

NUTRITION & HEALING

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Poor digestion shows its colors: the story of "The Gray Man"

By Jonathan V. Wright, M.D.

At the Tahoma Clinic, he was known as the "Gray Man." He got the nickname after our staff agreed it had never seen anyone with his skin tones. His visible skin was devoid of any pink tones, had scarcely any brown, and instead was a peculiar whitish-gray. I've not seen anyone like him before or since.

The Gray Man hadn't come in to find out why he looked gray—although his wife had mentioned it to him "a time or two." Actually, he explained, he didn't have any symptoms or illnesses but was just plain tired. *Really* tired!

Further questioning turned up little but the fatigue. In the past, he'd had chronic indigestion and intermittent but persistent heartburn. He noted that both symptoms had gone on for over 20 years and that he'd taken "plenty of those Tums and Roloids and other antacids" since his 40s. However, he reported he hadn't had any indigestion or heartburn problems at all since he'd started taking Tagamet every day since it came out. Now that I mentioned it, he guessed he *had* been taking Tagamet for seven years by now.

"You know that stomachs are naturally designed to secrete enough acid to turn even large meals into the equivalent of soup?" I asked.

"Yeah, I know that in general, but all the doctors told me that

indigestion and heartburn are due to too much acid," he replied.

"Did anyone ever actually measure your stomach-acid production?"

"No...but the symptoms sure have gone away since I blocked all that acid out."

Ten to 15 percent of the population suffers from hypochlorhydria, and most people are being misdiagnosed and mistreated.

"And a river will dry up if we stop all the rain," I said. "Maybe that's an advantage for a little while if the river has been overflowing, but what happens if we stop the rain permanently?"

He thought for a moment. "Permanently?"

"At least seven years."

"Quite a drought. Nothing would grow."

"Right. And if we shut off or neutralize our stomachs' natural acidity for more than brief intervals, there are similar consequences. First, we don't break down foods as well, and many nutrients, especially essential amino acids, certain minerals, and at least two B vitamins, aren't made as available by natural acid digestion as they usually are and aren't properly absorbed into our

bloodstreams. So our cells don't have the normal amounts of nutrients for nourishment."

"Second, when that acidified soup empties out of our stomachs into the upper small intestine—the duodenum—it triggers the secretion of hormones that in turn stimulate the pancreas and gallbladder to make or release their own digestive secretions, such as enzymes, bicarbonate, and bile. Without the acid "trigger," these hormones are underproduced, and the next stages in digestion don't work as well as they should either. This makes another whole group of nutrients less available to our cells."

"So it's like a cascade of events. If the acidity isn't there, then other parts of digestion aren't triggered properly either."

"Exactly. And we don't even know if we know absolutely all the 'cascades' in the digestive stream."

"No wonder I'm tired. I've literally dried up a lot of my digestion for years. Why didn't anyone tell me about this?"

"Don't know. It's all right there in the basic textbooks for medical students. But that's not all: The same basic textbooks list a third consequence of low or no stomach-acid production. Let's think about it this way: What happens if I put bacteria or parasites into an acid in a test tube?"

"Not sure, but I'd guess a lot of

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Dr. Jonathan V. Wright's

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Our mission:

Nutrition & Healing is dedicated to helping you keep yourself and your family healthy by the safest and most effective means possible. Every month, you'll get information about diet, vitamins, minerals, herbs, natural hormones, natural energies, and other substances and techniques to prevent and heal illness, while prolonging your healthy life span.

A graduate of Harvard University and the University of Michigan Medical School (1969), Dr. Jonathan V. Wright has been practicing natural and nutritional medicine at the Tahoma Clinic in Kent, Washington, since 1973. Based on enormous volumes of library and clinical research, along with tens of thousands of clinical consultations, he is exceptionally well-qualified to bring you a unique blending of the most up-to-date information and the best and still most effective natural therapies developed by preceding generations.

Nutrition & Healing cannot improve on these famous words:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

The inalienable right to life must include the right to care for one's own life. The inalienable right to liberty must include the right to choose whatever means we wish to care for ourselves. In addition to publishing the best of information about natural health care, Nutrition & Healing urges its readers to remember their inalienable rights to life, liberty, and freedom of choice in health care. This information is published to help in the effort to exercise these inalienable rights, and to warn of ever-present attempts of both government and private organizations to restrict them.

