
December 2007 Newsletter

Don't get sick!

Cold, sore throat, flu and sinusitis season is hovering and looking for somewhere to land. For ideas about how to prevent these winter miseries, and for some non-toxic ways of dealing with symptoms, feel free to drop by our office for a copy of our handout, *Cold, Flu and Sinusitis*. It is important to remember that most of the time there is no value in antibiotics for these conditions, so arm yourself with some evidence-based natural treatments that may help prevent the illness or reduce the symptoms.

Antibiotics and probiotics

If you do need to take antibiotics for any reason, it is especially important to include food with live cultures ('probiotics') in your diet while you are taking the antibiotic, and for a week or two afterwards. Probiotics refer to the beneficial bugs ('cultures') that grow in these foods and help restore the normal 'friendly' bacteria and yeast in your body, helping you to maintain a normal immune system and avoid unnecessary diarrhea and yeast infections that sometimes are associated with antibiotic use.

Good examples of probiotic foods are natural yogurt with live cultures and kefir (a yogurt-like drink). Buy plain unsweetened versions like *Nancy's* or *Mountain High* (sweeten to taste with honey and/or fresh fruit), which probably maximizes the quantity of friendly bugs you are getting. Be sure to read ingredient labels, as many yogurts (especially fat-free versions) have added sweeteners, fillers, and artificial flavors.

Flu Shots

If you would like to get a flu shot, we recommend a flu shot clinic at your local pharmacy or supermarket, which usually offer flu shots at a very reasonable cost. Pneumonia shots are typically given to people over 65 every six years or so.

Chicken Soup

Your grandmother was right. Chicken soup deserves a mention in any discussion of the common cold, flu, and the like. Here is a recipe for a basic and comforting chicken soup.

A Soothing Chicken Soup

2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
2 cups onion in ¼-inch dice
2 cups celery in ¼-inch dice
1 tablespoon fresh crushed garlic
1 teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon freshly ground pepper
4 cups chicken stock
2 cups shredded cooked chicken

- Heat oil in a heavy 5-quart pot over medium-high heat. Add onions and celery and sauté 12 – 15 minutes or until vegetables are very tender.
- Add garlic, and sauté another minute. Add salt, pepper, and chicken stock. Bring to a simmer and cook gently for about 15 minutes.
- Add chicken and continue cooking at a bare simmer for 10 minutes. Serve and eat. (*Serves 4*)

Narcotic note

Prescription pain medicines containing narcotics (such as hydrocodone, oxycodone, or morphine) are heavily regulated at the state and federal levels. Patients who are routinely using these will be asked to see one of us every 3 or 4 months if we are to continue prescribing them. We appreciate the extra expense and nuisance that this is for you, but we don't know of any other way to maintain the careful oversight that these drugs demand.

Rx reminders

Remember that the first step in getting a prescription refilled is to call your pharmacy, even if the prescription states 'No Refill.' The pharmacy will then fax our office with the refill request, which includes all the prescription details. We will return the fax to the pharmacy the same day. (Your pharmacy may tell you that the process will take four days, but that is not the case with our office.)

Insurance and you...

Please note that Dr. Hahn and Dr. Hassell are "out of network" providers on all health plans. We suggest you call your health insurance plan for benefit information on visits to a "non participating" or "out of network" provider.

Are you insured by Blue Cross Blue Shield (BCBS)? We are happy to continue billing BCBS for your visits but we ask that you pay at the time of visit, and then keep the check that BCBS sends directly to you. By paying at your time of visit, your bill will be discounted by 15%.

If you are insured with Providence Health Plan *Personal Option*, you will find there are no out-of-network benefits at all. As mentioned above, we ask that you pay at the time of visit, which will reduce your bill by 15%.

If you'd like to make a payment on your account with MasterCard or Visa, feel free to take care of it by telephone. Please call our billing department with any questions concerning your bill or insurance issues.

The Cookbook

For those of you who have asked about buying cookbooks in bulk, they are available in cases of 15 for \$225 which runs \$15 per book (regularly \$20.)

For anyone unfamiliar with *Good Food, Great Medicine*, the book is self published and simply presented, and was written by sister-and-brother team Mea and Miles Hassell. It offers an overview of the evidence supporting the case for a Mediterranean-style whole food diet, and suggests ways to translate that information into practical day-to-day living, cooking, and eating.

Finally...

Wishing you a calm and bright Christmas holiday and a New Year rich with joy and peace and discretionary amounts of refined carbohydrates.

Upcoming Speaking Events

1/14/2008 – *Nutrition Elective* at OHSU
(*This is a medical student audience*)

2/7/2008 - *Myth Busters* at Providence St Vincent Medical Center.

Discussing common misconceptions about which health choices matter and which ones do not. For example, are eggs and butter bad for you? (Miles Hassell MD)

(*This talk is open to the public and free. Stay tuned for more information as the date approaches.*)

2/12/2008 – *Management of High Triglycerides* at OHSU Lipid Journal Club
(*This is a physician audience*)