

## **Beyond Routine Blood Work**

*by Molly Linton, ND, LM*

Most of the clients at Emerald City Clinic receive routine blood testing which helps your physician determine whether you are anemic; how your kidneys, liver and lungs are working; the health of your thyroid, prostate, etc. Beyond the routine screening, here are some of the diagnostic tests available to help fine tune your health:

- **Vitamin D levels:** Vitamin D is imperative in the health of your bones, immune system, and cardiovascular system just to name a few. Those of us who live at this latitude are severely deficient. This test has now become a routine screen which we recommend for everyone.
- **Homocysteine:** analyzes the health of the walls of the blood vessels which are injured by our modern diet, lacking in Vitamin B12, folic acid and vitamin B6. Recommended for anyone over 40.
- **Hs-CRP:** “high sensitivity c-reactive protein”: an inflammatory marker that judges generalized inflammation and looks specifically at heart muscles. Recommended for everyone over 40 and people with significant family cardiovascular risk history.
- **CA-125:** screens for ovarian cancer and is recommended for women over 40 and earlier for those with family history.
- **VAP:** “Vertical Analysis Procedure”: analyzes the separate fragments of cholesterol. It is much more detailed than the basic cholesterol profile, and helps distinguish between “hereditary” and “lifestyle” risks. Recommended for anyone with family history and current high cholesterol levels.
- **Fasting insulin:** looks at adrenal exhaustion, hypoglycemia, unexplained weight gain, and other sugar metabolism problems.

We order the above tests through our primary lab, Dynacare/Labcorp, which is contracted with most insurance companies and can therefore bill your insurance for your testing. We also use many alternative labs which are doing amazing things to give us an insight into your health. However, most tests performed at these labs are not paid for by insurance because the insurance companies consider these tests “provocative” or “experimental.” Ask your physician to discuss with you the value of the information gained through these “non-insurance covered” tests, versus the out-of-pocket expense you will incur:

- **Heavy metal testing:** a urine collection test that, with the use of a provocation medication, will sample your tissues for the presence of toxic metals and the balance of essential minerals. Recommended for anyone with heavy metal symptoms and/or anyone who has had more than 6 amalgams (silver fillings) in their life, lived in a major metropolitan area with poor air quality, travels by plane a great deal, or has lived in a toxic exposure environment such as a military installation.
- **Comprehensive Digestive and Stool Analysis:** a multi-sample stool analysis that tells us what is growing in your digestive track—good, bad or indifferent. It also analyzes the digestive process. It is much more thorough than ova and parasite tests that are routinely done. Recommended for anyone whose digestive track seems to be recalcitrant to treatment.
- **Adrenal Stress Index:** a saliva test through which we can analyze the status of a person’s adrenal glands on a continuum of “healthy” to totally “burnt out”. It also illustrates the timing of adrenal function. Recommended for ALL of us.
- **Saliva hormonal testing:** blood analysis for most of the female sex hormones is difficult because during a cycling woman’s life, hormones are a moving target. We can better analyze female hormones in the saliva and urine. Recommended for women having hormonal issues.
- **Food, Spice, and Medicinal Herb allergies:** We have always had blood tests for food allergies but now we have a lab that will also check you for reactions to many of the botanical medicines we use. If you have ever suspected an allergy to Echinacea or Goldenseal this is the test for you.

The following tests are being successfully billed to insurance by the test labs:

- **Brain chemistries:** A new test that includes all the brain transmitters. In addition to the transmitters, this lab can add to the test the adrenal stress index and the female hormone tests. More often than not, such companies as Premera, Regence, and Aetna have been paying for these tests! Recommended for any one with foggy thinking, insomnia, anxiety, depression, mental health issues, hormonal imbalances or exhaustion.
- **Nutrient analysis:** We now have a lab that will analyze your blood for individual nutrients at the cell level. They are also billing insurance and only asking for \$75 copay. A marvelous deal to take a look at your nutrient status on a cellular level. Recommended for anyone.

This is just a sampling of the testing available to you to assist your health team to design a program for you that optimizes your health on an individual basis.

## Neural Therapy

*by Loren Riccio, ND, LM, CPM*

Neural Therapy is a gentle healing technique developed in Germany which involves the injection of local anesthetics into autonomic ganglia (center for nerve activity), peripheral nerves, scars, glands, acupuncture points, trigger points, skin and other tissues. Neural therapy is a safe method of treating chronic pain and illness caused by disturbances in the body's electrical system. These disturbances, also called interference fields, can be found almost anywhere in the body, often far from the area where you may be feeling symptoms. They can be caused by infection, injury or trauma (both emotional and physical), scars, inflammation, or diseased tissue, which results in an abnormal electrical signal transmitted throughout the body. For example, an old appendix scar might cause migraine headaches, or a wisdom tooth extraction scar might cause chronic low-back pain. We can identify an area of interference in the flow of information along the nervous system pathways and using neural therapy injections reset the nervous system response.

