

Nerve Tension



“Nerves” – meaning tension or emotional stress – are blamed for many health problems by both doctors and patients alike. There are many ways that this so-called diagnosis comes to the forefront; however, in most cases the connotation is incorrect.

The term “nerves” as correlated with tension, stress of any nature, and emotional problems should be eliminated from the vocabulary because it is very misleading. Of course there are many times when the actual nerve system does not function correctly and does cause a health problem. However, these involvements are not what people usually mean when they say, “my doctor says my stomach problem is due to ‘nerves’.”

By looking at the different ways the nerves become involved in health problems, we can understand much better the meaning behind the statement, “your problems are caused by your nerves.” The first two involvements of the nerve system are actually conditions where the nerves are involved on a direct basis. These are not conditions which are diagnosed as “just nerves,” but are diagnosed as specific entities with specific treatments and/or management.

Specific Nerve Imbalance

The only time to properly blame a condition on nerves is when there is actual, primary involvement of the nerve system. There are many examples of this, such as a nerve being irritated as it comes out of the small opening between the vertebrae of the spinal column. This could be complicated by an intervertebral disc actually pinching on a

nerve going down the leg. The real problem is in the spine; however the pain, numbness, and dysfunction are felt down in the leg. There are many other places the nerve can become directly irritated besides where it comes out of the spine. Nerves can be irritated as they travel through confining muscular areas, under ligamentous bands, over bony prominences, etc.

Diseases of the Nerve System

Of course a condition could be accurately classified as “nerves” when there is a disease process of the nerve system, such as tumors or degenerative processes.

Secondary Nerve Imbalance

The glandular system of the body has intricate mechanisms designed to make adaptational balance changes to nerve function. For example, when we become emotionally upset about something, the glandular system immediately makes changes to help solve the problem. The same nerve balance shift takes place when a considerable amount of heavy work must be done, or when chemicals invade our bodies by way of the environment, and with almost all types of emotional shifts. This glandular shift, which in turn changes the function of the nerve system, is a portion of the adaptation system within our bodies that makes us functioning humans, capable of solving problems, producing work, and continually adapting to our environment. Sometimes, because of structural distortions in the body, nutritional deficiency, or severe emotional shock, the glandular system gets off-balance and is unable to react to our changing environment. When this happens we cannot handle simple emotional stresses, work loads, or adverse environmental factors because the glandular system does not make the adaptations necessary for successful handling of the adverse conditions. In this case, an individual may over-react or under-react to an emotional stress, chemical stress, or physical stress.

Because this is not usually a disease process, it does not show up in the usual laboratory or physical examination, and can easily be missed by a knowledgeable, well-qualified doctor. Because the body does not react adequately to normal emotional and other forms of stress, the emotions and the resulting tensions and stresses are blamed as the cause of the health problem rather than the body’s inability to handle the stress. The key to correcting this condition is not tranquilization or other medication designed to over-ride the problem; rather, it is bringing the glandular system back to normal function. The treatment is usually nutritional support, nerve reflex activity to regain normal nerve control,

and elimination of as much emotional stress as possible during the rebuilding period.

“Nerve” (Tension) Problems Secondary to a Primary Health Problem

Doctors who work with natural health care frequently see patients who have had a previous diagnosis indicating the problem is “just nerves – you need to go home and relax.” Let’s look at a typical case and see why this diagnosis is so often made.

Mrs. Jones has had a problem with headaches for the past ten years. Over this period of time the headaches have progressively worsened. In the beginning, she controlled her headaches with over-the-counter patent medicines. When these medicines were no longer able to control the headaches, she sought a doctor’s advice and received stronger medications. After a period of utilization, this medication became ineffective in controlling her headaches. She sought the advice of another doctor. By this time she was under considerable tension because of headache pain. Anyone who’s had a headache for a couple of days in a row knows the irritable, tense feelings that develop – you can imagine the stress Mrs. Jones was under, having had the headache for ten years!

Finding no reason for the headache from examination, the new doctor suggested that they were “tension headaches” and that Mrs. Jones would have to get her nerves under control. Tranquilization was prescribed. Because the tranquilizer made Mrs. Jones tired all day, she sought the advice of a doctor specializing in natural health care. His examination showed a condition called suboccipital neuralgia as a result of muscles and vertebrae in the neck not functioning normally. Treatment of these structures eliminated the headache without the necessity of medication.

By the time Mrs. Jones saw the doctor who diagnosed her condition as “nervous tension” she actually did have considerable nervous tension. Who wouldn’t have, after ten years of constant headaches? In this case, looking at the nervous tension is looking at the effect, not at the cause.

It is almost a daily occurrence for the doctor dealing in natural health care to successfully treat a patient whose problems have previously been diagnosed as “nerves” or excessive tension. When the body is functioning in a normal, healthy manner, we are able to cope with the stresses of our interactions with other people and with our environment. If the actual cause of a health problem is not

diagnosed, and if treatments are directed toward the symptoms of the condition – such as tranquilization for “nerves” – the basic underlying condition is allowed to worsen. It may sometimes develop to a stage where it no longer can be corrected by natural health means.