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FALL 2012

WHAT'S HAPPENING

This month we are excited to introduce two new services offered at the clinic as well as update you on our new clinic hours. All the changes we make are aimed at providing the best customer service we can while maintaining an efficient business. We welcome your feedback on how well we are achieving this goal!

We will start with a short piece on gastroenteritis, prompted by the recent food recall due to *E. coli* contamination.

GASTROENTERITIS

WHAT IS IT?

Gastroenteritis has commonly been referred to as 'stomach flu', or food poisoning (however there is no relation to the seasonal flu caused by the influenza virus). The term technically refers to any inflammation of the stomach or intestines, however the main sign is diarrhea, often with nausea and vomiting and possibly pain or cramping. Gastroenteritis is usually infectious in nature and may have a viral, bacterial or parasitic cause. The most common viruses include the norovirus (most common in adults – think Norwalk) and rotavirus (most common in children). Bacterial causes may include *E. coli*, *Salmonella*, *Shigella*, *C. difficile*, or *Staph aureus*. Parasites are less common causes in

the developed world, the more common ones being *Giardia*, *Chryptosporidium*.

A definitive diagnosis usually can't be given without stool testing, however some generalities may help to differentiate the different causes.

Viral: main symptom is vomiting, the apparent incubation (the time it takes for symptoms to appear from the suspected exposure) is over 14 hours, and when the entire illness is over quickly (often less than 3 days).

Bacterial: high fever, bloody diarrhea, severe abdominal pain, and more than 6 stools in a 24 hour period.

Parasitic: not usually suspected unless the illness has been present up to 2 weeks.

Many of the symptoms in gastroenteritis are caused by toxins produced by the offending organism. Food poisoning technically occurs when food already containing pre-formed toxin is ingested – this can result in rapid onset of symptoms from the time of ingesting the food (i.e. within several hours).

TREATMENT AND PREVENTION

Regardless of the infecting agent, the first step of naturopathic and conventional treatment is to ensure adequate hydration. Fluids are lost through diarrhea and vomiting and must be replaced. Water can be used, but often electrolytes must also be added. This can be done with pre-mixed electrolyte solutions, or a simple home made solution may be composed of 1 level teaspoon of salt

and 4 heaping teaspoons of sugar added to 1 liter of water. In severe dehydration intravenous fluids may be required. Some signs of severe dehydration include extreme thirst, lack of sweating or urination, shriveled skin and rapid heart beat among others. If any of these signs are present, seek immediate medical attention.

Conventionally, rehydration is often the only treatment given, as most cases of gastroenteritis are self limited and will run their course within a few days to a week depending on the cause. In certain bacterial cases antibiotics may be used, however in some instances the antibiotics may even be harmful. Antibiotics are of no use in suspected or confirmed viral cases.

Naturopathic treatment will often utilize probiotics, which have been demonstrated to shorten the duration and reduce the severity of symptoms in gastroenteritis. The dosage and strain will depend on the age of the patient and the suspected infecting agent. Probiotics can also play a role in preventing and treating antibiotic associated diarrhea (a type of gastroenteritis brought on by antibiotic use which causes an imbalance in the natural flora of the gut, allowing an infection to develop). Zinc may also have some benefit in gastroenteritis treatment, but the greater benefit is in malnourished populations to prevent its development.

Homeopathic treatment is also a strong option, with many individual remedies being useful for various presentations of vomiting and diarrhea. Common remedies include *arsenicum album* and *nux vomica*, however, as with all homeopathic treatment, matching each specific case with a specific remedy provides better outcomes.

Botanical treatment also has much to offer and may focus on anti-microbial herbs, immune modulating herbs or demulcent/healing herbs as appropriate.

As with most illnesses, maintaining general health is the best prevention. Focus on eating a variety of fruits and vegetables, whole

grains and adequate protein while avoiding processed (boxed, canned etc.) foods which are high in sugar, salt, additives and preservatives. Physical activity is another important determinant of health – if your job is not physical (which for most of us it isn't), aiming for 30 minutes of activity 5-7 days a week should be a constant goal.

FOOD SAFETY

Specifically related to gastroenteritis, general guidelines for safe food preparation and handling safety are important to follow. While a strong immune system is the best defense, it would be unwise to ignore food safety. The basics include:

Cook: Always cook food to safe internal temperatures. You can check this by using a digital food thermometer

Clean: Wash your hands and surfaces often with warm, soapy water

Chill: Always refrigerate food and leftovers promptly at 4°C or below

Separate: Make sure to always separate your raw foods, such as meat and eggs, from cooked foods and vegetables to avoid cross-contamination.

