

# Mystery Symptoms and Immune Dysfunction:

## *From Allergies & Arthritis to Memory Loss & Multiple Sclerosis*

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**W**hether you have localized symptoms such as a stuffy nose or painful joint, or it seems that everything is being affected from hair to toenails, one root cause that affects every cell in your body is immune system dysfunction.

An enormously complex defense system, the main job of the immune system can be boiled down to a simple concept: The immune system determines whether something is “Me” or “Not-Me.” Is what is going on inside or outside my body in my best interest, or not?

While every cell is influenced by the immune system, about two-thirds of the immune system is found in that 30-foot tube running from the lips to the anus known as the *gut*. Clearly, this is because this internal core of the body is actually more intimate with the environment than even our skin. In fact, it is designed to turn environmental components—that is, food and drink—into the very stuff of you: bones, nerves, hormones, etc. In order to do this, it must very precisely determine what bits and pieces will help you, and which will harm you.

### YOUR MICROBIOME

This is also the site of the greatest concentration of our allies in this process: the *microbiome*. This now-common term refers to a whole host of other “critters” that are intimately part of our bodies, and without which we could not live. After the human genome was sequenced in 2000, an astonishing, previously unknown array of tens of thousands of micro-organisms was found in the gut, on the skin, even in the bloodstream. They were found because their DNA is different from human DNA.

We were unaware of most of them because they couldn’t be grown outside the body in a laboratory. Of the approximately 100 trillion cells that make up the human body, only 10 percent are human DNA. *The other 90 percent are something else!* Most of these bacteria, yeasts, protozoa, viruses, etc., live in the gut. All of us have three to five pounds of these creatures “along for the ride.” They’re absolutely necessary for life. We can’t extract the nutrition from our food without them. Perhaps even more importantly, they’re in constant communication with our immune systems.



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system dysfunction.”

Whether you are concerned about mysterious weight gain, fatigue, widespread pain, brain fog, tingling in limbs, or countless other symptoms often ignored or poorly resolved by current medical treatment, chances are it can actually be traced back to the immune system and its co-workers contained in the microbiome.

### FUNCTIONAL MEDICINE: SEEKING THE ROOT CAUSE

A Functional Medicine doctor will ask you many detailed questions and examine every aspect of your body, as these can provide valuable clues to the true root causes of your symptoms. For instance, problems ranging from nasal allergies to swollen joints to nervous system disorders including multiple sclerosis and depression are very often linked to poor digestion and imbalances in the gut. The many reasons your nutrition choices pack so much wallop in affecting your health have to do with how food and drink affect your microbiome and impact your immune system, as well as whether you can absorb specific nutrients.

Whereas the diagnostic labels we have become used to in modern medicine describe *effects*, the treatment of *root causes* diagnosed through Functional Medicine can heal many different symptoms simultaneously. And, unlike a one-size-fits-all “magic bullet” medication, Functional Medicine targets all the factors contributing to your symptoms.

As my teacher, Dale Bredesen, MD, stresses in his new book *The End of Alzheimer’s*, if you have a leaky roof with 33 holes in it, you have to repair all 33 holes to stop the leaking. Similarly, while wholesome nutrition helped multiple sclerosis sufferer, Terry Wahls, MD, get out of her wheelchair and onto a bicycle in just one year, it is not the only factor you must use to solve complex chronic diseases. (Read *The Wahls Protocol* for inspiration. Learn more on our website about how Whole Health Solutions is using Dr. Bredesen’s and Dr. Wahls’s cutting edge therapies.)

### TRIGGERING IMMUNE DYSFUNCTION

Let’s look at some of the many dynamics triggering immune dysfunction. Among the most obvious is infection. But what if your immune system is having a hard time distinguishing between the allies and the gangsters? Many “autoimmune” diseases, such as rheumatoid arthritis, Hashimoto’s thyroiditis, lupus, psoriasis, inflammatory bowel diseases, and more were formerly thought to be “the body attacking itself.” We are now learning that hidden infections ranging from viruses to yeasts are actually triggering immune dysfunction. Even when a bacterium, such as *Borrelia burgdorferi*, which causes Lyme disease, can be identified, we are learning that hidden co-infections complicate and confuse the immune system, weakening its ability to fight simultaneous battles on many fronts.

Toxins and allergens are other clandestine activators of the immune system. Allergens often set off the alarm system then cut and run, leaving sirens blaring. Most treatments of allopathic medicine simply try to cut the wires to the alarm rather than addressing the immune system dysregulation that led to the allergies to begin with. We know that some toxins such as pseudo-estrogens, plasticizers, or nicotine, can mimic natural molecules. The effects can be very stealthy until years later when they show up as cancer or dementia. Often sneakiest of all are heavy metals, such as mercury, lead, arsenic, or cadmium. They can hide in the bones and fat, quietly destroying tissues including the heart and the brain, without the immune system being stimulated.

### HEROIC MEASURES

Our current medical system developed from heroic measures designed to help people when symptoms become extreme. For many immune-related conditions, signs and symptoms must be severe with obvious tissue destruction before diagnostic criteria are met. Diagnoses are often complicated, as both abnormal laboratory markers and a list of physical defects must be checked off to meet the criteria.

The duty to make an accurate “diagnosis” is great when the recommended treatments have harsh, even life-threatening side effects. This is one of the prices we’ve been willing to pay as a society in our reliance on chemical and surgical remedies. Functional Medicine supports the body to heal itself with fundamentally natural therapies. Learn more about treating root causes by visiting our website at [www.whole-health-solutions.com](http://www.whole-health-solutions.com) and click on “How Can I Get Help?” **h&h**

*Joanne Pizzino, MD, MPH, and Karen Saylor, FNP, use the latest research-proven Functional Medicine therapies for reversing memory loss and nervous system disorders that can lead to dementia and multiple sclerosis. Dr. Pizzino is board-certified in Preventive Medicine and Integrative Medicine through the American Board of Physician Specialties. Visit our website to get immediate access to “The Top 10 Root Causes of Illness Missing From Most Doctor Visits.”*

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