issue is that of a relative nutritional deficiency. Just eating a broad diet doesn't guarantee that you'll get what your immune system needs because there are issues with the quality of the food and the efficiency of the digestive system to be reckoned with.

Organically grown food is best for many reasons including that it has a higher protein content than produce grown with synthetic fertilizers and your body doesn't have to deal with the stress of the toxic pesticide residues. We are fortunate in that there are several farm stands around the area that have locally grown, organic produce. Next comes the issue of digestive function. As a consequence of illness or as a common occurrence of the aging process, as time goes by our production of enzymes and stomach acid tend to decrease. As that happens our ability to digest (breakdown nutrients into their component parts) and then absorb them becomes compromised. As a result, even if we are eating a well balanced pristine diet we may still wind up with a wide range of nutritional deficiencies.

In this age of diet fads, I have seen people who have eliminated protein and cut back on their calories so much that their body started shutting down non-critical functions to conserve protein. This resulted in a significant decrease in the production of digestive enzymes to the point that when they started to eat more normally their body couldn't tolerate it and they got sick. Foods had to be re-introduced slowly, well cooked and given with digestive aids until their body could start producing what it needed. The entire immune counter-attack to any severe or chronic disease is protein based.

Send in your questions and be well.