

# Natural Help 4...

# Autoimmune Disease



## What is Autoimmune Disease?

The immune system normally protects the body from infections and disease brought about by bacteria, viruses, germs, or abnormal body cells. When an [autoimmune disease](#) develops, the **immune system mistakenly attacks and destroys its own tissues** and organs.

Many parts of the body such as the red blood cells, blood vessels, connective tissues, digestive system, endocrine system, muscles, joints, nerves and skin may be affected. [Autoimmune diseases](#) predominantly affect women, frequently during their childbearing years. These diseases often tend to be hereditary, and certain environmental factors may also contribute to a weakened immune system.

[Autoimmune disease](#) symptoms vary from individual to individual, with each disease being different. **Ranging from mild symptoms to more debilitating conditions**, a malfunction of the immune system occurs in all of them.

## Classes of Autoimmune Disease

**Systemic [autoimmune diseases](#)** are characterized by the involvement of many different organs and organ systems.

The most common examples of systemic [autoimmune diseases](#) are:

- Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) and Juvenile RA (JRA) - joints; less commonly lung, skin
- Lupus (Systemic Lupus Erythematosus) - skin, joints, kidneys, heart, brain, red blood cells, other
- Scleroderma - skin, intestine, less commonly lung
- Sjogren's syndrome - salivary glands, tear glands, joints
- Goodpasture's syndrome - lungs, kidneys
- Wegener's granulomatosis - blood vessels, sinuses, lungs, kidneys
- Polymyalgia Rheumatica - large muscle groups
- Guillain-Barre syndrome - nervous system

**Localized [autoimmune diseases](#)** are characterized by the involvement of only a single organ, organ system or tissue.

The most common types include:

- Type 1 Diabetes Mellitus (pancreatic islets)
- Hashimoto's thyroiditis, or Graves' disease (thyroid gland)
- Celiac disease, Crohn's disease, Ulcerative colitis (GI tract)
- Multiple sclerosis
- Addison's disease (adrenal)

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- Primary biliary cirrhosis, Sclerosing cholangitis, [Autoimmune](#) hepatitis (liver)
- Pernicious anemia (stomach)
- Myasthenia gravis
- Dermatomyositis
- Temporal Arteritis / Giant Cell Arteritis (arteries of the head and neck)

## Diagnosing Autoimmune Disease

[Autoimmune diseases](#) are not always easy to diagnose, especially during the earlier stages of the disease. **Symptoms are often vague** and difficult to describe. The diagnosis is usually based on a physical examination, symptoms of the individual, and a complete medical history.

Laboratory tests may also be performed to determine the diagnosis of certain [autoimmune](#) disorders.

## Tests to Diagnose Autoimmune Disease

- Blood tests
- Specific antibody tests
- Thyroid function tests to test for thyroid disorders such as hyperthyroidism or hypothyroidism
- Rheumatoid factor test
- Acetylcholine receptor antibody test to test for myasthenia gravis

## Symptoms of Autoimmune Disease

The symptoms of [autoimmune disease](#) vary depending on the disease as well as the person's immune system. Common symptoms include:

- Inflammation
- Fatigue
- Dizziness
- Malaise
- Elevated fever and high body temperature
- Extreme sensitivity to cold in the hands and feet
- Weakness and stiffness in muscles and joints
- Weight changes
- Digestive or gastrointestinal problems
- Low or high blood pressure
- Irritability, anxiety, or depression
- Infertility or reduced sex drive (low libido)
- Blood sugar changes

Depending on the type of [autoimmune disease](#), an increase in the size of an organ or tissue or the destruction of an organ or tissue can result.

## What Causes Autoimmune Disease?

The exact cause of what triggers the onset of an [autoimmune disease](#) has **not yet been conclusively established**. These diseases occur when the body attacks its

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### Michele Carelse, Clinical Psychologist



All of our natural remedies are formulated by our expert team of herbalists, naturopaths and homeopaths, and headed by Michele Carelse.

