

## **Bartonella and Autism – A Common Stealth Infection**

If you are part of the larger autism community and are searching for answers, stealth infections like Bartonella, Lyme and Babesia may be one of your missing puzzle pieces. Luckily if you found this article via google and are vaguely aware of what Bartonella is then you are already ahead of most. I say that because there is very little awareness about these stealth infections that are often a co-infections with Lyme disease but can also manifest by themselves. In fact some people believe that Bartonella is the true causative agent when it comes to the symptoms associated with Lyme.

Unfortunately most cases of bartonellosis and stealth infections in general go undiagnosed partially due to lack of awareness and also due to testing which can be expensive and inaccurate. (An unfortunate combo) I believe that I find Bartonella related disorders more common in my practice than most other practitioners due to my extensive use of the manual muscle test in addition to traditional diagnosis. I do not use manual muscle testing as a definitive diagnosis, but rather a clinical correlation to how the patient presents and the best way to proceed. This gives me a head start for when and what lab tests are actually necessary.

Bartonella once diagnosed can take quite a while to eradicate as it prefers to become a chronic infection rather than an acute infection. Technically Bartonella organisms are considered intracellular parasites and given that they are intracellular and like to hide, it is difficult to treat them.

In common with Lyme disease and many other stealth infections, Bartonella can occur in anyone healthy or not, but appears to more easily reside in those with depressed or imbalanced immune systems. Almost all autistic individuals have an imbalanced immune system which will need to be addressed before, after or in conjunction with the treatment of detrimental organisms. Conditions such as allergies, dysbiosis, leaky gut, autoimmune disease or excessive stress (think excessive sensory stimulation) make those with autism more susceptible to infection. Once established, Bartonella begins to utilize the body's own tissues to hide from the immune system.

Before we go on to a list of symptoms of Bartonella, it is important to know that while Bartonella, Babesia and Burgdorferi are all common stealth infections, there are countless others that still go undetected. A stool analysis will not discover all potential pathogens that create biofilms or hide in the body via other mechanisms.

### **Symptoms of Bartonella**

Given its effect on multiple important systems in the body, Bartonella symptoms can be mild, severe or even fatal depending on the specific organism. Some of the more common symptoms are:

- Swollen lymph nodes
- Gastritis
- Sore sole of feet
- Muscle twitching

- Headaches
- Abdominal pain and discomfort
- Rashes
- Nodules in the extremities that are tender
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Anger
- OCD behaviors

Bartonella as a general rule is an infection primarily affecting the blood vessels, blood components and the bone marrow. Contrasting that to Lyme disease (*Borrelia Burgdorferi*) which although can be found in the same tissues, seems to most often reside outside of the vascular system. This is one reason in patients with suspected Lyme disease, Bartonellosis or Babesia infection, I consider it is important to consider factors that relate to red blood cells. (See below)

I believe that in autism, the primary concern regarding Bartonella and some of its detrimental effects is inflammation of the blood vessel walls. Some have reported tooth destruction and jawbone cavitations frequently associated with Bartonella infection. While only a correlation, experts have observed high incidences of root canals in those with Bartonella infection. Dysbiosis related to leaky gut is almost common knowledge these days, but many people do not know that dysbiosis occurs in the mouth as well as other areas of the body. Breath smell and the health of your teeth can be another indicator to observe on your path to recovery.

### **Is Bartonella Making You Crazy? (Psychological aspects)**

Emotions such as anxiety, depression, anger, OCD thought, OCD behavior, rage and even suicidal thoughts have been associated with Bartonella. If you are frequently around those with autism, many of those symptoms may sound familiar. As the blood vessels are infected in the nervous system and in the brain, processing of information becomes more difficult and patients feel an “overload” of information.

In the autistic patient this can present as anxiety or fear. Obviously in someone that has difficulty expressing emotion and conversing, this can easily be confused with sensory stimulation overload, but really the root underlying cause could be Bartonella. The point is that it may be partly the external environment, but also the internal environment that leads to altered behavioral responses and reactions in susceptible individuals.

### **Neurological Symptoms**

Given that autism has a large connection with the nervous system, symptoms that can appear in both autism and Bartonellosis include: antisocial behavior, mood swings, disorientation, hallucinations, bipolar disorder, combative behavior, rage, anger, OCD, depression, anxiety, impulsivity, agitation, panic disorder and general irritability. The unique part about these symptoms is that this is how they present in non-ASD patients and the additional complications of neuro-inflammation associated with autism could obviously escalate any individual symptom.

