

# Targeting Wellness Newsletter

## Good News for Good Health!

October 2020

Debby Schiffer, Wellness Director for BURLCO & TRICO JIFs



“Autumn is a  
second spring  
when every leaf  
is a flower.”

— Albert Camus

### *In this issue*

1. *Get Your Immune System Fall Ready*
2. *Main Components That Support Your Immune System*
3. *What is Autoimmune Disease?*
4. *Connection Between Autoimmune Disease and Gut Health*
5. *So Many Squash Varieties...Who Knew?*
6. *Recipe Corner—Acorn Squash Soup with Turmeric*

*It always comes down to ones mindset, ones perception.*



## Get Your Immune System Fall Ready

This year our kickoff to autumn was a bit different. Traditionally this season is greeted with kids going back to school and maybe starting new projects at work. However, this year we are looking at a very different Fall perhaps one filled with a bit more uncertainty when it comes to our overall wellness. We know our **immune system** is always more vulnerable this time of year, and with COVID-19 lurking, many may feel even more concerned.

**What exactly is our immune system?** It's simply our defense against danger whether external or internal. It's pretty obvious that external infections from bacteria, viruses and other organisms pose a threat, but often we forget how vital our immune system is for growth, development and living longer. It stays alert 24/7 to remove internal "invaders" by finding ways to remove them from our system. When the immune system is compromised, we suffer from inflammation. Sometimes inflammation can help fight an acute and specific threat, but long-term inflammation is dangerous. And factors such as poor diet, obesity and a sedentary lifestyle make inflammation worse! Chronic inflammation can increase one's risk of cardiovascular disease, cognitive decline and premature aging, not to mention COVID-19.

If we stop and think about it, our immune system is pretty darn amazing! We have trillions of bacteria in our gut and colon. It is their job to figure out which are harmful, which are neutral and which are helpful to our bodies health and function. Over 70% of our immune system is contained in our gut microbiome (the community of bacteria).



### Fall's impact on our immune system

Change in the weather tends to produce ideal conditions for viruses to flourish while at the same time, tends to lessen our immune system's strength to fight them.

#### Hot, Dry Indoor Air:

Indoor heating can irritate our nasal, sinus and throat passages, causing tiny cracks in our skin and pores which allow bacteria and viruses to enter the body much easier. Installing a humidifier can help.

#### Less Sunlight:

With days getting shorter, our exposure to Vitamin D is reduced. Our skin produces vitamin D when exposed to sunlight. This "sunshine vitamin" is a key nutrient needed to support a healthy immune system. Getting a sunlamp for your desk may not only help with vitamin D but may also help against seasonal affective disorder (i.e. SAD).

#### Fluctuating Weather:

We experience frequent changes in the weather during this time of year. Changes in temperature, humidity, wind levels and barometric pressure can all take a toll on our body. The constant adaptation to these changes can put stress on the functioning of our system.

### Does our age make us more vulnerable to sickness?

Our immune system is at its peak during our reproductive years and begins to decline as we get older. This is why our elderly can be more at risk in getting sick and may have more difficulty fighting it off if they do get sick. However, that is NOT always the case. We can slow down or speed up this trajectory by our lifestyle choices and the environment in which we live. Our diet, if we get enough exercise and quality sleep, how we deal with stress, if we smoke or take drugs, if we drink alcohol in excess or come in contact with other toxins...these all impact our immune system and its ability to do its job properly.



## Main Components That Support Your Immune System

### Managing Stress

What is your go-to method for dealing with stress when you have taken all you can take? Now ask yourself, is this a healthy practice or one that could lead to other problems? No doubt there are things that happen daily to cause you some level of stress. Sometimes it helps push you forward, other times it causes you to become immobile. It is crucial that when you feel the stress and anxiety building up you have a plan to calm yourself: step away from the situation and focus on deep breathing; go for a walk outside to change your tunnel vision to optic flow; talk to a friend or co-worker. You can learn to become more resilient in times of stress but it will take awareness and practice. It's worth the effort because your immune system will be stronger for it!



