



**In this issue:**

Should I get the Flu Vaccine? 1

Flu Vaccine Position Paper—CNA 2

Is it the Flu or a Cold? 3

Nutrition Principals - Energy & Weight loss 4

Understanding your Feet 5

Ask the Expert 6

November 2005

# Vibrant Living

Your Guide to Vibrant Living through Fitness and Nutrition

## SHOULD I GET THE FLU VACCINE?

**Robin Walsh, BASc, ND**

This is a question I get asked daily, so I thought that I would address it in this issue of Vibrant Living. I tell my patients that before they consider getting the flu shot, it is important to become aware and informed of the potential risks and benefits. At the bottom of this article, I have included the Canadian Naturopathic Association's position on the flu shot and also some other well researched resources on the topic.

The best protection from infectious diseases is a robust immune system and daily healthy habits. There is a saying, "it is the terrain and not the disease" meaning that if your "terrain" or your body is healthy it doesn't matter what infection gets thrown it's way. Now, there are always exceptions to this rule, however it is very true for the routine infections such as the common cold and flu. In order to optimize your immune system, you need to address your underlying health conditions. It is very difficult for the immune system to fight infections if it is depleted from stress or another chronic disease. If you haven't explored a natural alternative approach to chronic disease, then contact a naturopathic doctor or other health care provider.

The most important defense you have, is maintaining an optimal nutrient intake and a strong digestive tract

- Try for 10 serving of fruits and veggies per day
- Include things like garlic, oregano, thyme and onions to your cooking to boost your immune system and fight viruses
- Avoid or limit sugar, caffeine and alcohol which reduce your immune fighting capabilities
- Keep hydrated...6-8 glasses of pure water/day. In the winter people tend to decrease their water intake, however

this puts extra metabolic stress on the liver, kidney and colon

- Avoid overeating, as it takes more energy to digest large amounts of food...all taking away energy from the immune system

It is also important to obtain an adequate amount of sleep and keep that stress level in check. Chronic stress will directly suppress the immune function and can lead to chronic infections. Try daily stress reducing activities such as meditation, yoga, massage or deep breathing. Deep breathing can have a powerful impact on your ability to "de-stress" and it is something that everyone has the ability to do. Take 5 minutes in the morning and evening and deep breath, also do this when stress is becoming overwhelming throughout the day. This will help to decrease the negative impact that stress has on your system.

Should you come down with a cold or flu this winter, there are many safe and effective alternative approaches to common ailments. Your local health food store is a reliable source for many alternative treatments for common conditions such as ear aches, colds and flus.

The occasional cold or flu is actually a good sign that means that your immune system is working and identifying infections. Colds and flus become a problem when you can't seem to shake an illness or when you keep getting chronically sick. At this point, your condition should be addressed by a Naturopathic doctor or health care practitioner who can determine the root cause of your chronic infections.

If you do come down with a flu or cold this winter and would like some naturopathic support to get you back on your feet, **acute visits are only \$35.**

## CANADIAN NATUROPATHIC ASSOCIATION POSITION PAPER—FLU SHOT

The Canadian Association of Naturopathic Doctors believes it is in your best interest to become informed about your health and treatment options before making any decisions about your health. Review the following information to become better prepared to determine if the flu vaccination is the best option for you or family members.

### Information on the influenza virus

- Millions of individuals develop the flu each year and only experience mild symptoms.
- There is a two day incubation period before symptoms of fever, cough, chills, sore throat, body aches, fatigue or headaches appear.
- Influenza virus spreads through coughing and sneezing, direct contact with contaminated surfaces and objects or unwashed hands.
- Flu symptoms usually subside after two to three days and disappear within a week.
- Once an individual has had the flu, their body will have produced antibodies that protect them from the same strain of virus for a prolonged period of time.
- Complications from influenza infection are very rare and may occur in individuals with an underlying medical condition, those greater than 65 years of age, and young children that have a predisposition to respiratory infections. Pneumonia is the primary complication of influenza and can result in hospitalization or death in those that are at extremely high risk for complications.

### Information on the 'flu' vaccination

- The 'flu' vaccination, more correctly termed the influenza vaccination, is a vaccine against specific strains of the influenza virus.
- There are over 500 different viruses that can cause flu like symptoms. The vaccine is formulated from the three most common strains seen in the previous year.
- The influenza virus is constantly changing. A flu vaccine is only effective against the same strain of influenza virus used to develop the vaccine.
- It takes about two weeks after the flu shot to develop sufficiently high levels of antibodies to protect you

from the influenza virus. These antibodies start to lose their effectiveness within a few months.