Interference fields can impact the nervous system resulting in a confused or inappropriate signal, which we can feel as chronic pain or illness. These fields are found by looking at the events that occurred prior to the onset of the illness. Patients who can identify an event that occurred just before they became sick will often say they have not been the same since. This is also useful in patients who have not responded to treatment plans that should have resulted in some improvement. The body's response to an illness or injury impacts the autonomic nervous system. Chronic pain—especially migraine—often has symptoms caused by the autonomic nervous system, such as nausea or sweating. An interference field may also be involved if sciatica or any other leg pain is accompanied by coldness or change in skin color.

The autonomic nervous system regulates the body's automatic functions. It helps control, for example, heart rate, blood pressure, digestion, bowel movements, urination, sexual function, menstruation, perspiration and skin temperature. Any symptom related to these functions, such as palpitations (rapid heartbeat), indigestion, constipation or even cold hands may be partly or totally caused by an interference field.

If an interference field is found, it can easily be treated by injecting it with a local anesthetic (pain killer). Local anesthetics have an interesting property apart from their ability to "numb things"—they also can restore abnormal electric potentials (when a nerve fires a signal) or regulate unstable electrical membranes in living tissue. By restoring cell membrane potential to normal for even a short time, cellular metabolism improves, and a healthier local environment is created when the system stabilizes.

An interference field is any pathologically damaged tissue, which acts as a stimulus to the autonomic nervous system. Neural Therapy corrects the dysfunction in the autonomic nervous system by stopping the interference field. Once this occurs the organs, glands, and body tissues can function better, alleviating chronic disease conditions. Neural therapy is now available at Emerald City Clinic. Talk to your doctor to determine if neural therapy is right for you.

## GERD and Hiatal Hernias: Looking to the CAUSE

*by Laura C Walton, ND, LMP*

Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), is also known as esophageal reflux, reflux, or heartburn. The classic symptom is a burning sensation in the chest, due to stomach acid regurgitating into the esophagus. As I mentioned this is the CLASSIC symptom, but there are many others that often go undiagnosed. These include:

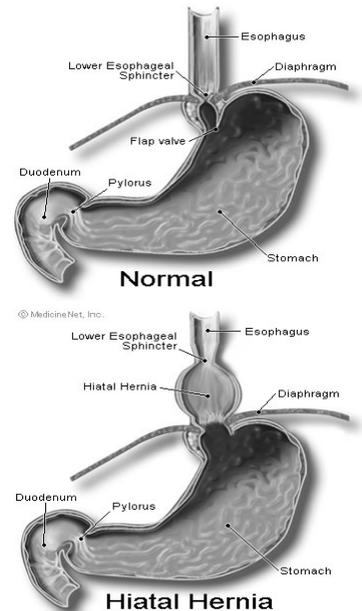
**RESPIRATORY:** chronic dry cough, chronic bronchitis, asthma, chronic ear infections, chronic sinusitis, inflammation of throat and larynx (chronic sore throat)

**DIGESTIVE:** regurgitation, burping, nausea, ulcers, strictures (caused by scar tissue from chronic esophageal irritation), Barrett's esophagus (pre-cancerous condition occurring in 10% of GERD patients), chronic gas and bloating

**GENERAL:** a sense of fullness or pressure in the chest, heart palpitations

(Some of these symptoms may also be a reflection of hypochlorhidria, which is low stomach acid. Your doctor may ask you to do an HCl challenge to test out this idea first.)

The anatomy of the area associated with GERD is complicated, and can become disrupted relatively easily (see image at right). GERD usually occurs due to a weakness or dysfunction in the lower esophageal sphincter (LES), which separates the esophagus from the stomach. The LES is normally closed, only opening when food passes through the esophagus into the stomach. When there is dysfunction in the LES causing it to remain slightly open, stomach acid travels up and irritates the esophagus. The diaphragm also plays a role in this system, which is why there are so many respiratory symptoms associated with GERD. The diaphragm normally wraps around the area under the LES, causing an additional amount of pressure to keep the stomach acids in the stomach. In GERD, this diaphragmatic area can become inflamed with stomach acid, causing irritation to the diaphragm which creates a dry cough or other respiratory symptoms.



**Hiatal hernias can be caused by:**

- ◇ a strong episode of coughing
- ◇ a blow to the abdomen
- ◇ food allergies
- ◇ chronic poor posture patterns
- ◇ chronic STRESS

Research has shown that 80% of people who have GERD also have a hiatal hernia. A hiatal hernia is a condition where the top of the stomach actually moves up through the diaphragm. This displacement of the stomach causes displacement and lack of function in the lower esophageal sphincter, often causing GERD. There may be other or even no symptoms associated with a hiatal hernia. For example, if you always cough when you are on the phone, you may have

a hiatal hernia. Or, if you always get pressure in your chest when you are behind the wheel of a car, you may have a hiatal hernia. If any of the symptoms listed above surround eating, a hiatal hernia should definitely be ruled out.