### Set Boundaries

This can be the toughest thing to do when you are everything to everyone (spouse, parent, employee, coworker, friend, family member....). Where do YOU come into the picture? Saying "no" may be very difficult for many reasons. But instead of thinking of it as saying "no" to someone else, think of it as saying "yes" to yourself. With many uncertainties this fall season, make sure you don't over commit. Each week take some time to do something for yourself. Self-care is not being self-fish! I'm sure you have heard the flight attendant words referenced many times "put the mask on yourself first"! Saying "no" once in awhile allows you to say "yes" to yourself more often. Give it a try.

### Getting Enough Sleep

If you are pushing the envelope of sleep to get in another movie, surf the web, or peruse your favorite social media, think again. Sleep is when your immune system registers any of the day's invaders. Our immune system, during sleep, gathers up the information it has "learned" about viruses and bacteria it came in contact with during the day. It identifies characteristics and methods of attack and creates antibodies to fight off that invader in the future. Research shows that this process of "immune memory" creation can ONLY happen during sleep.



### Healthy Diet

Many have mentioned that a few extra pounds have found their way around their waistline since the start of the pandemic. No surprise with our normal routines being turned upside down. Maybe there were extra snacks in the house or you ordered out more and moved less. But since more than 70% of our immune system resides in our gut, eating a healthy diet will definitely have a huge impact on its strength and ability to fight off sickness. One way to do that is to incorporate color into your diet. Eating more whole foods such as vegetables, fruits, grains, legumes and beans will fuel your body with the powerhouse nutrients and vitamins needed to ward off external and internal invaders. Make sure you are eating foods rich in vitamin C, vitamin D and Zinc. Also elderberries have long been used in herbal medicine to support the immune system. They are packed with antioxidants that may help in blocking viral proteins and inhibit early stages of an infection.

### Get More Exercise

Perhaps your "normal" workout routine got thrown off track with the pandemic. Gyms are finally reopen but not everyone feels comfortable to head back, fully masked and socially distanced. No worries. Fall is a great time to start a new exercise routine. With the cooler weather, see if you can incorporate time to get outside to take a walk or ride your bike. It's a great way to have alone time, or time to spend with your family. Getting outside in the middle of the day is a great way to soak in some vitamin D. I have done many after dinner remote "walks and talks" with friends. It's a great way to stay connected while getting in your steps. Tai chi, yoga and strength training are also great options to incorporate into your routine. It can help reduce stress, strengthen muscles, and help your immune system all at the same time.

Strive for the 3 C's in all the above: **COMMITMENT, CONVENIENCE, AND CONSISTENCY!**





## What is Autoimmune Disease?

An **autoimmune disease** is a condition in which your immune system mistakenly attacks your body. As you just read, the immune system normally guards against germs like bacteria and viruses. When it senses these foreign invaders, it sends out an army of fighter cells to attack them. Normally, the immune system can tell the difference between foreign cells and your own cells. In an autoimmune disease, the immune system mistakes part of your body — like your joints or skin — as foreign. It releases proteins called auto-antibodies that attack healthy cells. Some autoimmune diseases target only one organ. Type 1 diabetes damages the pancreas. Other diseases, like lupus, affect the whole body.

### Why does the immune system attack the body?

- \* “Autoimmune diseases are the third most common category of disease in the United States after cancer and heart disease; they affect 5%-8% of the population.” (CDC, 2004)
- \* Doctors don’t know what causes the immune system misfire. Yet some people are more likely to get an autoimmune disease than others.
- \* There is a higher prevalence of autoimmune diseases in women, with conservative estimates to be 78.8%. Often the disease starts during a woman’s childbearing years (ages 14 to 44).
- \* Some autoimmune diseases are more common in certain ethnic groups. For example, lupus affects more African-American and Hispanic people than Caucasians.
- \* Certain autoimmune diseases, like multiple sclerosis and lupus, run in families. Not every family member will necessarily have the same disease, but they inherit a susceptibility to an autoimmune condition.
- \* Because the incidence of autoimmune diseases is rising, researchers suspect environmental factors like infections and exposures to chemicals or solvents might also be involved.
- \* A “Western” diet is another suspected trigger. Eating high-fat, high-sugar, and highly processed foods is linked to *inflammation*, which can set off an immune response.
- \* Another theory is called the *hygiene hypothesis*. Because of vaccines and antiseptics, children today aren’t exposed to as many germs as they were in the past. The lack of exposure could make their immune system overreact to harmless substances.