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them die."

"Right. They die and turn into a minor protein supplement. Textbooks of gastroenterology actually call stomach acid the acid barrier to intestinal-tract infection. Also, everyone knows that farther down the intestinal tract is home to a wide variety of micro-organisms—sometimes called intestinal microflora—that help with digestion, secrete a few important vitamins, and generally behave themselves. But if the acid-alkaline balance, technically called the pH, isn't just right, then many of the friendly micro-organisms literally die out and are replaced by not-so-friendly germs. At best, these unfriendly micro-organisms aren't as helpful to us as the friendly ones. Worse, some of them excrete substances toxic to our own body cells, that are absorbed and spread all around our bodies."

The Gray Man shifted uncomfortably in his chair. "So not only have I been semi-starving myself but also maybe encouraging toxins from my gut to enter my system?"

"Afraid so."

"Could blocking my normal stomach function be the basis for this incredible fatigue?"

"Very likely. Let's work on restoring normal digestion as much as possible, make up for at least seven years of unintended malnutrition, and, if necessary, work to restore normal gut flora. Then we'll see."

"I guess the first thing is to stop this Tagamet. But then I'll have indigestion and heartburn all over again, won't I?"

"Most of the time there are natural ways to stop indigestion and heartburn without blocking stomach acid."

"How?"

"First, we need to find out if your stomach really does make too much acid. Chances are very high—over 90 percent—that it doesn't, and that the real culprit is likely *underproduction* of stomach acid, along with some of that small amount of acid turning up in the wrong place, causing burning. Let's wait until we do a test or two."

You can eat all the right foods but still slowly starve to death

Like the overwhelming percentage of individuals with indigestion and heartburn, the Gray Man found, after some testing, that his stomach had actually been underproducing acid for all those years. *Hypochlorhydria* (low or no stomach acid) is one of the most common digestive malfunctions, and it's often accompanied by other, seemingly unrelated, health problems. Unfortunately, inadequate digestion becomes even more frequent with age. So, even if you're following the best possible diet plan in general or for a particular ailment, if the food you're eating is incompletely digested or assimilated, your body won't get the nutrients possible from it and it won't be effective.

Think about it. Our bodies are made up of 60 or so essential nutrients (*essential* being defined as nutrients without which we'd sooner or later drop dead); how healthy can you be if your body isn't absorbing even one of those nutrients? And what if a dozen or more nutrients are in short supply? If our foods and supplements don't encounter the proper acid and enzymes, they won't digest and absorb, which will cause malnutrition. In essence, you could be eating all you need but still starving yourself.

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St. John's wort: New uses for a tried and true treatment Part 1

St. John's wort (*Hypericum perforatum*) is now one of the best-studied herbs from a scientific perspective. If you search on the Medline data base, which is hosted by the National Library of Congress, you'll find that there have been more than 200 scientific articles published on this plant in the past three years.

Because the current realm of knowledge surrounding this herb is so impressive, the medical community and the public are very accepting and comfortable with it. In fact, it has become almost as popular and as easy to find as vitamin C. It's available in supermarkets, and you'll even find it mixed into popular soft drinks that are sold at convenience stores! As it creeps into our lives more and more, we're also finding out that its uses vary; it's not just for depression anymore.

Clinical trials offer all the proof you need

The research that's been done has been vast and thorough, and it well illustrates the merits of using St. John's wort to treat medical conditions—especially depression. In fact, with all the evidence out there, there's little need to question the efficacy of this product. A recent comparative trial found that an extract of St. John's wort is safer than the tricyclic antidepressant drug imipramine (one of the most commonly used antidepressants) and as effective for treating patients with moderate depression.¹ Both treatments improved patients' quality of life when compared to patients in the placebo group, but side effects were more common in those taking imipramine.

According to the *largest-ever*

study of St. John's wort, published in the August 2000 *British Medical Journal*, it was found to be *as effective as imipramine*—and researchers said that it should be considered a first-line treatment for patients with mild to moderate depression.

In other comparative trials of St. John's wort and tricyclic antidepressants, St. John's wort was shown to be superior to imipramine² and amitriptyline,³ in that it was just as effective but with fewer side effects. A massive 64 percent of patients receiving amitriptyline reported side effects.⁴ Many other studies with similar or even more positive conclusions exist.

