

## **The Lymphatic & Immune Systems - Part 1**

Kristine Brown - Traditional Community Herbalist

### **What Do the Lymphatic & Immune System Consist of?**

The Lymphatic system consists of:

- lymph - fluid that resembles plasma but with much lower concentrations of proteins
- lymphatic vessels - a network that carries lymph from peripheral tissues to the venous system
- lymphoid organs - consist of lymph nodes, tonsils, thymus gland, spleen.
- lymphatic tissues - connective tissues dominated by lymphocytes.

The Immune system consists of:

- Bone marrow
  - White blood cells (lymphocytes & leukocytes)
- Spleen
- Thymus - T-cells mature; somewhat large in infants, grows until puberty then starts to slowly shrink and become replaced by fat with age
- Lymph nodes

### **What is the Function of the Lymphatic & Immune System?**

The Lymphatic system has 4 functions:

- The creation and circulation of lymphocytes
- Transporting immune cells to/from the lymph nodes
- Circulating fatty acids to the blood stream
- Removing interstitial fluids from tissues and circulating the fluid back into the blood stream

The Immune system protects against disease or other potentially damaging foreign bodies. When functioning properly, the immune system identifies a variety of threats, including bacteria, viruses and parasites and distinguishes them from the body's own healthy tissue.

### **Common Acute and Chronic Problems for Lymphatic & Immune System:**

Adenines	Allergies
Anaphylaxis	Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS)
Autoimmune disease	Cancer
Chronic fatigue syndrome	Common cold
Cytomegalovirus (CMV)	Epstein-Barr virus (EBV)
Hodgkin's lymphoma	Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)
Immune stress related disorders	Lethargy
Leukemia	Lowered resistance
Lymphocytopenia	Malnutrition
Mononucleosis	Multiple sclerosis

Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma  
 Pneumonia  
 Retrovirus  
 Sore throat  
 Swollen lymph nodes

Pneumocystic carinii  
 Recurring infections  
 Rheumatoid arthritis  
 Splenomegaly  
 Systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE)

### **Herbal Applications for the Lymphatic & Immune System:**

Extracts	Compresses
Teas	Oils
Oxymels	Massage

### **Herbs for the Immune & Lymphatic System:**

#### *Immune stimulants*

Black Pepper (*Piper nigrum*)  
 Boneset (*Eupatorium perfoliatum*)  
 Calendula (*Calendula officinalis*)  
 Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*)  
 Echinacea (*Echinacea spp.*)  
 Garlic (*Allium sativa*)  
 Goldenseal (*Hydrastis canadensis*)  
 Honeysuckle (*Lonicera spp.*)  
 Maitake (*Grifola frondosa*)  
 Motherwort (*Leonurus cardiaca*)  
 Spilanthes (*Acmella oleracea*)  
 Thuja (*Thuja occidentalis*)  
 Usnea (*Usnea spp.*)  
 Wild Indigo (*Baptisia tinctoria*)

#### *Immune suppressants*

Red Sage (*Salvia miltiorrhiza*)  
 Thunder God Vine (*Tripterygium wilfordii*)

#### *Immunomodulators*

Astragalus (*Astragalus membranaceus*)  
 Ashwagandha (*Withania somnifera*)  
 Elderberry (*Sambucus nigra*)  
 Eleuthero (*Eleutherococcus senticosus*)  
 Reishi (*Ganoderma spp.*)  
 Rhodiola (*Rhodiola rosea*)  
 Schisandra (*Schisandra chinensis*)  
 Shiitake (*Lentinus edodes*)  
 Tulsi (*Ocimum tenuiflorum*)

#### *Antihistamines*

Echinacea (*Echinacea spp.*)  
 Goldenrod (*Solidago spp.*)  
 Nettles (*Urtica dioica*)  
 New England Aster (*Symphotrichum novae-angliae*)  
 Osha\*\* (*Ligusticum porteri*)  
 Peach leaf (*Prunus persica*)  
 Plantain (*Plantago spp.*)  
 Ragweed (*Ambrosia spp.*)

#### *Lymphatics*

Burdock (*Arctium lappa*)  
 Cleavers (*Galium aparine*)  
 Ocotillo (*Fouquieria splendens*)  
 Poke (*Phytolacca americana*)  
 Red Root (*Ceanothus americanus*)  
 Violet (*Viola spp.*)

