

Healthy Notes

Summer 2010

Lazy, Hazy Days of Summer

Wendy Harrell, Patient Coordinator

I wish I could be lazy in the summer ... but there is just so much to do! Sometimes, when it rains in the afternoon, I find myself on the porch with a good summer novel and a cat in my lap, but most of the time I am trying to fill every moment of warm sunshine.

In Asheville, the abundance of summer activities can be dizzying. Community fun includes Friday after Five concerts and drum circles, and fiddlin' at Shindig On the Green. Outdoor sports such as whitewater rafting and kayaking, mountain biking and hiking are all right outside my door. Plus the gardening and lawn mowing always need time and attention.

But early on Saturday mornings, it's hard to resist visiting one of the many tailgate markets around town, where gorgeous fresh local groceries can be found for a Saturday dinner party. While strolling musicians play, you can stroll from abundant stall to abundant stall, choosing from a delightfully diverse array of produce, a variety of fresh, local grass fed meats, seafood from the North Carolina coast, refreshing drinks, and tantalizing baked goods. I feel so inspired whenever I can create meals from such fresh ingredients. Mingling with the farmers and like-minded Asheville folks is also a big pleasure!

Fresh fruits and vegetables and grass fed meats are always the mainstay of my diet, but right now they're my complete diet since my family reunion is coming up and I'm feeling just a little pushed to lose some weight. AIM has implemented a new program offering a weight loss plan using the HCG protocol developed by Dr. Simeon. Jan Ross, RN, wrote this issue's article explaining how it works.

A healthy lifestyle is easiest when fresh food is abundantly available and there is so much beauty to explore outdoors. We are truly blessed in our special river-rich region! More good news: Maureen McDonnell, another RN in our practice, has just been named *WNC Woman* magazine's health editor! In the first article of her series, "Common Sense Approaches for Women's Health Issues," she offers tips for healthy aging. The article also includes an extensive interview with Dr. Biddle, so do pick up a copy of *WNC Woman* and please pass it around!



Common Sense Approaches to Women's Health Issues By Maureen McDonnell, RN

(Taken from an article first published in *WNC Woman* magazine July 2010)

Purpose of this new column:

Throughout our lives, women experience distinct and varied cycles (do maiden, mother, and crone ring a bell?). At each phase, we benefit from learning all we can about what our bodies are going through (which in turn enhances the joy, health and fulfillment inherent in each stage.) This column is dedicated to all of us, at every stage of our womanhood, in our search for vibrancy and optimal health!

I'm starting these columns with a piece on healthy aging because it's a topic that seems to be reaching critical mass, and because now that I'm 55, the concept totally intrigues me. However, we will in later issues also discuss the birthing process, childrearing, PMS, the special challenges of raising teens, natural approaches for anxiety and depression, menopause, breast health, preventing cancer, heart health (and maybe, if you the readers don't consider it "too out there", we could do an article on natural or green ways of passing on.)

I will warn you though, this won't be information on women's health you'd likely find in "O" Magazine, *Cosmopolitan*, *Vogue* or any other magazine whose main financial contributors are advertisers for prescription drugs. I'll be honest, I have one gigantic bias that I might as well get out in the open right now. As a registered nurse for 33 years, I think women, children and men are all being prescribed and taking way too many pharmaceuticals for our health issues.

So what I'd like to do in this column is reach out into the rich resources contained in these beautiful mountains and tap the brains of leading-edge thinkers and health practitioners for information on more natural approaches for helping us feel our best at whatever phase of our wonderful lives we find ourselves in!

Tips on Healthy Aging for Women.....

It's not about looking 40 when you're 50, or 60 when you're 80 (although I'm not saying that's a bad thing). More importantly.....it's about staying sharp, minimizing your chances for developing heart disease and cancer, keeping your bones and immune system strong, enjoying vitality, feeling fulfilled and having fun!

Contrary to what most of us have been conditioned to believe, now more than ever, healthy aging is a real possibility!

