

# *Emerald City Clinic*

Newsletter



Spring 2006

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## Allergy Season

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As spring swings into full bloom, so do people's allergies. There are many approaches to allergies and the treatment of allergies. I hope in this article to give each of you an insight into why you may get them, how to treat them less toxically, and/or how to prevent them.

One of the questions that I regularly ask in an office visit is: Do you routinely wake up with a stuffy nose? "Stuffy noses" are a good diagnostic tool. There are many reasons for a stuffy nose; each reason leads to a different treatment protocol. If you wake up occasionally with this condition it is most likely due to what you ate the night before. If you experience stuffiness only in a certain season (e.g., Fall or Spring) then it is due to an environmental pollen/plant/mold. If you are stuffy all year round then it is your house (e.g. animal dander, mold, dust mites, etc.) or your diet. You can distinguish this by staying elsewhere or noticing what happens when you travel. I will discuss in this article specific remedies that you can use for each of these causes, but first I want to address some universal underlying issues.

Generally speaking we should not be allergic to our environment. We either must clean up our environment and/or improve our immune system. I have written many articles about how to reduce our toxic exposures. I refer you to my web site to read past newsletters about reducing toxins in your environment. What I would like to address in this article is improving our immune system. The best way to improve our immune system is to have all 5 elimination channels working to their top capacity and to strengthen our adrenal gland so it can handle the "insulting agents."

The **5 Elimination Channels** are nature's detoxification system. If these back up, then we exhibit allergic symptoms such as rashes, itchy eyes, stuffy mucus membranes, etc. The first elimination channel is our **kidneys/bladder**. The most important thing for this organ system is water. The first thing I always recommend is to drink 1/3 of your body weight in fluid ounces/day. You should be urinating 6-8x/day and not immediately after drinking. If you are urinating within 1/2 hour of drinking then your fluids are rushing through without soaking in. I would recommend putting some Emergen-C or another electrolyte in your water to aid you to retain the water. The second elimination channel is our **lungs**. They need to be exercised. It would be optimal to have 45 minutes to 1 hour/day of exercise; but if that is not possible then start with 15 minutes of sustained exercise per day. Thirdly, is our **colon**. It needs three 1/2 cups of vegetables/day (fiber), plenty of water, exercise and consider the use of fermented foods, good quality yogurt (if you're not allergic to dairy) and/or acidophilus to have a good bacteria balance. A healthy digestive system has no burping/heartburn/flatulence and has at least one formed bowel movement a day. If you do not have this, then it is time for a visit. The **skin** is our largest elimination channel. People should sweat when exercising. If you do not sweat with exercise or in heat then your largest detox organ is really blocked up. I find as I am assisting my clients in detoxification that getting them to sweat is imperative. We have a program to do that. Other things that would be routine health maintenance would be dry brush massaging and epsom salts baths. The handouts on how to do this are also on the web site. Finally, the **liver** is probably one of the most important components to preventing allergic reactions. It is also one of the hardest organs to treat as it dumps into the digestive track and has no direct outside access. I suggest that every one eat at least one serving (one cup) of liver foods a day. These include beets, artichokes, dark foliage, turmeric and any greens. Many of our botanical medicines, such as milk thistle or dandelion, address liver health.

Adrenal health depends on following Dr. Molly's 5 Point Health Plan. Are you drinking enough water? Eating enough protein and vegetables? Exercising daily? Sleeping 7-8 hours of uninterrupted sleep? Following your supplement regime that Emerald City Clinic physicians have outlined for you? I assume you are all doing these things. If you are and need more adrenal support, then I suggest trying a botanical remedy to aid in curing the ailments of modern living. These botanicals include green tea, licorice, ginseng, ashwaganda, and rhodiola, to name a few. These medicines can be taken safely and effectively if administered correctly. I usually have people try them in tincture or teas in the first part of the day. People on prescription allopathic drugs or who have serious health issues should consult one of the doctors at Emerald City Clinic before taking licorice or ginseng in high quantities, but as over the counter teas they are pretty effective without side effects.

