



Avoid the Flu?

Not so fast...

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Avoid the flu? *Not so fast...*

We have been taught that germs are bad and they are lurking around every corner, waiting for the opportunity to invade defenseless humans. We go to great lengths to combat these potential invaders; we employ frequent hand-washing with copious amounts of soap and grimace at the thought of eating a morsel of food picked up from the floor. Doctors and the media discuss the flu season as though getting the flu is inevitable unless, of course, you get a flu shot. But similar to other unquestioningly accepted medical concepts, convincing us that humans have a frail immune system that must be strengthened by vaccines is a medical myth. A better understanding of the symbiotic relationship between humans and microbes is long overdue.

The immune system is the powerful interaction between white blood cells, antibodies, hormones, proteins, enzymes, and inflammatory molecules called cytokines. Together, they perform a complex dance, working flawlessly together to maintain health. Every moment, your body is exposed to trillions of microbes. They live on us, in us and on everything we touch. It has been estimated that more than 1000 species of bacteria live on our skin and we carry between 30 and 50 trillion microbes in our intestines.

Microbes that coexist with humans and animals are called **symbionts** – organisms we have developed a mutually beneficial relationship with and are part of the body's normal flora. Our primary immune system - specifically the [Toll-like receptors](#) and macrophages - recognizes foreign bacteria that are not part of our normal flora and effectively eliminates them. This process occurs thousands of times per day with little or no fanfare. Therefore, it is not likely the invasion of a foreign microbe that leads to symptoms we call the flu; it is the breakdown and contamination of the terrain that leads to the development flu-like symptoms - fever, cough and congestion.

One of the primary differences between conventional medical practitioners and those who embrace more holistic medical practices is in their interpretation of the Germ Theory of Disease, credited to Louis Pasteur. Because the Germ Theory is a hardened cornerstone in today's medicine, challenging its premise can generate a reaction somewhere between eye rolling-disdain and outright hostility. Pasteur's mechanistic idea of disease - finding the right cure (drug) for each germ – has led to the explosive growth of the pharmaceutical empire and its dominance over everything medical. It is most unfortunate that his premise was wholly embraced to the exclusion of all others. What was put forth as a theory has become dogma: bugs are bad and must be eliminated by drugs and vaccines.

Opposing the Germ Theory

By most historical accounts, Pasteur is considered one of the luminary heroes of mankind. Some of his discoveries were undoubtedly noteworthy. For example, his discovery of microorganisms was the groundwork for minimizing the spread of infection in hospitals and his work with rabies began the study of viruses. Pasteur also developed a process called "pasteurization," a method to heat and destroy microbes, supposedly without causing harm to food. The problem with milk pasteurization is that it not only kills bacteria, it also destroys the enzymes that important for overall health. The full debate over the benefits vs. harm of pasteurization is another topic, for another day.

Rewriting generally accepted medical dogma is a monumental task, especially when it involves taking a critical look at a premise set forth by someone with Pasteur's luminary stature. However, there is another view of microbes that challenges Pasteur's 150-year-old premise: Health is based on the condition of the body called **the terrain**, or its soil. Only when the terrain is unwell do pathogens set up shop and propagate.

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Notable physicians throughout the late 1800s and early 1900s engaged often vociferous arguments over the controversy: Was illness caused by germs or was illness the result of a contaminated, toxic terrain? The most vocal figures in this debate were Louis Pasteur and two of his contemporaries, Claude Bernard and Antoine de Béchamp. Both strong critics of Pasteur's work, it was Bernard — a physiologist considered to be the father of experimental medicine — made this statement amidst a group of physicians and scientists, ***"The terrain is everything; the germ is nothing."***

Bernard used a simple example: When a peach or an apple is sitting on a shelf, it remains intact. But when its skin is broken or bruised, microbes can gain access to the body of the fruit and it deteriorates. When the body is intact and has a well maintained terrain, it remains well.

