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SPRING 2007

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Several signs of spring have finally arrived at the clinic. In one of the front flower beds the coltsfoot (*tussilago farfar*) has flowered, always one of the first to do so in the spring. Trees are budding, grass is green and many other flowers are beginning to emerge. While we all tend to enjoy these signs of spring and the progression in to summer, for some people it is not as pleasant because it indicates the arrival of seasonal allergies. For information on a naturopathic perspective of allergies please see John's article on the second page. Another health topic that becomes prevalent in the spring season is detoxification. Many people consider spring a good time to do a 'detox' or 'cleanse' – please see Lindsay's article for more on what this really means.

CLINIC UPDATES

Another sign of warmer weather is the beginning of some outside work around the farm. As some have already seen the shed across from the clinic has been taken down in order to expand the available parking (see the last page for some 'before and after' photos). Some new tiling and grading was also done in the yard to hopefully prevent the yearly ice build up in front of our door. The majority of this work should be completed before you

read this newsletter, however if you are not sure, ask us about the best place to park while any work is going on. Another goal of the clinic this spring is to place a sign near the end of the laneway in order to make it easier for first time patients to find us and to increase local awareness of our business.

Also keep an eye on the flower beds in front of the clinic. We are trying to maintain and improve the flower beds, including the labeling of any of the medicinal plants that are present. This will likely be a several year process as there is much work to be done.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Maya Health Food Centre's 2nd Annual Wellness Fair

Lindsay Bast will be speaking on genetically modified foods at this free event on June 2, 2007 at 55 Ingersoll Rd in Woodstock. The event runs from 9:30 am to 5:30 pm and features several speakers, demonstrations and vendors. Please feel free to stop by our booth in the vendor tent.

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JOHN'S MESSAGE

ALLERGIES - SAFE AND EFFECTIVE SOLUTIONS

For most people, spring is an exciting time of year, with plans for outdoor activities, projects, and summer vacations. For others, seasonal allergies can put a big damper on the pleasures of the season. An allergy is a hypersensitivity reaction to a substance that is normally harmless to the human body. Common allergens in this season are grasses, pollens and molds. Symptoms will vary from sniffles and watery eyes, to chronic nasal congestion and itching of the eyes and throat. Some people will suffer with headaches, fatigue and fever as well. Although the symptoms may vary greatly, the one thing that they have in common is their ability to disrupt one's day-to-day activities. In an effort to cope, people reach for a variety of different allergy medications and remedies. Some help; others don't. Some work for only a short time and don't address the real problem. Some have side-effects, both short or long-term. Lets look at some of the options we have.

Pharmaceutical Products:

Conventional medical treatment usually involves some combination of antihistamines, decongestants, and nasal sprays.

Histamine is something produced naturally by a person's immune system when exposed to something they are allergic to. Certain white blood cells release this histamine and a number of things result; histamine causes the blood vessels to become 'leaky' so that fluid from the blood (blood serum) leaks out into the tissues. This results in swelling, edema (water retention) and weeping of fluid in different areas of the body, especially in areas where there are a lot of blood vessels near the surface of the skin (mucous membranes). This

is evident as the swollen watery eyes, mucous in throat, runny nose and sinus congestion.

Antihistamines like Tavist, Hismanal and Claritin are drugs that suppress the effect of histamine and may result in side effects like dry mouth, fatigue, headache, anxiety and abdominal pains. Some of them can even cause a heart-rhythm problem. Although they act quickly, many people choose to avoid them due to annoying side effects. Because of the sedating side effects of many of these medications, you should exercise caution when taking them in combination with sedating herbal products like: passion flower (*Passiflora incarnata*), skullcap (*Scutellaria lateriflora*), lemon balm (*Melissa officinalis*), chamomile (*Matricaria*) and valerian (*Valeriana officinalis*). Antihistamines should also not be taken with the herb Henbane (*Hyoscyamus niger*), as this herb may increase the side effects like dry mouth and heart palpitations.

There is a more natural way to reduce the negative effects of histamine. A variety of nutrients act as natural antihistamines without side effects. These nutrients were more prevalent in the basic diets of decades ago, but with modern farming and food transport methods, much of this nutrient content has been lost by the time it reaches our table. **Vitamin C** works as a natural antihistamine by strengthening white blood cells, making them less sensitive to allergens. Taking 3000-6000 mg of vitamin C daily can work just as well as any drugs listed above. **Bioflavonoids**, *quercetin*, *grapeseed extract*, and *pine bark extract* are other nutrients with similar effect.

