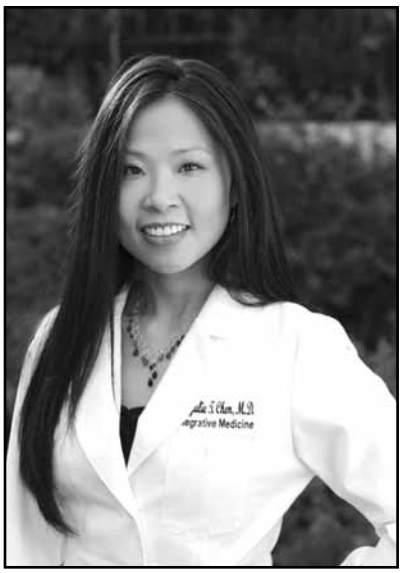

Dr. Julie

by Julie T. Chen, MD
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'Why Do I Feel So Tired and Achy?'

If there are two symptoms which I can say that I see the most in my clinic, they would be "fatigue" and "pain." It seems that no matter what initial presenting symptom the patient came in to see me for, be it thyroid disease, hair loss, weight gain, insomnia, or any other medley of complaints, inevitably during the review of symptoms, the patients usually come up positive for fatigue and pain of some sort.

In my patient population, when people come in with these two common symptoms, the cause is usually related to the endocrine system, autoimmune disease, adrenal fatigue, or major food sensitivities. So typically tests are done for all these categories and, fortunately, most of my patients seem to improve dramatically once we address these issues.

So imagine my surprise and frustration when one of these patients walked into my clinic, and after evaluation and treatment of these major categories, did not improve in her symptoms of fatigue and generalized muscle aches and pains.

First a bit about her history.

She is a 43-year-old Asian female who had been generally healthy her entire life until she started developing significant fatigue and myofascial pain with some occasional, seemingly transient feelings of numbness and tingling in her hands and feet about two years before she started seeing me. She had been seeing her primary-care doctor, but she was ruled out for heart disease, lung disease, thyroid disease, diabetes, and Addison's disease. She found me herself and decided that she needed to be evaluated for food sensitivities and vitamin levels. She also wanted to be treated with acupuncture to see if it might help her.

She reported that there was nothing out of the ordinary around the time of the onset of symptoms. She rather felt as though it just started to sneak up on her one day. She reported no foreign travel and no exposure to areas where she might have picked up parasites or obscure infections.

Since her history seemed relatively uneventful and benign, we started testing for some of the common causes of fatigue and nonspecific generalized pain in her body. During that time, she was also sent by her primary-care doctor to a neurologist and had a normal spine and brain MRI.

Her labs came back negative for thyroid disease and autoimmune disease, but she was positive for gluten and dairy sensitivity in her labs. She wanted to forgo heavy metal testing due to potential costs and because she didn't take any vitamins and said she wasn't exposed to any blatant sources of heavy metal. But she had prior lab testing two years ago showing that she had mild adrenal fatigue, so she wanted to go ahead with treatment now since the fatigue was getting worse. ➤

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