

Autoimmune Support Toolkit

A calm, step-by-step plan for living well with an autoimmune condition: the right tests, the root causes worth looking for, and daily support for your whole body.

Prepared by MK Wellness · Cypress, TX · mkwellness.care · Updated October 2026



Take a breath. You don't have to do this all at once. Pick where you are below, and start with one step today.

A NOTE FROM DANI

Your body was designed to heal, and the terrain your immune system lives in can change.

An autoimmune diagnosis can feel overwhelming: new words, new medicines, and a body that doesn't feel like yours. It doesn't have to be the whole story. Your immune system responds to its terrain: your gut, your food, your stress, your sleep, your home, and old infections or exposures. This toolkit gathers what we've learned from specialists, functional medicine doctors, researchers, and people living well with autoimmunity, one step at a time.

You'll find mainstream care next to holistic and functional approaches, with honest labels on the research. Keep your specialist on your team, and add whole-body support around them. There's no single right path, only the one you choose with good information and people who listen.

How to use this toolkit

1. **Tell us where you are** (just below) to see your first six steps.
2. **Tick each box as you go.** Your checkmarks save on this phone or computer, so you can come back anytime.
3. **Bring your questions** to appointments: print them, or email them to yourself. Talk through anything new with your doctor before you start it.

Where to start

Just diagnosed or still searching

1. Start a simple symptom journal (step 1)
2. "Which antibodies were tested, and what do my results mean?" (step 2)
3. Ask about celiac testing before you go gluten-free (step 2)
4. Ask for a full thyroid panel, not just TSH: free T4, free T3, and thyroid antibodies (TPO and thyroglobulin antibodies) (step 2)
5. Ask to check key nutrients: vitamin D, B12, ferritin (your iron stores), magnesium, and zinc. (step 2)
6. Add a functional medicine practitioner (step 3)

In a flare

1. Call your doctor (step 8)
2. Never stop a prescribed medicine on your own (step 10)
3. Rest without guilt (step 8)
4. Keep food simple (step 8)
5. Write down what happened before the flare (step 8)
6. In a flare, choose the gentlest options (step 11)

Feeling steady

1. Try an elimination diet with guidance (step 4)
2. Remove gut irritants (step 5)
3. Check your home for mold (step 6)
4. See a biological dentist (step 6)
5. Protect your sleep (step 7)
6. Watch the trend, not one number (step 2)

What the research labels mean

STRONG National guidelines recommend it, based on many trials.

PROMISING Positive randomized or controlled human trials; still being confirmed.

EMERGING Early human data: small studies, case series, clinic data.

EXPERIMENTAL Lab and animal studies plus personal stories; human trials still needed.

The 13 steps

1

Get organized

A simple record of how you feel is one of the most powerful tools you have.

- ☐ **Start a simple symptom journal.** Each day, jot down energy, pain, sleep, digestion, skin, and mood. Patterns are often the first clue to what helps and what hurts.
- ☐ **Note possible triggers next to your symptoms:** foods, stress, poor sleep, illness, weather, travel, and where you are in your cycle.
- ☐ **Take photos of visible symptoms,** like rashes, swelling, or color changes in your fingers. Flares don't always show up on appointment day.
- ☐ **Put all your records in one free app.** Apps like Guava Health pull records from your patient portals into one place.
- ☐ **Keep a one-page summary** to bring to every appointment: diagnoses and dates, medicines and supplements, allergies, key lab results, and your care team's phone numbers.
- ☐ **Ask to record your visits:** "Do you mind if I record so I don't miss anything?" [QUESTION TO ASK](#)
- ☐ **Bring a helper** to big appointments, or have them join by phone, to take notes and ask follow-up questions.
- ☐ **Optional: let AI help you prepare.** A private project in Claude or ChatGPT can turn your journal into questions for your next visit. Cover ID numbers first, and confirm anything important with your doctor.

2

Get the right tests

The right labs can confirm a diagnosis, show how active things are, and point to root causes.

