

Newsletter Winter 2011

Human Nature
Natural Health



Welcome to the winter 2011 quarterly newsletter from the doctors and staff of Human Nature Natural Health. The response to our first newsletter has been extremely gratifying. We received lots of wonderful questions and had many discussions with many of you in response to the articles. Your feedback about what you wanted to see in future newsletters, resources you wanted added to the website and your priorities for the clinic itself was and is invaluable.

Again, we look forward to your questions and feedback on everything that we're doing. You can contact us by phone, fax or email, or chat with us next time you're in.

One Year of HNNH

Winter is a perfect time to hunker down, conserve strength for the next year's growth, and reflect on the past year. You see it reflected in nature all around you, and the same energy is true for people as well.

As we begin our second year we at HNNH look back on our first year and are grateful for the many wonderful blessings we have.

These include a beautiful facility that reflects our vision – calm, healing, full of state of the art healing equipment, with welcoming touches of home, and a staff that is dedicated to the best in natural health care, and truly enjoys working together and being part of your healing journey.

It all started with a simple idea - to truly treat the unique individual that is you. We strive to make that manifest in everything that we do; from the individualization and precision of our dietary and supplement recommendations, the wide range of treatments we offer, to how we respond to your need for support with your health guidelines.

It's only been possible because you've told us what's working well, and where you want to see change.

We've worked hard to refine our
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Maintaining Elemental Balance Through the Winter

Dr. George Savastio

One of the wonderful insights provided by the Elemental Profiles is that it recognizes that, no matter how isolated or separated from nature you may feel, it's simply not possible to be separate in any way from your environment. You are nature, whether you experience it or not. And, in spite of all our technology, our heated houses, workplaces and automobiles, our bodies do change with the change of the season. This article will, we hope, help you understand how to bring your body through the long winter in the best possible health and spirits.

A good part of staying healthy through the winter is making sure you become acclimated to the cold. Humans thrive in all kinds of environments, and the cold need not be an exception. However, it's much harder to adapt to changes in the climate if you do not make a point of getting yourself outdoors on a regular basis as the weather begins to change in the autumn. Your daily exercise time is perfect for this, whether you run, cycle or walk. If you accept the continuing change of nature, your attitude accommodates. If you're exposed regularly to the outdoors, your body accommodates. The autumn places a bigger strain on your ability to adapt because the weather differs so much from day to day. This flux is good preparation, because it keeps you nimble and flexible in response to the elements. Once the cold really settles in you'll be used to it, and it won't seem such a deterrent to spending time outside. Nothing makes the winter so

long as being cooped up inside your super-heated house grumbling at the weather. Worse, the weather shocks your body every time you're exposed to it when you don't make a deliberate effort to acclimate.

This brings up the issue of whether sauna and steam baths are helpful to your body in the winter months. The answer is a qualified yes. Nothing feels as wonderful as a wood-fired sauna on an icy day. Yet, the Scandinavian practice of sauna in the winter is usually accompanied by a roll in the snow or a dip in the icy water between rounds. For a determined indoor type, the extra heat of the sauna only makes the disparity between the body and the natural world greater, which is the opposite of the balance that elemental medicine aims for.

It is wise to align the energy of your food with the energy of the season. Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) in particular has some good insights that support traditional ways of eating in the winter months. The energy of nature draws in and down in the winter. This is most plainly seen in the activities of plants. Leaves drop from the trees, and the perennials in your garden recede back into their roots as nutrients are stored underground over the winter. TCM recognizes that foods create a pattern of energy flow in your body. Lively, zesty foods create an upward flow, such as ginger and many spices. The sort of earthy roots and tubers that our ancestors kept in their root cellars to feed the family over the winter have a downward energy that helps align you with the greater pattern of nature. Of course, consider the foods listed in your booklet when choosing your meal plans. Meats also have a grounding tendency.

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Natural Skin Care & Aesthetic Medicine

Effective Natural Solutions for Skin, Hair & Body Care

Following an exhaustive six-month search, Human Nature Natural Health is excited to announce that we have a complete line of natural skin care products, as well as unique oxygenating facial treatments, now available to patients.

We researched and evaluated many different companies in order to bring you the highest quality products.

In our research we were surprised to find that most of the cosmetic industry, even those that offer natural and organic products, use artificial ingredients and often toxic chemical in their skin care lines.

It's a well-known fact that whatever you put on your skin you are also putting in your body. Why eat organic foods and take pure supplements and then introduce toxic chemicals into your system in an attempt to enhance the texture and beauty of your skin?

