

## The meningitis connection

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He was seven months old and having grand mal seizures as I sped into the emergency room at St. Paul Children's Hospital. The diagnosis was meningitis and we were told if everything went all right he should be able to go home in three to five days. Things did not go all right. He developed hydrocephalus and was left permanently physically and mentally disabled.

His stay at St. Paul Children's Hospital ended up being 41 days in pediatric intensive care. Trust me, you never want to be there with your child or anyone else that you love. It was an open ward with tiny little bed after tiny little bed and all the occupants fighting for their lives.

Over the six weeks that I was at the hospital, I met three other fathers who had their sons in there with meningitis. The odd thing about this was that each of these men had also had meningitis when they were children. When I was nine years old, I remember having a fever and lying on a couch watching, "Death Valley Days" starring Ronald Reagan. The next thing I knew, I woke up in the local hospital. Over the next three days, I received approximately 30 injections of penicillin. Things went well for me, and I got to go home. A little girl in the neighboring town was not so lucky, and she passed away.

I had the opportunity to speak with the head pediatrician about this father/son connection and the meningitis. While studying meningitis in chiropractic college, there was no mention of genetic or familial relationship as it relates to meningitis. This wonderful doctor said that there was no research to state a connection and it was just a coincidence. I remember thinking that was one heck of a coincidence!

Thirty years later I am on my elliptical machine, my son who had had meningitis, is on a treadmill next to me, and I am listening to a lecture from Dr. Thomas O'Brien as it relates to gluten-related health issues. All of a sudden, Dr. O'Brien makes the comment that gluten can cause a problem with the serum transglutaminase in our bloodstream, which has an affinity for weakening the blood brain barrier. It took me about 10 seconds to go, "What did he just say?"

So if gluten sensitivity can cause a weakness in the blood brain barrier (which can allow a pathogen to pass out of our bloodstream and into the cerebral spinal fluid thus causing meningitis), and if both my son and I can be tested to see if we have serum transglutaminase in our bloodstream, that may be the answer to the connection I was looking for 30 years ago. At that time we simply did not have the ability to test for or make the connection to this situation.

When the Cyrex labs blood test came back positive for serum transglutaminase in both my son and me, it was an amazing finding, one which will demand serious research and study. Can you imagine the application of this finding should the research findings be consistent as it relates to the prevention of meningitis?