

NUTRITION



Nutrition Support of the Vagus

You Need the Truth and the Whole Truth

By Guy Schenker, DC

A DOMINANT THEME EMERGING from the chaotic realm of alternative health care is “strengthen the vagus nerve.” Be careful what you wish for.

Vagotonia (a strongly reactive parasympathetic nervous system) is a direct cause of asthma, mucous colitis, hypoglycemia, and some forms of chronic fatigue and depression. What you and your patients actually need is a strong but controlled reactivity of a balanced sympathetic-parasympathetic autonomic nervous system.

Here is a quick metabolic therapy test you can use to determine your patient’s need for any vagal or sympathetic nutrition intervention:

- Patients sit relaxed on the exam table in a position from which they can lie supine without first standing up or scooching along the table.
- Count the resting heart rate for 30 seconds.
- Patient lies supine, and at exactly the 30-second mark, you count the heart rate for 30 seconds a second time.
- If the 30-second heart rate drops between one and three beats (e.g., from 34 to 32), you likely have a perfectly capable vagus nerve in perfect balance with sympathetic reactivity.
- If the 30-second heart rate drops three beats (and definitely if it drops more than three), there are only two possibilities. The patient either has excess vagal activity or is suffering from thyroid insufficiency.
- If the supine heart rate does not drop, or even rises, then you likely have a vagus nerve being dominated by sympathetic (adrenergic) stress.

This clinical gem is so valuable because it is specific for sympathetic-parasympathetic balance. It is a constant physiological fact that when humans assume a supine posture, the parasympathetic nervous system activates and the sympathetic system deactivates. There is only one other metabolic dysregulation that can cause an excessive decline in supine heart rate, and that is low thyroid function.

Patients who show excess vagus reactivity need a blend of specific nutrients, such as phenylalanine, glutamine, glucosamine, and vitamin B5. Patients whose testing shows sympathetic stress need supplementation for adrenergic control, including arginine, betaine, niacin, and magnesium.

Dr. Guy Schenker, a Pennsylvania chiropractor since 1978, is the developer of the Nutri-Spec System of Clinical Nutrition, which eschews symptom-based nutrition in favor of individualized metabolic therapy. Nutri-Spec offers a stage of life diphasic nutrition plan (SOLID DNP), empowering each patient to live stronger longer. Contact Dr. Schenker at 800-736-4320, nutrispec@nutri-spec.net, or through the website nutri-spec.net.

References

1. Low PA, Benarroch EE. *Clinical Autonomic Disorders*. 3rd ed. Philadelphia: Wolters Kluwer/Lippincott Williams & Wilkins; 2008.