Basic Description
An autoimmune disease develops when your immune system, which defends your body against disease, decides your healthy cells are foreign. As a result, your immune system attacks healthy cells.

Symptoms
Because there are so many different types of autoimmune disease, the symptoms vary, even within the same type. Some of the more common symptoms are fatigue, fever, and general malaise (feeling ill). Symptoms worsen during flare-ups and lessen during remission.
Autoimmune diseases affect many parts of the body. The most common organs and tissue affected are:
- joints
- muscles
- skin
- red blood cells
- blood vessels
- connective tissue
- endocrine glands

If you are experiencing any of these symptoms, especially a combination of several of them, you may have an autoimmune disease.

1. Joint pain, muscle pain or weakness or a tremor
2. Weight loss, insomnia, heat intolerance or rapid heartbeat
3. Recurrent rashes or hives, sun-sensitivity, a butterfly-shaped rash across your nose and cheeks.
4. Difficulty concentrating or focusing
5. Feeling tired or fatigued, weight gain or cold intolerance
6. Hair loss or white patches on your skin or inside your mouth
7. Abdominal pain, blood or mucus in your stool, diarrhea or mouth ulcers
8. Dry eyes, mouth or skin
9. Numbness or tingling in the hands or feet
10. Multiple miscarriages or blood clots

Linked to a variety of Diseases
The following are some of the more common autoimmune diseases:
- rheumatoid arthritis: inflammation of joints and surrounding tissues
- systemic lupus erythematosus: affects skin, joints, kidneys, brain, and other organs
- celiac sprue disease: a reaction to gluten (found in wheat, rye, and barley) that causes damage to the lining of the small intestine
- pernicious anemia: decrease in red blood cells caused by inability to absorb vitamin B-12
- vitiligo: white patches on the skin caused by loss of pigment
- scleroderma: a connective tissue disease that causes changes in skin, blood vessels, muscles, and internal organs
- psoriasis: a skin condition that causes redness and irritation as well as thick, flaky, silver-white patches
- inflammatory bowel diseases: a group of inflammatory diseases of the colon and small intestine
- Hashimoto’s disease: inflammation of the thyroid gland
- Addison’s disease: adrenal hormone insufficiency
- Graves’ disease: overactive thyroid gland
reactive arthritis: inflammation of joints, urethra, and eyes; may cause sores on the skin and mucus membranes

Sjögren’s syndrome: destroys the glands that produce tears and saliva causing dry eyes and mouth; may affect kidneys and lungs

type 1 diabetes: destruction of insulin producing cells in the pancreas

What causes autoimmune diseases?
There are many underlying factors that can cause people to develop an autoimmune condition. One thing that seems to be consistent is that there is an underlying genetic component. We still don’t understand how these genes get activated. There are many theories about what triggers these diseases including:

- toxins from heavy metals like mercury
- mycotoxins from molds
- infections like Candida, Epstein-Barr and the herpes simplex virus
- chronic inflammation tied to food sensitivities — particularly gluten

What should you do if you suspect you have an autoimmune disease?
If you feel that you have an autoimmune disease you should get tested by your doctor. It is important to have a full understanding of what you are dealing with. It can be hard to diagnose because the symptoms vary so much. There are many things to consider including: family history, blood tests, medical history. Your doctor can also advise you on risk factors, food sensitivities and may refer you to other specialists. If you test positive for an autoimmune disease, your doctor with likely prescribe medications such as anti-inflammatory drugs, steroids, or immunosuppressant’s. These may help decrease current symptoms, but do nothing to address the underlying cause of the disease and some even have side effects and risks.

How to Help
Autoimmune diseases are chronic and complicated and believed to have no cure. However there are many things you can do to help your body combat flare-ups, degeneration and symptoms:

- eat a balanced and healthy diet
- exercise regularly
- get plenty of rest
- take vitamin supplements / herbs
- decrease stress
- limit sun exposure
- avoid any known triggers of flare-ups
- physical therapy

Dietary Changes
Because reactions to foods and environmental toxins seem to be major contributing factors altering your diet can improve things significantly. Here are some ideas:

Avoid gluten! This protein found in grains and some other foods, is linked to many autoimmune conditions. You can try going gluten free for 30 days and see how it affects you.

There are other foods that can cause reactions, but they vary and it is up to you to be aware of how your diet is affecting your health and symptoms. You may want to become familiar with some of the diets developed for autoimmune disease, you can find them online or in books. Most of them have the common thread of being an adjusted version of the Paleo Diet.
Add green tea and turmeric into your diet. These foods have been shown to dampen the autoimmune response in the body, especially the brain.

**Make detoxification a regular practice**
People with autoimmune conditions can also have altered detoxification pathways, so helping your body on a daily basis to remove toxins is a good idea for people with autoimmune conditions. Eating a variety of green leafy vegetables like kale and spinach and avoiding sugar and processed foods will aid your body in many different ways.

**Leaky Gut**
Leaky Gut is a major factor in healing. Some people even think you can reverse autoimmune conditions by healing the “Leaky Gut” (see our website for outline and recording of the Leaky Gut training call).

**Essential Oils**
Lavender, Bergamot, Chamomile (Roman and German), Clary Sage, Cedar Wood, Clary Sage, Frankincense, May Chang, Orange, Rose, Rosewood, Tangerine

**Things to consider when performing Foot Zone Therapy on someone with an autoimmune disease:**
- In administering a zone treatment you are opening up the body’s communication and reminding it how to function healthily
- Use the chronic disease schedule
- Remember that your client will likely have extra tender feet
- Pay special attention when treating these areas: Hormone Balance, Solar Plexus, Chakra Balance, Stomach and Digestive System, Lymph Drainage
Specialized Treatment Schedules

Schedule for CHRONIC DISEASE
1. Friday
2. Saturday—8 days later
3. Thursday—12 days later
4. Monday—11 days later
5. Tuesday—8 days later
6. Wednesday—8 days later
7. Sunday—11 days later
8. Friday—12 days later
This schedule will help bring the glands back to normal function.

Schedule for ACUTE DISTURBANCES in the Glandular System
If the first treatment is given on a
1. Monday,
2. Tuesday - 1 day later
3. Wednesday - 1 day later
4. Sunday – 4 days later
5. Friday – 5 days later
6. Saturday - 1 day later
7. Thursday - 5 days later
8. Monday – 4 days later
This treatment schedule may be repeated, monthly but be sure to alter the start day so that the treatments can be rotated on different days.