I've never liked the term "**Anti-Aging**".....how can you be against such a natural and inevitable process? No one likes the idea of getting older, but when you think about it, isn't dying the only alternative? With all the knowledge we have as to what accelerates the aging process and what lifestyle choices slow it down, more and more savvy women are able to make different and better choices than their mothers or grandmothers made, and seeing and experiencing amazing results.

One redeeming quality of an otherwise disappointing movie: *Sex in the City 2*, was when Samantha (played by the 54 year old actress Kim Cattrall) gave voice to the fact that many women are no longer accepting that loss of skin tone, decreased libido, an abdominal spare tire and declining memory are conditions to passively accept as inevitable. Even in the Muslim country they visited in the movie, women were armed with Susan Somers' book *Breakthrough* (which although apparently outlawed in their male dominated society, they carried underneath their burkas). The point is: our concern about growing older in a healthy way has hit the critical mass and more women are waking up to the array of options for growing older gracefully and with vibrant health. Although I predict the movie to be a bomb, I see it (as well as the popularity of Susan Somers' book) as indicators of the explosion of interest and demand for information on safe and effective ways of staying healthy and feeling our best as we enter and navigate through our third act.

Between women's magazines, health channels, and great websites such as the ones by Andrew Weil, MD (drweil.com), Christiane Northrup, MD (drnorthrup.com) and others, many of us have become familiar with the list of popular tips for staying healthy at any age that I've compiled below. The trick is to follow them. I for instance have been advocating most of this stuff for 30 years, but do I fall off the wagon periodically?For sure I do! But I must say, being in my mid 50's has provided me with more incentive to follow these guidelines (because unlike when we were in our 20's), I now see a clear and distinct difference in myself and others when healthy habits are practiced and when they are ignored.

Basic Tips for Healthy Living

- Eat an excellent plant-based diet that contains 4-5 cups of organic vegetables and fruit as well as lean organic protein (like eggs, salmon, chicken, nuts, grass fed beef etc).
- Consume plenty of pure water (improve your health and save money by getting a great water filter and drink from stainless steel or glass bottles instead of plastic).

- Keep your intestines healthy by consuming fiber (like flax seed, nuts, pumpkin seeds, fresh veggies), taking probiotics (good friendly bacteria that keeps the bad pathogenic organisms at bay) and have a good bowel movement at least once, preferably twice per day
- Use healthy fats including organic cold-pressed olive oil, nuts, avocados, walnuts and flax oil.
- Eat foods with a low-glycemic index (meaning they raise your blood sugar slowly instead of causing a surge of insulin and increasing inflammation)....foods such as nuts, seeds, veggies, protein and whole grains.
- Eat fruit by itself (because it digests more quickly when eaten alone as opposed to combining it with other foods which can lead to gas, bloating and improper digestion).
- Consume some super-foods like Acai, blueberries, and pomegranate as these colorful antioxidant rich foods help ward off chronic illness. That's right, that'd be the green light for small amounts of dark chocolate and red wine!
- Drink a couple of cups of green tea per day (new study shows in addition to all other health perks associated with green tea, it can also help protect against glaucoma and other eye disease). **
- Spice up your life and decrease inflammation with cayenne, turmeric and other anti-inflammatory herbs.
- Have an exercise routine that includes some cardio (its good to sweat), stretching like yoga and some resistance work. (Researchers at the Aging Research Center in Sweden found that those who exercise at least twice per week reduced their risk of dementia by more than 50% and of Alzheimer's by 60%).
- Perform brain stimulating activities. Learning challenging new dance steps or a new language are fun ways to keep the mind sharp.
- Get a good night's sleep (7-9 hours). ****
- Maintain and enjoy social connections with family and community.
- Take a good comprehensive multi (with adequate amounts of the B vitamins and the proper balance between magnesium and calcium). Consider additional nutrients such as fish oil as a source of anti-inflammatory Omega 3', Coenzyme Q 10 which helps improve cardiovascular health and improves energy at a cellular level.
- Get your Vitamin D blood level checked and take enough of this important vitamin to maintain a healthy heart, brain, immune function and bones. Since many of us aren't outside enough (and when we do go out we lather up with sunscreen), it's common to test low in Vitamin D. Recent studies have shown that those of us with Vit D levels above 50 have decreased incidence of dementia, heart disease and cancer.