## **Co-Infections and the Immune System**

Bartonella specifically is known to cause immune suppression. With a depressed immune system, it makes co-infections more common and even critical when Bartonella. This is also one of the reasons why many clinicians state that frequent relapse can occur. This is not an immune system article, but if the major TH1 and TH2 systems are not in balance then the immune system may not be able to help fight off the infection regardless of the antibiotic or supplement used.

Bartonella has been identified as a common co-infection with Lyme disease. That being said, checking Bartonella, Babesia, Borrelia Burgdorferi and Mycoplasma using manual muscle testing as a clinical indicator can provide a more comprehensive and cost-sensitive approach to patients trying to discover these hidden infectious agents. In those with autism, treating the total microbial load is critical. In sensitive systems, the body can only handle so much, while eradicating all microbes and being perfectly 100% bad microbe-free may not be possible for anyone, decreasing the infectious load enough to allow the immune system to take over and balance itself out, is the goal.

## **Antibiotics**

Traditional medicine chooses antibiotics as the first line of defense in treating Bartonella. I argue that in a sensitive system, antibiotics are often contraindicated and if you have previously made gains in digestive health and leaky gut, then some or all of these gains can be lost and previous pathogens can be brought back to life. Speaking specifically to the autism community, I am aware that thousands of patients have seen enormous benefit from antibiotic therapy. I view this as a blessing. I am not against antibiotic therapy for specific conditions, but caution must be used as to not disrupt the gut, overburden the liver and further weaken the adrenals. Your doctor of choice should be able to assess the status of each of these systems prior to giving a blanket treatment. For these reasons I feel that natural antimicrobials should be the first line of defense. In addition, most autistic patients I consult with and/or treat have already tried at least a few rounds of antibiotic therapy and many still suffer from co-infections, stealth infections or just poor digestive health in general. In antibiotic resistant cases, I feel that natural antimicrobials work even better than antibiotics.

## **Blood – Complicated Bugs Need Complicated Approaches**

Recent clinical findings also have demonstrated the importance of coagulopathies (blood clotting) with regards to many chronic infections including Bartonella, Lyme, biofilms and other infections. Given that Bartonella commonly infects the lining of the blood vessels, proper blood coagulation must be checked in order to make sure that the blood is not too “thick”. Blood thinning agents can provide dramatic improvement but must be used with caution only under the supervision of a knowledgeable physician. As always, I prefer natural herbal anti-coagulators and blood thinners that are less aggressive than traditional medications. Many of these herbs are dose dependent and need to be prescribed carefully.

## **Supplementation – Medicinal Herbs and Oils**

I have had significant success treating co-infections, antibiotic resistant digestive issues and Bartonella specifically using high quality herbal products. I currently source most of my antimicrobial herbs and oils from Supreme Nutrition. My most commonly used supplements are Melia (Neem Leaf), Morinda (Noni berry), Golden Thread (Coptis Chinensis), BFB 1 (oil) and BFB 2 (oil). Other supplements that can be

used include goldenseal, oregano, garlic, uva-ursi, caprylic acid, undecyn and biocidin but I find these to help much less frequently than my top 5.

CAUTION: I have a distinct distaste for supplement marketing in today's world. Everyone has the miracle oil or pill that you should take. My list above is not the magic pill and I only sell them to patients (online or in-person), so I have no interest in recommending these products other than for the good of my patients. In fact, I do recommend most of Supreme Nutrition's products, but there are quite a few that I don't use at all. With autism, many times patients come in and have already tried natural herbs, antibiotics, oils, supplements, etc. The key in this situation is to match the correct herb with the correct organism to be eradicated in addition to taking into consideration your individual state of health. The best way to understand this is that if you need Vitamin A, no matter how much Vitamin D I give you, it won't fix your problem. Antimicrobials work the same way as most are somewhat broad spectrum, but each one has its strengths and weaknesses. In order to match the proper supplement with the microbe to be eradicated, I believe the best way is to utilize the manual muscle test. What this means is that in my office, I don't give the patient all 5 supplements, but rather most leave with 1 or 2 antimicrobials that are specific for what they need. If you need help finding a qualified practitioner, please don't hesitate to email me.

### **Conclusion**

Most doctors aren't going to look into bartonellosis for you and/or your child. Even fewer doctors know how to effectively treat Bartonella if they discover it. Bartonella and other chronic stealth infections can be something that creates constant low grade inflammation, makes you prone to other infections and creates many of the behavioral changes that are visualized in autism.

If you have additional questions, please email me at [drhoustonanderson@gmail.com](mailto:drhoustonanderson@gmail.com). I offer free 15-minute consultations to anyone either via phone, in-person or email. Thanks! ~Dr. A

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