



History Taking: Medication, Supplements, and Environmental Exposures

Transcript

We are going to continue our Ninja History Taking skills by taking a look at what medications they are on and what supplements they are on.

Before we begin let's make sure that you are aware that any of the information I'm presenting here is not intended to replace a one-on-one relationship with a qualified healthcare professional. It's also not medical advice and when you are presenting to your clients you need to be really careful and make sure that they are aware that what you are presenting, and what I'm presenting here today, is intended as a sharing of my knowledge, information, clinical research and clinical experience over many years. I encourage you, and you should encourage your clients, to make their own healthcare decisions based upon your research and in partnership with a qualified healthcare professional. This is especially true for people who are on any medications. I just want to make sure that the things that we talk about in terms of nutrition are not going to interfere with the protocols.

It is really important to understand exactly **what medications and what supplements they are taking** for several reasons. You want to find out what interactions might be happening between the medications, the herbs, the foods, or between one medication and another. You want to find out what kind of side effects might be possible with these medications and/or supplements or herbs, so that you can see if some of the complaints that they have are actually medication or supplement side effects. We want to look at what are they taking, how often are they taking them, what time of day they take them, how long have they been taking them, is this something they had just been doing for the last few months or is this something they have been doing for a long time?

You want to look at what their doses are, what brands for supplements in particular but also for medications sometimes because some of the generics may have some extra excipients or additives or food colorings or allergens. What was the original reasons why they started taking this? Did a doctor prescribe it for a specific purpose? Was it something they started taking on their own because they read about it? When we talk medications we are talking prescriptions of course, but also any over-the-counters.



People tend to forget to tell you about the three or four ibuprofen they popped two or three times per week because of a headache or recurrent shoulder pain or whatever. Because it is so habitual and so normal they may not think it is necessary to tell you so it is really important for you to get that information.

You want to ask them if they notice any benefits. Have they improved as a result of taking this particular medication? Have they had any side effects? Have there been any symptoms that started to occur shortly after starting taking these medications or supplements and if they stop them do those particular symptoms go away? If they have not tried that before with over-the-counter medications or supplements, you can always advise them to try going a couple of days without and then reintroducing to see if those effects come back. If it is prescription it is a little bit trickier. You will have to have them work with their doctor.

Any recent past supplements? Sometimes they come in to see you figuring you are going to tell them what they should take so they stop everything and they say they are not taking anything. Or they have just recently stopped taking something because it was having a particular bad side effect, but they are not going to necessarily offer that information unless you specifically ask for it. You want to get a thorough past medication history. If a year ago they were taking high blood pressure medication and six months ago they were on an antibiotic or an anti-inflammatory, it is good to know these things because it fills in the gaps on what has been going on with this person and what kind of interventions have been taken.

It is really interesting when you start to do more and more of these histories with people, how little they tell you and how much they forget until you actually ask them, so it is important to ask in a way that nothing is missed. Let's take a look at our medication forms and spreadsheets. What I like to do is have people fill out a form that basically has several columns. It says the medication or supplement name, it has why they are taking it, their doses, and their timing, and when they started, when they stopped, and any noticeable changes with it. Let's have a look at this.

We have an Excel spreadsheet, we have a Word version and we have a PDF version. You are welcome to use them. I personally prefer to use the Excel version for a number of reasons. One is that you can easily manipulate cells, you can move them around, change the spacing, it can get very wide and expansive and when you print it if you want to print it you can actually shrink it down to a single page. Also I like to keep these little extra tabs at the bottom. You can put multiple worksheets within a workbook.



If you have an old supplement sheet you can keep track of it even if you are not working with it anymore or it is not the same medication sheet anymore, you can store it with the new one or you can put supporting information in a worksheet within the same workbook. This is our *Medication Sheet* and this is our *Supplement Sheet*. I also include my clients' and patients' diet diary within there. Not everyone fills out this particular form for the *Diet Diary*. Some have their own personal favorite but if they do I like to keep track of it right within this same spreadsheet and I can have these named and labeled. So *Diet Diary*, January 1, *Diet Diary* starting February 1, you can label them. Same thing with the supplements if they are changing that much, and the medications.

