



Healthy for Life Newsletter

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Fibromyalgia/Chronic Fatigue - Part II

In this edition of the Healthy for Life Newsletter we are going to explore the underlying or root cause of fibromyalgia/chronic fatigue. Even though no one really knows exactly the cause of fibromyalgia, there is growing evidence that the root cause is oxidative stress.

Oxidative Stress as the cause of Fibromyalgia/Chronic Fatigue

When I witnessed my wife's near miraculous recovery, the first book that I began to research was a book written by Dr. Kenneth Cooper who started the exercise revolution in the early 1970's and actually coined the term "Aerobics." His book was called *The Antioxidant Revolution* [Thomas Nelson 1994]. Now I had heard about free radicals and antioxidants in the past, but truthfully, I really did not understand much about the health consequences involved. However oxidative stress—the dark-side of oxygen—had been shown to be the root cause of over 70 chronic degenerative diseases like heart disease, diabetes, arthritis, macular degeneration, Alzheimer's dementia, Parkinson's Disease, and even possibly cancer itself. I certainly began to wonder about the possibility that fibromyalgia was the result of oxidative stress. The problem was that fibromyalgia was not very high on the totem pole of research dollars and there really was not very much in the way of clinical studies on this disease.

In Dr. Cooper's book he detailed a problem known as the "Overtraining Syndrome." He had spent a lot of time and effort at his Aerobic Center in Dallas, Texas trying to determine the cause of this problem. He came to the conclusion that the underlying cause was "oxidative stress." When you look at the symptoms of the Overtraining

Syndrome, they are very much like those of fibromyalgia. These symptoms were detailed in my last newsletter and I would refer you to this newsletter for more details on the symptoms of this disease. However; in general those with the overtraining syndrome experience fatigue, muscle weakness, poor stamina (when they try to exercise, they simply fatigue very easily and just can't do much), muscle soreness, frequent infections, and the list goes on and on. After seeing my wife's improvement by providing her with what I now refer to as cellular nutrition, which boosts our body's natural antioxidant defense system, I started to understand why she improved so much by simply taking some high quality, complete and balanced nutritional supplements. In fact, oxidative stress could explain almost all of the varied symptoms of fibromyalgia/chronic fatigue. So let's take a closer look at what oxidative stress really is.

Oxidative Stress

Oxygen is essential for life itself. However, it is also inherently dangerous for our existence. As we utilize oxygen within the furnace or battery of the cell, called the mitochondria, to create energy and life itself we also on occasion create a cellular exhaust called a "free radical." A free radical is an oxygen molecule that has at least one unpaired electron in its outer orbit which gives it an electrical charge. If it is not readily neutralized by an antioxidant, which has the ability to give it the electron it desires, it can go on to damage the cell wall, vessel wall, proteins, fats, and even the DNA nucleus of the cell. As I mentioned earlier this process has been shown in our medical literature to be the root cause of over 70 chronic degenerative diseases like heart disease, diabetes, cancer, arthritis, macular degeneration, Alzheimer's dementia, and Parkinson's disease. I now believe that this process is also the root cause of fibromyalgia/chronic fatigue. We are

essentially rusting inside. So the same process that turns a cut apple brown or rusts metal is rusting us inside.

Now it is important to realize that the number of free radicals you and I produce is not steady. You certainly do create some free radicals just in metabolizing your food for energy; however, there are several situations in your daily life that cause an increased production of free radicals. The pollutants in our air, food and water, radiation, sunlight, cigarette smoke, over exercise and medication all increase the number of free radicals we produce. However, one of the greatest causes of increased free radical production is emotional stress.

We are not defenseless against this process. Antioxidants are like giving your car a new coat of paint, which will protect the metal from rust. Our bodies make a certain amount of antioxidants and we get antioxidants from our foods, especially from fruits and vegetables. However, as I have researched the health benefits of taking nutritional supplements over the past 12 years, it has become obvious to me that everyone needs to be supplementing their diet with high quality nutritional supplements in order to have enough antioxidants to handle the number of free radicals we produce. Because of our polluted environment, stressful lifestyles and overmedicated society, this generation is exposed to more free radicals than any previous generation that has ever walked the face of the earth.

It is all about Balance

It is all about balance. You want to have enough antioxidants on board to handle the number of free radicals you produce. Certainly it is wise to cut down your exposure to anything that causes increased free radical production such as decreasing your stress level, drinking purified water, eating organic foods, and stop or never start smoking. However, we are really not able to live in a bubble and we have to live on this planet. The best way to bring oxidative stress back under control is by providing our body what I refer to as

cellular nutrition through nutritional supplementation.

Cellular Nutrition

I define cellular nutrition as providing the body with all of these antioxidants and their supporting nutrients at optimal levels or those levels that have been shown to provide a health benefit in our medical literature. These optimal levels have absolutely nothing to do with RDA levels of supplementation. RDA's were developed back in the late 1930's and early 1940's as the minimal amount of supplementation that is needed to avoid what we refer to as acute deficiency diseases like pellagra, scurvy, and rickets. They have absolutely nothing to do with the levels of nutrients needed to provide a health benefit against these chronic degenerative diseases like fibromyalgia.

Concept of Synergy

When you review the medical literature in regards to the health benefits of taking nutritional supplements, these studies will generally just look at one or possibly two nutrients at a time. They will do a study looking at Vitamin E or Vitamin C or Calcium or Selenium. This is just the way we do our research. We are always trying to find the magic bullet and we tend to look at these nutrients like they were drugs. However, Vitamins E or C are not drugs. They are simply nutrients we get from our foods. However; today we are able to get these nutrients at levels we could never obtain from our foods because of supplementation. Vitamin E is a great antioxidant; however, it primarily works within the cell wall or membrane. Vitamin C is the best antioxidant in the plasma or fluids of the body. Glutathione is the best intracellular antioxidant. All of these antioxidants need the so-called antioxidant minerals along with the B-cofactors to do their job of neutralizing free radicals.

