
Module 6 Lesson 3

Transcript

Today I'm going to talk about common medications people take when they are living with autoimmune diseases. As with all our lessons on medications, only doctors will need to worry about prescribing, of course. The key here is for you to become familiar with different meds and have a general understanding of what they do and how they affect the body so you can be aware. The goal here is not to have you memorize the names of medications or how the dosing works. That's not for you. Rather, I want your takeaway to be that medications are going to come with side effects that you need to consider when you're creating plans for your clients. Some of them cause weight gain, others mess with the GI track or sleep. It's going to be really helpful in your planning to consider how meds are impacting your clients as you work with them.

In this lesson, we're going to go through common types of medications and discuss side effects and highlight the role that you can play in supporting clients on these medications. Let's start with a case study here. One of my clients was Josie. She suffered from psoriasis and when it flared up it was pretty bad. Most of the time Josie managed the chronic small patches of rash with topical creams and special soaps that we really didn't discuss much after her initial intake. But after a few times, Josie called me between appointments to tell me that her skin was really inflamed and her doctor was putting her on an oral steroid. Every time she's on oral prednisone, her skin improved, but her weight shot up about six pounds fast. She was really irritable and sleepless while taking the steroid as well. We found that we had to double down our efforts when she was on prednisone with a lot of extra meal prep, exercise, and sleep hygiene to get her through all of it.

She had to be uber-diligent. Eventually, we found Josie's skin flare ups decreased a lot after making dietary changes. She attributed most of the residual flare ups to stress and going off track with her foods. Her diet had previously been making a lot of her symptoms worse. Just knowing that Josie's medication gave her so many side effects was really helpful in all of our work together and I can't emphasize that point enough because a lot of times it's hard to make the connection that even though your client is doing great work, side effects from drugs can be very derailing.

Okay, I digress. Let's get back. Autoimmune medications. Here we go. So many of the inflammatory symptoms that come with autoimmune diseases are going to be managed with over the counter NSAIDs, nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs including Motrin and ibuprofen. Most people tolerate NSAIDs well but they can cause nausea, vomiting, constipation and diarrhea; and longterm use can also cause GI distress with things like bleeding and ulcers, but I don't adjust meal plans for people who are on this class of drugs. There are no short term side effects of these types

of painkillers and they can be an effective temporary tool. If someone is on a longer course of NSAIDs, I remind them to definitely check back with their doctor regularly to make sure that they're not experiencing hidden bleeding or ulcers.

Corticosteroids are also commonly prescribed. Most people will receive a course of prednisone which is an immunosuppressant. It may help fight the inflammation, but it also lowers resistance to other infections, so people should not be on corticosteroids for long periods of time. They can cause things like nausea, vomiting, and blood sugar control issues, and can interact with other drugs your client may be taking. So make sure they are properly informed and again, remind them to go talk to their doctor if they're not fully informed about their meds. I found some clients retain water and complain of bloating on prednisone. You may have heard that too. It's pretty common; though it is more anecdotal.

There are other classes of drugs that are outside of our scope of practice as well, but also important to familiarize yourself with. You can check out the handouts attached to this lesson so you can familiarize yourself with them. I want to make the quick point here that it's absolutely okay to tell your client that you're going to do some research on their medications for nutrition side effects. Nobody expects you to be a medicine dictionary and have every medication memorized. Doing your research also shows that you care. Because so many of these drugs are immunosuppressive, I also always double down on the importance of hand-washing, staying away from sick people and highly trafficked places. And if a client says she's been told she's at risk, I often educate on the importance of cooking foods to proper temperatures and may even suggest that this client avoids raw foods like fresh fruits and certain salads until their lab values put them out of risk completely.

As I prefaced in the beginning, you don't need to memorize all of these meds and their side effects. That's the doctor's job. Rather, identify what meds your client is taking during your intake session and ask them to let you know if they begin anything new while you're working together. Then, do some research on their meds and see what types of side effects are common: weight gain, nausea, any nutrient drug interactions, any foods they need to avoid. Then, work with the client to tailor their plan if needed.

Before we wrap up this lesson, let's do a quick refresher from today. Common drugs that people with autoimmune diseases may be on include nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, corticosteroids, and some others listed in a handout that I definitely want you to check out. Ask about medications during your intake session. This is super important and you can play a big role

here. Research the meds your client is on and adjust the plan as needed if there are any side effects or interactions that will affect their nutrition. I cannot wait to see you in the next lesson.