Autoimmune conditions can take a long time to diagnose, and many people see several doctors first. Keep asking until you have answers. Specific antibody tests help tell conditions apart, and functional labs can show what may be feeding inflammation.

- ☐ **Ask:** "Which antibodies were tested, and what do my results mean?" A positive ANA alone isn't a diagnosis; specific antibodies help tell conditions apart. [QUESTION TO ASK](#)
- ☐ **Ask about celiac testing before you go gluten-free.** The blood test only works while you are still eating gluten (Celiac Disease Foundation). [QUESTION TO ASK](#)

- ☐ **Ask for a full thyroid panel**, not just TSH: free T4, free T3, and thyroid antibodies (TPO and thyroglobulin antibodies). Hashimoto's is one of the most common autoimmune conditions, especially in women. Read thyroid labs for women. [QUESTION TO ASK](#)
- ☐ **Ask to check key nutrients:** vitamin D, B12, ferritin (your iron stores), magnesium, and zinc. [QUESTION TO ASK](#)
- ☐ **Track the inflammation markers** your doctor uses, like CRP and ESR.
- ☐ **Taking biotin?** It's in many hair, skin, and nail supplements. Tell your doctor and the lab before blood work; biotin can throw off thyroid and other test results (FDA).
- ☐ **Ask a functional practitioner about root-cause testing**, such as a comprehensive stool test, food sensitivity testing, or testing for chronic infections. [QUESTION TO ASK](#)
- ☐ **Watch the trend, not one number.** Keep every result, dated, and review how your labs and symptoms change over time.
- ☐ **Not getting answers? Ask for a referral or a second opinion.** It's okay to keep looking for a doctor who listens. [QUESTION TO ASK](#)

3

Build your whole team

Your specialist manages the condition. Your wider team supports the whole you.

Who	What they do	How to find one
Your specialist	Diagnoses and manages your condition: a rheumatologist, endocrinologist, neurologist, gastroenterologist, or dermatologist, depending on the condition	Your primary care doctor, or the foundations listed in "Free help and resources"
Functional medicine practitioner	Looks for root causes: gut health, food triggers, infections, toxins, hormones, and stress	IFM Find a Practitioner or the Natural Health Network directory (MK Wellness is a member)
Dietitian or nutritionist	Guides an elimination diet and reintroduction safely, so you don't miss nutrients	Ask for one experienced with autoimmune conditions or the Autoimmune Protocol (AIP)
Biological dentist	Comprehensive dental exam with a 3D cone beam scan for hidden infections	Natural Health Network directory or IAOMT
Counselor or therapist	Support for the stress and grief that can come with chronic illness, and for past trauma	Your doctor or insurance plan, or Psychology Today's directory
Physical therapist or trainer	Safe strength and movement that fits your joints and energy	Ask your specialist for a referral

Who	What they do	How to find one
Referring partner for MK clients	Medical questions and regenerative care	We refer our clients to Dr. Tina Hills, D.O., and her practice, PHMX, in Katy. Ask us to connect you
Supportive wellness, like MK	Comfort, circulation, calm, and recovery	MK Wellness, Cypress: (346) 805-8928

- ☐ **Add a functional medicine practitioner** who will look for root causes alongside your specialist. Find one through IFM or the Natural Health Network.

Questions for any practitioner

- ☐ "What do you think is driving my immune system, and how can we find out?" [QUESTION TO ASK](#)
- ☐ "What should I do if I flare, and when should I call you?" [QUESTION TO ASK](#)
- ☐ "What are the benefits and side effects of each medicine, and how will we know it's working?" [QUESTION TO ASK](#)
- ☐ "Will you support me in trying an elimination diet alongside my treatment?" [QUESTION TO ASK](#)
- ☐ "Will you share notes with my other practitioners?" [QUESTION TO ASK](#)

4 Calm inflammation with food

Food is the part of your terrain you shape three times a day.

Many people with autoimmune conditions feel better when they remove inflammatory foods and find their personal triggers. The goal isn't restriction forever. It's learning what your body loves and what it doesn't.

