



Dear Doctors,

My husband suffers from chronic lymphocytic leukemia and his immune system is very low. His blood count is good and he takes 2 chemo pills daily. What can I do to build his immune system?

That is a very good question. For those of you who do not know chronic lymphocytic leukemia or CLL, it's a genetic defect in a single lymphocyte cell which is one of the various kind of white blood cells in your body. This single cell multiplies prolifically and has a longer life span. It eventually reaches such high numbers that it throws your body's balance off resulting in:

- Patients tire more easily.
- They may feel short of breath when physically active.
- They may lose weight.
- They may experience frequent infections of the skin, lungs, kidneys or other sites.

Symptoms develop gradually and the treatment can lower concentrations of other types of white blood cells due to the immunosuppressive nature of the treatment. There is a school of thought that stimulating the immune system will lessen the potency of the treatments for the CLL, but I feel that this is not the case. Overall immunity is maintained by macrophages and natural killer cells which are other components of the white blood cell system. You could stimulate those portions of the immune system without stimulating the lymphocytes using herbs which specifically target certain components of the white blood cell system. Your husband could also use anti-bacterial and anti-viral to ensure he does not get sick. Items like essential oils and xylitol work well to make sure one does not get ill. Xylitol is interesting because it kills bacteria in the mouth and nasal passages that cause nasal infections, cavities, tooth slime and bad breath. Research has shown that chewing xylitol gum or spaying a xylitol solution in your nose can prevent sinus infections. Tastes sweet too! I talked about essential oils in my last column, but to recap; using 1-2 drops each of oregano, rosemary and thyme oil in 1-2 ounces of a carrier oil like almond or grape seed can be very useful to prevent illnesses when applied to the inside of your nasal passages or when rubbed on your chest.

Herbs which stimulate the natural killer cells and macrophages are coriolus versicolor or the turkey tail mushroom, astragalus and ligustrum. Astragalus also stimulates interferon which is a powerful component of the immune system as well. Stay away from shitake mushrooms and Echinacea as they stimulate lymphocytes, but for those without CLL, they are a fine addition to your diet or as a supplement to stimulate your immune system.

I would like to give dosages, but I hesitate because each manufacturer has their own potency and dosage. I always suggest to take the manufacturer's stated dosage on the package. You will need to go to a specialty health store to get some of these as they are not usually found in the drug stores or larger retailers. Hope that helps.

Yours in Health,  
Dr. Ervolino

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Contact Dr. Ervolino at  
[herbal\\_doc@hotmail.com](mailto:herbal_doc@hotmail.com)  
or 772-341-0326