Decongestants like Dristan, Sudafed, Sinutab and Contac are meant to help fluids drain from the sinuses and other areas, but have a number of common side effects like insomnia and restlessness. These products are also available in sprays which when used for more than a few days will create a dependency that can result in a worsening of symptoms when the products are discontinued. Because of the stimulant effect of these medications, they should not be taken with stimulant herbs like: coffee, lobelia (*Lobelia inflata*), and ephedra (see below).

Some natural decongestants include herbs such as *ginger*, *garlic*, *goldenseal*, and *citrus peel* (organic). Breathing in essential oils of *eucalyptus*, *lavender*, or a combination of them will also help loosen congestion.

Over-the-counter **nasal sprays** such as Cromolyn sodium (Intal or Nasalcrom) coat the nasal membranes and stabilizes the white blood cells. These sprays are slow to get started but generally considered quite safe. The second category is the nasal inhalant steroids like Flonase. All steroids, even in very small doses, will have some side effects. One concern with inhalant steroids is that they will overpower and therefore "antidote" homeopathic remedies, rendering these remedies useless. Another concern with long-term use is of course the thinning of the nasal membranes that can cause bleeding. If you are using any form of steroid, calcium supplements should be used to negate this side effect.

Natural alternatives include Histaminun Complex nasal spray which is a combination of different homeopathic solutions that reduce sensitivity to allergens.

Sniffing a saline solution up into the sinuses will often be enough to reduce irritation for a time.

Vitamin and Mineral Products:

This is a good season to ensure you are getting an adequate intake of vitamins and

minerals. As I mentioned, vitamin C as well as bioflavonoids are tremendously beneficial in the prevention of allergic reactions. Essential fats like borage, flaxseed, and evening primrose oil help to balance the immune system. When taken in appropriate doses, none of these nutrients will interact with your allergy medications or your herbal or homeopathic products. You can consult your naturopathic doctor about choosing the nutrients that will give you most benefit. Some of our in-office tests (BTA testing, live blood analysis) can indicate where the underlying immune system imbalance stems from.

Herbal Products:

Herbal products can provide a tremendous benefit to people suffering from allergies. The following is a list of some of the common herbal products used:

- **Nettle** (*Urtica spp.*) is a very useful herb during the allergy season. This herb helps to drain swelling and fluid in the sinuses. This can be taken as a tea made from steeped dry or fresh leaves (remember to wear gloves to avoid nettle rash), or tinctures and capsules are also convenient ways to take nettle.
- **Turmeric** (*Curcuma longa*) has natural anti-inflammatory properties. It helps the liver eliminate wastes that accumulate in the body from allergy reactions.
- **Licorice** (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*) is often used in the treatment of allergies. Licorice should not be taken by people with high blood pressure or who are on high blood pressure medications without the supervision of a health care coach. Licorice should also be avoided by people using diuretics (especially the thiazides). Licorice is nice in a tea with fenugreek and thyme to relieve congestion.
- **Echinacea** is commonly used to boost the immune system when there is any risk of infection.

- **Goldenseal** (*Hydrastis Canadensis*) is also used for risk of infection but is also very healing to the mucous membranes (linings) of the upper respiratory tract.
- **Ephedra** - Recently Health Canada has requested a voluntary recall of certain products containing ephedra/ephedrine after an assessment showed these products may pose a risk. Ephedra, also known as Ma Huang, is effective in treating asthma and congestion in many people and should therefore not be completely ruled out. This product is still available in lower doses in some products. Talk to your Naturopathic doctor to decide if it may be beneficial to you for short-term use in low doses. Ephedra should never be taken with caffeine, MAO inhibitors

(phenelzine, selegiline, tranylcypromine, and moclobemide), dexamethasone, corticosteroids, or reserpine.

Homeopathic Products:

Homeopathic remedies can be used as single remedies like allium cepa, sabadilla, or in combination allergy products such as *Histaminum Comp* or *Pollen plus*. These remedies have no known drug or herb interactions but are best used under the advice of a health professional.

Allergy season may be here, but that doesn't mean you can't enjoy the blessings of this season. Thankfully we've been given nature's pharmacy to help us cope with allergies effectively.

LINDSAY'S MESSAGE LINDSAY BAST, B.Sc., N.D.

DETOXIFICATION

While this is a large area of discussion the following article will try to answer the most basic questions and provide a simple understanding of the concept of detoxification.

WHAT is detoxification?

