

## ISSUE 3 - 2008

# Natural medicine: is it an alternative or complement to Western medicine?

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Thankyou  
for your  
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This practice grows because you care enough about your family and friends to refer them to us for their health needs and assistance. Our commitment to you is to provide the highest quality and most genuine care that we can give. So to all of you have sent people to our clinic – thankyou!

Your body has a natural healing capacity. If you break a bone it will heal, the doctor makes sure the pieces are set back together correctly so that the body can use its own healing ability to mend the bone. Natural medicine recognises the systems that are compromised (eg. a broken bone) and supports them so that the body can self-heal (eg. promoting circulation and nourishment to the broken bone). This system recognises that we are self-healing but often require a bit of a nudge.

Natural medicine is sometimes called "alternative medicine". This implies that natural medicine is an alternative to western medicine. At other times it's called "complementary medicine", a term often preferred by Governments and medical groups. This term implies that natural medicine complements western medical treatment but is a secondary measure. Both terms are true in some situations but not in others. For this reason we prefer the term "natural medicine".

The difficulty with defining these terms is that often natural medicine practitioners and western medical professionals use the medical paradigm (model) to define the understanding of health and disease. This can make the mistake of defining health as the absence of disease. We would prefer to define health as the optimisation of body functions allowing for any individual limitations (chronic conditions). Very few people are as healthy as they can be, so our treatments aim to firstly improve health and allow everything else to follow.

### Western medicine model

Western medicine shines in the treatment or management of defined disease but has difficulty treating a patient with an undefined problem. For example, someone who presents with symptoms of fatigue, headaches and vague symptoms of being unwell, but returns normal blood tests and scans, often will not have a 'disease' diagnosed making further treatment difficult. This often leaves only two options: 1. the person is healthy so is in no need

of treatment, or 2. it is a psychiatric illness such as depression or anxiety.

### Natural medicine model

This is a model of health so rather than trying to find a disease condition and treat it, we are looking for imbalances or functional disturbances and designing a treatment to promote health. For example, someone who has significant digestive disturbances and has had investigations including colonoscopies and stool analysis returning normal results may be labelled with "irritable bowel syndrome". The natural medicine model would consider that the health of the digestive and nervous systems need support and treatment would be designed around increasing the health of these systems.

### Natural medicine can complement Western medicine

There are many conditions where western medicine offers superior life saving treatments and should be considered the primary treatment; examples are heart disease, kidney disease, organ failure and serious hypertension (high blood pressure). In these cases, natural medicine can be of benefit in promoting health but shouldn't be seen as replacing western medicine.

### Cancer treatment

The medical treatment of cancer is aimed at eliminating the cancer or reducing its impact so the patient can live longer and better. Often, western medicine can help the health of the individual by eliminating the cancer but this is not a treatment in itself that is health promoting. To a significant degree it relies on the body's ability to heal and the individual's immune function to recover from the condition and cope with the treatment.

The natural medicine model of treating patients with cancer is not about treating cancer. Herbs and nutrients are not cell toxic and won't kill cancer cells like chemotherapy or radiation will. Rather, natural medicine is complementary to western medicine, as the medical treatment

is eradicating cancer and the natural model is supporting the health of the individual. The natural model will look at the patient's lifestyle and diet and incorporate relaxation and/or meditation techniques. Supplements and herbs are utilised to improve immune function, support digestion, promote detoxification pathways, reduce oxidative stress and support the organs (be it brain, breast, bowel or where ever the cancer resides.) The treatment will be individualised and constructed to support the individual. In many cases where cancer treatment fails, it is due to the inability of the individual's vitality to carry on the work of recovery.

### Infertility & IVF

Here western medicine has developed the technology and expertise to aid egg production, fertilisation and pregnancy. Most of the medical approach is designed around the individual components of the reproductive system and a high level of expertise is aimed at achieving a successful pregnancy.

The natural model complements the IVF process by seeing the interdependency and interconnectedness of all our body systems and organs, improving their quality. The treatment will be designed around making the parents as healthy as possible, with the idea that the healthier the parents, the healthier the egg and sperm and so the healthier the child. (see Healthy Living Issue 2/2008 for discussion of IVF)

### Natural medicine can be an alternative to Western medicine

In some cases western medicine can only offer management of symptoms. In many circumstances natural medicine may offer a true alternative. For example, muscular pain, sports injuries, arthritis, digestive disorders and allergies may all be greatly improved through acupuncture, herbal medicine and other natural medical treatment. Natural medicine may be considered for many non-life threatening conditions to alleviate symptoms, manage conditions and improve your overall health.