- ☐ **Cut the inflammatory basics:** added sugar, alcohol, seed oils (canola, soybean, corn, cottonseed, sunflower, safflower, grapeseed), refined flour, artificial dyes, and ultra-processed foods.
- ☐ **Build every plate around real food:** quality protein, lots of vegetables, and fruit, with healthy fats like olive oil and avocado. Choose organic and pasture-raised when you can, and wash produce well.
- ☐ **Lean Mediterranean.** For rheumatoid arthritis, the American College of Rheumatology recommends a Mediterranean-style diet in its 2022 guideline for exercise, diet, and integrative care. [PROMISING](#)
- ☐ **Try an elimination diet with guidance.** The Autoimmune Protocol (AIP) removes common trigger foods for a few weeks, then adds them back one at a time. In a small study of people with Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis, 11 of 15 reached clinical remission by week 6 on AIP alongside their usual care (Inflammatory Bowel Diseases, 2017). In women with Hashimoto's, AIP improved quality of life and symptoms (Cureus, 2019).

[EMERGING](#)

- ☐ **Add foods back one at a time**, and note how you feel in your journal. That's how you learn your personal triggers.
- ☐ **Thinking of going gluten-free? Test first.** Get tested for celiac disease before you cut out gluten (see "Get the right tests").
- ☐ **Add fermented foods slowly.** In a Stanford study, healthy adults who ate more fermented foods for 10 weeks had a more diverse microbiome and lower levels of 19 inflammatory proteins (Cell, 202100754-6)). Start with a forkful of sauerkraut or a spoonful of kefir. PROMISING
- ☐ **Living with MS? Learn about the Wahls Protocol.** In the WAVES trial of 87 people with relapsing-remitting MS, both the Wahls and Swank diets reduced fatigue and improved quality of life (2021). PROMISING
- ☐ **Drink clean, filtered water**, and keep a bottle with you.

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Repair the gut

A large share of your immune system lines your gut, so healing often starts there.

Functional medicine follows a simple order called the 5Rs: remove what irritates the gut, replace what helps digestion, reinoculate the good bacteria, repair the lining, and rebalance the rest of your life. Our gut repair guide walks through each one.

- ☐ **Remove gut irritants:** your food triggers, alcohol, and frequent NSAID pain relievers if your doctor agrees there's an alternative.
- ☐ **Ask about testing** for SIBO, parasites, yeast, or H. pylori if you have bloating, reflux, or irregular digestion. QUESTION TO ASK
- ☐ **Eat slowly, sitting down and relaxed.** Digestion starts in a calm nervous system.
- ☐ **Feed your good bacteria** with a variety of vegetables, fruit, and fiber, like garlic, onions, asparagus, and cooked-and-cooled potatoes and rice.
- ☐ **Ask before starting a probiotic** if you take immune-suppressing medicine. QUESTION TO ASK
- ☐ **Ask your practitioner about gut-lining support**, such as L-glutamine, zinc carnosine, collagen or bone broth, and omega-3s, and choose third-party tested brands. We carry Thorne L-Glutamine.

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Look for hidden triggers

Old infections, toxins, and stress can keep the immune system on high alert.

Infections and your mouth

- ☐ **Ask:** "Could an old infection, like Epstein-Barr virus, be part of my picture?" EBV is the virus behind mono. In a study that followed 10 million US military members, EBV infection raised the risk of MS 32-fold (Science, 2022). [QUESTION TO ASK](#)
- ☐ **See a biological dentist** for a comprehensive exam with a 3D cone beam (CBCT) scan, to look for hidden infections (cavitations), problem root canals, and mercury fillings. Read root canals, both sides.
- ☐ **Check your sleep and breathing.** Snoring or waking up tired can mean sleep apnea, which strains the whole body. A sleep study and an airway-focused dentist can check.

Your home

- ☐ **Check your home for mold,** especially after any water damage. Read mold illness.
- ☐ **Lower your toxin load:** filter your water, store food in glass, choose fragrance-free products, and buy organic for the most-sprayed produce. See our non-toxic home guide.