Potential new uses for St. John's wort

Because of all the success associated with the studies, scientists have started looking for and discovering new uses for St. John's wort.

Reducing menopausal symptoms. A recent trial involving 111 women between 43 and 65 tested the effects of St. John's wort on symptoms characteristic of both the pre- and

postmenopausal phases. All symptoms except for hot flashes improved substantially. The patients' sexual well-being also improved after treatment with St. John's wort extract.⁵

Relieving PMS. PMS is a problem for many women, and St. John's wort has shown promise in relieving its symptoms. British researchers report that it may alleviate nervous tension, anxiety, feelings of being out of control, and insomnia.⁶ The four-month study included 19 women diagnosed with PMS symptoms. The findings showed that treatment with St. John's wort tablets for two menstrual cycles resulted in significant improvements. Some of the individual symptoms included nervous tension, insomnia, crying, and depression. (Follow-up placebo-controlled trials need to be done to make sure that results were not skewed.)

Helping alcoholics. St. John's wort may also be helpful for alcoholics. Alcoholism has some similarities to depression, such as

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St. John's wort is for the bears, NOT for the birds—

Scientist critics are hard to persuade, but even they are convinced of the herb's efficacy

In perhaps what must be the best evidence to date that the scientific community now accepts the efficacy of *Hypericum*, it was recently announced that it is to be given to depressed bears.¹² According to the press release:

"It is hoped that the herb, a sort of natural Prozac known to have antidepressant qualities in humans, will produce similar results in No Oreja and Nikki, spectacled bears that were acquired five years ago from zoos in Chicago and Detroit. After the bears' arrival at Beardsley Zoo, No Oreja—Spanish for 'no ear'—began pacing in her cage. Nikki soon picked up the habit. 'What happens with captive animals is they tend to get anxious and develop traits that are unacceptable, habits of spinning and pacing and just nervous attitudes in response to captivity,' said Howard Hochman, a veterinarian at the zoo."

Citations available upon request.

St John's wort

(continued from page 3)

low brain serotonin activities. Two studies published at the same time by different research teams found that it reduced the alcohol intake of different strains of alcohol-preferring rats.^{7,8} The herb exerted both short- and medium-term effects. Human trials are necessary to confirm these results.

Fighting cancer. St. John's wort has also displayed anticancer properties. Hypericin inhibits various protein kinases that are involved in both cell growth and apoptosis (cell death).⁹ In other words, it can inhibit tumor growth. It might also act as an aid to certain cancer treatments by increasing sensitivity to light. In experiments using mice, hypericin was shown to accumulate specifically in tumor tissue. When these hypericin-treated mice were irradiated (treated with high-energy light rays that are used to kill cancer cells), tumor growth was inhibited.¹⁰ Similar results have been found in human-tumor-cell lines where the hypericin was taken up by the tumor cells, rendering them more vulnerable to the killing effects of specific types of light.¹¹ Of course, these results are preliminary; much more work is needed in this area.

St. John's wort may be effective in treating many other conditions/diseases, including bed-wetting, chronic fatigue, and viral infections. Keep your eyes open for more placebo-controlled clinical trials that may be in the works for these ailments.

Because of its efficacy and its lack of side effects, St. John's wort is something that could be safe and effective for many people and for many diseases. But you do need to be careful; it can interact with other medications and has been shown to decrease the efficacy of birth-control pills. Stay tuned for more on possible complications associated with this herb in part 3 (December 2000 issue) of this series on St. John's wort. ●

The Gray Man

(continued from page 2)

Antacids may be squelching the only stomach acid you have left

Many people who have too little stomach acid are being treated as if they have too much—probably because the symptoms are similar. Ten to 15 percent of the population suffers from hypochlorhydria, and most people are being misdiagnosed and mistreated. A full 50 percent of people over 60 are hypochlorhydric, and most of them are being treated for the opposite problem.

Why in the world would you want to take antacids or acid blockers when your stomach is already weak and not digesting adequately? It's easy—SYMPTOM RELIEF. It also just so happens that this phenomenon is making drug companies very rich! If doctors aren't prescribing high-strength antacids, people are just getting them over the counter and

often popping several a day. Multimillion-dollar promotions to the public were launched to drive home the point that "heartburn" and indigestion are caused by too much acid, which can be blocked by antacid products with minimal risk. Oddly enough, the FDA has never required the companies advertising these products to document their claims that indigestion is actually caused by over acidity.