Michele has had years of experience in the manufacturing and use of natural remedies. In addition, she is a trained Clinical Psychologist and has been incorporating natural remedies into her treatment of patients with depression, anxiety, ADD, ADHD and stress for many years with spectacular results.

own tissues, thus affecting the functioning of that system of the body.

There are many different underlying factors that may contribute to the development of [autoimmune diseases](#).

## Contributing Causes of Autoimmune Disease

- Environmental toxins
- Heredity or genetics
- Viruses
- Sunlight
- Iodine
- Stress and anxiety
- Pregnancy

Poor diet, lack of exercise, lack of sleep, abuse of alcohol and use of tobacco can also weaken the immune system.

## Help for Autoimmune Disease

Most [autoimmune diseases](#) **cannot be cured**, although much can be done to relieve symptoms and improve quality of life. The treatment of an [autoimmune disease](#) depends on the symptoms associated with a specific disease.

There are various treatment options such as conventional medicine, complementary therapy, or natural remedies that can help to reduce the severity of symptoms.

## Conventional Medicine

- Over-the-counter (OTC) drugs such as aspirin and ibuprofen may treat mild symptoms of an [autoimmune disease](#), serving as [anti-inflammatories](#) or pain reducers
- Prescription drugs such as non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) or powerful immunosuppressants are often prescribed to control the inflammation and subsequent damage
- Antidepressants and other psychiatric medications may be prescribed for the psychological effects and symptoms
- Radiation therapy
- Plasmapheresis (a 'filtration' procedure that removes the diseased cells and harmful molecules from the blood circulation)

## Natural Remedies

There are many **natural remedies that offer an alternative** to conventional [anti-inflammatories](#). Not only can they soothe the over-active and misguided immune system, but [natural anti-inflammatories](#) can also help to restore the body's self-healing mechanisms and natural balance.

Herbal and homeopathic remedies are 100% natural and gentle, yet effective to use without the potential side effects of prescription medications. Herbs such as sarsaparilla and yarrow can be used to detoxify the bloodstream. These herbs are

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able to cleanse the blood and act as [natural anti-inflammatories](#) for muscles and joints. Boswellia, Devil's Claw, Ginger and Turmeric are effective for treating the symptoms of [autoimmune](#) disorders. Other herbs such as yucca can reduce muscle pain and stiffness, and if used as a shampoo, may help those who suffer from skin disorders.

Tissue salts and homeopathic ingredients are also highly effective aids to restoring balance, health and vitality, as they do not over-stimulate the immune system. They are nutroceuticals (nutritional substances), which can help to relieve the symptoms associated with [autoimmune diseases](#) and improve functioning. Ingredients such as Natrium sulphate, Kalium phosphate and Natrium phosphate can optimize the nervous system and lift the mood. Consult your physician, herbalist or homeopath about the best treatment for your needs.

## Complementary Therapy

- Acupuncture
- Dietary modifications
- Tai Chi
- Psychotherapy and counseling
- Touch therapy such as reiki
- Music therapy
- Iridology (pinpoints the areas of weakness in the body and assesses how specific nutrition and lifestyle changes may promote mental, emotional and physical health.)

## Tips for Coping with Autoimmune Disease

When you are diagnosed with an [autoimmune disease](#), it is very important that you learn to manage your disease. Many simple lifestyle changes can alleviate symptoms, such as eating foods high in certain ingredients that are known as [natural anti-inflammatories](#). Follow these suggestions to help you cope more effectively with your illness:

- Eat a healthy diet of fresh fruit, vegetables, whole grains, low fat dairy products, fish and poultry
- Exercise regularly – gentle exercise such as walking, yoga, light aerobics
- Increase your intake of dietary supplements such as omega-3 oils, and vitamin C, E, A, D, K and B complex
- Spend time in the natural sunlight because exposure to sunlight is good for the immune system health (but remember not to overdo it!)
- Be involved in your illness and treatment plan – make an effort to understand your illness and ask questions about your symptoms, what changes may occur, side effects and medication
- Be honest and open with your doctor, and do not be afraid to discuss your symptoms no matter how trivial they may seem
- Get enough sleep and try not to overexert yourself with strenuous activities
- Reduce stress by practicing relaxation techniques such as meditation or imagery
- Join a support group where you will be able to relate to others in a similar condition
- Allow family and friends time to adjust to your illness, but gaining their support will have a positive effect on your emotional health