Your body and your life

- ☐ **Watch your hormones.** Symptoms can shift with your cycle, pregnancy, postpartum, and perimenopause. Track the pattern in your journal and share it with your doctor. Read perimenopause protocols.
- ☐ **Ask:** "Could any of my medicines be playing a role?" A few medicines can trigger lupus-like symptoms, for example. [QUESTION TO ASK](#)
- ☐ **Have breast implants or metal implants?** Read implant toxicity, both sides.
- ☐ **Name your stressors, past and present.** In the long-running ACE study, adults who had two or more hard childhood experiences were 70% to 100% more likely to be hospitalized for an autoimmune disease (Psychosomatic Medicine, 2009). A counselor who understands trauma can help.

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Calm your immune system every day

Sleep, movement, sunlight, and calm are free, and they matter.

- ☐ **Protect your sleep:** a consistent bedtime, a dark, cool room, and no screens the last hour.
- ☐ **Get morning light outside** without sunglasses, and build up sun time gradually, never burning. If you have lupus or light sensitivity, ask your doctor first.

- ☐ **Ask about vitamin D.** In the large VITAL trial, adults who took vitamin D for five years had 22% fewer new autoimmune diseases (BMJ, 2022). Test your level and ask what's right for you.

QUESTION TO ASK

PROMISING

- ☐ **Move every day, gently.** For rheumatoid arthritis, regular exercise is strongly recommended in national guidelines. In a trial of people with fibromyalgia, which often overlaps with autoimmunity, tai chi eased symptoms as much as or more than aerobic exercise (BMJ, 2018). **STRONG**

- ☐ **Practice one calming habit a day:** prayer, slow breathing, meditation, or time in nature. Read the nervous system reset.

- ☐ **Pace your energy.** On good days, don't overdo it, and plan rest before you need it.

- ☐ **Find your people.** A support group, online community, or friend who understands makes the hard days lighter.

- ☐ **If faith is part of your life, lean on it.** Prayer and community carry many people through.

- ☐ **Plan one thing you enjoy each week.** Joy is part of healing, not a reward after it.

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When you flare

Flares happen. A plan makes them less scary.

- ☐ **Call your doctor** if a flare is new, severe, or different from your usual, or if you have a fever, chest pain, trouble breathing, or new weakness or vision changes. For an emergency, call 911.
- ☐ **Write your flare plan now, while you feel well:** who to call, which medicines your doctor has approved, and what helps you rest.
- ☐ **Rest without guilt.** Cancel what you can, ask for help with meals and rides, and keep movement gentle.
- ☐ **Keep food simple:** soups, broths, cooked vegetables, and easy proteins you know agree with you.
- ☐ **Write down what happened before the flare:** foods, stress, sleep, illness, or travel. Patterns become clearer over time.

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The integrative toolbox

What helps with common symptoms, and what's on the cutting edge.

Symptom	What can help	Evidence
Joint pain and stiffness (rheumatoid arthritis)	Regular exercise; a Mediterranean-style diet	Strong / Promising

Symptom	What can help	Evidence
Fatigue (MS)	The Wahls or Swank diet; PEMF	Promising / Emerging
Widespread pain (fibromyalgia often overlaps)	Tai chi; gentle aerobic exercise	Promising
Gut symptoms	An elimination diet with reintroduction; fermented foods	Emerging / Promising
Stress, anxiety, and low mood	Mindfulness, counseling, yoga, and time outdoors	Strong

Sources: ACR 2022 rheumatoid arthritis guideline for exercise, diet, and integrative care, plus the studies linked in each step.

The cutting edge: therapies to ask about

These are the approaches we hear about most from clients and functional practitioners. Each works alongside your care, and each needs your team's input.

Low-dose naltrexone (LDN)

EMERGING

Prescribed at a small fraction of the usual dose, naltrexone may calm inflammation. In a small placebo-controlled trial in adults with Crohn's disease, 83% improved on LDN compared with 38% on placebo, and a 2018 Cochrane review called for larger trials (Cochrane, 2018). Many functional doctors also use it for Hashimoto's, MS, and fibromyalgia.