Let's have a look at the columns. The columns for the medications and supplements are very similar. Name the medications you currently take or have taken over the past several months, why did you take it, what is the dosage and the timing? Three 500 mg capsules three times a day, or one 500 mg first thing in the morning or last thing at night. You want them to specify that. If they don't when they fill this out you go ahead and verify that with them. You want to know when they started it. Approximate is fine because they don't necessarily remember the date they started if it has been several years, but you want to know if it has been a year, three years, five years, 10 years or just a two months. So approximate date of when they started. If they recently stopped it or while you are working with them they stop it, you want them to keep track of the date that they stopped it. Any reactions, positive or negative. I took this and the next day I felt like I was run over by a truck. Or, I took this and I finally got my first good night's sleep in a long time. You want to have them jot those things down.

For the supplements I believe it is exactly almost the same. I am a little bit more specific. Dose and form i.e. 3 drops, one 500 mg tablet, etc., frequency and timing, date started, date stopped and any reactions. What I like to do is keep track of what they are currently on and I will have it at the top of the spreadsheet. Say these are what they are currently on. If they take them off of a particular supplement I do not remove it from the chart, I just create a section called the supplements that we stopped or any other kinds of things that we do.

We may temporarily stop something so I will put that in a separate section and that is why it is really easy to grab these and copy and paste them down below. If we have a list of the stuff we stopped, the way I explain it to them is: in a couple of years you are kind of going through your supplements and you hear about this great new supplement. You check out your supplement lists and you find, yeah, I heard about that great new supplement two years ago and I took it and got a headache from it so I am not going to try it. It gives them a sense of keeping track.



I like to empower people to be in charge of their own health and to keep track of all of the different things they are doing that benefit their health and also the things that they are doing that do not benefit their health.

You can get very sophisticated with the medications and you can make it easier on people if you give them a list. What I have done with this one, actually this one is from a colleague, is there is the listing of antibiotic use, how often have you used it? We know from digestive knowledge of digestion that it is really important to understand the role of antibiotics in affecting gut flora and affecting your overall health, so how often are they taking them? Then you mark that down. How often are they taking steroids? Because similarly to antibiotics they have pretty severe effects.

Then I have a list of various medications here. They can click off any of them that they have taken over the last month; so this is a more of a recent history. You can do both. Check out the person. You can always ask them these questions and have a cheat sheet for yourself so you don't forget to ask anything when you are working on the medications: antibiotics, laxatives, thyroid medication, etc. You can ask them specifically. Then any allergies they had to medications, or supplements, and even foods, would be good to list there. There is another place to log supplements, which is similar to the other one but gives you a little bit of extra information. You have a PDF version as well because that way, if you do not have Word, it is not a problem.

Let's take a look at the environment and **how the environment influences their health**. The environment is a huge component of stress on a person's body and subsequently the kinds of symptoms they can manifest. You can overstress your detoxification mechanisms, not be able to cleanse and detoxify from the environment, and have a lot of health issues as a result. We are going to look at their inside environment, the outside environment, and their workplace environment. Let's have a look.

The online form is basically asking them questions about their environment, their workplace, how many hours do they work in an office building? Office buildings are known to be toxic. There is toxic air from lots of different sources. Are the lights fluorescent? Some people are especially sensitive to fluorescent light and fluorescent light is not the best for your brain. Do you use fluorescent lights at home? They tend to flicker and cause headaches, and a lot of other issues. How much time do you spend in front of a computer? Are they getting EMF exposure? How far away do they sit you may want to ask them as well. Do they live or work near high-power lines? Does their job require use of chemicals or pesticides?



Some of them may work in a nursery for example and may be required to handle fertilizers. Somebody who is an art teacher might be exposed to a lot of chemicals in the clay and paints that they use. I always ask them about the use of chemicals and fertilizers at home, do they store those, and are they exposed to those. I ask them about microwave use. How often do you use a microwave? Using a microwave a couple times per month is not a big deal but when they use it constantly every day for their food heating it really destroys and damages the molecular structure of the food.

I ask them how much time they spend watching TV. Again, it is the EMFs, and also the jittery brain waves that occur. It is known that children who watch a lot of TV will end up with attention issues and focus issues as a result of the constant moving and stimulation to the brain. How much time do they spend in the car? A lot of people are very sensitive to the gasoline fumes. I know people who actually carry a little mask with them when they go and fill up the car with gasoline. They immediately turn their car off even if they are waiting for someone to come in because the exhaust fumes get back in. It is probably good for all of us to do that, especially if you are really sensitive to that.