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## The 5 elements?

The five elements or phases is a system used in Chinese medicine to classify disorders of the body but can in fact be applied to any phenomena – it is commonly used in Feng Shui and martial arts. The five elements are: wood, fire, earth, metal and water. To be in a state of balance each element should be represented evenly within the body, although it is normal for individuals to have a slight predominance of one or two elements.

The elements are interrelated as they feed each other but also control each other. It is best to understand the five elements by examining the diagram.



Fire creates ashes that become the earth, earth contains minerals to become metal, metal carries water (pipes or bucket), water nourishes wood (plants), wood then feeds a fire, and so the cycle continues. The elements should move through the cycle in a particular direction but when this is disrupted, an imbalance occurs. For example, if the cycle reversed, fire would burn and destroy wood.

Within the circle is a star formation which indicates a controlling cycle. This cycle ensures that no element becomes too dominant and if this occurs, the correct element is chosen to reduce the dominant element. The controlling cycle is: wood breaks up earth (through the root system), earth absorbs water, water quenches fire, fire melts metal and metal chops wood. When the body is out of balance, for instance, too many fire signs are present (the patient is hot, excessively talkative or has burning urination) the water element may be nourished to put out the excess fire (eg. increase cold foods and herbs and drink more water).

*“As I see it every day you do one of two things: build health or produce disease in yourself.”*

*Adelle Davis.*

## Organic food: better for you

Organic food is produced from farming systems that avoid the use of synthetic, man-made fertilisers, pesticides, growth regulators and livestock feed additives. Instead, organic farming relies on biological pest control, crop rotation, animal manure fertilisation and hand weeding. Public concern is rising over the safety of conventionally farmed foods; and the widespread belief that organic food is a healthier option means that people are willing to pay a higher premium in order to obtain it. But why is it better?

### Research suggests that organic produce is more nutritious than its conventionally grown equivalents:

- Organic food has powerful antioxidant qualities. This is particularly advantageous for people with compromised immune systems such as cancer patients and those with chronic illness. Organic fruits have been shown consistently in studies to have a much higher concentration of Vitamin C and antioxidants.
- Organically produced milk has consistently higher proportions of beneficial fatty acids than conventionally produced milk. In addition, lactating women consuming a diet containing predominately organic dairy products have been shown to have increased concentration of specific nutrients in breastmilk, linked to various positive health effects, including protective effects against allergic hypersensitivity diseases.

Certain health risks are associated with aspects of conventional farming. Chemical pesticides are prohibited in organic farming, so the foods produced will have a lower chemical residue. There is a strong association between organophosphate

(OP) pesticides (commonly used in conventional agriculture) and Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's, autism and psychiatric disorders. And a recent study showed that maternal exposure to pesticides during pregnancy adversely affected infant brain development.

The role of organic foods in maintaining health also extends to sustainable agricultural techniques, as we look towards the maintenance of an ever-growing global population. Current figures suggest that agriculture is responsible for approximately 30% of global warming, with an estimation that roughly one quarter of the major greenhouse gas – CO<sub>2</sub> – stems from agricultural sources. Organic agriculture is seen as a viable alternative to reduce carbon emissions, through improved practices in cropland management and more sustainable practices.

There is clearly more to the management and maintenance of health than what an individual consumes; nonetheless, diet and lifestyle do have significant influence on the cultivation of good health. As a result, the importance of investing in sustainable lifestyle practices cannot be stressed enough, particularly when there is so much evidence to suggest strong links between disease processes and current dietary, lifestyle and agricultural factors.



## Herbal repeats? – Phone first!

If you need a repeat for a herbal formula please phone us first. Some of your formulae are very complicated and take time to make up. Advising us in advance may save you waiting up to 20 minutes.