Good to know: Prescription and compounded, usually low cost. It blocks opioid pain medicines, so tell every doctor. Learn more at the LDN Research Trust.

Red light (photobiomodulation)

PROMISING

In a randomized, placebo-controlled trial of 43 people with Hashimoto's-related hypothyroidism, low-level laser light over the thyroid lowered the amount of thyroid medicine people needed over nine months and lowered thyroid antibodies (Lasers in Medical Science, 2013). Red light is also widely used for pain and recovery.

Good to know: That study used a medical laser over the thyroid, not a red light bed. Never change thyroid medicine on your own; your doctor adjusts it based on your labs.

PEMF and frequency therapies

EMERGING

Pulsed electromagnetic fields are used for pain, circulation, and recovery. In a placebo-controlled trial of 117 people with MS, a small wearable PEMF device eased fatigue and improved quality of life (2003).

Good to know: Not for people with pacemakers or other implanted electronic devices, or during pregnancy. MK offers PEMF and the BioCharger; see "Your MK protocol."

Curcumin and omega-3s

EMERGING

Curcumin (from turmeric) and omega-3 fats are two of the most studied anti-inflammatory supplements. In the VITAL trial, omega-3s also trended toward fewer new autoimmune diseases.

Good to know: Both can affect bleeding; ask first if you take blood thinners or have surgery coming. Choose third-party tested brands.

Regenerative care

EXPERIMENTAL

Stem cell and exosome therapies are an active area of research for autoimmune conditions, with results so far from small studies.

Good to know: For regenerative care, we refer our clients to Dr. Tina Hills, D.O., and her practice, PHMX. Ask us to connect you.

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Choose wisely

Holistic care is powerful when it works with your medical care.

Green flags

- Looks for root causes and explains the plan in plain words
- Coordinates with your specialist and shares notes
- Is honest about what the research shows
- Tracks progress with labs and how you feel

Pause and get a second opinion if

- Someone promises a cure
- You're told to stop your medicine on your own
- A costly program has no clear way to measure progress
- You're told to stop talking to your doctor

☐ **Never stop a prescribed medicine on your own,** especially steroids or thyroid medicine. Plan any change with your doctor.

☐ **Show your team every supplement.** Bring each bottle, or a photo of each label, to appointments.

☐ **Ask before "immune-boosting" herbs** like echinacea if you have an autoimmune condition or take immune-suppressing medicine. [QUESTION TO ASK](#)

☐ **Look up products** in MSK About Herbs, and choose third-party tested brands.

☐ **Change one thing at a time** when you can, so you know what helped.

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Your MK protocol

Gentle support for circulation, calm, sleep, and recovery, built around you.

MK Wellness is a non-medical wellness spa. Clients with autoimmune conditions often choose gentle therapies for comfort, circulation, sleep, and stress relief. Our services support wellbeing; they do not diagnose or treat any disease. See our Autoimmune Support protocol.

Good to know

Tell us about your condition, your medicines, and any heat or cold sensitivity, and share your MK protocol with your care team. We start gently and adjust as we learn what your body likes.

MK therapy	Good to know
PEMF and BioCharger	Implanted devices such as pacemakers or pumps, and pregnancy
Red light therapy	Lupus or light sensitivity, and light-sensitizing medicines
Mild hyperbaric oxygen	Ear and sinus pressure, lung conditions, and feeling closed in
Infrared sauna and HOCATT ozone sauna	Heat sensitivity: with MS, heat can temporarily bring back symptoms until you cool down (MSAA)
Dry cryo float	Raynaud's or cold sensitivity
Compression boots and lymphatic massage	Blood clot history, swelling, or open skin
Ceragem, Sound Lounge, and Zero Gravity chair	Comfort and calm; usually the gentlest starting point

- ☐ **Book a free tour or a first visit**, and we'll build a gentle protocol with you. Call or text (346) 805-8928.
- ☐ **In a flare, choose the gentlest options**, like the Zero Gravity chair, Ceragem, or the Sound Lounge, and keep sessions short.
- ☐ **Share your MK protocol with your care team.**
- ☐ **Tell us at each visit** if you're flaring or your medicines change, and stay home if you have a fever or infection, especially on immune-suppressing medicine.