- According to Health Canada, the influenza vaccination is recommended for individuals at high risk for developing serious complications if they were to contract the influenza virus.
- High risk groups include all people aged 65 years or older, people with serious long-term health problems, diabetes, cancer, kidney disease, immunosuppressive disorders, children on long-term treatment with acetylsalicylic acid (ASA); as well as, health-care workers, residents / workers / volunteers of nursing homes, chronic-care facilities and retirement homes and women who will be more than 3 months pregnant during the influenza season.
- The research from Health Canada suggests that the flu vaccine that closely matches the current seasonal influenza strains temporarily prevents the flu in healthy persons less than 65 years old about 70% of the time.
- In individuals over 65 years of age the efficacy rate of the flu vaccine is reported to be less than 30%.
- 75% of individuals have prolonged (up to 2 days) soreness at the site of the injection.
- Children are at the greatest risk of side effects including: fever, body aches, allergic reactions and potentially a severe paralytic illness.
- There is a rare risk of allergic reaction in individuals with an allergy to eggs. Warning signs include: breathing difficulties, hoarseness, wheezing, hives, paleness, pronounced weakness, rapid heartbeat, or dizziness.

### Reported concerns and contraindications to the flu vaccine.

- According the manufacturer of the vaccines, the flu vaccination should NOT be given to persons with an acute respiratory infection or with any other active infection or serious febrile (fever) illness.
- Vaccination is also not recommended for individuals who develop anaphylactic type reactions (hives, swelling of the mouth and throat, difficulty breathing, hypotension and shock) when they eat eggs. Immunization should be avoided in patients with

## CANADIAN NATUROPATHIC ASSOCIATION POSITION PAPER—CONT'D

an active neurological disorder until they are stabilized.

- The normal immune response following influenza vaccination may not develop properly in individuals undergoing immunosuppressive therapy. This includes those taking high doses of systemic steroids.
- Thimerosal, a mercury containing compound, is commonly used as a preservative in flu vaccines.
- There is a mild risk of a paralytic disorder called Guillain-Barre Syndrome.

### Points to consider before making a decision on flu prevention.

- If you already have had the influenza virus this year, your body will have developed antibodies to the influenza virus. Antibodies, developed by the body, when one has actually have the flu are more robust than antibodies from the flu vaccine and will protect one for a longer time.
- The selection of the influenza strains that make up the vaccine is a hypothesis or guess. There is no way of knowing what strains will be the most prevalent in any given season.
- The flu vaccine only promotes temporary (about 2 months) immunity to the viral strains or closely related viral strains contained in the vaccine.
- The only way to acquire natural and long term

immunity to a strain of the influenza virus is to recover naturally from the flu.

- The process that is used to destroy the viruses and create the vaccines often uses formaldehyde, heavy metals (mercury) and chemicals. There are concerns and need for more extensive research about the effect that these substances on the human body and the lack of long term safety associated with their use, especially with the potential for increased risks that yearly vaccinations might entail.
- Vaccinations prevent the body from naturally responding to external pathogens like viruses and bacteria. Individuals who regularly maintain a strong healthy immune system will protect themselves from any adverse effects of the flu, will build permanent immunity and will decrease the potential for developing unknown side effects from long term exposure to vaccinations.

*The flu vaccination was developed by the allopathic health care system to decrease the risk of contracting the influenza virus. However, the best way of preventing any flu or complications from any flu is through prevention. The main focus of prevention needs to be on daily healthy habits that ensure an optimum immune system and overall health. A strong immune system is the most effective prevention strategy against the flu or any other virus. If you have additional questions or concerns, please discuss these with your naturopathic doctor or other health practitioner.*

## IS IT THE FLU OR IS IT A COLD?

**Robin Walsh, BASc, ND**

Here is a chart that you can use to determine if you are suffering from a cold or the flu. While this chart will help, self diagnosis is not always safe and if your condition worsens or is not improving it is important to consult with a health care practitioner.

Most colds and flus are viral infections meaning that antibiotics and many pharmaceutical treatments will not be effective. However, there are many natural antiviral and immune building therapies that will preventatively boost your immune system or help you get over your illness more quickly. Talk to your naturopathic doctor if you are someone who chronically gets sick throughout the winter, or has a hard time getting over infections as you probably have a low functioning immune system.

| COLD             | Symptoms           | FLU                 |
|------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Rare             | Fever              | Characteristic      |
| Mild to moderate | Chest discomfort   | Common              |
| Common           | Stuffy nose        | Sometimes           |
| Slight           | Aches and pains    | Usual, often severe |
| Rare             | Headache           | Prominent           |
| Usual            | Sneezing           | Sometimes           |
| Never            | Extreme exhaustion | Early and prominent |
| Common           | Sore throat        | Sometimes           |
| Hacking          | Cough              | Nonproductive       |
| Very mild        | Tired/weakness     | Can last 2-3 weeks  |

## NUTRITION PRINCIPALS FOR PURE ENERGY AND WEIGHT LOSS

**Sarah Heipel, Certified Personal Trainer, Nutrition & Lifestyle Coach (Level 1)**

### 1. Living Water & Live Foods

Water is the second most important element to our health. It is essential for success in all health and weight loss goals.