Mosby's dictionary defines detoxification as "the removal of a poison or its effects from a patient." I find this simple definition very suitable for the concept of detoxification. You may hear several other words such as 'cleansing' or 'fasting' which are often used interchangeably with detoxification and essentially achieve the same outcome. Fasting itself has many different forms and is a 'method' for detoxification (see HOW for more details). Some practitioners prefer to use the term metabolic detoxification, which specifically means the improvement of toxin

elimination by supporting the metabolic processes of the liver and kidneys and bowels. However, on the most basic level we can simply think of detoxification as removing harmful substances from the body.

WHO should undergo detoxification and WHY?

The simple fact is that everyone is exposed to harmful toxins, whether it be heavy metals, pesticides, air pollution, solvents etc. One only needs to look at the recent public testing of 4 political members by a group called Environmental Defence. Environment Minister Rona Ambrose, Health Minister Tony Clement, NDP Leader Jack Layton and Liberal Environment Critic John Godfrey were tested for 103 different pollutants, and testing

revealed the presence of an average of 53 pollutants in each. A study by the same group on 5 Canadian families revealed an average of 32 pollutants in each parent and 23 in each child out of 68 tested for. Similar data exists from the United States Environmental Protection Agency Adipose Tissue Survey.

Having established this ever-present exposure it could be argued that everyone should undergo some type of detoxification. However, some individuals may be more likely to suffer adverse effects from environmental toxins and would see greater benefits from detoxification. The symptoms of toxicity can be quite vague and non-specific and include: headaches, fatigue, brain fog, joint and muscle pain. This is certainly not an inclusive list, but gives an idea of the wide range of problems associated with toxicity. Specific testing can also determine the presence of toxins in the body. In our office, biological terrain analysis, live blood analysis and bioimpedance testing can all be helpful in identifying people who may benefit from detoxification. Specific testing can also be done to detect the presence and levels of heavy metals and other toxic substances in the body.

WHEN

There is not necessarily a 'right' time to do detoxification. They can be performed any time of year and the duration depends on the individual. As general maintenance, many people choose to do 'mini' detox's each spring and fall.

HOW

Now that we know detoxification is the elimination of harmful substances from the body, the question is how do we do this? It should be noted here that as a general rule our first goal should be to decrease our exposure to toxic substances. Although some

exposure is unavoidable we can decrease it several ways:

- Avoid pesticides by thoroughly washing food or eating organic foods
- Wearing appropriate safety equipment to decrease work exposures to dust and fumes e.g. dust masks, respirators
- Decrease exposure to plastic residues by avoiding microwaving in plastic containers
- Refusing mercury amalgam (silver) fillings and considering the replacement of existing fillings

Many choices we make can also decrease the release of many toxic substances into the environment. By reducing the amount of pollution in the environment we not only help ourselves but also our children and the planet as a whole. Again, this topic could cover an entire newsletter but includes things like eating organic foods, reducing, reusing and recycling products and decreasing our greenhouse gas emissions.

Back to detoxification. A detox program often encompasses a specific diet to reduce exposure allergenic foods (called an elimination, or hypoallergenic diet) as well as nutritional support to enhance the metabolic pathways of the liver and ensure proper elimination of harmful substances in the urine and stool. As mentioned there are a wide variety of specific methods and products to aid in detoxification, but it is best to consult your naturopath as to which method may be best for you. Many types of liver support are available with milk thistle (*silybum marianus*) being one of the most researched. We also know that increasing the pH (or decreasing the acidity) of the urine helps our body to eliminate harmful substances. However, the type of detoxification you need may also depend on what you are exposed to. For example exposure to mercury from dental fillings may require different support than exposure to solvents or formaldehyde.

Fasting can also be a specific dietary tool to assist in detoxification. Although large caloric restrictions are not advisable (and if undertaken should certainly be medically supervised) in certain instances short duration juice fasts may be effective for some people.

Further tools that may be incorporated into a detox program include infrared saunas, exercise and homeopathic remedies which may help to mobilize and eliminate toxins.

It must also be pointed out that it is possible to suffer adverse effects while doing a detox. Many toxins are stored in our fat tissue. If toxins are released too quickly from this tissue and are not eliminated you may actually feel worse rather than better. While on a detox it is also possible to change the

rate at which some medications are metabolized, thus altering their effectiveness, again making it wise to consult with your health care practitioner before undertaking.

SUMMARY

Although exposure to environmental toxins is unavoidable it is also important to limit our exposure as much as possible and for each of us to do our part to decrease the release of toxins into the environment. Detoxification can be an effective tool for many people to improve and maintain their health. Visit your health care provider to determine if you could benefit from detoxification and what plan is best suited for you.

PHOTOS

Two recent photos to show the new parking area.

Before:



After:



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