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Free help and resources

You don't have to figure this out alone.

Who	Helps with	Contact
Autoimmune Association	Education and support for all autoimmune conditions	autoimmune.org
Global Autoimmune Institute	Research-based education and patient resources	autoimmuneinstitute.org
National MS Society	MS Navigators for information, resources, and support	1-800-344-4867
Arthritis Foundation	Helpline with social workers for rheumatoid arthritis and related conditions	1-844-571-HELP (4357)

Who	Helps with	Contact
Crohn's & Colitis Foundation	The IBD Help Center	888-MY-GUT-PAIN (888-694-8872)
Lupus Foundation of America	Education and support for lupus	lupus.org
American Thyroid Association	Patient information and finding a thyroid specialist	thyroid.org
Celiac Disease Foundation	Testing, gluten-free living, and support	celiac.org
IFM Find a Practitioner	Functional medicine practitioners near you	ifm.org/find-a-practitioner
Natural Health Network	Holistic practitioners near you	naturalhealthnetwork.org

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Voices we learn from

Doctors, researchers, and people living with autoimmunity whose work shaped this toolkit.

Their stories and research are powerful. Each is one path, not a plan for you, so share what resonates with your team.

Dr. Terry Wahls, MD

Physician living with MS

A clinical professor of medicine at the University of Iowa, she used a tilt-recline wheelchair for four years with secondary progressive MS, then returned to walking and biking after redesigning her diet and lifestyle. She now runs clinical trials of her approach. Author of *The Wahls Protocol*. Her recovery is her personal story.

Dr. Amy Myers, MD

Functional medicine physician

After her own Graves' disease, she built a root-cause program for autoimmunity centered on the gut, food, toxins, infections, and stress. Author of *The Autoimmune Solution*.

Dr. Alessio Fasano, MD

Pediatric gastroenterologist and researcher, Mass General and Harvard

His team discovered zonulin, a protein that loosens the gut barrier, and his research helped show how a leaky gut can open the door to autoimmunity. Co-author of *Gut Feelings*.

Dr. Sarah Ballantyne, PhD

Medical biophysicist

Author of *The Paleo Approach*, the foundational book on the Autoimmune Protocol (AIP), and a leading voice on nutrient density for autoimmune health.

Izabella Wentz, PharmD**Pharmacist living with Hashimoto's**

Author of *Hashimoto's Protocol*, focused on finding each person's thyroid triggers, from food and nutrients to stress and infections.

Dr. Mark Hyman, MD**Functional medicine leader**

Helped bring functional medicine's root-cause approach to millions. His books and podcast often cover autoimmunity, gut health, and food as medicine.

Books to explore

- *The Wahls Protocol* by Dr. Terry Wahls
- *The Autoimmune Solution* by Dr. Amy Myers
- *The Paleo Approach* by Dr. Sarah Ballantyne
- *Hashimoto's Protocol* by Izabella Wentz
- *The Immune System Recovery Plan* by Dr. Susan Blum
- *Gut Feelings* by Dr. Alessio Fasano and Susie Flaherty
- *The Autoimmune Epidemic* by Donna Jackson Nakazawa

We're in your corner.

Questions about this toolkit, or want help building your MK protocol? Call or text us. We're happy to talk it through.

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Important. MK Wellness provides wellness services for comfort and quality of life. We do not diagnose, treat, or cure any autoimmune condition or disease. This toolkit is educational, shares information about approaches at different stages of research, and does not replace advice from your doctors. It deliberately includes no doses or protocols. Never stop or change a prescribed medicine without your doctor. Mention of a person, book, or program is not an endorsement of every claim they make. Resource details can change; confirm with each program. MK Wellness and PHMX are two separate, independent businesses.