

EHC-D NEWSLETTER

June 2008



Finding Health

Through Balance

An important component of the human body is the Autonomic Nervous System: autonomic meaning self regulating (*auto = self, nomic = law*). Two branches of this system are the Sympathetic and the Parasympathetic which are antagonistic or opposite of each other. The sympathetic system produces the **'fight or flight'** or survival response which, for example, directs blood to the muscles and the brain. Energy is routed away from such functions as digestion, elimination and immunity and is directed toward stimulating the thyroid and adrenal glands to produce hormones in response to the 'high state of alert'. Thus, the sympathetic nervous system is considered to be 'catabolic' in nature which involves a release of energy for the breakdown of material or destructive metabolism. The majority of chemically sensitive people are observed to be in a state of over-stimulation or dominance of their sympathetic nervous system, as documented by Heart Rate Variability and Pupillography studies.

Conversely, the parasympathetic nervous system is considered to be 'anabolic' or restorative in nature. This system is the **'rest and digest'** branch which promotes nourishment and regeneration of the body. When the parasympathetic system is in dominance, the resultant rest and relaxation allows energy to be directed to the liver, pancreas, stomach and intestines for enhanced digestion and assimilation of nutrients, effective waste elimination (detoxification) and balanced, proper immune function.

It can be concluded that pursuing avenues of support for the parasympathetic nervous system could provide vital, restorative and rebalancing value for an over-stimulated and exhausted system, as is seen in chemically sensitive people. One obvious way is to avoid harsh chemical incitants on the nervous system such as pesticides, solvents, food preservatives, fumes, etc.; however, stress is another harsh toxin on the nervous system. In fact, excessive stress hormones such as cortisol and adrenaline can be very harsh 'fight or flight', biochemical incitants.

Daily restorative and balancing practices such as yoga, meditation, prayer and even visualization promote parasympathetic dominance. Nutrients such as magnesium, calcium and zinc are also supportive of this anabolic or rebuilding branch of the nervous system. Ask your doctor about other supplements such as Tryptophan or 5-HTP for promoting parasympathetic well-being.

An environmental protocol in which the overwhelming principle is to avoid pollution in the air, food and water as much as possible and includes detoxification, desensitization and nutrient restoration can have a very positive effect in down-regulating an over-stimulated nervous system; however, healthy life choices which promote relaxation, enjoyment and happiness are equally vital toward establishing the biochemical foundation for healing and allowance for an overall state of healthy nervous system balance.

*This article was written by Barbara Fritts Pond, EHC-D staff member and should not be construed as medical advice.
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