This disease is testable and treatable—but your doctor may not know it

You can be tested for hypochlorhydria and other possible stomach malfunctions. I recommend direct measurement of gastric acidity by radiotelemetry using the Heidelberg capsule. At present, it's the best test available for functional determination of the stomach's ability to secrete acid normally.

I also use other laboratory clues to help my diagnosis. One is a

You may have the signs—or the illnesses—but no idea what's causing them

Many patients with low stomach acidity or no stomach acidity frequently report bloating, belching, or burning immediately after meals; a feeling that food just sits in the stomach not digesting; and an inability to eat more than a small amount of food without feeling full. Many of them are constipated, but others have diarrhea and some people have normal bowel function. Not everyone has all these symptoms—many have just one or two. And some individuals with no stomach acid at all have no symptoms.

There are also some *physical signs* often found in people who suffer from low stomach acidity, such as weak, easily broken, and peeling fingernails; hair loss (in women); gassiness in the upper abdomen; and unusual dilation of the capillaries in the cheeks and on the nose (in a nonalcoholic).

A long list of diseases frequently associated with low stomach acidity are diabetes mellitus, an underactive or overactive thyroid, childhood asthma, eczema, gallbladder disease, osteoporosis, rheumatoid arthritis, chronic hives, lupus erythematosus, weak adrenals, chronic hepatitis, vitiligo, and rosacea.

If you're suffering from some of the symptoms or diseases mentioned above and suspect that your problem is poor digestion, you should talk to your doctor about the possibility of hypochlorhydria.

mineral analysis of a hair specimen. If six or more nutrient minerals are low, excluding sodium and potassium, your stomach-acid level should be checked. The other test routinely done in our laboratory is on a stool specimen, to check for completeness of digestion. It's not unusual to find an excess of undigested meat fiber in such an analysis. And measurement of the stomach acid in those cases usually discloses an insufficiency.

Once the problem is found, I recommend treatment with hydrochloric acid (**which can be dangerous, however, and should be used only with careful supervision**). I've found that hydrochloric acid when used in conjunction with pepsin usually gives the best results. And unless you're sensitive to it, pepsin is usually recommended with hydrochloric acid. Powdered preparations of HCL in capsules are much more effective than the solid tablet forms. Some individuals may have pain, burning, or additional stomach problems when using HCL; when that's the case, I find that small, gradually increased quantities of lemon juice or vinegar can usually do the same job.

To minimize even minor side effects, I always start with just one capsule (5, 7.5, or 10 grains) taken just before meals. After two or three days, if there are no problems, I suggest increasing the dosage to two capsules before meals for another two or three days and then to three capsules. The dose is gradually increased in this fashion until the recommended amount is reached. The amount of hydrochloric acid that's usually effective for adults is at least 40 to 70 grains of betaine hydrochloride (or glutamic-acid hydrochloride) with pepsin per meal. That's about four to seven 10-grain (8 to 14 5-grain) capsules per meal.

CLINICAL TIP 76

Throw out your night cream...it's back to basics for beautiful skin

Within the last few years, it has been reported that regular application of a 10 percent vitamin C topical solution (rubbed in, not swallowed) can reverse fine skin wrinkles. Recently, another group has reported that a 10 percent vitamin C solution can "turn back the hands of time" for skin damaged by sunlight.

Nineteen individuals rubbed this solution onto one side of their faces every day for three months. Photographs of the entire face were taken to gauge the outcome. According to the researchers, results showed up to a 73.7 percent improvement in skin quality, including improvements in wrinkling, softness, tone, and overall appearance.

You can buy a 10 percent vitamin C solution in a topical roll-on applicator through the **Tahoma Clinic Dispensary** (with which I am, of course, affiliated); tel. (253)850-5661, Web site: www.tahomaclinic.com. It should also be available through compounding pharmacists without a prescription, since it's simply diluted vitamin C. Except in rare cases of hypersensitivity, there are no side effects.

One precaution: Topical vitamin C oxidizes (turns brown) more easily at room temperature and loses some of its effectiveness. It lasts longer if it's kept refrigerated. Buy small quantities of the solution so that it will be used up before any significant oxidation takes place.

