

New Hope for Fibromyalgia and Chronic Fatigue Sufferers

There are many theories with regard to the causes of chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia, many of which may be indeed touching on the truth or at least touching on an aggravator or contributor to these afflictions. Diseases in general have been growing in epidemic proportion over at least the past 20 years, especially in the United States, where our increasingly toxic environment and lifestyles have drifted further and further away from what is natural in the name of progress, technology, and profit

Chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia are no exception, the two often being experienced together, and possibly symptoms of the same disease. Many agree that having one or both of these conditions reflects a compromised immune system, but whether this has resulted from viruses or chemicals or heredity or DNA mutations or other causes is much debated. As in the question of the chicken or the egg, I think the answer lies in what came first, at least in terms of triggering the disease.

We all have unique genetic weaknesses and tendencies, but usually a disease that we may be predisposed to will not surface unless an external environmental factor triggers it. Viruses lay dormant in all of us, as do many bacteria. The body's immune system keeps them in check unless the body is damaged and becomes weak and imbalanced to the point that viruses and bacteria grow out of control and flourish, causing disease. But what external "triggering" factors came first to weaken the immune system to allow such a systemic breakdown to occur?

The answer most likely lies in how increasingly toxic and contaminated our bodies are becoming. This cumulative toxic overload is the result of the growing number of harmful chemicals we're exposed to in our everyday life -- over 10,000 in food processing and preservation alone. We eat chemically-processed foods that contain preservatives, pesticides, dyes, hormones, bleaching agents, neurotoxic artificial sweeteners, steroids, and antibiotics, drink hundreds of chemicals in our tap water, breathe in fumes from factories, are bombarded with radiation from numerous and growing sources, and chemicals are outgassed in our homes from our Teflon-coated pans to our stain-resistant carpets. We are surrounded with plastics, paints, solvents, cleaners, medications, and many other toxic chemicals, and when you mix them all together in our bodies with our own natural chemistry, as in a chemistry lab, the results can be unpredictable and potentially explosive. In addition, antibiotics that destroy good bacteria along with the bad have been dangerously overprescribed, contributing to weakened immune systems, and expensive unnatural synthetic drugs are being dispensed in record numbers that do not cure but only suppress symptoms, while causing a plethora of harmful side effects to the tune of billions of dollars for the pharmaceutical industry.

Recent studies have shown that antibiotics and chemicals can permeate cell walls and destroy, damage, or mutate mitochondria, which most claim cannot be regenerated. What are mitochondria? In short, they are the powerhouses of our bodies. They assimilate food and produce critical nutrients, but their primary function is to manufacture adenosine triphosphate (ATP), a vital component of life. ATP is believed to provide 90-95% of all cellular energy and has been found to act as a neurotransmitter extracellularly. Also, an enormous amount of ATP is required by our energy-hungry muscles. Unfortunately, the brain does not store ATP, ATP cannot be shared between organ systems, its supply is very limited, and the demand for it by the body is very high. Therefore, ATP must be constantly synthesized to provide a continuous supply of energy or an ATP-imbalance occurs, which may lead to neuronal cell deaths, chronic fatigue from lack of energy, nutritional deficiencies, and muscle weakness and pain as in fibromyalgia, among many other symptoms. ATP imbalance or poor regulation can be very dangerous – too much ATP in a few areas of the body can actually be just as damaging as too little, such as in spinal cord injuries.

Scientists have theorized that mutations in mitochondrial DNA also contribute to aging, and when the production of ATP is interrupted or stopped for any number of reasons, a cascade of free-radical damage begins. The key to chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia, and many other diseases, may lie in cellular damage by chemicals, while the road to recovery may lie in eliminating toxins that cause cellular damage and pursuing natural courses of treatment that help the body heal itself.