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- Communicate openly with your partner about your illness and the emotions that you are experiencing

## The Natural Approach

While Western medicine has become the norm in many cultures, it is not the only treatment option. Conventional western medicine, often called allopathic medicine, is the system of medicine taught at most medical schools and most pharmaceutical and synthetic medicines are manufactured and marketed according to the principles of allopathic medicine. Allopathic medicine is also sometimes called orthodox medicine.

Because most of us in the Western world have grown up in a society in which allopathic medicine is the prevailing norm, we forget that, only a few decades ago, homeopathic, herbal and other natural medicines were commonly available – and freely used even by conventional doctors. While there are often heated debates about which system of medicine is ‘better’ than the other, many responsible doctors (whether they are allopathic or not) recognize that both have a role to play in the treatment program.

Natural medicine has often been frowned on by conventional doctors, especially by those who did not have sufficient knowledge of these medicines. However, it is encouraging to note that some medical schools are now beginning to re-introduce it into their course work, thereby providing doctors with a wider range of treatment options from which to choose. In many countries, especially in Europe, India and China, natural and homeopathic medicines are commonly prescribed by conventional doctors and represent a significant part of the total annual drug sales.

Naturopathy is a branch of medicine (just as allopathy is a branch of medicine) which operates according to the underlying philosophy that the body has an innate capacity to heal itself. While natural medicines are often called ‘alternative’ or ‘complimentary’ medicines, they are, in fact, a unique and independent form of medicine in their own right, well able to treat a variety of conditions. Perhaps the term ‘holistic’ medicine is more apt, given the broad range of treatment options and approaches which are to be found within the practice of natural medicine, which encompasses many different disciplines, including herbalism, homeopathy, iridology, osteopathy, chiropractic, therapeutic massage techniques, aromatherapy, acupuncture and many, many more.

Most naturopaths will use a variety of treatment modalities in order to treat their patients in a holistic way to support health, relieve symptoms and prevent future disease. In fact, even the World Health Organization defines health as being "... more than simply the absence of illness. It is the active state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being." This is a wonderfully clear description of holistic or natural medicine, which strives to support health (thereby relieving or preventing symptoms), rather than simply eliminating disease.

Although allopathic medicine certainly has a role to play and has made a tremendous contribution to medical science during the past century, there is a growing perception that it is not the only answer and that, in many cases, holistic medicine can accomplish just as much, if not more – without the risk of side effects, addiction and sacrifice to health so commonly associated with pharmaceutical drugs. Contrary to common perception, and provided that they are manufactured in the correct way, natural medicines can work quickly and safely to

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In many cases, they can succeed where pharmaceutical drugs have failed. Despite frequent reports that they are 'unproven' and 'untested', the opposite is true. Natural medicines have a long history of usage and there is a wealth of empirical evidence to support their effectiveness and safety. In addition, active clinical research is carried out by many academic hospitals and universities to support the extensive traditional and empirical evidence behind natural medicines.

It is also important to know that, like any medicine, herbal and homeopathic medicines must be manufactured in the correct way, following acceptable procedures and manufacturing methods to ensure maximum effectiveness and safety. Due to the recent rise in popularity of natural remedies, many companies have sprung up to take advantage of the market. Unfortunately not all of them are equipped to manufacture to the correct standards, often resulting in a flood of inferior (and sometimes even unsafe) remedies onto the market – and giving natural remedies a bad name.