Let's assume your elimination channels are clear and your adrenals are getting stronger. We are now ready to address different treatments for allergies. First, most allergy symptoms are caused by histamine release of the white blood cells. The insulting agent, whether that be food, pollen or dust mite, hits the white blood cell which opens and releases histamine. It is the histamine that causes the typical allergic reaction and the allopathic medical community then gives anti-histamines. These anti-histamines are plagued with all sorts of side effects such as drowsiness, worsening symptoms, tachycardia to name a few. A Naturopathic approach would be to strengthen the white blood cell first. The cell wall of the white blood cell needs certain nutrients to stave off

an attack by an allergen. Those nutrients include omega 3 oils, vitamin C and bioflavonoids. The dosages of Omega 3 oils should be 4 ounces of fish, 1 tablespoon of flax or fish oils OR 3-4 caps of a supplement. Vitamin C should be a buffered vitamin C given in 500-1000 mg 3x/day. You should watch for bowel tolerance. If you are getting loose stools then you need to back off the vitamin C. Finally, every source of vitamin C comes with its partner, a bioflavonoid. The most effective bioflavonoid for the respiratory system is quercetin which is found in onions. Other choices include rosehips, rutin, hesperidin, vaccinium (found in blueberries and other dark fruit). During an acute attack I often give 500 mg of quercetin 4-6x/day. Nettles is one of the most effective anti-histamines out there, if your prevention has not been started early enough or is not strong enough.

If you can identify the “insulting agent” such as cat dander or alder, we carry the homeopathic antidote. OR you can consider desensitizing yourself with NAET. Refer to our website for specifics about this treatment for eliminating allergic response.

The bottom line is that you do not need to have seasonal allergies. It is curable. We need to clean out the detoxification channels, but while we work on that, we can give you relief without the poisoning effects of Claritin, Sudafed or Benadryl. These medications only suppress the symptoms making your body more toxic and forcing the individual to take higher and higher doses to get the desired effect. For the months of April and May we will be offering 10% off all airborne allergy products when they are properly prescribed for you. If you have not tried this approach before I am encouraging you to do so.

## Spring Detoxification

As the winter months end and the warmer months arrive, it is the season for Spring Cleaning. The “mucous” in our bodies melts and needs to be assisted out of the body. We need to metaphorically open the windows and shake out the rugs. The season itself invites us to do that as all the new growth is popping up. The garden needs to be weeded.

I divide cleansing into three major categories. The first is **general tissue cleansing** to get all five elimination channels moving. These types of cleanses usually focus around the liver and colon. You can get great results in 2 weeks of liver/colon cleansing. Every single person can benefit from some type of physician-guided fasting or cleansing.

The second type of cleanse concerns **elimination of parasites and/or candida**. This is a little more involved as it requires that you kill off the possible pathogen with anti-fungals or anti-parasitic botanicals.

The final cleansing I talk about is **heavy metal detoxification**. You should ask yourself the following questions to see if you are in need of a cleanse:

- 1. Are any of my elimination channels not fully functioning?**
  - A. Skin: do I have rashes, acne, dry patches? Do I exercise without sweating?
  - B. Colon: do I have daily flatulence? Are my stools loose? Am I not having daily bowel movements? Is there undigested food in my stools? Is there routine abdominal pain?
  - C. Liver/gall bladder: am I nauseated routinely? Are my stools often green?
  - D. Lungs/respiratory system: am I often congested? Winded? Am I stuffy every morning upon arising?
  - E. Bladder: Do I urinate too much (more than eight times a day)? Am I urinating too little (less than six times a day)? Is there a strong odor?
- 2. Do I have heavy metal exposure?**
  - A. Do I have or have I had in my life time more than six silver fillings?
  - B. Have I lived in a major metropolitan area with poor air quality such as New York, Los Angeles, or Chicago for longer than three years?
  - C. Did I grow up on a farm that used pesticides?
  - D. Have I been involved in work that has high chemical exposure?
  - E. Do I have unexplained fatigue, viral infections or numbness?

If you can answer yes to any of these questions, you should consider some preventative detoxification. Please make an appointment to so that we can individualize a “Spring Cleaning” plan for you!

## Our Favorite Products *by Dr. Laura Eastman*

**Mycopotent Immune by Biogenesis:** A mushroom extract in a glycerin base does not sound yummy, but just tell that to the kids who ask their parents for it when they get sick! This blend of medicinal mushrooms helps boost the immune system against viral infections, and can be used during an acute infection as well as preventatively during flu season.