We are thrilled to offer a top-quality, additive-free alternative in natural skin care.

Francesca Ciani L.M.T., who already has a large following among our patients in her massage practice, has now added facials to her list of available therapies. She's excited to be able to offer individualized oxygenating facials, which is a unique therapy that combines our line of deep-cleansing, exfoliating and soothing products with the boost that only pure oxygen gives.

It not only feels great while you're having it done, it makes an instant and lasting difference in the glow and texture of your skin.

Our skin care line addresses many different problem areas, including:

- Hyper-pigmentation (sun spots, liver spots)
- Anti-aging to reduce wrinkles, smile lines and crow's feet
- Collagen boosting to support the inner structure of the skin
- Cooling for inflamed skin, such as rosacea or other forms of acne or redness
- Soothing and calming for sensitive skin
- Deep-cleansing for oily skin and acne

Organic Hair Care

We are also very excited to have just finalized importing an organic shampoo, conditioner and dandruff treatment line from Canada. Manufactured with organic ingredients and no artificial preservatives, these products give you another option in your daily regimen to not have to apply chemically laden products to your body in order to get your desired effect.

Finally, we've also found an effective deodorant line originally from Australia. Available in three different scents, they provide protection without chemicals, or potassium alum, a common ingredient in natural deodorants, but controversial because of it's close relation to aluminum.

Contact Francesca, Joanne or one of the doctors to learn which products and services are right for you.

Home Treatments for Colds and Flu

Dr. Beth Devlin

I would like to share some hydrotherapy treatments that you can do at home as part of treatment of colds and flu. However, don't forget to come see us or call when you're acutely ill.

One of my favorite treatments for congestion either in the lungs or sinuses is the wet sock treatment. It sounds very unpleasant but once you're in bed, a wet socks treatment is actually quite cozy and can have profound results. It's important to be warm at the beginning of the treatment, so if you or your family member is cold it might be best to take a warm shower or bath first. To start, place a pair of plain cotton socks in cold water, wring them out well and put them on, then cover them with a dry pair of wool socks and hop into bed. Remember, it's important to keep the rest of the body warm. When you wake in the morning your feet will be warm and dry and you will be less congested overall.

The way it works is quite simple. You may sweat or have a fever during the night. The cold of the socks causes constriction in the blood vessels of the feet. The action of the body warming the feet has a sedating effect, then as the body continues to heat the congestion is decreased, the circulation increases and there is a positive effect on the immune system. The immune system produces more of a response at higher body temperatures. This is why it's important not to suppress a fever unless it remains over 104, or the person becomes dehydrated.

Similarly, if someone is suffering from a cold or sinus infection accompanied by a headache, one could try a hot foot bath. Fill a tub with hot water. To avoid burning yourself, test the temperature on your wrist first. Place your feet in the water and cover up with a wool blanket. Place a cold compress on the forehead. Sit for 20 minutes and end by rinsing the feet with cool water. You can add Epsom salts or a few drops of your favorite essential oils to the water if you like.

Another favorite is steam inhalation. Bring a pot of water almost to a boil. Add 2-3 Tablespoons of aromatic herbs such as Rosemary or thyme from your kitchen pantry. The essential oils of these herbs are anti-microbial and anti-inflammatory. Chamomile and lavender flowers are also a nice choice for steam inhalation and can help to calm a cough as well as provide anti-microbial and anti-inflammatory action. Cover your head and the pot with a towel, and deeply inhale the steam until the essential oils are gone, usually about 10 minutes or so.

There are many more home hydrotherapy treatments like herbal baths and compresses but more on those later. If you have any questions about these or any other home treatments give us a call.

Public Lecture Series

As part of our mission to make our medicine accessible to the greater community, we are giving lectures on a variety of subjects including women's health, pediatrics, cancer care, diabetes care, or any topic of interest related to natural medicine. If you know of a civic or community group that would be interested in having one of the doctors lecture, or even if you have a group you'd like to host yourself, please let us know.

Running Outdoors Through the Winter

Dr. George Savastio

Your first thought upon reading the title of this article might be, "Running outdoors through the winter! Why would I want to do that?" You could hardly be blamed for such a thought in a world that has learned to place such a premium on comfort and ease. And yet, as one who has consistently run through all four New England seasons for many years in all kinds of weather, I can attest that it is not only possible to run outdoors through the winter, it's a practice that accrues multiple benefits, not the least of which is the enjoyment of running through the woods when they are filled with sparkling snow. At this point, I feel the need to make the standard sort of caveat that running through the winter is not suited for all constitutions and individuals, so please consult with your doctor before heading out into the snow if running hasn't been prescribed for you. A brisk walk in the winter cold may be more fitting for you.