## China 2008 study trip



Sarah George, one of our acupuncturists and massage therapist, is travelling to China to further her knowledge of Traditional Chinese Medicine in August and September. She will be learning from Chinese medical professors who are experts in acupuncture, herbs, massage, women's health, pain management and many other aspects of health. Her course is based at the Guangxi Traditional Chinese Medicine University in Nanning (known as the "green city" which is also home to China's largest medicinal herb garden). She looks forward to bringing back new techniques and knowledge to help her clients and to share with you in this newsletter. Make sure to book in with Sarah for acupuncture or massage before her last day on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> August. She will be back in the clinic from Monday 6<sup>th</sup> October.

# Natural cold remedies

Colds and flus are caused by viral infections and are highly contagious. The chances of infection are increased by stress, exhaustion, chronic illnesses or depression – all of which lower resistance.

The best treatment for colds and flus is prevention – and one of the best lines of defence is the foods that you eat. A diet that includes plenty of fresh fruit, vegetables and foods that are rich in zinc, such as green leafy vegetables, seeds, nuts, grains and beans will provide all the nutrients required to help reduce the risk of catching a cold. Fruit and vegetables are also the richest source of antioxidants including Vitamin C.

Once caught, there are a number of home remedies that can be used to reduce the misery of a cold or flu. These include:

- Drink at least 6 to 8 glasses of fluid per day to combat dehydration and keep mucus on the move. Include plenty of water, and lemon juice plus a teaspoon of honey in hot water. The lemon juice is rich in vitamin C and bioflavonoids and the honey helps to soothe a sore throat.
- Inhale steam to relieve a stuffy nose. Half fill a bowl with hot water, put a towel over the head to trap the steam and inhale for a few minutes. Adding eucalyptus or peppermint oil can help as a decongestant, and tea tree oil can be used if there is a lot of yellow mucus being discharged from the nose.
- Get plenty of rest and relaxation. Continuing to carry on as normal will hinder recovery and spread the infection to other people.
- Keep warm and especially in the first few days of the cold try to induce a sweat through a

warm bath and pungent foods such as chilli and onions if you feel chilled or peppermint tea if you feel hot.

- Suck on zinc gluconate lozenges. Several clinical trials have now demonstrated that zinc lozenges can significantly reduce the duration of a cold.
- Boosting your vitamin C and taking Echinacea will help your body to recover from the cold more quickly. See page one for our Echinacea limited offer.
- Acupuncture can boost your immune system to help prevent cold and flu. Sore throats, blocked noses and achy bodies also recover more quickly with acupuncture.

Make sure to see a health professional if you experience a painful cough, facial pain, painful ears, difficulty swallowing, breathing difficulties, traces of blood in the phlegm or a high temperature that lasts more than 24 hours.



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## Ask us:

**Q: I am trying to get pregnant and have been told to increase the iron in my diet. What are good food sources of iron?**

**A:** Signs of iron deficiency include tiredness, weakness, poor concentration, weak nails, hair loss, dizziness, poor vision and headaches. If you have a minor iron deficiency, increasing the iron through your diet alone will enrich your blood and nourish not only your hair, skin and nails but also the lining of your womb, which is essential for pregnancy to occur. If you have significant iron deficiency signs supplementation should be discussed with your health practitioner.

Good food sources of iron include but are not limited to meat (especially liver which should be organic), poultry, eggs and oily fish. Iron is also widely available from plant sources including vegetables, legumes, grains, nuts and seeds. Particularly good plant sources include spinach, kelp, soy beans, mustard greens, string beans, shiitake mushrooms, almonds and molasses. Chinese medicine values red coloured foods to nourish the blood including dates, goji berries and kidney beans.



Have you got a question you would like to ask the HealthWise practitioners? Email your question to [news@healthwiseclinic.com.au](mailto:news@healthwiseclinic.com.au) with 'Newsletter Question' in the subject line.

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## Do it Yourself Acupressure: Nausea

Nausea can hit you as part of travel sickness, morning sickness, food poisoning, severe pain or medication side effects. The acupuncture point, Pericardium 6 (Neiguan), located 2 thumb widths up your arm (palm up) from your wrist crease, just between the two prominent tendons, has been used for thousands of years to control nausea and vomiting. Apply pressure to this point as needed when feeling nauseous.



## 10% Discount off Products

Every purchase of products totalling more than \$50.00 will attract 10% discount. This discount applies to purchases made in the clinic or by phone order.



## Latest research

### ACUPUNCTURE MAY EASE DEPRESSION

A meta-analysis of eight randomised controlled trials has found that acupuncture is beneficial in the treatment of depression. Data from 477 depression sufferers was studied to conclude that acupuncture is particularly useful in reducing the severity of depression.