Most MDs will treat GERD with acid-blocking agents. This changes the pH of the stomach acid so that the GERD-sufferer does not FEEL the burning, although the stomach acid is still moving up into the esophagus. Acid-blocking agents have the added danger of not allowing the stomach acid to do its job of digesting food. Our bodies NEED stomach acid to digest food properly. As stomach acid is alkalized and food is not digested properly, over time the GERD patient will probably develop food allergies or nutritional deficiencies.

If an MD does recognize that a person has a hiatal hernia (usually through an endoscopy procedure), s/he will most likely be told that there is nothing to be done about it. If the hernia is severe enough, they may tell you that surgery to correct it is an option, although the success of these surgeries without recurrence is miserable.

Fortunately, there is naturopathic treatment for hiatal hernias, as well as other causes of GERD. This treatment would be individualized for each patient, and would probably include a physical as well as a nutritional component. Physically, a procedure called Visceral Manipulation (VM) can be used to relocate the stomach below the diaphragm, in its proper position. Usually this treatment also relaxes the LES and area surrounding the diaphragm so that everything can function optimally. Your doctor will usually suggest at least three VM treatments to determine if this method will work for you. In addition to the physical treatment of VM, nutritional therapies to treat stomach acid imbalances (too much or too little) or other digestive complaints that have developed due to the hiatal hernia would be indicated. Naturopathic medicine can also help to heal tissue damaged by stomach acid imbalances.

The treatment of GERD, hiatal hernias, and the digestive disturbances that result is an arena where naturopathic medicine shines. We can really address the CAUSE of the problem, in a holistic manner. If you or anyone you know has been diagnosed with GERD or a hiatal hernia, or experiences any of the symptoms listed above, I encourage you to visit Emerald City Naturopathic Clinic for assessment and naturopathic treatment of this all too common malady.

**ATTN:** Dr. Linton wrote an article about third party reimbursement, insurance companies and health savings plans. Due to the space limitations it will be in the next newsletter but if you want an advanced copy email the office and we can send it: [frontdesk@emeraldcityclinic.com](mailto:frontdesk@emeraldcityclinic.com). Many of you will need to choose your insurance carrier in October or November before the next newsletter publication. If you need our guidance please read the article and ask for our assistance.

## Dr. Molly's Corner

- ◇ **Emergency contact:** To reach Dr. Linton after hours for an urgent matter, *call her home phone first* (206)780-0565 and leave a message *before* paging her. Her home machine will inform you if she is out of town, and give you on-call contacts. On Bainbridge there are "pager shadows" where the system does not work, so the message on her phone machine is an important back up. If you have Dr. Linton's cell number, please do not use it, as it is reserved for her private life. Thanks for respecting her privacy.
- ◇ **Recycle tincture bottles:** Return your tincture bottles to Emerald City Clinic and we will recycle them.
- ◇ **'Better Bladder':** contact your doctor to consider this natural remedy for urinary incontinence, nighttime or frequent urination.
- ◇ **One suite is still available for lease in our adjacent space: 135 sq ft, shared waiting room, tenant kitchen/ laundry, classroom access. Join this great community of therapists (family, teen, & individual counseling, massage, acupuncture): call Roberta: 206-781-2206 for more details or to arrange a tour of the space.**

**Welcome our new staff members: Rachel Colburn, Patient Advocate:** "Growing up in a naturopathic family, I have seen the amazing power of natural medicine to work miracles in my life and in the lives of those around me. After spending many years working in the health care profession, I am happy to have found my place at Emerald City Clinic as the patient advocate. When we are unwell, even the most simple of tasks can seem overwhelming and can interfere with our ability to heal. I am excited to be available to each of you who may need some assistance in your journey to health."

**Lydia Wheaton, Dispensary Assistant:** "I will be graduating from Bastyr's ND program in 2009 and my passions within naturopathic medicine include homeopathy, botanical medicine, hydrotherapy and massage. I also have a love affair with Central America, where I have lived and traveled extensively. I am working on becoming fluent in the Spanish language and hope to one day practice with underserved Hispanic populations, both in the U.S. and abroad. As the dispensary coordinator at Emerald City Clinic, I look forward to working with patients and expanding my knowledge of herbal tinctures and nutritional supplements. It is a true gift to work in an environment with such incredible people!"

- ◇ Welcome also to our new part-time front desk staff, **Jamine Blesoff** and **Angie Lemke**, who are here to provide you with excellent customer service both in person and over the phone.
- ◇ If you haven't been by to see us lately, you may not have noticed that Emerald City Clinic has a new look--instead of a bright yellow building, we are now emerald green!
- ◇ Reminder for parents with children returning to school this fall: call us early to schedule sports physicals, as our schedule is filling up fast!



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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