I would begin with the argument that human beings are happier and healthier when they live outdoors, living a rugged, natural lifestyle. This is not the lonely opinion of an off-the-wall tree-hugger; it is common thought among anthropologists who have studied the fortunate few who maintain unspoiled traditional lifestyles in our increasingly corporate, globalized world. When such people are found in the temperate climates, they routinely employ what might be called "hardening" techniques to toughen themselves up for the winter months. You might think of the Scandinavian practice of rolling in the snow

or dunking in lakes through holes broken though the ice in between rounds in the sauna. The Native Americans employed similar practices. Along the same lines, the naturopathic profession can directly trace its roots to the European practice of dousing patients in cold water to stimulate the "vital force" in order to bring about healing.

Running through the ice, snow and storms of the winter goes a long way toward hardening you so that you can handle the winter weather with relative ease. Plus, there's a real satisfaction to knowing that you can handle whatever nature throws at you. The intent of this article is not to suggest that you join the Polar Bear Club, but rather to encourage a winter exercise practice that is satisfying in its own right, and confers greater immunity to winter ailments such as colds and flu along the way. With the right clothing and an easy modification to your running shoes, there's no reason that the weather should ever consign you to the treadmill when it comes time for your daily run.

Technology has made wonderful advances in providing lightweight fabrics that are remarkably wind-resistant, keep the rain out, and, best of all, "wick" away your perspiration so that you don't get chilled by your own sweat. The trick is to put on just enough clothing to stay warm, but not so much that you are bathed in sweat, because that will overwhelm the wicking system. That just takes a little practice, and a willingness to feel a bit cool as you're warming up, so that you'll be comfortably warm once you're up to full steam.

The standard approach of layering clothing works best. If it's really cold, a

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Seasonal Flu Vaccination

Dr. Ian D. Bier

At this time of year people's thoughts turn to the long winter ahead, and the invariably impossible to avoid exposure to colds and flu. We always get many questions about the influenza vaccination, especially these last few years as the pressure to get immunized has increased. Like any medical procedure, any vaccination decision should only be made after carefully assessing the risks and benefits. Most conventional medical practitioners see only benefit from the influenza vaccination and ignore the risks; on the other side you have many people who ignore any possible benefit and focus solely on the potential risks of vaccinations.

For the seasonal flu vaccine, most of the best research seems to be indicating that there really isn't any evidence to support its use. I know that statement probably contradicts everything that you've heard, but it's based on an extremely comprehensive research review put together by the well-regarded Cochrane collaboration (www.cochrane.org). In its own words, the Cochrane collaboration is "an international, non-profit, independent organization, established to ensure that up-to-date, accurate information about the effects of healthcare interventions is readily available worldwide."

The collaboration has produced over 4000 reports on different healthcare interventions. Not surprisingly, their report on influenza vaccinations is one of the more controversial, because the results they got were not what people expected, or necessarily wanted to learn. Their conclusion, after evaluating 50 studies with data of

research trials of over 70,000 people is that: "Vaccination had a modest effect on time off work and had no effect on hospital admissions or complication rates. Inactivated vaccines caused local harms and an estimated 1.6 additional cases of Guillain-Barré Syndrome per million vaccinations. "

So, if we look at the risk:benefit ratio question, if you're interested in possibly reducing the chance of your taking time off of work for flu related illness, then there may be a benefit to the seasonal flu vaccination. If you're concerned about more serious complications of the seasonal flu, the vaccination will not be helpful.

We have many options to decrease the likelihood of getting, and reduce the severity and symptoms of winter viruses, whether you chose to vaccinate or not. Even though I'm at the clinic 5 days a week, I keep a bottle of cold/flu tincture at home, knowing that it's likely to be Friday night when someone in the house starts to come down with symptoms. If you have any questions about treating or preventing winter viruses, just talk to one of us.

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medicine to make it more specific and effective, with a more realistic view to how to make it work in your life.

We've expanded into new areas, offering therapeutic massage as well as a complete line of natural and effective aesthetic products.

For our second year, we look forward to continuing to refine what we do, so that we can truly serve the unique needs of you, your family and community. Please continue to let us know how we can.