Even some pharmaceutical companies have rushed to claim their market share by producing so-called 'standardized' extracts of herbs and offering these as superior to the tried and tested methods of naturopathic manufacturing. Nothing could be further from the truth. While 'standardized' extracts may offer benefit of easy consistency of dosage (and cheaper more efficient production lines), they have grave disadvantages. These include an increase in side effects as the medicines produced in this manner lose the natural protective properties of the herbs. In some cases, these side effects have proved fatal – as was seen in the liver toxicity associated with standardized extracts of kava kava, a herb previously safely used for generations without any known side effects.

Most naturopaths recommend what is called the Full Spectrum Method of extraction – which retains the benefits of ALL the active ingredients within the herb as opposed to isolating only one – thereby providing a more complete treatment as well as superior protection against side effects.

Whatever your choice, always choose wisely. Research what is best for you. If you have a chronic or life threatening condition, don't make changes without first discussing them with your doctor in order that your condition may be monitored. Well informed and supportive practitioners will support patients who want to take responsibility for their own health.

In the treatment of depression, the following herbal and homeopathic remedies are often used as part of the treatment plan.

## **Related Natural Remedies:**

**Fatigue Fighter**: Helps maintain energy levels and feelings of well being, overall systemic and immune functioning.

**Fatigue Fighter** is a 100% safe, non-addictive, natural herbal remedy that can be used consistently to safely support **healthy energy levels**, **increase stamina and endurance**.

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thereby helping to maintain balanced metabolism, stamina, endurance and routine, healthy performance **without artificial stimulants or caffeine**. Fatigue Fighter can make all the difference, without compromising health and **without the risk of serious side effects**.

The formula remains true to the **whole spectrum method** of herbal extraction, ensuring the bio-availability and balance of all the active ingredients contained in the remedy. This method of manufacture also significantly reduces the likelihood of side effects and maintains all active ingredients in perfect balance – exactly as nature intended!

[Learn more about Fatigue Fighter](#)

**JointEase Plus:** Promotes joint and muscular-skeletal system health.

JointEase Plus means freedom to walk and move with ease!

JointEase Plus contains 100% pure Harpagophytum procumbens, also known as 'Sengaparile,' 'Devil's Claw' or 'Duiwelsklou', because of the claw-like shape of its fruit. For thousands of years, the Khoisan people of the Kalahari Desert (in Southern Africa) have used **Devil's Claw to promote healthy joints as well as for a digestive tonic**.

**Our new and even more powerful formula** now combines Devil's Claw with Glucosamine sulphate and Boswellia serata, both in the forefront of latest developments in the natural promotion of joint and muscle health.

[Learn more about JointEase Plus](#)

**High-Rite:** Helps maintain healthy blood pressure, artery clarity and functioning and heart health.

High-Rite is a 100% safe, non-addictive natural herbal remedy formulated by our team of natural health experts. High-Rite has been used for many years to safely **maintain health and systemic balance of the cardiovascular and circulatory systems**.

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High-Rite supports the healthy functioning of the cardiovascular system, thereby helping to **maintain balanced pressure of the blood on veins and arteries**, routine oxygenation of the blood to the heart muscle and pulse regulation.

The formula remains true to the **whole spectrum method**, ensuring the bio-availability and balance of all the active ingredients contained in the remedy. This method of manufacture also significantly reduces the likelihood of side effects and maintains all active ingredients in perfect balance – exactly as nature intended!

[Learn more about High-Rite](#)

**MindSoothe:** Promotes balanced mood and feelings, as well as healthy levels of serotonin and other neurotransmitters.

MindSoothe is a 100% safe, non-addictive, natural herbal remedy that has been especially formulated by a Clinical Psychologist for adults and teens, and comes in a compact capsule form, making it easy to take.

MindSoothe can be used to safely maintain emotional health, balanced mood and systemic harmony in the brain and nervous system, without harmful side effects.

This remedy contains a selection of herbs known for their calming and supportive function in maintaining brain and nervous system health, emotional balance and overall well-being.

[Learn more about MindSoothe](#)

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