I ask them about habits like smoking, did they ever smoke, are they sensitive to smoke, are they sensitive to auto mobile fumes. We always want to know what kind of reactions they have. Do they have a flare up of symptoms in shopping malls. In shopping malls you are surrounded by all kinds of synthetic chemicals and preservatives, formaldehyde in the carpet and the various kinds of the VOCs in the paints. That is a tipoff that their problem is an environmental problem and it may have to do with their detoxification mechanisms. Maybe the liver is where you want to be looking.

Same thing with chemicals in the cleaning solutions and perfumes. Are their symptoms worse at a particular time of year? If so when is that? That could have to do with environmental allergens that come out. If there are specific rooms in their house... Oh yeah, every time I go into my bedroom I start to sneeze. Maybe there is some mold growing in the bedroom or maybe it is the new carpeting that was put in that is outgassing. Maybe it is paint in there or some other things that are being kept in there. It could even be clothing. Sometimes if you get polyester clothing it just radiates out this particular chemical smell and it is not good for you.

Is your home carpeted? Carpeting is important because if it is carpeted they may be exposed to lots of molds. Mold is very aggravating to the immune system. I remember when we first moved into this house my son, when he was two or three, started developing post-nasal drip. I thought, what is this about? What is going on?



I started investigating and got mold plates and placed them in the room. Sure enough there was a lot of mold. We ended up tearing up the carpet and putting in bamboo flooring and he never had the problem again. It was quite amazing.

Just simple things like that, you can have mold growing behind your refrigerator and that can be putting a taxing load on the immune system. These are really important questions to ask them whether you do it with a questionnaire like this or whether you just talk to them about it, important to do. If you are the type that just likes to talk to people and get this information out, you can have your forms in front of you to just remind you of all the questions that you want to ask and do your history that way. The point is not how you do it but that you do it, and you be very, very in-depth in trying to dig, because remember some of these people have been around the block a few times. They have been to many practitioners and they are trying to get somebody who is going to listen and dig to find those clues that nobody else has.

Pets are another issue; if they have pets, they could be allergic to the dander in the pets. Certain times of year the pets may shed more times than others and that may contribute to the seasonal type problem. You also want to ask, did their health issues come on after a particular incident like travel or moving to a home, death in the family, or toxic exposure on the job. This is really important to know. Then I have a table of products they use and whether or not it is organic, natural, or commercial. We look at all of the different things that they might be exposed to, their deodorant, their antiperspirants; you know the aluminum in antiperspirants, not a good idea. Some of the chemicals in the deodorants that you are putting in are clogging up your pores, your sweat glands, where toxins are supposed to be eliminated.

A lot of people use various powders and hair gels and moisturizers on their skin. The rule of thumb is if you cannot eat it, don't put it on your skin. You want to find out what those things are because the buildup of toxic exposure can be contributing to their health issues. Same thing with their personal care like shampoo, conditioner, soap, and shaving cream. Laundry soap is another one. You may have kids who develop rashes on certain parts of their body. You may want to investigate the laundry soap and encourage them to switch to the *Seventh Generation* or the hypoallergenic soaps.

Glue, some people actually use a lot of glue and they may not tell you a lot about this. It could be they may be sniffing fumes from the glue. Maybe that is part of their work or their hobby. They may be a carpenter or make a lot of little fine things and use a lot of that heavy-duty glue. Solvents, same thing.



If they are into something where they have to be cleaning up residues of oil-based products like for example oil paints, you need specific solvents to break that down. Especially if they are not careful about putting gloves on to protect their hands. These are all things that you can find out from them just by asking the question or giving them a questionnaire to fill out. Paint, varnishes, bleach, insect sprays, air fresheners, and gasoline. These are all things about which you can ask.

On the personal care products, you can ask, what kind of brands are you using? Are they using more natural brands like Aubrey's, Burt's Bees, and things like that, or are they using the Clairol's and commercial stuff that is loaded with fragrances and all sorts of chemicals that may not be serving them.

