

Intolerance: Allergy vs. Toxicity

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Intolerance is a general term that means something is not tolerated, regardless of the cause. The usual causes of intolerance, especially of food and environment, are allergy and/or toxicity. Public awareness of these concerns fuel the expanding organic produce markets, sales of water filtration systems and resistance to vaccines, as a few examples. The chronic conditions that are “managed” but not solved by pharmaceutical agents often involve toxic and/or allergic factors. The reader should review the figure below.

Toxicity

A “toxin” is something that interferes with normal function, either temporarily or permanently. “The dose makes the poison” explains the science. Anything can become toxic in excess—including water, love and money. On the other hand, things that we think of as toxic, at low levels, can be innocuous, easily handled by our body’s detox mechanisms, or can even be therapeutic. Examples include arsenic, which we eat daily in minute amounts, and Botox toxin, which, while highly fatal in bad food, in micro-doses can turn off muscles that cause spasm, pain, double vision or other dysfunctions.

By definition, toxins block specific biochemical processes directly. Once the immune system is involved, we have “allergy”.

Allergy

Allergy implies a patterned, coordinated response of the immune system. Discussed in detail elsewhere, the immune system is a collection of cells and molecules that function in surveillance, defense and memory. It has several dimensions—one being innate (inborn) vs acquired (learned). Another dimension is whether the response is via molecules (antibodies, like bullets) or cells (T cells, like soldiers). The immune system acts like a roving mind, reporting to brain, gut, as well as liver and adrenal glands. “Psycho-neuro-immunology” is concept that connects mind, brain and immune system.

A triggering substance, whether it be pollen, peanuts or pets, evokes both bio-molecular and cellular cascades. Sometimes repeat exposures make allergies worse; sometimes better if in the context of “allergy shots” certain vaccines or homeopathy. With allergy, even a single molecule can act as a switch triggering an atomic bomb. In “autoimmune” diseases, the trigger moves from external agents to the body’s tissues, which are then attacked.

Physiological Responses

When triggered, the immune system releases histamine, with the patterned reactions of sneezing, itching, redness and congestion, and which can be partially mitigated by anti-histamines and steroids. If the trigger is a specific food, environment, or season, it is often identified and avoided. However, since there are thousands of molecules involved in this system, which can interact with the thousands of

substances that we are ingesting through food, water air and energy, many responses are difficult to pattern and decipher.

Toxic effects can look like any symptom. There can be both a toxic and allergic, multi-level or sequenced response to any substance or combinations. Reactions can be instantaneous or delayed by minutes to days to years. Toxins and allergens may never be felt directly while their accumulation and synergism can contribute over decades to the development of “dis-eases” and signs of “aging”. In “pseudo-allergy”, foods containing histamine or other substances can cause a reaction that looks like allergy but is really toxic and dose dependent.

If these responses continue, secondary effects on stress hormones, sleep, brain, liver, gut and related functions can ensue and persist, long after the initial exposure is over.

Evaluation & Treatment

When the body responds negatively, chronically and/ or episodically, holistic evaluations often lead to the search for toxins and allergens. Intolerance can be at the core of chronic conditions including cough, swelling, aches, fatigue, sleep disorder, stomach pain, IBS, thyroid and heart diseases, cancer, anxiety, autism, ADHD, and depression.

Due to the complex interactions discussed above, testing for single allergens or toxins may be expensive and inconclusive. Testing for toxins that accumulate deep in our bones and other tissues is limited by access and cost.

Working with a holistic practitioner who is skilled in the art and science of designing an “n of 1” experiment can help identify offending agents. Using the patient as his/her own control, factors are varied systematically while closely

monitoring subtle bodily clues such as rash, irritability, bowels, cycles and other functions, and their patterns. This process can enable the formulation of the optimal detox and immune-reset programs to yield long-standing improvements at a root-cause level.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

1. **This educational material may not be used to influence medical care without supervision by a licensed practitioner.**
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3. Dr. Cheikin's website has related articles and references such as “Allergy and Infection”, “Autoimmune Disease”, and others.

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