Vitamin C actually is able to regenerate or replenish Vitamin E so that it can be used over and over again. Alpha lipoic acid is another potent antioxidant that is able not only regenerate Vitamin E, but also, that intracellular glutathione.

Therefore, one plus one is not two, but instead, 8, 12, or even 20. These antioxidants work together in different parts of the body against different free radicals. When you also provide these antioxidant minerals and B-cofactors at optimal levels, you give yourself the absolute best chance of bringing oxidative stress back under control. These concepts are critical for the individual who is suffering from fibromyalgia/chronic fatigue.

Oxidative Stress as the Cause of Fibromyalgia/Chronic Fatigue

My clinical experience with treating fibromyalgia/chronic fatigue in my medical practice for the past 20 years has given me great insight into this horrible, chronic degenerative disease. Understanding the concept of oxidative stress as the root cause of this disease will give you an understanding of why you may have developed this disease in the first place and why cellular nutrition is your best hope of taking back control of your health.

The medical literature shows that there is usually one of three different events that can set off the beginning of fibromyalgia/chronic fatigue. First is a serious illness. Second is a serious injury or trauma to your body (especially to the head and neck area). Third is severe or prolonged emotional stress. Of course, it could be a combination of any of these events. All three of these events significantly increase the amount of free radicals you produce. These events can certainly lead to oxidative stress and when the events are severe enough or are occurring in combination, can set off the start of fibromyalgia/chronic fatigue. I have been able to elicit this history in most of my patients who have developed fibromyalgia.

I also have found that certain personality types seem to be more vulnerable to developing fibromyalgia/chronic fatigue. First of all, 8 out of 9 people who develop fibromyalgia are women. I have found that most of these women are type A - hard driving and very successful. They are also perfectionist. Now remember these are broad generalizations; however, it has amazed me how

often I have seen this pattern in my women patients who have been diagnosed with fibromyalgia/chronic fatigue. Yes, I will see some men with this disease; however, the overwhelming majority of my patients with fibromyalgia are women who tend to have these strong personalities.

When I first began my medical practice in the early 1970's, I never saw any patients who had fibromyalgia and I certainly never made the diagnosis of fibromyalgia. I began hearing the term of psychosomatic rheumatism in the late 1970's and early 1980's. However, beginning in the mid-1980's I began seeing more and more patients who had fibromyalgia. Today, there are literally millions of individuals who are suffering from this disabling disease. Why is this happening?

It has become apparent to me that because of our stressful lifestyles, polluted environment, and over-medicated society, this generation has to handle more free radicals than any generation that has ever walked the face of the earth. One of the best books that I have read on chronic fatigue was written by a Dr. Ali called "The Yellow Canary and Chronic Fatigue." He shares the concept that the coal miners used to place the yellow canary in a small bird cage and then take it down into the mine with them. If there was a methane gas leak in the mine shaft, the canary would quickly die and it served as an early warning sign to get out of the mine as quickly as possible. He feels that the women who develop and suffer with fibromyalgia are like the yellow canary. We are all exposed to this toxic, stressful world; however, some of us are more vulnerable and sensitive to this exposure than others. People who develop fibromyalgia are the yellow canaries of this world. In other words, they are just not as able to handle this increased oxidative stress as well as others.

I also look at the change that has occurred with the role of women in our society over the past generation with the advent of the two-income families. Being a wife and mother is probably the most difficult role and job in the world. However,

because of the financial strain and demand placed on the family today, many women have had to join the workforce to make ends meet. So women not only have to fulfill the role as a wife and mother, but also must work a full time job to help meet the financial needs of the family. The sad truth is the fact that most of the women who come home from an 8 hour day at work still must feed the family, clean the house, do the laundry, and still meet the needs of their children and husband. Society looks on these women as superstars. Remember, that many women who develop fibromyalgia seem to be women who are not only type A, but also perfectionist. They receive most of their self-worth and identity by pleasing others and meeting others needs. These are worthy goals and desires; however I have seen so many of these types of individuals eventually crash and burn. The end result for many of them is the development of fibromyalgia/chronic fatigue.

When my mother delivered her children, she told me that she would stay an average of 7 days in the hospital. Back in the 1940's and 1950's this was the standard of care. I did obstetrics in my family practice for over 20 years. I found it very interesting how things had changed. When I would deliver a child, the first question many of my patients would ask me was, "Is it a boy or a girl?" Then the very next thing she would ask was when she could go home followed quickly by asking me when she could return to work. This all occurred while they were still on the delivery table. Boy, how things have changed.

Conclusion

I certainly believe that the underlying or root cause of fibromyalgia/chronic fatigue is oxidative stress. Understanding oxidative stress will give you a tremendous insight into this disease. It will also allow you to develop an effective strategy in learning how you can take back control of your health. In my next newsletter, I will lay out the strategy that has helped thousands of patients who have struggled with this disabling disease. You certainly can check out my nutritional recommendations for this disease today by going

to my specific recommendations located on the home page of www.bionutrition.org and click on fibromyalgia/chronic fatigue. As members you can also arrange a consult for yourself, family member, or friend who may be suffering from this disease by clicking on the icon that appears on the right side of this page. I will then be able to send them a personal consult and give them my specific recommendations for this disease along with the specific nutritionals I have had so much success using with my patients.