

activity. The spleen processes worn-out red blood cells and platelets and provides a location to engulf and destroy invading bacteria. The liver cleans toxins from the blood and produces most of the body's lymph, the liquid that flows in the lymph system, basically the body's sewer system. This system runs parallel to the blood vessels; it stores, filters, and circulates waste, especially dead bacteria and the massive numbers of white blood cells produced during active infections. Lymph nodes are large intersections of lymph channels, and they store or warehouse the waste products being processed through the lymph system. When the lymph nodes are processing a lot of waste they tend to swell, clog up, and become painful to the touch, and processing of waste slows down. Keeping the nodes clear helps the body process infections much quicker. The lymph nodes (as does the thymus gland) also produce unique white blood cells called lymphocytes that are potent elements of our immune system.

The bone marrow and to some extent the thymus manufacture other types of white blood cells to fight infections. Two of the most important are phagocytes and neutrophils. Phagocytes exist in three forms: monocytes, macrophages, and granulocytes. As macrophages they rove the body looking for foreign bodies, engulf invading bacteria, and help clean up residues of white blood cells and bacteria during and after infections. They also alert the neutrophils, which attack and destroy bacteria and viruses, to the presence of disease organisms.

All the differing parts of this whole immune complex can be supported and kept healthy. By doing so we help prevent inroads in our systems from antibiotic-resistant bacteria.

Revitalizing Strategies

Over the past three decades there has been a great deal of exploration of just what is involved in creating and maintaining overall health and vitality. This includes things that can be done to restore and revitalize a suppressed or damaged immune system or keep an already healthy immune system functioning well. Roughly, these measures fall into three categories: herbs, foods and vitamins, and lifestyle choices.

A basic truism of antibiotic treatment is that it just will not work under most circumstances unless the body can mount its own attack against invading bacteria.

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