



Sick of Feeling Tired? How to Supercharge Your Flat Battery

By Dr Peter Holsman

Holistic medical practice is based on the observation that many factors affect a person's health. Holistic practitioners are likely to incorporate a number of complementary therapies, such as chiropractic, osteopathy, allergy testing, flower essences, homoeopathy, kinesiology, massage, acupuncture, vitamins, herbs or nutritional advice. Client responsibility, exercise, and a healthy physical environment with minimal toxic exposure are key aspects of this approach.

Most people who come to holistic practitioners say that tiredness is one of their biggest problems. Patients may say that they have lacked energy from as short as one month to as long as 20 years. If only they could have more energy and reverse the aging process.

Other symptoms may include nose and sinus congestion, poor concentration, abdominal bloating and wind, spinal discomfort, lymph node enlargement, intermittent fever, headaches, and recurrent infections.

Fatigue is a common symptom which can result from a vast number of physical and emotional health problems. Sometimes the cause is obvious. For example someone may have pneumonia, kidney failure or be dealing with bereavement. Such conditions are readily diagnosed and treated by conventional medicine.

The problem arises when fatigue alone is the major symptom. The medical approach is to look for causes such as a physical illness, drugs (medical or recreational) and social and psychological factors. Conventional medical tests have usually been done to exclude such known illnesses as anaemia, thyroid dysfunction, kidney failure, heart disease and cancer. Their test reports read "within normal limits".

Although this is in some ways reassuring, the lack of a positive finding can be frustrating for both patient and health care practitioner. Some patients wonder if it is really "all in their head", that is, psychological.

So if they don't have a recognisable illness, then what do they have? A common label such patients receive is "chronic fatigue syndrome. This is really a diagnosis of exclusion. You see, there is no test available to confirm this condition. Nor is there a recognised management program to help such

people once they receive this label. In general patients say that rest, time and a possible antidepressant have been the main suggestions.

Complementary therapists see chronic fatigue syndrome as being a condition of generalised physical and emotional depletion. Multiple symptoms are typically present. Although most people have been unwell for more than six months, it is generally felt that a shorter illness does not exclude chronic fatigue syndrome.

So what else can be done? Australians were reported to spend more than one billion dollars on alternative health treatments in 1995. This confirms that other modalities of diagnosis and treatment are being used in addition to modern medical practice. Ultimately it needs to be realised that neither health care model is complete by itself.

Further progress in health care requires that both models are wisely integrated. The fact is that health care has always been evolving. I have some medical textbooks that are over 100 years old. Some of their content has clearly been superseded. How long will it be before today's level of knowledge is obsolete?

Let's look at some of the diagnostic and therapeutic options available in Australia:

Integrative Medical Doctors

Integrative Medicine Doctors offer a combination of conventional medical care and natural therapies. Consultations start with a comprehensive holistic examination of your health and wellbeing. Diagnostic tests are requested when indicated. Treatments may include advice about your diet, lifestyle, physical activity, communication skills and relationships. Natural or pharmaceutical medicines may be recommended.

Osteopathy

Osteopathy is a holistic system of manual therapy which is used to treat musculoskeletal and postural problems. Your body needs a healthy nerve supply for the internal organs such as liver, gut and brain to work at an optimal level. In my experience the health of many people has improved much faster when osteopathy is included in their treatment program as healthy nerve function allows optimal results from dietary changes and nutritional supplements. Techniques used include stretching, massage, improving joint mobility, muscle energy techniques where tight muscles are relaxed by applying a counter stretch to opposite muscle groups, and manipulation.

Massage

Therapeutic massage has been used for thousands of years. Massage therapy covers many different styles and includes gentle relaxation and deeper therapeutic techniques. Beneficial effects have been experienced by people with chronic low back pain, fibromyalgia, anxiety, stress, depression and lymphatic oedema.

Allergy testing

Allergies, sensitivities and reactions to food and the environment are thought to result from a stressed immune system. This in turn results in a cascade of other events, the specifics which will depend on an individual's strengths and weaknesses.

Allergy testing can be performed in a number of ways and may include skin prick testing, blood tests for immune proteins, dietary elimination and challenge, and electrodermal "energetic" testing using acupuncture points.

Herbs

Herbal medicines have been used to treat the sick for thousands of years. Herbal medicine is practiced in every country of the world. The World Health Organisation has estimated that more than 75% of the world's population still uses the services of herbalists for the treatment of ill health.

