

"WHAT CAN EASE ULCERATIVE COLITIS?"

My younger sister has been diagnosed with ulcerative colitis following a spell of ill health (her symptoms were initially attributed to IBS). She's currently studying at university and her illness has caused her to miss so much time she's had to retake her first year, causing considerable stress and upset. It saddens me to see her life so disrupted. I would like to know if there are any complementary therapies she could try that might relieve some of the symptoms?

Stephanie Driver advises:

Ulcerative colitis occurs when the membranes lining the colon become inflamed and develop ulcers. Although the original cause is unknown, it is certainly aggravated with food intolerances. Ask your sister to keep a record of what she is eating daily. This way she can identify foods that either worsen or improve her condition. Wheat, dairy, yeast and eggs are common triggers, and by removing these you can reduce or even eliminate the need for anti-inflammatory drugs. I would advise a low-carbohydrate, high vegetable-protein diet (include alfalfa and barley). Avoid full fat milk and cheese, carbonated drinks, spicy foods, caffeine, red meat, sugar and processed foods as these all irritate the colon. If diarrhoea is present, she could add natural fibre like psyllium husks to her diet, and increase her water intake to ensure proper hydration.

The herbs ginger, turmeric and boswellia are natural anti-inflammatories and will reduce pain and discomfort. Aloe vera juice also soothes and heals the colon. Try half a cup of aloe in morning and again at bedtime. To help repair the gut wall try increasing garlic and take glutamine (500mg twice daily, away from meals). If she has lost blood through stools ensure she takes an iron supplement – Floravit is gentle and easily absorbed.

Also check her stress levels. If stress is not managed properly, her symptoms may get worse. Magnesium and B-complex vitamins nourish the nervous system and will help reduce the effects of stress. Lastly I would recommend she visit a qualified naturopath. Ulcerative colitis is a serious condition that should be monitored by a professional.

"MY SINUSES ARE AGONY!"

When I don't sleep or I'm under stress I get really sore sinuses. The pain is bad inside my nose but my eyes seem to suffer the most – they puff up and get really painful. Sometimes it goes into my ears too, making everything sound muffled. I get hay fever in the summer and this certainly affects it, but it occurs frequently throughout the year. There's a definite link to sleep deprivation and stress. What can I do to alleviate this problem?

Stephanie Driver advises:

As it looks like there are several issues in your question I will tackle each, one at a time.

Sinusitis is simply inflammation of the nasal sinuses. 50 per cent of cases are due to bacteria, while chronic sinusitis can be linked to emotional stress amongst other things.

Foods can certainly aggravate the sinus cavities by producing excess mucus – wheat products, dairy and sugar being the main culprits. Eliminate these from your diet to identify any connection. Vitamin C with bioflavonoids (4000mg/day) boosts immune function, prevents infection and decreases mucus production. Quercetin and bromelain protect against allergens and are helpful for hayfever too. The herbs fenugreek, marshmallow, anise and mullein all reduce sinus inflammation, decongest the cavities and reduce pressure pain.

Address your stress levels as it's clearly quite destructive to your health. Try adding relaxation techniques into your daily routine, such as deep breathing, yoga, exercise and meditation.

Vitamin B complex nourishes your stress glands, the adrenals. Magnesium is specific for the nervous system. It helps muscles relax and improves energy. Taken at night, it also encourages good sleep. The herbs oats, holy basil, chamomile, lemon balm and withania also help the body cope better with stress.

Lastly, to help sleep, reduce any stimulants over the day, like caffeine, alcohol and sugar. Try valerian, passionflower and skullcap herbs in tea or tincture form to combat this. A naturopath or herbalist will formulate the right mix for you.

Addressing both your stress and sleep first may in turn alleviate the sinus problem altogether.

"CAN DIET HELP WITH CHILDHOOD EPILEPSY?"

My nine-year-old daughter has starting having seizures. Fortunately it seems to be a mild case of junior myoclonic epilepsy, but the thought that she might be on anti-epileptic medication for the rest of her life is disturbing. I've heard that the condition can be improved with diet and complementary therapies. What are your thoughts on this and where do I go for more information?

Harald Gaier advises:

The so-called naturopathic ketogenic diet, which has been used since the early 1920s, is a low carbohydrate, high-fat diet which may reduce epileptic seizures by 59–70 per cent in children, even those who fail to respond to orthodox anticonvulsants. For more detailed information on this, I can refer you to *The Epilepsy Diet: An Introduction to the Ketogenic Diet* by J M Freeman (New York, NY: Demos Publishing Inc, 1994). A well-controlled study in 1998 has shown that about one third of these children with intractable medication-resistant seizures became seizure-free. However, since the diet is not particularly healthy for growing children, its use has been restricted. Nowadays the diet, which is initiated by a 24–36 hour fast, is normally introduced during a spell of

MEET THE PANEL

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STEPHANIE DRIVER



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HARALD GAIER



is a naturopathic physician with a doctorate in naturopathic and botanical medicine and is registered in the UK as an osteopath, naturopath, acupuncturist, medical herbalist and homeopath. He has published papers on medical research and on the current economics of medicine.

He is also the author of the *Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Homeopathy*. He serves on the Education and Training committee for the Prince of Wales' Foundation for Integrated Health. Contact The Health Equation, 11 Harley Street, on 020 7612 9800 or 07917662042 or visit drgaier.com or 07917662042 or visit drgaier.com

hospitalization by personnel trained in its preparation. What this diet has done, however, is draw attention to the relationship of total foods consumed and those reacted to; in other words, the fact that this type of epilepsy is very often a food hypersensitivity problem. You can read more about this aspect of child epilepsy under 'Diet & Tips' on my website (www.drgaier.com). Another form of alternative therapy that has been shown to be successful is acupuncture when used together with oriental herbal medicines. A suitably qualified practitioner of Traditional Chinese Medicine could be consulted about possible treatment.

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