

**Free Report**

# **The 5 Hidden Causes for Chronic Illness that You Must Know**



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## Congratulations, I am so pleased you have downloaded this report.

The fact that you have done so is an indication that you are wanting to take charge of your health. You may not know very much now about what that might look like, or you may be overwhelmed and confused by the conflicting information you hear from various sources. What matters in this moment is that you have taken a very important step to begin claiming the power you have to determine the fate of your health and be in charge of your well-being.

In this special report, you will learn about the **5 Hidden Causes for Chronic Illness That You Must Know**. If you are struggling with depression, fatigue, chronic pain or any other persistent symptom, this is information you absolutely must have. If you are reading this, I am guessing that you are not satisfied with how your treatment is going. Get ready to be excited, because you are going to make some major discoveries and learn some things you can start doing now to enhance your health.

Allow me to explain briefly why I am so passionate about helping people and why I love Functional Medicine.

There was a time when I practiced psychiatry much like everyone else. I didn't plan on doing this, years ago, when I chose to go to medical school. Back then, I was actually very interested in nutrition and exercise. After years of school and residency training, I found myself working at a community mental health agency where my main function was prescribing psychiatric medications to children and teens who mostly were of low socioeconomic status.

Things changed for me in two stages. First, I was exposed to some new information about the nature of trauma and the impact that trauma has upon development. Next, I learned about alternative medicine. That was a journey that began with my first visit to the Riordan Clinic in 2006 and culminated with becoming a Certified Functional Medicine Provider in 2014.

Here's what I have learned, in a nutshell, from all the training that I have done in the past 8 years-**You are in Charge**. That's right. It's your brain and your body. You do have the power to take control of what is going on in your body. Through lifestyle changes, you can dramatically impact your well-being.

In this report, we are going to look at some lifestyle mistakes that you may be choosing today, unaware of the harm it may be doing to your brain and body. You are going to learn about some choices you can begin taking now to begin your journey towards better health for you mind, body and spirit.

I encourage you to begin making those changes now, but don't forget to consult with your own provider regarding these suggestions if that seems appropriate to you. DO NOT discontinue any current medical treatments without first consulting your personal healthcare provider. My hope for you is that you, or someone you love, may find some actionable step that could truly relieve your symptoms rather than simply trying to keep them in check.

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## 5 Hidden Causes of Chronic Illness That You Must Know

### 1. Inflammation

It's a new word to many when I first say it in my office. No matter what chronic condition you may have, chances are good that inflammation is playing a part in creating this problem. If you don't address it, you will undoubtedly continue to suffer.

What is inflammation? It's what happens when the immune system goes wacky. The immune system gets revved up over something and cranks out chemical messengers (called cytokines) that course through the body creating havoc. Cytokines can cause pain in joints or muscles. They are responsible for the profound feeling of fatigue you experience when you have the flu. While it's obvious that our immune system is fighting something when you have an acute infection like the flu or a bad cold, you can be experiencing hidden inflammation which is leading to your depression, fatigue or chronic pain.

What triggers inflammation? Why does the immune system go awry? There are many triggers. The two that are the most likely are food and bugs. By bugs, I mean the microbes that live in your body, primarily those that live in the intestinal tract. There are certain types of microbes that foster optimal function of the immune system while others provoke the immune system into misbehaving. Whenever you take antibiotics, all of the microbes in the gut are killed. More often than not, those that next begin to flourish in the intestines are those that disrupt the normal function of the immune system. If you have a history of antibiotic use or if you have digestive symptoms such as excess gas or bloating, talk to your doctor about using probiotic supplements and explore the use of fermented foods, such as sauerkraut, kimchi or kombucha tea.

The foods we eat are another potential trigger that can provoke the immune system to become overly reactive. This can lead to a wide variety of symptoms, which may or may not involve the digestive system itself. The behavior of the immune system when someone has one of these food sensitivities is very different from an allergic type of response. When someone has an allergy, they usually know immediately or shortly after exposure that they have reacted to something. In the case of a food sensitivity, there is no obvious immediate reaction most of the time. In order to determine that you are having this type of problem with a food, you must either eliminate the offending food for a number of weeks or have specialized testing to look for food sensitivities.

Other food choices can influence the immune system and increase inflammation. For instance, the oils that are frequently used in processed foods and in fast food restaurants provoke inflammation. There are healthier fats that can be used, especially at home, for cooking that actually lower inflammation. Try instead to use olive oil, coconut oil and even grass-fed butter for cooking. You can supplement with fish or flax oil to increase your intake of anti-inflammatory omega-3 fats. You can also enjoy chia or hemp seeds which contain high amounts of those fats as well.