Citation available upon request.

The "Gray Man" followed this type of treatment program and as long as he kept it up controlled his indigestion and indigestion symptoms. His program also included replacement digestive enzymes, intestinal flora "normalizers" (also called probiotics), and supplements of amino acids, vitamins, and minerals.

The Gray Man's skin color slowly returned to the normal brown and pink skin tones. As his grayness turned to normal, his nickname faded away too, and was replaced by only his first name, John. His fatigue also waned and was replaced by increased energy. His wife noted improvements in mood and attitude. Six months later, he declared himself "back to normal."

The only thing entirely atypical about the Gray Man's—John's—case was his skin color. As noted above, I've never seen anything like

it before or since. But the rest of the story—indigestion and heartburn caused by *underproduction* of normal stomach acid—is absolutely typical.

If your doctor cannot offer help for hypochlorhydria, or is not willing to test you, call the **American College for Advancement in Medicine**, tel. (800)532-3688, to find a doctor in your area who can help. If your doctor would like more information on how to test/treat you for this problem, have him/her call the **Tahoma Clinic**; tel. (253)854-4900.

Parts of the above article are excerpts from the soon-to-be-published book (very tentatively titled "Slow Death by Antacids") written by Lane Lenard, Ph.D., and Jonathan V. Wright, M.D. It's scheduled to be published in the spring of 2001 by M. Evans Publishers, New York. 🍀

Consumer Freedom Means Lower Costs and Higher Knowledge

In June, Congresswoman Helen Chenoweth-Hage introduced the "Consumer Freedom Protection Act" (H.R. 4604), which, if passed, would place into law the appeals court decision "*Pearson v. Shalala*," which denied the FDA power to suppress health claims. So far, however, the FDA has refused to obey the court decision and continues its 60-year practice of *actively suppressing free, truthful, research-based claims concerning vitamins, minerals, herbs, and other unpatentable natural supplements*. This bill is vital to our interests. If it's passed, our rights as consumers to make up our own minds will be protected. It would prohibit the FDA from suppressing health claims made on food and dietary

supplements unless it could prove that (1) there was no scientific evidence to support the claim and (2) the claim was inherently misleading. The law would also mean that the cost of patentable medications would go way down—something that we've been waiting for for far too long.

This law could do great things for your health and your wallet

For consumers, this bill means that, for the first time *ever*, you'll be able to obtain scientific information right on the labels—information that explains how certain ingredients in foods and dietary supplements can help various diseases/conditions. The law will usher in a new era, in

which disclosure of health information at the time of sale will replace FDA suppression and in which consumers will be empowered to exercise free choice in the market—fully informed of emerging science on the nutrient-disease relationship.

This law would mean freedom for dietary supplement and food companies. It would stop the FDA from denying the companies their right to tell consumers what effects their products have on certain diseases/conditions. As long as there's science behind a claim, the FDA could not prohibit a nutrient simply because it seems, in its opinion, inadequate. Instead, the FDA would have to rely on reasonable disclaimers (e.g., "The presentation of more information is necessary...") to restrict any connotation it believed misleading.

For physicians who sell dietary supplements, this law would deny the FDA the power to stop promotion of the effects that dietary supplements can have on certain diseases/conditions. Right now, every time a supplement is sold, if the cure, treatment, mitigation, or prevention of a disease is promoted, it's in violation of the FDA's "rules."

The prescription drug market—not a monopoly anymore

For our wallets. For over 60 years, the FDA has actively and vigorously suppressed competition in the area of the treatment of disease by forcing *raids, arrests, jail time, and product destruction* on individuals and companies that dared to tell the truth about healing disease by using vitamins, minerals, herbs, and other *natural* substances. If there had been a free market for the past 60 years, one

CLINICAL TIP 77

A bitter remedy for poor digestion can also cure hiccups

Many things happen to our bodies as we age. Unfortunately, some of them are unavoidable. Indigestion is a common complaint for many, but it's not a condition you have to accept. For generations it's been observed that the use of bitter substances before meals appears to stimulate digestive secretions and improve digestion. (See the December 1998 issue for a complete review of bitters and their uses.) Traditional African herbal medicine has always used bitter herbs for this purpose. In Holland, elders would participate in a "bitters hour" at the tavern or at home in the early evening to help with the digestion of dinner. Now, it appears that bitters can also eliminate bouts of stubborn and often painful hiccups.