**Bio-Inflammatory Plus by Biogenesis:** From musculoskeletal complaints to GI disturbances, we have seen this blend of vitamins and herbs reduce inflammation throughout the body. Try it during allergy season to keep inflammation down in the body and reduce the allergy threshold to relieve symptoms.

**Amla Plex by Ayush Herbs:** Traditionally called Chayawanprash, this sweet Ayurvedic paste can be mixed into hot water for tea, or spread on toast for a yummy, healthy treat. Honey is used to extract over 30 herbs that act as an adrenal tonic and general energy booster. We can't keep this stuff on the shelf!



## Preconception Care and Fertility

by Dr. Loren Riccio



We can only be as healthy as the environment around us—physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. Unfortunately our physical environment has become more and more polluted over the years due to a multitude of impacts on our soil, air, and water quality. On a daily basis we consume and accumulate many harmful substances that affect our health in a variety of ways. There is a trend toward women choosing to have babies later in life, thus increasing the total accumulation of harmful substances that may have an adverse effect on a woman's hormones and fertility. Many of these potentially harmful substances can be passed on to a developing baby. Participating in a detox or cleanse prior to conception decreases or eliminates many of these harmful substances, improving the expectant mother's overall health and fertility, and minimizing the potential to pass these toxins on to her baby.

Preconception care addresses underlying health conditions of the mother-to-be. It provides her the opportunity to achieve better health and prepare for the needs of a developing baby. Important areas to address preconceptionally are nutrition, blood sugar regulation, blood building, liver support, and adrenal support. A developing baby will take what it needs from the mother, potentially leaving the mother deficient. Ensuring that the mother is in good health will minimize this impact on her body and provide for a healthy pregnancy and postpartum.

Much modern healthcare is fragmented. But Naturopaths provide a unique continuity of care beginning prior to conception and continuing through pregnancy and beyond—healthcare for mother, baby, and the entire family. When considering fertility, often a gynecologist or reproductive endocrinologist is the primary physician involved, focusing on reproductive health only. Naturopaths who provide pregnancy care typically practice general medicine too; thus naturopaths can take a broader, more holistic view of the fertility question. A naturopath will consider all aspects of physical and emotional health that affects an individual or couple's fertility. We participate in collaborative care with gynecologists or reproductive endocrinologists when needed, offering supportive therapies to enhance the effectiveness and success of conception. By combining modalities, we offer the best of both worlds.

There are many reasons underlying infertility. As naturopaths, we look for the cause and consider nutrition, hydrotherapy, botanical and/or homeopathic medicines chosen specifically for an individual's needs. Every couple should address their overall health and wellness in preparation for pregnancy, even if they are not having fertility issues. This will support a healthy and happy pregnancy and ease the transition through postpartum into parenthood.

*Dr. Loren Riccio was recently featured in the article Preconception Planning in the March 2006 edition of Seattle Woman magazine, [www.seattlewomanmagazine.com](http://www.seattlewomanmagazine.com).*

## Vitamin D *by Dr. Loren Riccio*

As the sun begins to shine once again, I am reminded of all the wonderful gifts it has to offer. One in particular is the ability to transform precursors of vitamin D in our skin into the active vitamin. Vitamin D provides many health benefits and most people don't have enough of it. It is best known for helping our bodies to absorb calcium in order to build and strengthen bones. Did you know that vitamin D may help with other health concerns such as diabetes, multiple sclerosis, depression, cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, polycystic ovaries, epilepsy, certain cancers and autoimmune disease?

Sources of vitamin D are dietary, sunshine, or supplemental. There are many things that influence the amount of vitamin D that each of us has, such as the latitude where you live, sun exposure, body weight, skin pigmentation, dietary intake, digestive health, and use of certain medications. It may take five times longer sun exposure for people with darker pigmented skin to achieve the same level of vitamin D as those with lightly pigmented skin.