## **2. Digestive Disturbances**

"Death begins in the colon"

The gut is the new frontier in medicine, or modern medicine, that is. Ancient healing practices, including many systems of care often referred to as "alternative" medicine have long held that the key to a healthy body begins with good digestive function. What's new are the discoveries being made by scientists today that help us understand the intricacies of this somewhat complicated process. Emerging data is revealing how our bodies are impacted, dare I say controlled, by the organisms that live in our digestive tract. A growing

number of studies show that participants experience improvement in mood or anxiety symptoms after use of probiotics or yogurt products.

How does our digestive function get out of control? Things can begin to go awry right at birth. It is known that children delivered by C-section have different microorganisms than those delivered vaginally. Sometimes, mothers are given antibiotics before delivery. Many children in this country are given antibiotics multiple times for ear infections and other reasons. Antibiotics kill all bacteria, including the ones that should be living in your digestive tract. If someone has had this type of exposure to antibiotics, it is unlikely that the microbes in their gut are the type that will play friendly with the immune system. If the immune system responds adversely to the microbes in your gut, it goes into a state of heightened alert, yelling "Stranger-Danger!" to all of the other immune cells in your body. Worse, some of those undesirable critters can provoke the body into attacking itself as a result of "molecular mimicry." This can be the root of some cases of autoimmune disease.

There are other important ways that our digestive tract may not function as it should. It could be as "simple" as taking the time to slow down to eat and giving mindful attention to the process, rather than quickly eating at a desk while talking on the phone or while watching TV. Good digestion happens when the parasympathetic nervous system is active; relaxation is the key to activating the "rest and digest" functions of the body.

Digestive function also requires adequate chewing, saliva, stomach juices including hydrochloric acid (yes, you actually need this stuff!), pancreatic enzymes, bile (you are missing out if you don't have a gallbladder), the proper amount of motility or movement in the intestines, and the list goes on. Fiber and water are also needed in adequate amounts.

Are you having digestive problems? Do not ignore this! You must do more than follow the recommendations of conventional medicine to remedy symptoms of poor digestive function. Good health will allude you if you don't take steps to improve this. As I begin working with a new patient, I assess their digestive function very carefully and provide guidance on corrective steps if any problems with digestion are identified.

### **3. Blood Sugar Dysregulation**

Like inflammation, this may be a new term to you. For the sake of your health both now and in the long-term, it's important that you be informed about the relationship between your food choices, your blood sugar and the function of your brain and your body.

Millions of Americans have problems with their blood sugar. The number diagnosed with Type II Diabetes is steadily growing as is those with the precursor to the condition, or Pre-Diabetes.

What does this have to do with your brain? Quite a lot. If you have blood sugar problems, you have energy problems. If you are depressed, you have energy problems. Obviously, if you are fatigued you have energy problems. Unstable blood sugar can also play a role in creating episodes of low mood, anxiety, overwhelm and even rage. If you have diabetes, your chances of experiencing depression rises, as does your risk for developing Alzheimer's Dementia. There are many people who are already in the stages of pre-diabetes who have no idea they are putting their health at risk. If you are a sugar or carb addict, know that you are at high risk of being one of those people. While there are some symptoms and behaviors that identify the potential for a blood sugar problem, the best way to assess your risk is to get some labs done. A functional medicine provider will be your best option for having these labs interpreted appropriately. It should include a fasting blood sugar, fasting insulin and Hemoglobin A1C.

Hemoglobin A1C is a measure of sugar that is attached to the protein hemoglobin found in red blood cells. Ideally, it should be below 5.4%. If it is higher, this could be the hidden cause for problems such as fatigue, depression or difficulty losing weight. In my opinion, this needs to be addressed by adopting a diet that is sufficiently low in carbohydrate to begin lowering it into the more favorable range.

What is "sufficiently low in carbohydrate"? At a minimum, it's avoiding added sugars such as those found in sweets and sweetened drinks. This can be a very challenging step to take! Perhaps even harder than giving up something like wheat or gluten, giving up sugar can be quite difficult. We now know that sugar has the same impact on brain function that cocaine does! Working with a provider who can help you create a successful plan to knock your sugar habit and get your blood sugar under control can be the key to your success.

## **4. Nutrient Deficiencies**

Who would guess that in a county where about 2/3 of the population is either overweight or obese, that some many people would have nutrient deficiencies. It's so astounding. Consider some of the nutrients that are commonly deficient and how they might impact brain function.

- Let's start with vitamin D. To most people, this is a nutrient needed for healthy bones. In fact, every cell in the body has a vitamin D receptor. It

does many things, including regulating the immune system. In studies, vitamin D deficiency ranges in frequency from 15% to as high as 60%. Those with obesity show an increased likelihood of being vitamin D deficient. Vitamin D deficiency is also found in those with depression.

