

# LIVING BETTER

with

## AUTOIMMUNE DISORDERS

Simple ways to turn down the volume and revitalize your life

by Jacob Teitelbaum, MD

If you've been living with an autoimmune disorder, you know how hard it is to just get through the day. Some days, even getting out of bed feels impossible.

Between the achiness, exhaustion, and other disabling symptoms, living with an autoimmune disease can impact your ability to work and socialize. It can also take a toll on your financial health, along with your physical and mental health.

And while it may seem like you'll never feel better, there are safe, natural solutions that can help to reduce painful inflammation, decrease fatigue, support a healthier immune response, improve digestive problems, and brighten your mood.

By giving your body and your immune system the gentle support they need, you'll be able to get back to living your life the way you want.

### When Your Immune System Gets It Wrong

Your body has a carefully designed system to keep you healthy and disease-free. But sometimes that system gets hit with a glitch, causing it to become hypervigilant. When that happens, your immune system confuses your own organs and tissues with dangerous invaders and goes on the attack.

Those attacks can affect any part of your body—and sometimes multiple parts—depending on the type of autoimmune disorder. As a result, your body gets weaker and your immune system gets overworked, making it nearly impossible to properly defend you against real menaces like infectious bacteria and viruses. In the worst cases, autoimmune conditions can threaten your life.

The most common autoimmune disease symptoms include:

- Fatigue
- Muscle or joint pain

- Overall achiness
- Joint swelling
- Digestive problems
- Recurring fever
- Skin issues

Those symptoms can swing from mild to severe and back again, even within a single day.

Unfortunately, most autoimmune diseases have no permanent cure, but that doesn't mean there's nothing you can do. In fact, there are some very easy actions you can take to minimize your symptoms and calm your autoimmune disorder activity without suppressing your immune system.

### More Than 80 Autoimmune Disorders

You might be surprised to learn that there are more than 80 distinct autoimmune disorders, and each affects the body in different ways. Some of these disorders are extremely rare, affecting very few people. Others affect millions.

The most common autoimmune disorders include:

- Rheumatoid arthritis
- Hashimoto's thyroiditis
- Psoriasis
- Lupus
- Celiac disease
- Multiple sclerosis
- Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD)

Though these autoimmune disorders are different and come with their own unique symptoms, there are some factors that all of them have in common.

### Overreaction, Inflammation, and Oxidation

Three health issues can be found in virtually all autoimmune conditions:

1. An overreactive immune system that makes mistakes
2. Long-term, system-wide inflammation
3. High levels of oxidative stress that can harm healthy cells

The last two—inflammation and oxidation—are consequences of the overreacting immune system.

Inflammation acts as one of the tools your body uses to fight off threats and promote healing. But in autoimmune conditions, inflammation signals get turned on unnecessarily. Worse yet, those signals don't turn off when they're supposed to. The resulting runaway inflammation can cause pain throughout the body and interfere with the normal functioning of cells and organs.

Oxidative stress comes into play when free radicals (unstable molecules that can damage your cells) outpace your body's supply of antioxidants. Excessive oxidative stress can trigger autoimmune disorders, lead to disease progression, worsen immune system intolerance, and increase systemic inflammation.

All three of these factors are intertwined, and together they can worsen your symptoms and your disease...unless you take steps to calm them down.

### Calming Things Down

In autoimmune disorders, your immune system makes mistakes. It sees threats where there are none and goes on the attack. While weakening or shutting down your immune system may seem like the logical answer, it's not. That can leave you highly vulnerable to opportunistic infections and may not resolve the symptoms you're struggling with.

Calming the immune response is the key to easing autoimmune disorders and their debilitating symptoms. That may seem impossible—especially if you've been suffering for a long time with no relief—but it can happen when you know the right actions to take.

A combination of easily manageable lifestyle changes and targeted natural supplements can turn the tide on your autoimmune condition, and help you feel like yourself again.

### 5 Simple Changes Can Ease Your Symptoms

With an autoimmune condition, you'll have good days, bad days, and very bad flare-up days. Luckily, by making some simple lifestyle changes, you can increase the good days, decrease the bad days, and cut down on flare-up days.

Try introducing these five changes—you'll be amazed by how much better you'll start to feel.



**1. Eat nourishing whole foods.** Sticking with a healthy diet and avoiding problem foods can help get your immune system back in balance. Get

## The AIP Diet

Making major changes to your diet can quickly ease some of the most disabling symptoms of autoimmune diseases. Adopting the Autoimmune Protocol (AIP) Diet offers a food-based solution to the runaway inflammation common to these conditions. Basically, this diet eliminates foods that can trigger inflammation and replaces them with nutrient-dense foods that can modulate the inflammatory response.