Dandelion, a Common Weed and Versatile Medicine

Dr. Beth Devlin

I spent quite a bit of time ruminating about which herb to discuss in this issue of the newsletter. Then it came to mind to choose Dandelion. To me, January is a wonderful time to think about Dandelion, also known as *Taraxacum officinale*.

It's decidedly not cutting edge, exotic or even sexy, but it was probably the first plant I developed a relationship with. Originally a native of Greece, it can now be found in many parts of the world, including our New England backyards. As a child I remember lying in the grass surrounded by the beautiful yellow flowers - what child can resist blowing the seeds from a mature plant? The color and vibrancy of the dandelion has a lot of appeal as we find ourselves in deep winter.

Dandelion is a plant that offers many therapeutic benefits. As a constitutional remedy it reduces fire due to its cooling, bitter, and slightly sweet qualities. The leaves of the plant have been used widely for their diuretic effect and the root is better known for its actions on the liver and gallbladder. I tend to use the whole plant. Dandelion also cleanses the blood and lymph glands while dispelling stagnated heat. This makes it a great addition to herbal formulas for women during menopause. The cleansing of the liver helps the body rid itself of excess estrogen and estrogen-like compounds. This in turn makes it a great herb for women with mastitis, cysts, and tumors of the breast. Dandelion also is a minor laxative and can be helpful in cases of chronic constipation. Historically it was also used for rheumatism.

Dandelion can be used in tinctures or teas and in the spring the leaves are great in salads and soups. If making a tea of the root and or dried leaves use 2 tsp. per cup of water, and drink cool or at room temperature.

This is a very safe herb; however, the action on the liver may affect the way your body metabolizes some medications. It's also not a good herb to take if you're experiencing diarrhea or any gastric upset. Dandelion contains high amounts of potassium which makes it an even more appealing diuretic, as well as vitamin A, C, B6, and choline.

Although many people find this plant to be a nuisance I have to envy several of its characteristics; it's vibrant, tenacious and can thrive in almost any situation.

Complimentary Office Visit

We've had a wonderful response to our offer of a complimentary office visits to fine-tune your guidelines according to your full *Constitutional Type*.

If you are a current patient and interested in learning more about your constitution and how to live in better harmony with the body you have, we'll be happy to see you for a free office visit to discuss your *Elemental Profile*, how it works with your *BioPhenotype* to define your complete *Constitutional Type* and fine-tune your diet, supplements and lifestyle recommendations.

Research Corner

The research corner of the website is now live. We will be posting and commenting on research studies in different areas of interest. If you have a particular area you're curious about, just let us know.

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spandex (or one of the many variants currently available – polypropylene is a little warmer for those below-zero days) long-sleeve top and tights can be worn under a looser outer layer. If there's a snow or ice storm going on, I'll put on a gore-tex shell to keep the moisture out. I've been snug on days as cold as 24 below zero, and stayed comfortable through many storms. I prefer mittens on the really cold days, and I choose between three headwear options, depending on the temperature. If it's 20 or above, a wool hat works nicely. From zero to 20, a gore-tex hat is the choice. For those below zero mornings, a spandex ski-mask (sometimes called a babushka) under the gore-tex hat keeps the noggin from freezing. You can find the temperature –gear combinations that work for you with just a little practice.

Now, about maintaining traction on snow and ice. There are various gadgets that you can strap onto your shoes in order to prevent slipping. I should know, because I've broken them all, and usually within a week or so of purchase. What works best is to buy a little package of 3/8" self-tapping sheet metal screws. You drill them; point first, into the soles of your standard running shoes. If you run off-road, the screws will hold very well, with only an occasional need for replacement. If you're a road-runner, you may need to check them after every run, and replace as needed. The screw heads really bite into the ice and snow, and provide superb traction, even on black ice. They give you the confidence you need to run on any surface you're likely to encounter.



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So, this winter, don't look for excuses to stay indoors just because it's cold outside. If you make up your mind to take on winter's challenge, everything you need for success is right at hand.

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Stews, soups, casseroles, roasts and other hearty meals keep the body warm and align with the energy of the season. Warm spices are fine along with this type of fare. However, just because we have access to summer produce in the winter through the miracles of modern transportation doesn't mean it's good to consume them at this time. Cold drinks and raw foods such as salads and fresh fruit place a strain on the system in the winter and rob precious heat from the digestion. TCM recognizes that the "stomach fire" runs a little smaller in the winter, and equates eating raw food to dumping wet leaves on a small camp fire.

The winter need not be a time of frequent colds or endless longing for spring. Adjust your attitude and your body to cope with the changes that nature inevitably brings.