Medicinal plants range from gentle herbs such as chamomile, which acts to reduce spasm, relieve inflammation, and counteract flatulence, to powerful agents such as digitalis, which is used for heart conditions. The rise of modern chemistry early this century saw herbal medicine fall into disrepute in industrialised societies; however modern herbal medicine is now undergoing a renaissance and is increasingly being supported by scientific research. Empirical evidence suggests that the relative safety and efficacy of plants is due to the sum of all their constituents, rather than the pharmacological approach of attempting to isolate and patent a single active ingredient.

Bach flower essences

Bach flower remedies were developed by Dr Edward Bach in the 1930s. The remedies are prepared from the flowers of wild English plants and are used to help people deal primarily with emotional issues. The best known is Rescue Remedy, which is actually a composite of five Bach flowers. As the name implies, it is used in situations of shock, distress, panic, fear or injury.

Australian bush flower essences have also been developed and are prescribed by a number of local practitioners.

Homoeopathy

Homoeopathy began with Dr Samuel Hahnemann (1755 – 1843), a German physician. There are hundreds of different homoeopathic remedies, all of which are based on the following principles: what a substance can cause it can also cure; the potency of a remedy increases as it is diluted; the patient is treated according to the whole symptom picture, rather than just a single disease.

Acupuncture

Traditional Chinese Medicine and acupuncture have been practiced for centuries. Acupuncture is based on the principle that energy flows through the body in lines or "meridians". Illness results from a block in the energy flow and acupuncture is used to restore that flow. Chinese herbs are often used in conjunction with acupuncture, and can also be prescribed independently.

Case Histories

A young mother with two children came to see me because she was exhausted and teary. Was it just the strain of being woken at night by one or more children? Blood tests confirmed low iron. It was interesting that, like many tired people she was craving more sweets, when ideally grilled red meat would have been better for her energy. Treatment with iron rich foods, iron tablets, osteopathy to help relax her neck and back muscles and general nutritional supplements resulted in great improvement. This was helped and confirmed by her resuming long walks every day.

A number of women with menopausal symptoms such as hot flushes, night sweats and poor sleep have improved for six months and then had a relapse. Why has the medicine stopped working? The usual causes have been an increase in stress from working too many hours and family challenges. A common pattern of people who used to burn the candle at both ends is that the pattern is repeated as soon as they are well again. The adrenal glands that help give you stamina, energy and hormones can only do so much!

Glandular fever is common in high school and university students. The stress of exams, irregular sleep patterns and a hefty load of extra curricular activities are generally relevant. Most require advice about healthy food and fluid choices, in particular the need to minimise refined, processed foods and carbonated drinks. Osteopathy and a combination of herbs and vitamins have accelerated their recovery.

Bloating, wind, a sluggish bowel and general lack of energy are common symptoms for many people who come to this clinic. Blood tests, x rays and colonoscopies have all been normal. Treatment with dietary advice about how and what to eat, herbs and vitamins usually make a big positive difference.

Results

The results of using many of the above approaches, show, in my opinion, that there is much more to tiredness than simply a label or diagnosis of exclusion.

The first area that usually requires treatment is the digestive system. Compromised function results in impaired assimilation and utilisation of nutrients. Elimination of toxins also requires attention. For example faecal retention may be indicated by iridology or bloating and distension in the lower abdomen. In general the build up of toxins is an expected consequence of impaired organ function. Dietary modification and avoidance of foods and /or drinks to which the client is allergic or intolerant is generally an important prerequisite for long-term improvement.

Nutritional depletion is frequently at the core of a vicious cycle of deteriorating health. The physical consequence is to further impair the function of organs, nerves, cartilage, adipose and connective tissue, enzymes and hormones. Cognitive changes such as memory, concentration, energy and clarity of thought are also evident.

The prognosis varies with each person's underlying problems, commitment to their treatment program, and lifestyle. In general, most people notice improved energy and cognitive function within one to three months.

Dr Peter Holsman is an accomplished medical practitioner and enthralling public speaker who enjoys helping people stay young and energetic. His entertaining and actionpacked presentations are for every one who wants to get the most out of life and for organisations that want to put life back into their people. For more information visit www.liveto100.com.au or phone Your Health Camberwell on 03 9882 5151.