Although most doctors and researchers do not believe mitochondria can be repaired or regenerated, they used to say the same thing about brain cells, and that has since been disproved. The body is a miraculous creation, and if it is not abused, it has many self-healing and regenerative abilities. I came across one University of California-Berkeley research project recently where mitochondria in rats were able to be rejuvenated with large doses of acetyl-L-carnitine and alpha-lipoic acid, common natural dietary supplements, which also appeared to make the old rats more youthful. Guaifenesin has also been used successfully by fibromyalgia sufferers to help relieve pain. It is believed that guaifenesin works both by causing urinary excretion of excess uric acid, phosphate, and other substances that should have been excreted by the kidneys that have built up in the cells and tissue to the point that they depress ATP formation, and by actually reinforcing cell walls to minimize entry by toxins and further damage to the cells. (There seem to be very few all-natural products that contain guaifenesin without ephedrine or chemicals. I found one product made by Naturade called Herbal Expec that I would recommend)

After "Yuppie Flu" first surfaced in the 1980's, a few progressive doctors tried giving patients injections of adenosine monophosphate (AMP), a chemical precursor of ATP, but this was expensive, inconvenient, difficult to tolerate, and the results were very slow and gradual. Next, in the 1990's, oral ATP supplements were tried, and are still available today,

but they had side effects and did not allow the body to naturally assimilate the ATP itself which makes it less targeted and effective. But more recently, there has been significant success with another precursor to ATP – D-Ribose. D-Ribose is a complex sugar with no side effects. It goes to work quickly in the body, effectively fueling the mitochondria so that additional needed ATP can be produced for many hours at a time. In particular, it increases ATP production in muscles, including the heart, therefore besides improving muscle strength and helping alleviate pain, it additionally benefits individuals with heart problems, and increases blood circulation, oxygen levels, and energy levels. Ribose formulas often include creatine, as the two are believed to work synergistically together to increase overall ATP production.

With cellular damage, and the often accompanying gut damage from ingesting chemicals, there are also often multiple nutritional deficiencies that result from poor absorption and assimilation, regardless if you think you have been eating well, therefore a potent vitamin and mineral supplement and an immune system builder is also recommended, preferably liquid sublinguals (under the tongue) to enhance absorption. Since our soil has been damaged from chemicals, and thus much of our food is lacking in vitamins and minerals, the vitamin/mineral nutritional supplement should be the one thing you take for life to maintain health even if you feel fine. For those who can afford it, a new spectroscopic test is available from Spectracell that examines white blood cells, which help protect the body and combat disease, and can pinpoint your specific and unique cellular deficiencies.

Although the natural supplements mentioned above may be extremely helpful in repairing cell damage over time, increasing energy, and may potentially help alleviate symptoms in the short-term, in order to foster long-term healing and maintenance of health, it is critical that toxins that store in fatty tissue be removed from the body, such as with binding whole grains, natural detoxifiers, and chelation, and further toxic exposure that contributes to cellular damage and other health problems be avoided. Since your body is likely chemically addicted to many substances, a natural course of treatment that involves the elimination of chemicals often results in short-term withdrawal symptoms or temporary exacerbation of symptoms where you feel worse before you feel better, but this stage passes quickly.

The more you understand what you're fighting and your options, the better armed you will be to battle it. And half the battle is knowing and eliminating what caused the disease in the first place. Although there are supplements that may help, natural steps to better health do not have to cost a fortune. There are many inexpensive dietary measures that can be taken. To learn more about the thousands of harmful toxins in our food and everyday environment and how to avoid them, how to bind toxins and remove them from the body, how to treat symptoms of disease naturally, and how to adopt a non-toxic chemical-free diet and natural lifestyle that will help your body heal itself, please visit the NatureGem website at <http://www.naturegem.com>. From the home page, you can also link to a copy of this article with active links to helpful resources.

About The Author

Deb Bromley is a former science and technology researcher and the President of NatureGem Nontoxic Living (<http://www.naturegem.com>), an organization devoted to promoting awareness of toxins in our food and environment that can cause disease, and providing access to nutrition information, natural remedies, and alternative health resources. She was formerly a researcher at the NASA Lewis Research Center, a professional staff member of Cleveland State University, and a Corning research contractor. Additionally, she was the operations manager for the Battelle Memorial Institute Midwest Technology Transfer Center, and an editor for a major Cleveland-area regional newspaper. Ms. Bromley studied environmental health and behavioral science at the New York Institute of Technology and is the founder of The Legacy Health Foundation, a non-profit hunger initiative created to provide chemical-free healing foods to underserved populations.