### OMEGA-3 BOOSTS SATIETY DURING WEIGHT LOSS

Long chain omega-3 fatty acids have been shown to reduce hunger sensations and increase satiety. When weight loss study participants ate a meal supplemented with a high dose of omega-3 they had fewer hunger sensations following the meal, which lasted up to two hours later. An improved omega-3 to omega-6 ratio was associated with higher satiety.

### PELARGONIUM FOR ACUTE BRONCHITIS

A systematic review of randomised controlled trials of a South African geranium known as 'umckaloabo' (meaning heavy cough) has shown positive findings in the treatment of acute bronchitis. The studies reported that bronchitis symptoms such as cough, chest pain, sputum and difficult breathing were reduced more effectively and faster than placebo and conventional therapy. Pelargonium has been used widely in Europe for respiratory tract infections and is now stocked in the HealthWise herbal dispensary.

### FIBRE REDUCES RISK OF ENDOMETRIAL CANCER

A newly published review of scientific studies

revealed that getting at least 5 grams of fibre for every 1000 calories consumed could lower the risk of endometrial cancer by up to 20%. If you eat about 2000 calories a day, you only need to grab a cup of oatmeal for breakfast (4 grams), snack on 30g of almonds in the afternoon (3.5 grams), and have a medium-sized baked potato with the skin at dinner (5 grams) to put you above the range that proved beneficial in the study.

### BREATHING EXERCISES REDUCE DEPENDANCY ON ASTHMA MEDICATION

Australian researchers have used two different forms of breathing exercises to reduce their need for asthma reliever medication by 86% and their preventative medication by half. One group of patients was taught Buteyko-style breathing exercises that involved taking shallow breaths through the nose, and then holding the breath. The other group learnt posture correction, relaxation techniques and arm and shoulder exercises aligned with breathing cycles. Both groups did their exercises twice daily and whenever they got asthma symptoms, over a 32-week period. These breathing exercises may help people who use a reliever puffer by reducing how often they'll need the puffer and in some cases, doctors may be able to reduce the amount of preventer puffer their asthmatic patients need.



Visit [www.healthwiseclinic.com.au](http://www.healthwiseclinic.com.au) and visit our 'helpful links' to view the free asthma breathing exercises tutorial videos.

### Home health tip:

## Cleansing facial scrub

This simple home cleanser is great for gently exfoliating and rejuvenating dry winter skin. It's easy to prepare - most people will have the ingredients already in their pantry!

1 cup rolled oats  
1 tablespoon cinnamon (preferably not too finely ground)

Roughly mix the oats and cinnamon and store in an airtight container, out of direct sunlight. To make a facial scrub, take a small handful of the mix and combine with just enough warm water to make a rough paste. Gently rub over the face and neck in a circular motion, being careful of delicate skin around the eyes. Wash off with warm water. Dry the face, lightly moisturise and enjoy the feeling of your soft fresh skin!

This mixture can be easily adapted, depending on your preferences and what you have at home - a couple of drops of good quality Lavender oil or Lemon oil can be a lovely addition, not only smelling good but also having a direct antimicrobial effect on the skin.

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We can provide you with a HealthWise gift voucher for any of our services. Treat your family and friends to massage, acupuncture or naturopathic appointments with our qualified practitioners. They will get exactly what they need to feel great! Call reception on 07 3839 1077 to purchase a gift voucher of your choice.



## A Personal Note From Us

It's hard to believe that it is a new financial year already as time is flying by so quickly. We are seeing many patients who are feeling it too - with low energy, feeling run down, exhaustion, tight muscles and easily catching colds - if this sounds like you pop on down to the clinic to recharge your batteries. And if you, or your family, have picked up a cold make sure to take advantage of our natural cold remedies in this issue and also our limited special on Echinacea Premium.

You may also notice some changes at reception next time you call in. Carmen has now moved interstate and we wish her very well for her adventures ahead. We are also welcoming Kobi MacDonald to our reception team. Kobi is studying naturopathy and is looking forward to meeting you soon.

Zam has returned from her Yoga retreat in Bali and is refreshed and ready to help you to achieve your health goals.

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*Yours in good health,*  
The HealthWise team

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