- How about vitamin B12? This nutrient is critical to the function of the nervous system. It creates the insulation in your long nerves that let you feel your pinkie toe. It also plays an important role in the creation of neurotransmitters like serotonin and dopamine. Vitamin B12 is only found in animal sources, so vegans need to supplement with B12. Even for those eating foods that can be sources of B12, many things can interfere with absorption. For instance, the diabetic drug, Metformin, interferes with B12 absorption. Low levels of stomach acid, as might happen for those taking drugs that block the production of stomach acid, is another risk factor for low B12.
- Another nutrient critical to healthy brain function that many are missing is magnesium. This nutrient is the best. It promotes relaxation of the muscles and the mind. It's found in only very small amounts in the diets of those folks who are relying on processed foods, which is most of the country.
- I would be remiss if I didn't include in this list the essential fatty acids, the omega-3 fats EPA and DHA. When a nutrient is described as essential, it generally means we must consume that nutrient in our diet because our body is not able to create it. In the case of EPA and DHA, some amount of synthesis can occur, but that requires adequate amounts of a plant-based omega-3 fat known as ALA. ALA is found in flaxseeds, walnuts, and chia seeds. There is controversy as to how well humans can convert ALA into EPA then DHA. Pre-formed EPA can be found only from animal sources such as fish or krill. Grass-fed meats can be sources of omega-3 fats as well. If you are a vegetarian or vegan, it's best to get both ALA from the sources mentioned above, as well as pre-formed DHA from seaweed and algae. Low levels of omega-3 fats and high levels of pro-inflammatory omega-6 fats commonly occur when people consume the standard American diet (known as SAD). This status is associated with a long list of conditions, which include almost every mental illness one might consider, notably depression, ADHD, and schizophrenia.

Your action plan for addressing potential nutrient deficiencies is to get tested. Most insurance plans provide coverage for assessing vitamin D and B12. Magnesium levels can be trickier to assess. Your best bet is to work with a provider experienced in nutritional medicine. I guide my patients through the process of testing, so you have the information you need in order to make the most well-informed decisions about your personal lifestyle choices.

## 5. Stress

Make no mistake about it, stress is a not-so-hidden trigger for many who are suffering from depression or fatigue. The evidence is clear that high levels of stress are found in people who have almost any diagnosis we could name. In my opinion, it's not possible to make much progress towards healing if efforts aren't made to learn and practice the skills necessary for handling stress in a more adaptive manner.

The process of becoming better adapted to stress begins with the realization that stress is not the challenging situation or person in your life. Instead, stress is our reaction to the events in our lives. And that means we do have some ability to control how we react. It may seem to be impossible just now but don't let that stop you from trying.

In order to develop greater resilience to stress, start with taking a mini-stress break. Right now, as you read this, allow your belly to expand as you inhale then gently contract as you allow a long, deep exhalation. Repeat this for a few moments, closing your eyes if you like.

Breathing in this manner is an important gateway to relaxation, and relaxing on purpose is one of the keys to stress reduction.

The second thing we must know about the way we react to stress is that our stress response system has an "on" switch that is easily engaged but no "off" switch. We turn our stress response down when we engage in practices that move the dial in the desired direction. There are numerous activities that can lower the stress response and promote healing. We must take the step of learning then using them in order to benefit. I encourage you to develop a tool-set of practices that are both short along with some that are bit longer in duration. I provide my patient with tools and practices that allow them to learn how to respond to stress in healthy, peaceful ways.

# Are you ready to take control of your health?

**Do you want to have a better understanding of why you are struggling with chronic illness and create an action plan that will free you of this burden?**

I am so glad you have downloaded this report. I hope you have enjoyed reading it, and that it has provided you with ideas that can serve you in your personal wellness journey.

As I work with patients, together we examine whether they are impacted by the 5 factors covered in this report as well as others that can create and maintain chronic illness. Whether its fatigue, excess weight, chronic pain or other conditions, you can do more than just take pills to control your symptoms. It's possible to take steps that actually remove them completely in many cases.

When you work with me in one of my programs, you have the opportunity to:

- Explore and understand the underlying causes of your health challenge
- Create an action plan to address those issues
- Receive targeted ideas to help you implement your personal wellness plan
- Examine and remove the blocks that can stand in the way of making the changes needed for success
- Develop tools that help you effectively deal with stress in a positive and healing manner

It's not easy to embark on this path without guidance and support from someone who understands the complexities of chronic illness and what it takes to change. If you could use some help to get you on the right track, I welcome the opportunity to work with you. I offer a variety of programs and coaching support that are tailored for each individual client I work with. I support, guide and mentor my clients towards creating the healthier life they desire and deserve to have.

For more information about my programs, please contact me at:

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Let's work together to create the healthy body and lifestyle you desire.

Many blessings to you on your journey to wellness,

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Certified Functional Medicine Practitioner