Although hiccups are usually a trivial problem, they can, if they're stubborn enough or persistent enough, actually lead to hospitalization. While doctors may attempt to offer relief with a variety of drugs, a bartender's "hiccup cure" may be the simplest and most productive answer. In an open trial of people suffering with the hiccups, 88 percent of those who sucked (and perhaps chewed) on a lemon wedge soaked in Angostura bitters were cured. Angostura bitters (named after what was once Angostura, Venezuela and is now Ciudad Bolivar) are made from the bark of a South American tree (genus *Galipea*) and were used much more widely in days gone by. Although they may be hard to find, keeping the bitters on hand is a good idea. You never know when a bout of painful hiccups is coming your way—and you might not have anyone around to scare you!

that allowed for the *truthful* advertising of the effects of natural therapies, the market for prescription drugs would be considerably less by now. In fact, my observations (based on my own medical practice) are that the market for prescription drugs would be at most 10 to 20 percent of what it is now and that natural unpatentable substances and treatments would

be used 80 to 90 percent of the time. With that kind of competition, the cost of patentable medicines would have plummeted years ago.

This bill will only become a law with your support

Congresswoman Chenoweth-Hage needs your help. She needs other members of Congress to support the bill by becoming co-

sponsors; the bill will never be voted on unless a majority of representatives and senators favors it. What you need to do is write, call, and e-mail your representative in Washington and urge him or her to support H.R.4604; tell your friends to do the same! Since it's now October, you'll need to wait for the next Congress to do so. I'll keep you advised in future issues. 🍎

Circumcision: a common procedure that we know is unnecessary—and harmful

Religious traditions should be respected. This is sometimes the reason for male circumcision...and I don't argue with it. But most male circumcisions performed in the United States are not done out of any deep religious belief but "because that's what's usually done" or "otherwise, my baby will be different." Doctors *know* the dangers of circumcision—discomfort, infection, penis mutilation, etc.—but they are rarely discussed in the maternity ward. Along with all the possible complications that go along with this procedure, **there are no medical or scientific justifications at all for going through with it!** We can't protect our children and grandchildren from all diseases, but we can protect them when we know the facts. I'm here to pass those facts along.

A completely preventable human tragedy

The assumption that the foreskin on a penis has no value is completely unfounded. Every day, 3,300 baby boys are getting half the skin on their penises removed in a painful procedure for absolutely no medical reason. And they are suffering for it in ways that are seldom considered. It's not the parents' fault—most doctors don't talk about the risks or reasons; they just take out their knives and get started.

The American Academy of Pediatrics has recently concurred with my position on this issue. In fact, it has recommended against routine infant circumcision since 1971 but did not always make that position clear. Finally, in 1999, it clearly stated that the scientific evidence backing up circumcision is insufficient to recommend it.

So many side effects...so little discussion

Following is just a sampling of what baby boys lose forever when they are circumcised:

- A 15-square inch piece of skin (when grown to

adult size), that protects against abrasion, drying, and contaminants of all sorts

- The primary erogenous zone containing between 10,000 and 20,000 of the most important sensory components of the penis
- Much of the immunologic defense of the male sex organ, including cells which produce antibodies and bacteria-killing enzymes
- Apocrine glands which produce pheromones, nature's invisible sexual signaling chemicals
- Lubricating glands, which protect both male and female sexual organs during intercourse
- Other research has shown that pain experienced as infants alters the entire lifetime pattern of response to pain

Do you think that if doctors explained the risks and side effects to the parents of newborns that many would go through with the procedure?

There's a group, **Doctors Opposing Circumcision** (D.O.C.), that recognizes that doctors have no role to play in advocating or performing this procedure. Just as little girls should not have their genitals removed, so little boys should be left intact. The first cut into normal genital tissue violates a child's basic human right to an intact body. For a doctor to perform a circumcision violates all seven principles of the AMA code of ethics. Ironically, it now also violates the rules of the Nuremberg Convention...in regard to medical experimentation on unconsenting victims.