\*Use only under the care of a qualified herbalist

\*\*Use only cultivated sources

**Ways to Maintain Lymphatic & Immune System Health:**

- ~ Exercise. For sluggish lymph, movement helps to get it flowing again. Trampolines are great lymph movers.
- ~ Breathe in fresh air as often as possible
- ~ Laugh often. Take joy in life.
- ~ Decrease stress and increase stress reducing activities such as meditation, yoga, walking. Deep breathing increases lymph movement.
- ~ Get adequate sleep in a darkened room.
- ~ Avoid sugar, especially if you feel run down. As little as 8 teaspoons can decrease immune function by 50% for five hours.
- ~ Maintain healthy digestion. Use bitters with every meal. If you have digestive issues, try eliminating the most common culprits: gluten, dairy, corn, soy, etc. After 45 days, add them back one at a time and check your reaction.
- ~ Tone the immune system response using long term herbs such as Astragalus
- ~ Supplements to support the Lymphatic & Immune system: CoQ10, zinc, Quercetin, vitamin D3, vitamin C

**Recommended Herbal Books (\*indicates available through library loan system):***General Body System Information*

- ~ The Gift of Healing Herbs : Plant Medicines and Home Remedies for a Vibrantly Healthy Life by Robin Rose Bennett\*
- ~ The Herbal Handbook: A User's Guide to Medical Herbalism by David Hoffmann
- ~ Herbal Medicine From the Heart of the Earth by Sharon Tilgner, N.D.
- ~ The Authentic Herbal Healer by Holly Bellebuono
- ~ Holistic Anatomy by Pip Waller
- ~The Encyclopedia of Medicinal Plants by Andrew Chevallier\*
- ~The Complete Medicinal Herbal by Penelope Ody\*
- ~The Holistic Herbal by David Hoffmann\*
- ~ Medical Herbalism by David Hoffmann

*Lymphatic & Immune System Specific*

- ~ Rogers' School of Herbal Medicine Volume 11: Lymphatic System
- ~ Rogers' School of Herbal Medicine Volume 12: Immune System
- ~ The Healing Power of Echinacea & Goldenseal and Other Immune System Herbs by Paul Bergner

**Online Resources**

Love your lymph:

<http://www.motherearthliving.com/health-and-wellness/love-your-lymph.aspx>

Lymph massage:

[http://www.massagetherapy.com/articles/index.php/article\\_id/937/Lymph-Massage](http://www.massagetherapy.com/articles/index.php/article_id/937/Lymph-Massage)

David Hoffmann on lymph system:

[http://www.healthy.net/Health/Article/  
A Brief Overview of the Biological Immune system/1987](http://www.healthy.net/Health/Article/A_Brief_Overview_of_the_Biological_Immune_system/1987)

[http://www.healthy.net/Health/Article/The Immune System and its Specific Problems/  
1809](http://www.healthy.net/Health/Article/The_Immune_System_and_its_Specific_Problems/1809)

Christopher Hobbs on the immune system:

[http://www.christopherhobbs.com/webdocs/class-handouts/Immune-System-  
Overview.pdf](http://www.christopherhobbs.com/webdocs/class-handouts/Immune-System-Overview.pdf)

An excerpt from Paul Bergner's book:

[http://medherb.com/Therapeutics/Immune - Lymphatics and antibiotics.htm](http://medherb.com/Therapeutics/Immune_-_Lymphatics_and_antibiotics.htm)

Juliet Blankespoor on herbs for the immune system:

<http://chestnutherbs.com/herbs-for-the-immune-system/>

Angie Goodloe on food allergies and food sensitivities:

<http://herbalistpath.blogspot.com/2007/10/immediate-food-allergy-reactions-and.html>

7song on allergies:

<http://7song.com/files/Allergic%20Reactions-Herbalist's%20View.pdf>

Fire Cider eBook:

<http://www.herbalrootszine.com/fire-cider-ebook.pdf>

Article about spleen function:

[http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/04/science/04angier.html?\\_r=3](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/04/science/04angier.html?_r=3)

Cute video parody about the spleen function:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aEi\\_4Cyx4Uw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aEi_4Cyx4Uw)