Let's take a look at our Word version. It is a little bit different but similar. There are tens of thousands of chemicals that are commercially produced in the United States alone. The long-term use of these has not been studied. We really want to look at what is your clients' patients' toxic exposure. Let's take a look at this. We want to look at what they're toxic load is so we know how to help them to avoid the toxic load and how to work with them within their systems, within their detoxification systems, to improve that.

Electromagnetic factors. This is important. If they live close to high-power lines, if the bed is too close to the main electrical current, say you have the fuse box and it is outside on the wall of your bedroom, there is too much electromagnetic by you when you are in bed for eight hours, hopefully, per night. A fan directly over your bed or at least your upper part of your body, not a good idea either because of the electromagnetics. If you have it towards the foot of the bed it is much better.

Having an alarm clock or radio too close, I keep mine about 3 feet away, ask them about that. How far away is that? Just give an idea about how far they should put it. There are all sorts of other things. Electric blankets, water beds, being near TV transmitters. Water beds because there is a heating element and the same thing with electric blankets. You are laying in the electromagnetic field. Working on a computer for longer than six hours per day is an electromagnetic stress on the body without a screen shield especially. You want to find out if they live near any cellular towers or radio towers. How about the use of microwave ovens? I actually went around with a gauss meter and stood in front of the microwave when it goes on. The readings went off the charts. Again, it even goes high with the *Vitamix*. When you turn on your blender to make a smoothie, step away because that electromagnetic force might not be good for you. Fluorescent lights, the same thing.



We want to look at their toxin exposure. I like this particular form because it breaks it down by specific types of chemicals. It is surprising where you will find some of these things. Like trichloroethylene, TCE, copier machine printing shops, decaf coffee, correction fluid, rug cleaners. Then you have disinfectants, carbonless paints, spot removers, cleaning supplies, metal degreasers, recreational painting like with some of the paints there are particular colors, especially the reds, tend to have more toxins in them.

Then there is formaldehyde. You would be shocked how much formaldehyde is in your environment. Dry cleaning, polyester, spray starch, foam wall insulation, particleboard, wallpaper that has been up in the last two years, foam cushions and mattresses, all of these can be outgassing formaldehyde. Ask them if they have had problems since moving into a particular home. That could be a clue that some of the environmental things are really key there. These are all questions--carpets, waxes, paints, stucco, you can read them all. These are all things that you want to find out about if they are exposed to for an exposure to formaldehyde. Then there is a list where you can find pesticides. There are the obvious places like tap water, nonorganic meats, things like that, fumigants, VOCs, which are in the paints in the walls so if they have had your home painted in the last two years, although now you can get no VOC paint at the local hardware store like Home Depot. I did that and be painted my office. It was amazing how quickly the smell dissipated within two hours. There are all sorts of things--propane, barbecuing, laser printers--all sorts of things that give off VOCs. You want to ask them about this.

This is a very detailed questionnaire. You may not want to go into this much detail with people unless if you are really suspecting. You can ask the more general questions but that if it is really a resistant case and you are really wondering about their overexposure in the environment or the fact that they are so environmentally sensitive, you may want to get at it. I do not use this particular form per se because it is so detailed and it takes them a long time to fill out but still it is a good thing to use. I use it when I have someone who is environmentally sensitive. I don't mean I do not use it, I mean I do not use it on everybody. But I get at different categories of exposures that they might have through my other form.

There is asbestos; again, the brands of the different products, latex, some people are sensitive to it but it also outgases, miscellaneous things like mold. This goes on and on and on. Looking at the bedroom; so if you get someone who is really environmentally sensitive these are all of the questions you want to ask. You may want to take a subset of this to ask the average person who walks in the door.



Back at our slide presentation, we'll just look at the summary of the environmental influences that are important. Their current exposures, their past exposures, what is in their garage (super important). What personal-care products do they use? What homecare products? What occupational exposures do they have? Any known chemical or environmental sensitivities that they have already. We looked at the environmental exposure forms and got an idea of the kinds of questions that you can ask. These are the categories and you may want to keep it simple and ask them questions within the framework of this as a starting point. Then as you get more in-depth with them and you feel like you need to, you can go into the more detailed questions, but I like to start with at least that online questionnaire.

That was it for *Medications And Supplements And The Environmental Exposures*.