- Drink half your body weight in ounces daily. If you weigh 200 pounds, you should be drinking 100 ounces of water a day.
- Balance your water intake with salt intake (Celtic or Himalayan sea salt): ½ teaspoon of salt per quart of water (every 4-5 glasses)
- Drink water from a pure source
- Eat a diet of water-rich foods: at least 70% of your diet

### TAKE THE TEST

- a. Write down everything that has passed your lips in the last 24hrs:

---

---

---

- b. Do you think there is a reason you may not be performing at your optimal peak? What do you notice?

---

---

- c. Looking at your list, what percentage of your diet is made up of water-rich foods?

---

2. Alkaline-Forming Foods balance the acids in our body. Too much acidity is the cause of lethargy, fatigue, weight gain, and ultimately much bigger health challenges and disease.

### Consequences of an Imbalanced / Overly Acidic pH

- Weight gain – acid causes the body to produce more insulin, which leads to an increase in fat storage.
- Free radical damage of cell walls is accelerated. This leads to premature aging, eyesight and memory

problems, wrinkles, age spots, poor hormone regulation, etc.

- Irregular blood pressure due to increased workload on the heart
- Acid increases the likelihood of cellular mutations
- Decreased cellular metabolism
- An acid pH allows the binding of cholesterol to heavy metals and other cellular debris, increasing the rate at which plaque builds up in the vascular network.

To maintain a healthy body and maximize you energy and vitality, the best thing you can do for your body after proper oxygenation and hydration is provide it with the nutrients it needs: green foods / alkaline forming foods with greater energy and life force.

- Ideal foods to choose: asparagus, avocado, alfalfa spouts, almonds, beet tops, carrots, celery, cucumbers, cauliflower, cabbage, cantaloupe, coconut, lemons, limes, green/yellow/red peppers, onions, garlic, radishes, green leafy vegetables, wheat grass, walnuts, tofu, lima beans, spinach, turnip tops, melons, mangos, papaya, figs, watermelon, parsley, navy beans, soy beans, nuts, etc.
  - Supplement your diet with quality greens like wheat grass juice or powdered greens (organic grasses, green vegetables, spouted grains, and fibrous herbs)
  - Add fresh lemon/ lime to your water
  - Avoid acid forming foods: processed foods like refined sugar, white flour, cheese, milk, sour cream, margarine, hot dogs, etc. Also, coffee, black tea, alcohol, and soft drinks.
3. Essential Oils are necessary for the health of our skin, hair, hormones, immune system, metabolism, muscle function, energy, blood, etc.
- Omega 3 and Omega 6 fatty acids are essential to our health and cannot be produced by the body, therefore we must consume them.
  - Foods that contain unprocessed fats in their natural state: avocado, almonds, hazelnuts, pumpkin seeds, flax seeds, sunflower seeds, flax



## UNDERSTANDING YOUR FEET

### Dr. Adam Williamson, DC

Lack of proper care, ill-fitting shoes and general foot neglect are responsible for the majority of foot problems. It's important to understand your feet have direct impact on the rest of your body and support you with each step.

A small abnormality in foot function can have a large impact on joints higher up in the body, causing pain and discomfort. When you are running, the pressure on your feet can be three or four times your body weight. Even walking can produce more pressure than the sum of your body weight.

The American Podiatric Medical Association says that the average person takes 8,000 to 10,000 steps a day. That adds up to about 115,000 miles in a lifetime or more than four times the circumference of the globe. That is a lot of walking with ill-fitting shoes or painful feet!! In some cases foot ailments can be an early signal of more serious medical problems like arthritis or diabetes.

Women have four times as many foot problems as men because they have a long history of wearing high heels and/or pointy toe shoes. Orthotics and proper shoe fit are very important aspects of foot health. Remember if you are experiencing pain or discomfort in your ankles, knees or hip joints ....the direct cause may be the function of your feet or ill-fitting shoes.

### Foot Facts

People punish their feet daily by wearing ill fitting shoes or by walking around on feet that do not function properly. Educate yourself and start improving the health of your feet.

#### 1. Foot Fact Number 1

25 % of the Bones in the Body are in your feet. Your feet are a complex system of 52 bones, 66 joints, 214 ligaments, 38 muscles and tendons. It is no wonder that 75% of North Americans will experience foot health problems of varying degrees, at some point in their lives. You could be walking in comfort with professionally fitted custom orthotics.