Minimal amounts of vitamin D usually come from dietary sources and sunshine is often inconsistent. Sunlight is unavailable on rainy or cloudy days and during the winter months, especially in particular geographic locations such as Seattle. Most people work indoors and are partially or fully clothed when outside. Even on leisurely sunny days most people wear topical sunscreens which can block vitamin D production by greater than 90%. Artificial tanning is not an ideal source of the UVB rays needed to make vitamin D because the artificial lighting is often higher in UVA rays which may increase the incidence of skin cancer and aging.

So how does one get enough vitamin D? At Emerald City Naturopathic Clinic we have been monitoring vitamin D levels and finding that most of our patients are deficient. We have begun supplementing vitamin D and are finding that a lot of people are feeling better in a variety of ways. The preferred form of supplement is cholecalciferol or vitamin D3. This is the same form that is made in your skin and that comes from your diet. Supplementation may take several months to achieve sufficient levels; however, benefits may be noticed right away. Periodic monitoring is necessary to ensure vitamin D levels are sufficient and safe for health and disease prevention. Neither too little nor too much is good for your overall health. If you have not had your levels checked or have been taking a supplement that contains vitamin D, talk to one of the doctors at Emerald City Naturopathic Clinic about optimizing your levels of vitamin D.

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## Dr. Molly's Corner

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Seattle Magazine's September 2005 issue selected me as one of the Top Doctors in Seattle. Thanks to each of you for placing your trust in me and in my clinic.

**Phone consultation:** Please let me reiterate that scheduled phone consultations are only available for long distance clients and dire emergencies. They are not covered by insurance, do not allow for optimal health care, and are not less expensive. It is a service reserved for situations the physicians deem necessary when a visit is not possible.

**Email:** We keep current email addresses for all of our patients. Please email Tara at [tara@emeraldcityclinic.com](mailto:tara@emeraldcityclinic.com) if your email address has changed. Feel free to email us and let us know what topics you would like in the next newsletter.

**Fat Soluble Vitamins Warning:** Fat soluble vitamins such as vitamin D, vitamin E, and vitamin A can reach toxic levels in the body. Vitamin E can be easily taken in doses less than 2000 IU/day, vitamin A in 5000 IU/day. But I have been finding that many of my clients on Vitamin D levels of 1000-2000 IU/day are not doing the recommended follow up. I have generally found that 2000 IU/ vitamin D raises your vitamin D level by approximately 1 point/week on that dosage and I would like most of my clients in the range of 40-50. If you have been taking vitamin D for over 6 months at dosages of 1000-2000 IU per day without follow up blood work, please contact me so I can tell you when you need to repeat the Vitamin D blood level test.

**Lab reporting:** When we order lab work for you, in most cases the doctor will have our front desk call you to schedule an appointment to review the results. This is routine—we regularly schedule a follow up visit to explain the implications of your lab work and help you maximize your health. **If there is something in your lab that we want to address with you before your next visit, one of the doctors will personally call you, and leave a number where you can reach us if we did not speak with you directly. Do call back so that we can give you the relevant information, and alleviate unnecessary concerns.**

**Flex plans and/or Health Savings Plan:** There are few options for people to save money while getting alternative health care. Some of the options include Health Savings Plans, Flex Plans and/or Cafeteria Funds. The Flex Plan or Cafeteria Fund are independent of your health insurance. They are “stand alone plans.” You can take pre-tax dollars and set them aside for out-of-pocket medical expenses, including, but not limited to, prescribed supplements. Those supplements do not have to be purchased at Emerald City Clinic, but they do need to be prescribed. You will need a form explaining the “reason” for each supplement. We are happy to provide you with these forms at a nominal fee. Cost to set up this template for you is generally \$35-\$50 accounting for the time for the physicians to supply the diagnostic codes for each supplement. Please provide us the name of your Flex Plan, and allow 2-3 weeks to for us to complete the paperwork. Flex Plans also cover any service fees that you pay that are not covered by your health insurance, such as your co-pays, alternative treatments like massage, acupuncture, etc. Health Savings Plans are attached to your medical insurance plan. If you have major medical insurance with a high deductible you have the option to open a bank account specifically for meeting the deductible and for medical expenses not covered by your insurance plan. Some plans utilize pre-tax dollars; they also can accrue from year to year, allowing you to save for your deductible and spend extra monies on prescribed supplements, dental expenses, etc. Contact insurance agent Marti Lee at 206-709-2619 to find the right plan!

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