

## OUR INTEGRATIVE MEDICINE PROTOCOL

The key components of our integrative medicine protocol include:

- Treatment of the digestive system with a variety of nutrients that improve absorption, bolster immune system functioning, and restore the normal flora to an optimal balance.
- Treatment of chronic gut infections, focusing on removal of the “biofilm” that protects these organisms using a combination of pharmaceutical and natural antimicrobial agents.
- Promotion of elimination and detoxification through the use of colon hydrotherapy.
- Implementation of other detoxification techniques including modified fasting, chelation therapy and glutathione therapy
- The use of hyperbaric therapy to promote cellular repair, immune system stimulation and detoxification.
- The use of immune boosting pharmaceuticals and supplements necessary for the body to ultimately control the infection when antibiotics are no longer being used.

The Center’s overall approach has been further informed by clinical trainings sponsored by the International Lyme and Associated Diseases Society and through direct work with several leading Lyme physicians in the Northeast.

By John C. Pittman, MD, and Mark N. Mead, MS

Over the centuries, many metaphors have been used to describe the human body and the requirements for good health. Some have likened the body to a garden that must have good soil in order to repel pests and plant diseases—just as the body’s biochemical terrain must be fortified to stave off malignancies and infectious diseases.

More recently, the body has been compared to a magnificent computer, with the central nervous system acting as a kind of CPU that connects all the other systems as an integrated whole. From this perspective, the human body functions as an orchestrated network of interconnected systems, rather than individual systems functioning separately or autonomously.

Modern science has reinforced the validity of this perspective, as well as that of a dynamic balance between the body’s internal and external environments. We have known for several decades that the immune and nervous systems are inextricably linked—hence

# Overcoming Lyme Disease

## *The Power of an Integrative Approach*



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the burgeoning field of psychoneuroimmunology, the study of the interaction between psychological processes and the body’s immune and nervous systems.

We also know that conditions within the body influence the immune system in profound ways. For example, the digestive tract is frequently a hidden source of toxins and inflammatory chemicals that promote immune system dysfunction. Nutritional deficits and environmental pollutants can disrupt immune function while also triggering a wide range of both immunologic and neurologic problems. Such diverse connections help explain why psychological stress and lifestyle factors can have such a profound impact on so many aspects of human health—including our vulnerability to colds, flus, and other types of infection.

### AN INTEGRATIVE APPROACH

Our integrative medicine approach to Lyme disease is a great example of how this body-mind perspective can be put into action. Lyme disease is a chronic inflammatory condition caused when a certain type of bacteria, called *Borrelia burgdorferi*, is transmitted by the bite of a deer tick or black-legged tick. Although the disease is easily treated in its early stages, the condition is difficult to diagnose—due mainly to the diversity of symptoms and to poor reliability of the lab tests for identifying the Lyme pathogen. It therefore often goes undiagnosed until it has progressed considerably.

Well-intentioned medical doctors will often inform their patients that the problem is psychological rather than physical. “Whenever I described my symptoms, my doctors told me to go see a psychologist,” recalls Sally J., a 43-year-old businesswoman. “They told me it’s all in my head. But because I had such intense body pains, pins and needles, fatigue, and brain fog, I just knew this was way beyond psychological.”

In its more advanced stages, the symptoms of Lyme disease often take the form of chronic fatigue, debilitating arthritic pain,

irregular heart rhythms, brain fog, and other psychological challenges. Of the dozens of patients we have treated in the past two years, virtually all of have reported some combination of frequent anxiety, heavy moods (often diagnosed as clinical depression), poor concentration and short-term memory lapses. These afflictive moods and mind states are of course constantly exacerbated by the progressive nature of the disease itself, particularly when left untreated or poorly managed.

Of course, as we noted earlier, the mind can and does influence the immune system. Thus, in principle, strategies to calm and focus the mind should help overcome the disease. In our experience, however, mind-body strategies are only effective after you have first taken care of the debilitating physical symptoms of this disease. The tools we embrace at the Carolina Center for treating Lyme disease are designed to not only eradicate the infection, but to bolster energy, sleep, mood, and overall functioning, and these changes, in turn, give our patients the sense of peace and control they need to fully turn this situation around.

### TOOLS FOR HEALING AND EMPOWERMENT

The Carolina Center’s approach to treating Lyme and other tick-borne diseases is grounded in principles laid out in the Physician Training Program, sponsored by the International Lyme and Associated Diseases Society. Our approach utilizes a combination of strategies that address nutrient deficiencies, immune function, and hormone imbalances, along with the careful use of antibiotics, which serve as a first-line therapy and thus play a pivotal role in combating Lyme disease. Much of the art of treating this condition is determining when and how to use antibiotics, immune and hormonal support, detoxification, and some combination of these options.

Antibiotics are always the first course of action for anyone who has experienced a tick bite within the previous three months and

now has acute symptoms of fatigue, body pain, headaches, and generalized flu-like symptoms. In contrast, however, individuals who have been suffering for more than three months are unlikely to benefit from an approach in which antibiotics comprise the sole intervention. This is where nutritional and botanical agents, along with hyperbaric oxygen therapy and other complementary therapies, come into play.

By affording increased antioxidant and anti-inflammatory protection, this integrative approach can have a powerful impact on Lyme disease, as reported by University of California researchers in the September 2009 issue of *Evidence-Based Complementary and Alternative Medicine*.

Other factors that affect the ability to recover from Lyme disease include: treating the co-infections with other tick-borne organisms as well as other organisms (bacteria, yeast or parasites); removing toxic metals and other environmental pollutants that disrupt the immune system; correcting nutrient deficiencies that ultimately compromise the immune and detoxification systems; and redressing hormonal imbalances that are often due to Lyme-related damage to the hypothalamus. ❧

*Dr. Pittman is Medical Director of the Carolina Center for Integrative Medicine and serves as a member of the state’s Vector Disease Task Force and as President of the North Carolina Integrative Medicine Society. Mark Mead is a nutrition educator who works at the Center. For more information, call (919) 571-4391 or visit [www.carolinacenter.com](http://www.carolinacenter.com)*

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