### Some of the more common autoimmune diseases include:

- ◆ Type 1 diabetes
- ◆ Rheumatoid arthritis (RA)
- ◆ Psoriasis/psoriatic arthritis
- ◆ Multiple sclerosis—damages the protective coating that surrounds nerve cells
- ◆ Lupus—first described as a skin disease because of the rash it produces, but it affects many organs.
- ◆ Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) - Crohn’s or Ulcerative colitis
- ◆ Addison’s disease—affects the adrenal glands
- ◆ Grave’s disease—attacks the thyroid gland
- ◆ Hashimoto’s thyroiditis

Sources: CDC and NIH



## Autoimmune Disease and Gut Health: What's The Connection

Inflammation is our body's way of healing cells that have been damaged. We see this happen every time we get a paper cut. Our body jumps into action to first stop the bleeding and then inflammation sets in to allow fresh nutrients and oxygen while fighting off infection. It's pretty amazing what our bodies can do when they are able to work properly. But sometimes inflammation in the body does more harm than good. Often times the amount of inflammation increases due to the types of food we eat. Added sugars, red and processed meats, trans fats, and omega-6s can all trigger spikes in inflammation.

### What foods may actually help reduce inflammation in our body?

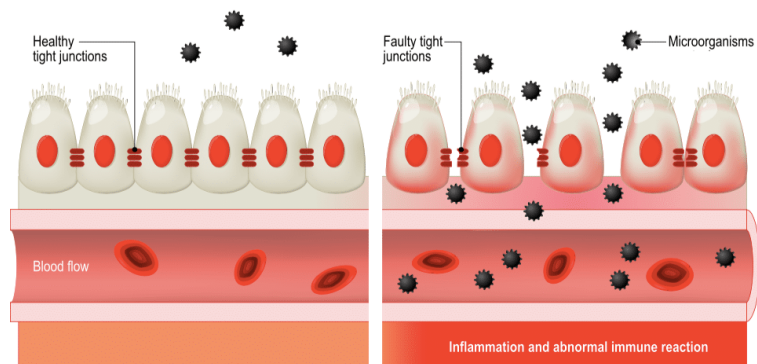
Every autoimmune disease is different yet research is showing that our food choices could impact when it comes to healing and preventing the development of autoimmune diseases. There was a study published in 2017 in the Frontiers of Immunology which found that "leaky gut" may trigger the initiation and development of autoimmune disease. Our gut health is crucial to the proper functioning of our body. It is made up of trillions of different bacteria (microbiota) which help with digestion, protects the intestinal wall and supports normal immune function.

The whole issue of whether LGS causes or is a symptom of any of the autoimmune diseases is still not 100% clear. But there are many studies that are stating there could definitely be a connection.

With that said, there is a good chance that what you eat could increase or decrease your symptoms. So what might be some ways to take care of your gut?

### "Leaky Gut Syndrome" (LGS)

This is a digestive condition that affects the lining of the intestines. Gaps occur in the intestinal walls allowing bacteria and other toxins to pass into the bloodstream.  
(Medical News Today)



- \* **Eating fermented foods** increase the beneficial bacteria (probiotics): kimchi, sauerkraut, unsweetened yogurts, coconut kefir, tempeh, kombucha (fermented black or green tea), miso
- \* **Eat more anti-inflammatory foods** such as mushrooms, onions, leafy greens, squash, turnips or rutabaga to name a few.
- \* **Add some spice to your life:** ginger, cayenne pepper, cloves, garlic, cinnamon, and turmeric.

Sethi, Dr. Saurabh. August 21, 2019. What to know about leaky gut syndrome. Medical News Today.  
<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/326117#what-is-it>

Other Sources: Cleveland Clinic, Food Revolution



## So Many Varieties of Squash....Who Knew?

With the start of fall, I thought it would be nice to address the many varieties of squash now available and all the health benefits you may not have known. When you think of squash, what comes to mind? Probably the thin green or plump yellow squash, typically found in the grocery store. But did you know there are dozens of varieties, including: buttercup, patty pan, Hubbard, cushaw, acorn, summer, autumn and winter squash? Squash is a very interesting fruit, which is often identified as a vegetable because it is a broad term that encompasses a number of different foods, including pumpkins, zucchinis, courgettes, and marrows...yes even pumpkins, which fall into the same **Cucurbit (climbing) family**. In North America, most of the varieties have been simplified into either summer or winter squash. Let's take a closer look at a few that you may or may not have tasted...maybe you'll be inspired to seek them out at your local farmers market or grocery store.