COMMENTS ON *E. COLI*

E. coli refers to a large group of bacteria found in the intestines of humans and animals. Most strains are harmless, some even beneficial, however some strains, such as *E. coli* O157:H7 can cause a severe form of gastroenteritis that can result in kidney failure. The main treatment strategy during infection is to ensure adequate fluid and electrolyte replacement. *E. coli* infections are not typically managed by antibiotics, which can actually increase the rate of severe kidney damage. This is thought to be caused by the release of the toxin following death of *E. coli* caused by the antibiotic. Some theoretical evidence suggests that using agents that bind the toxins in the gut and are then excreted may help to decrease the harm done by the bacterial toxins. This should be discussed

with a health care provider. Following the acute infection, re-population with friendly probiotics would be a general strategy as well as identifying if there are any other damaged organs.

With the recent massive recall of beef, it leads me to consider some broader issues related to food safety. The issue covered most in the news has of course been the processing of the beef at the XL plant. Processing at these huge facilities obviously carries some risk. However, we should also take into account the farming practices where the animals are raised. Without going into great detail, factors such as herd density and diet have been shown to have an influence on the shedding of *E. coli* as well as the rate of human infection in nearby areas. The easy

example is to think of a feed lot herd, versus a pastured herd. Increased roughage in the animals' diet has been shown to produce a lower amount of *E. coli* in the manure as well as decreased ability of it to survive afterwards.

Although beyond the direct control of the average consumer, we can have an impact based on our buying habits. Purchasing organic, or otherwise sustainably raised meat and produce is probably the best way for us to bring about change.

To me, this continues to validate the subtle shift of buyers to local and/or organic producers. While this by no means eliminates the chance for *E. coli* contamination or infection in people, the many benefits are beginning to add up.



Which would you choose?

NEW!

COMPLIMENTARY MEET THE NATUROPATH VISITS

We understand that choosing Naturopathic medicine is a significant investment of both time and money. To help new patients feel more sure of their decision, we are now offering complimentary 15 minute 'Meet the Naturopath' visits. These visits will answer general questions about Naturopathy and help patients decide if Naturopathic medicine, our clinic and our practitioners are right for them. We hope that this new feature will help us introduce more people to Naturopathic

medicine and give them the ability to make truly informed decisions about their health.

If you know someone who is interested in Naturopathic medicine, but still has some questions, please let them know about this new service! While we prefer to conduct these sessions in person, they can be arranged as a phone consultation as well. It is important to note that no treatment can be provided at these visits – they are for information purposes only.

NEW!

HOME VISITS

Beginning October 2012, Lindsay will be setting aside one day each month for home visits – that’s right, old fashioned house calls! We appreciate many factors can make it difficult for patients to travel to the clinic—but that in most cases the Naturopath needs to see you in person in order to provide adequate care. The last Friday of each month will be set aside to provide this service. The goal is to make care available to those whom would otherwise not be able to receive it. Of course, certain services will be unavailable at home visits (such as live blood analysis), and all of the usual resources can’t be transported.



Basic remedies and supplements will be brought along, however in many instances product recommendations may be made for patients to fill later,

or have shipped from the office. We will do our best to accommodate all requests, however travel distances will be taken into account when scheduling each month.

We will be evaluating this service regularly to determine how we can best adapt it to your needs, however initially we will be limiting home visits to a 30 km radius from Wellesley. The charge for this service (in addition to the regular visit fees) will vary based on distance traveled from our Wellesley location. See below for details.

Village of Wellesley – no additional charge
 0-15 km – additional \$10 home visit fee
 16-30 km – additional \$15 home visit fee

The home visit fee will apply per household. If there are multiple visits in the same family, only one home visit fee will be charged. Please contact the clinic with any questions or to book your first home visit!

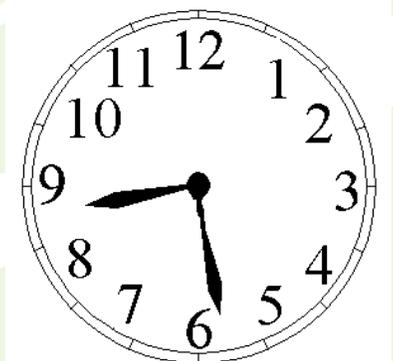
NEW!

Updated Office Hours

Beginning November, 2012 there will be some small changes to the hours of operation of GWC. The office will be closed Tuesdays after 12 pm and Thursdays. See below for full hours.

- Monday: 8:30 – 5 pm (office hours for John Pronk, ND)
- Tuesday: 8:30 – 12 pm (office hours for Sheldon Gilchrist, DC)
- Wednesday: 8:30 – 5 pm * (office hours for Lindsay Bast, ND)
- Thursday: closed
- Friday: 8:30 – 5 pm (office hours for Lindsay Bast, ND)

* Wednesday evening appointments are still available upon request



NOTE: THE INFORMATION PROVIDED IN THIS NEWSLETTER IS NOT INTENDED TO TREAT OR DIAGNOSE ANY CONDITION. PLEASE SEE YOUR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER BEFORE BEGINNING ANY NEW TREATMENT.