#### 2. Foot Fact Number 2

The average person takes 8,000 to 10,000 steps per day. Your feet have an important job; they carry you throughout the day, with every step making an impact on your body. If your foot functions improperly it will have an effect on joints higher up the kinetic chain (your ankle, knee, hip and spine). This may result in pain or discomfort. Most individuals will seek out medical attention for the symptoms they are experiencing in their joints, but do not realize the source of their pain is their feet.

#### 3. Foot Fact Number 3

The Right Running Shoe for You...If you are active, it is important that you select the right athletic shoe for your sport and for your foot type. With so many choices on the market, you should consult an expert for the best brand and model for your particular foot each time you buy.

#### 4. Foot Fact Number 4

60-70% of People with Diabetes have Mild to Severe Forms of Nerve Damage, Often Impairing the Sensation of the Feet. Foot disease is one of the complications of diabetes. Severe nerve damage in the feet can lead to ulceration and often lower extremity amputations. Early prevention and treatment of foot disease can be managed by effective foot care practices. These practices include: diagnosis of high pressure areas on the diabetic foot and treatment with properly fitted orthotics or footwear.

#### 5. Foot Fact Number 5

Many Foot Conditions (Bunions, Calluses, Corns, etc.) Are Caused by Ill Fitting Shoes. Most individuals buy shoes that do not properly fit their feet and that tend to aggravate foot ailments. When shopping for shoes make sure you go in the afternoon – your feet swell during the day. Also bring the proper socks for the style of shoe you will be buying, and if applicable, bring your custom orthotics. Shoe sizes vary based on the shoe make and style – do not always assume you will be the same size every time. Achieving the Proper Fit: The toe box should have a ton of room; make sure you can wiggle your toes. Ensure the width fits properly (your forefoot should never be wider than the shoe) Your heel should be stable within the heel counter. The shoes should feel comfortable the moment you try them on.

If you have any questions regarding your feet and how they may be contributing to other problems or would like to have a biomechanical analysis of your feet and walking gait call Dr. Adam Williamson at 747-1650.



## Your Guide to Vibrant Living

**ROBIN WALSH BASC, ND**

CHIROPRACTIC ASSOCIATES

175-100 REGINA ST. SOUTH

WATERLOO, ONTARIO

N2J 3T9

519.747.1650

ROBIN@ROBINWALSHND.COM

WWW.ROBINWALSHND.COM

**SARAH HEIPEL, CPT, SNS, CFC**

STUDIO ENEGI

B10-490 DUTTON DRIVE

WATERLOO, ON

N2L 6H7

519.888.8339

INFO@SARAHHEIPEL.COM

WWW.SARAHHEIPEL.COM

**DR. ADAM WILLIAMSON, DC**

CHIROPRACTIC ASSOCIATES

175-100 REGINA ST. SOUTH

WATERLOO, ONTARIO

N2J 3T9

519.747.1650

DR\_ATWILLIAMSON@HOTMAIL.COM

### ASK THE EXPERT

In this edition, Robin Walsh, BASC, ND answers a question from one of our readers.

#### QUESTION:

In the last 3 years, I have developed several skin tags. The really embarrass me, what causes them?

#### ANSWER:

Skin tags, or acrochordons as they are medically known are small growths of the skin that develop on the face, neck, armpit and groin. Skin tags are a benign condition that results when a bit of skin protrudes from the surrounding skin. They vary in appearance, and may be smooth or irregular, flesh coloured or pigmented and be raised from the skin or actually hang from a "stalk" of skin.

Skin tags usually begin to appear in middle aged people, and seem to be more common in women. They are treated by freezing them with liquid nitrogen, tying off the tag with a suture to cut off the blood supply, or snipping the tag with surgical scissors. They are a benign condition meaning that

they are not pre-cancerous, however they may signify an underlying imbalance.

Several studies have been done to reveal that skin tags may be associated with poor blood sugar regulation such as diabetes and/or cardiovascular disease. A study published in the Journal of Dermatology in 2005 revealed that while more research needs to be conducted, there appears to be a connection between skin tags and insulin resistance (pre-diabetic condition), obesity, and impaired carbohydrate and lipid metabolism.

So, what does this mean? Skin tags might be a useful clinical sign that could alert clinicians to screen individuals for abnormal lipids, type 2 diabetes mellitus, and cardiovascular disease.

Therefore, if you are developing skin tags, and have other risk factors for cardiovascular disease (visit heart and stroke website if you are unclear) then it is advisable to get screened for both heart disease and diabetes.