



Fighting Lyme Disease with Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy

Helen Prater

Lyme disease, first discovered in 1975, is an infectious illness transmitted by ticks. In the past decade, Lyme disease has spread across the nation and has increased in incidence some tenfold.

Early signs of Lyme disease include flu-like symptoms and, frequently, a Lyme rash. Although, once established, Lyme infection may produce muscle and joint pain, fatigue, swollen glands, fever, immune system dysfunction, nervous system abnormalities, cardiac problems, forgetfulness, sleep disorders, depression, and sensitivity to light and sound, to name a few.

Typically, if aggressive antibiotic therapy is initiated early in the course of the illness, successful treatment may be achieved. Unfortunately, many patients do not adequately respond to antibiotic therapy and essentially become incapacitated by this illness.

The medical community is often perplexed by the highly individual and complex nature of Lyme disease. Some people experience Lyme disease as a minor illness that appears to be easily treated with antibiotic therapy without any long-lasting complications. Others are not as fortunate.

When Lyme disease goes undetected, undiagnosed, and untreated for months or years following infection, the bacteria can spread to the nervous system, the heart and other organs, tendons, and joints. This late-stage infection can result in a wide variety of physical, emotional, and mental or cognitive symptoms. The late-stage list of symptoms is long and can include arthritis, heart abnormalities, Bell's palsy (paralysis of one or both sides of the face), and severe cognitive or mental dysfunction, including memory loss, confusion, and psychiatric problems.

Lyme disease is often referred to as the Great Pretender because the symptoms of Lyme disease can so closely mimic the symptoms of other diseases. Although no official numbers exist on this subject, Lyme patients have been misdiagnosed with chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia, multiple sclerosis, menopause, depression, Alzheimer's disease, and Lou Gehrig's disease. Other patients have failed to receive any kind of definitive diagnosis long after the presentation of symptoms.

New Hope for Sufferers

New and exciting research showing the efficacy of hyperbaric oxygen therapy now offers hope to patients crippled by chronic Lyme disease. Dr. William Fife, Ph.D., a Hyperbaric Medicine specialist at Texas A&M University, has published extensive research demonstrating

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profound improvements in chronic Lyme disease patients treated with HBO. Improvements include pain reduction, return of mental clarity, reduction of depression, and frequently, the ability to discontinue antibiotics.

What is HBOT?

Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy (HBOT) is a medical treatment approved by the FDA and AMA that delivers pure oxygen to the body in a highly pressurized environment, enhancing tissue levels of life-giving oxygen, thus increasing the body's natural healing process. Normally, oxygen is almost exclusively carried by red blood cells. During HBO therapy, all body fluids are infused with the healing benefits of this molecular oxygen. This promotes healing in less time and reduces chances of infection. It has been employed for more than three decades to treat a variety of medical conditions.

His study, completed at the Texas A&M Hyperbaric Laboratory, was approved by the University's review board. The results of the study were significant. Improvement (defined as a decrease, or the elimination, of symptoms) was shown in about 85 percent of the 66 patients treated.

It is also notable that all of the study's participants were veterans of antibiotic therapy. These were adults and children who had tried and failed antibiotic therapy, including the big gun in the antibiotic arsenal, intravenous antibiotics. It appeared that the study had chosen the most difficult subjects to test. These were Lyme patients with chronic symptoms, and most of them probably had

nothing to lose. The fact that 85 percent of these Lyme patients showed improvement seems remarkable. One reason HBO therapy shows so much promise for treating this disease is that it has been proven that the Lyme bacteria is debilitated in high oxygen environments.

During his research, Dr. Fife established the protocols for HBO treatment of Lyme disease. Two treatments a day, five days a week, is recommended. Each treatment lasts one hour. The total number of treatments given in each case varies. It is common to administer 30 to 60 treatments in the first phase of treatment. The question of further HBO therapy is then resolved after the patient's condition is reevaluated.

My research shows there has been an increase in both inquiries

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