### Inflammation-triggering foods include:

- Refined sugar
- High fructose corn syrup
- Dairy products
- Gluten
- Grains
- Nightshades (such as eggplants and tomatoes)
- Seed and vegetable oils (such as canola oil)
- Legumes (such as peanuts)
- Soy products
- Processed foods



### AIP superstar foods include:

- Bone broth
- Grass-fed meat
- Fish high in omega-3 fatty acids (such as salmon and mackerel)
- Sweet potatoes
- Coconut milk
- Avocados
- Olive oil
- Vegetables, especially leafy greens
- Small amounts of fruit, especially apples and berries



familiar with the AIP (Autoimmune Protocol) diet, which has been shown to calm systemic inflammation and reduce autoimmune symptoms. Avoid excess sugar and white flour, and when convenient eat grass-fed beef instead of grain-fed.



**2. Get enough sleep.** Your body needs plenty of solid sleep every night. Without enough sleep, stress hormone levels rise, which can increase your immune system imbalance, inflammation, and disease symptoms. Aim for 7 to 8 hours of sleep to refresh and repair your body and mind.



**3. Rebalance your gut.** When the bacteria in your gut are out of balance and the bad bacteria outnumber beneficial bacteria, it can cause damage throughout your body—and that includes your immune system. After all, your gut houses more than 70 percent of your immune system, so it's crucial that your gut bacteria remain in healthy balance.



**4. Calm your stress.** Stress throws your body into a hyper-alert state that engages your immune system. Take steps every day to reduce your stress levels. Try adding proven stress-relieving activities, such as meditation, yoga, and focused breathing, into your daily routine.



**5. Exercise regularly.** Getting 30 minutes of gentle exercise most days can help relieve fatigue, modulate your immune system, and reduce your symptoms. Try to get in some physical activity every day, at least some of it outdoors (if you can). Sunshine synthesizes vitamin D in the body, and low levels are associated with higher risk of autoimmune illness. Just make sure you don't overdo it during your workout and avoid any exercises that cause pain or overexertion.

### These 4 Supplements Calm Autoimmune Disorders

Your body needs special support to help normalize its immune system responses. That includes soothing chronic, systemic inflammation and protecting against free radicals and oxidative damage. Any autoimmune condition can benefit from these four targeted supplements:

**Curcumin** has been valued for centuries in the Ayurvedic medical tradition. It's well known for its superior anti-inflammatory action, which has been put to the test in numerous clinical trials. In addition, curcumin has impressive antioxidant powers that neutralize free radicals to calm oxidative stress and prevent oxidative damage. Unfortunately, most curcumin supplements are not fully absorbed by the body. The exception—a special form of curcumin called BCM-95 (Curcugreen) that's been shown in clinical studies to be highly bioavailable and absorbable, allowing for more powerful anti-inflammatory and antioxidant action.

**Boswellia** has been used for thousands of years as a staple of the Ayurvedic tradition. It has a unique ability to block 5-LOX, an inflammatory pathway that plays a destructive part

in many autoimmune conditions (including rheumatoid arthritis and celiac disease). In addition, boswellia tames multiple inflammatory pathways in the body, largely due to the herb's main healing compound, AKBA. For the best results, look for a standardized boswellia extract that contains at least 10 percent AKBA.

**Fish Oil** is a rich, natural source of omega-3 fatty acids, which excel at keeping inflammation under control. Studies show that fish oil can help tame inflammation in autoimmune conditions, prevent or slow disease progression, and calm hyperreactive immune cells. Increasing omega-3 fatty acid levels can also increase the body's antioxidant activity to reduce oxidative stress.

**Probiotics** help maintain a healthy balance in your gut microbiome—the trillions of bacteria that live in the gut. When that microbiome is out of balance, a condition known as dysbiosis, pathogenic bacteria can take over and cause runaway inflammation and uncontrolled immune system reactions. Unfortunately, it doesn't take much to disrupt the gut microbiome. Dysbiosis can be brought on by many factors, including medications like antibiotics and steroids, chronic stress, and poor diet (even for a single meal).

High-quality probiotic supplements can restore a healthy balance in the gut microbiome by increasing supplies of beneficial bacteria. Along with controlling dysbiosis, beneficial bacteria also produce anti-inflammatory compounds and help keep the immune system from overreacting. ■



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