

## *Module 6, Lesson 1 Handout:*

### **Doctors Who Treat Autoimmune Diseases**

One of the most frustrating things about having symptoms of an autoimmune disease is having no idea who to go to for help. There isn't one "autoimmune disease doctor office" where you can refer your clients. In general, you'll want to refer clients to a specialist who practices in the area where clients are experiencing their symptoms - so for example, a client with GI symptoms will want to start with a gastroenterologist. This is by no means a completely comprehensive list, but this will give you a place to start as you help these clients find relief.

**Dermatologist** - Clients who experience symptoms on their skin, hair or nails who may have a condition such as psoriasis and lupus will go to a dermatologist first.

**Endocrinologist** - If you suspect a hormonal imbalance or condition related to hormone function, such as diabetes or thyroid disease, refer the client to an endocrinologist.

**Gastroenterologist** - Clients experiencing symptoms related to the digestive system, such as those with suspected Celiac disease or inflammatory bowel disease will be referred here.

**Hematologist** - This is a doctor who treats diseases that affect blood and where you'll send a client if you suspect anemia or another blood related condition that may be linked to autoimmune disease.

**Nephrologist** - These doctors specialize in kidney problems and where you should send clients with suspected lupus or other conditions that may result in inflamed kidneys.

**Neurologist** - When a client presents with nerve related symptoms and is suspected to have an autoimmune condition such as multiple sclerosis, refer that client to a neurologist.

**Physiatrist** - A physiatrist works similarly to a physical therapist but is either an MD or DO. This type of physician can help clients who experience symptoms such as joint pain, stiffness, weakness and restricted body movement.

**Rheumatologist** - This is the go-to doctor for clients with arthritis and other rheumatic diseases, such as scleroderma and lupus.