**What a Power House of Nutrients:** they contain organically occurring vitamins and minerals; contains vitamins such as vitamin C, vitamin E, vitamin B6 and minerals and health components such as niacin, thiamine, folate, pantothenic acid, calcium, and iron. Minerals are also abundant in squashes, such as copper, magnesium, and potassium. Squash is overall an excellent way of getting a dose of antioxidants, carotenoids and anti-inflammatory agents.



Acorn Squash



Butternut Squash



Hubbard Squash

Can be used as pie filling or



Spaghetti Squash

So named because it splits

### BENEFITS

Boosts immune system

Helps reduce gastric & duodenal ulcer

Gives relief from asthmatic conditions

Effective in preventing heart diseases

Improves bone & eye health

Effective in managing diabetes

Helps to improve blood circulation

Reduces risk of lung cancer & emphysema



Delicata Squash

Skin delicate enough to be



Turban Squash

Has a big cap which can be removed in order to make it



Carnival Squash

Tastes like butternut



Ambercup Squash



Even the blossoms are edible!



Sweet Dumpling Squash



Eight Ball Squash

Tiny squash is a form of

Caution: Avoid consumption if suffering from hypotension (low blood pressure)

Source: [www.organicfacts.net](http://www.organicfacts.net)

### Baked Method

- Depending on the variety, cut in half or in pieces large enough for individual servings.
- Scrape out seeds and stringy parts. (I saved the seeds from an acorn squash. Cleaned and dried them. Baked on low for about an hour. Add some spices and enjoy on salads or as a snack)
- Place pieces cut side up on large baking pan.
- On each piece place 1 teaspoon of butter, 1 teaspoon of sugar or honey or corn syrup, and a sprinkle of salt. Or try butter, garlic cloves and fresh herbs.





## Acorn Squash Soup with Turmeric



This acorn squash soup with turmeric will warm you right up on a chilly fall afternoon. It's so creamy and delicious that you won't realize how healthy it is. It's full of veggies and also dairy free thanks to the addition of coconut milk. (Recipe courtesy of Seasonal Cravings)



### Ingredients:

Prep time: 10 mins.  
Cooking time: 54mins  
Servings: 6

- \* 1 acorn squash
- \* 1 tbsp olive oil (water or veggie broth will work too)
- \* 1 cup shredded or diced carrot
- \* 1 small onion chopped
- \* 1/2 apple diced
- \* 1 tsp ginger
- \* 1 tsp turmeric
- \* 1 14 oz can unsweetened coconut milk
- \* 1 1/2 cups water
- \* 1/2 tsp salt
- \* 1/4 tsp pepper

### Nutrition Facts:

Calories: 238kcal | Carbohydrates: 17g | Protein: 2g | Fat: 19g | Saturated Fat: 15g | Sodium: 225mg | Potassium: 556mg | Fiber: 3g | Sugar: 5g | Vitamin A: 3830IU | Vitamin C: 13.2mg | Calcium: 48mg | Iron: 1.9mg

### Directions:

1. Cut the squash in half and scrape out the seeds. Roast in a baking pan for about 30-40 minutes at 400°F. You want the flesh to be soft.
2. In a dutch oven, heat the olive oil over medium-high heat. (or use water/veggie broth to keep carrots covered for about 10 minutes.
3. Puree soup with an immersion blender or put in your blender. Be careful not to burn yourself!
4. Serve with pepitas (pumpkin seeds), scallions, and parsley.
5. and onions from sticking.
6. Add carrots and onions and sauté 4 minutes.



Debby Schiffer, MA, NBC-HWC, Wellness Director for BURLCO & TRICO JIF

E-mail: [debby\\_schiffer@targetingwellness.com](mailto:debby_schiffer@targetingwellness.com)

Home Office: 856-322-1220

Cell: 856-520-9908