What is little known is that throughout his career, Pasteur had doubts about his own assumptions. Pasteur and Bernard frequently debated whether germs produced disease or whether the body's resistance was more important. Pasteur placed more emphasis on the microbe, while Bernard focused more on the environment and the body's ability to maintain health. On his deathbed, Pasteur reportedly said, ***"Bernard avait raison. Le germe n'est rien, c'est le terrain qui est tout."*** (*"Bernard was right. The germ is nothing, the soil is everything."*) [i]

However, even in Pasteur's day, the germ theory had become so profitable that proponents of prescribing medicine dismissed his final confessions as nothing more than the ramblings of a dying man. The well thought out arguments put forth by Bernard and Béchamp are today called the **microbiome**. Their wisdom has been relegated to the pages of medical history instead of being the cornerstone of all wellness. Why? Because **the money is in the medicine — not health and being well.**

Stated another way, Bernard's view was that disease is an "inside-out job." When the body's physiological processes are contaminated by the toxicities we now commonly experience in our industrialized world - vaccines, pharmaceuticals, environmental chemicals, heavy metals, processed (GMO) food, pesticides (glyphosate), cigarette smoke, electro-magnetic fields, and more - the terrain becomes compromised. With progressive toxicity, our cells accumulate acidic waste.

Guyton's Textbook of Medical Physiology teaches that a normal pH, the balance between acid and alkaline, is one of the most important parameters for maintaining wellness. When cells become acidic, homeostasis is compromised and virtually all bodily functions are adversely affected. When the cells die, they need to be removed.

In a forest, healthy, intact trees thrive, but when a limb dies, it is an opportunity for bacteria, virus and parasites to invade. As contrary as it seems, germs are attracted to diseased tissues; they are not the primary cause of it.

A quote from Dr. Rudolph Virchow, the father of modern pathology, supports this idea:

*"If I could live my life over again, I would devote it to proving that germs seek their natural habitat - diseased tissue - rather than being the cause of diseased tissue; in other words, mosquitoes seek the stagnant water. They do not cause the pool **become stagnant.**"*

The symptoms generally described as the flu or pneumonia—fever, chills, cough, and excess mucous production—are actually secondary; the first illness was the loss of a healthy terrain.

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A Different View of Microbes

If, in fact, everything on earth is here for a reason, it may very well be that microbes are here to help humans detoxify. Instead of being the problem, what if viruses and bacteria are part of the solution? Perhaps pathogens are nature's cleanup crew, assisting the body to detoxify and clean out our clogged systems. It would be interesting to test the secretions expelled during a bout of "the flu." After all, the human race evolved because of its relationship to microbes, not in spite of it.

For example, if a person reportedly died from pneumonia, perhaps his body was trying to expel a huge amount of chemical containing mucous. If the person was too weak to muster an adequate response (fever) and his lymphatic channels were too congested to drain the accumulated debris — and more chemicals were added such as antipyretics, antibiotics, anti-inflammatories, and steroids — the body may have become overwhelmed, leading to the person's demise. The cause of death was blamed on the infection, but the real cause of death was the person's inability to detoxify.

This, of course, goes against completely against the current medical dogma that embraces suppressive medicine and harbors an unrealistic - and damaging - fear of fever.

Perhaps people who are seldom sick have a lower toxic load, i.e., they avoid refined foods, smoking, and alcohol. And instead, they eat mostly organic food, drink plenty of filtered water and detoxifying teas. They exercise and sweat regularly, get adequate sleep and purposefully support their body's detoxification pathways in the liver, the skin, the colon and the lymphatics by taking supportive supplements, such as elemental sulfur (MSM), N-acetyl cysteine (NAC), silymarin (milk thistle) and probiotics.

Stated in that way, it only makes sense the key to health lies within a robust terrain.

Make Friends with Microbes

Today, much is being written about the magnificence of the various human microbiomes, ecosystems of beneficial bacteria that are essential for our overall health and the health of our immune system. We're learning that microbes are handy to have around. Not only do they keep our pH in balance, to inflame the system and clean out the muck. Perhaps a good 'ol bout of the flu, with a fever and a hardy cough keeps us healthier by occasionally cleaning out the internal dross.

Instead of viewing every infection as the enemy, perhaps a better solution would be to support the body through its cleansing process with real food, plenty of purified water, Chinese herbs, and homeopathy, rather than suppressing the symptoms with Western medicine.

Detoxification is the key to overall, long-term health and longevity. Ever notice how much better you feel when you fully recover from a flu-bug after simply 'riding it out'? Perhaps it is time to develop a new respect for viruses and bacteria and embrace them as our friends. They may not be the bad guys after all.

[i] DeAngelo, LeAnna. *Germs On Our Mind: The Psychology of Contagion*, Washington: New Academia, 2005.

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