Please look at this issue carefully and decide whether you want this to happen to your children or grandchildren. It is not too late to protect the next generation. If you do study the facts, and the Internet is a good place to start, you too will have to agree with the old adage "If it ain't broke, don't fix it!"

Doctors Opposing Circumcision has a Web site at <http://faculty.washington.edu/gcd/DOC>.



Low immune function and the Epstein-Barr virus

Q: I've been struggling with a long-term case of fatigue, digestive problems, and low immune function. My physician believes a good part of my problem is related to a virus (Epstein-Barr). How do you treat chronic viral infections such as Epstein-Barr virus?

---E.C., Hilo, Hawaii

P.S. Have you written several books which you could list in your newsletter along with prices?

A: There are two parts to improving any chronic infection: building up the immune system so it can "throw off" the infection (and control many fewer infections in the future) and taking measures to "go after" the infection itself.

Build your immune system

You noted digestive problems. Until these are corrected, it's often much more difficult to build up the immune system, because the nutrients and botanicals needed to do the job aren't being effectively used. So, the first step in building up your immune system is to have the digestive problems properly diagnosed and corrected. The most common digestive problems accompanying an Epstein-Barr infection are food allergies and poor functioning of the pancreas and stomach. To sort all of this out, it's wisest to check with a physician who is skilled and knowledgeable in nutritional therapy. Call the **American College of Advancement in Medicine**, tel. (800)532-3688, or the **American Association of Naturopathic Physicians**, tel. (206)298-0125, either of which can help you find an appropriate doctor in your area.

Once you've corrected your digestive problems (for further

details, refer to our lead article), it's time to focus on the immune system. Some of the more basic nutrients to boost the immune system are vitamin A (for adults, 50,000 units daily), zinc (as zinc picolinate, 30 milligrams daily), and vitamin C (at least 3 grams three times daily; less if this amount causes gas or diarrhea). These basic nutrients should be "backed" by a high-quality vitamin-mineral supplement.

You should also look for hidden allergies that could be impairing your immune system. Very often, hidden allergies (especially food allergies) interfere with the function of the immune system. You can improve immune system function (often dramatically) by removing the item from your life, or by desensitization.

Once the basic nutrients are covered, the next items to stimulate the immune system include thymus glandulars and botanicals, including echinacea, astragalus, andrographus, picrorrhiza, medicinal mushrooms (shiitake, maitake, and others), and metabolites like beta-glucan. It's wisest to discuss dosages with a doctor or someone else knowledgeable in botanical therapies. (I realize we'll get letters about one or another favorite item that I've left off this list. Send them in, and we'll publish the best of them!)

Fight Epstein-Barr

To fight the virus itself, start with selenium. Selenium inhibits the duplication of the entire herpes family of viruses (as well as other retroviruses), of which the Epstein-Barr virus is a member. Since selenium can be toxic at levels above 1,500-2,000 micrograms daily, I usually recommend 250-300 micrograms to be taken twice daily. Other things that can be used to help

reduce levels of the virus (but usually require a physician's help) include high-dose intravenous vitamin C, as well as carefully administered intravenous ozone, hydrogen peroxide, and ultraviolet blood irradiation.

Thank you for the question about my books; here's a list starting with the most recently published:

- *The Patient's Book of Natural Therapy* (1999), written with Alan R. Gaby, M.D.
- *Maximize Your Vitality and Potency: for Men Over 40* (1999), written with Lane Lenard, Ph.D.
- *Natural Hormone Replacement for Women Over 45* (1997), written with John Morgenthaler
- *The Natural Pharmacy* (1996), written with Skye Lininger, Jamie Miller, Schuyler Lininger, and Alan Gaby
- *Dr. Wright's Guide to Healing With Nutrition* (1984, updated 1991)
- *Dr. Wright's Book of Natural Therapy* (1979).

My books are available in most bookstores or through the **Tahoma Clinic Dispensary**, tel. (888)893-6878; Web site: www.tahomaclinic.com.

We welcome your input!

If you'd like to share your stories, opinions, or medical findings, please send letters to:

Dr. Wright's Nutrition & Healing
819 N. Charles St.
Baltimore, MD 21201

Due to a high volume of reader mail, we may not be able to respond personally to each letter. However, your letter will be read and taken into consideration for future issues and special reports.

To make an appointment with Dr. Wright, call the Tahoma Clinic, tel. (253)854-4900.