In a recent interview with Jim Biddle, MD, (a doc here in Asheville who practices Integrative Medicine, which combines the best of both conventional and natural approaches to health), I asked him what he tells his female patients who are approaching, or in menopause, regarding staying healthy and aging gracefully. He said that although each woman would benefit from an individualized assessment to check for risk factors as well as a personally-tailored health plan, the tips I listed above were general fundamental principles that he agreed would help anyone interested in aging in a healthy way.

Dr. Biddle also discussed the importance of supporting hormonal balance. He explained that from puberty to menopause, there is a balance of natural estrogens, progesterone, DHEA and testosterone. Prior to, during and certainly after menopause, estrogen and progesterone both drop significantly. As a result, another hormone DHEA rises because the pituitary gland releases excessive FSH (Follicle Stimulating Hormone) to drive the ovaries to produce more estrogen and progesterone. But as we age, the ovaries become unresponsive to these signals. However, the adrenals answer the call of the pituitary for more hormones by creating more Androstenedione and DHEA. The problem is that these particular hormones can cause scalp hair loss and excess facial hair. Meanwhile the lack of estrogen and progesterone can also lead to more classic symptoms such as hot flashes, night sweats, insomnia, mood swings, urinary incontinence, weight gain, depression, vaginal dryness, loss of libido, as well as hidden symptoms of osteoporosis and accelerated wrinkling.

The good news from Dr. Biddle, and others who are experienced in helping women balance their hormones, is that they are finding when a full health assessment is done and bio-identical hormones are properly prescribed as a component of an overall health plan, women often experience positive results within a few weeks. "It does typically take a few months to fine tune the situation" Dr. Biddle told me, but went on to say "My patients tell me they love the fact that their skin turgor improves, they begin to sleep better, their hair grows back, their libido returns, their bone density improves, and their emotions feel more stable. Usually the women start feeling so great, they then want their husbands to come in and get fixed!"

Dr. Biddle's final comments had to do with one of the most common vitamin deficiencies people develop as we

age and that is Vitamin B-12. This is partly because it is a difficult vitamin to absorb as it requires stomach acid (which diminishes with age and is blocked by acid-blockers). It also requires a special protein called Intrinsic Factor which is made in the stomach and absorbed in the small intestines. As we age, we don't make either of these very well. Unfortunately, blood tests are not always sensitive enough to pick up a B-12 deficiency. European studies have shown that the brain can be deficient in B-12 even though the blood is measuring normal. When it is needed and replenished, Dr. Biddle stated "It makes a big difference in one's energy, mood, and cognitive functioning."

Finally, one last tip provided by my 69 year-old multi-talented neighbor and friend. Sheila Doughton has recently taken to climbing her very steep mountain every day (which has helped drop her blood pressure and weight significantly proving it's never too late to start an effective exercise program.) When asked to prioritize her tips for healthy aging, Sheila had this to say: "Laughing is number 1, 2 and 3 on my list. There's nothing healthier for you than a good old fashioned belly laugh.....all the rest (family, good friends, grandchildren by the bushel, walking our mountain, lots of veggies, good wine, hard work, tending your dreams each day etc.) falls under the big old laugh umbrella. It makes the small yucky stuff disappear and the big bad stuff less big and bad."

So, while we pop our vitamins, eat our colorful veggies, take our hormone creams and climb these incredible mountains, it's good to remember that laughing (even at ourselves trying to stay young) is definitely the best way to stay healthy at any age!

References:

Green Tea Catechins and Their Oxidative Protection", Kai On Chu et al, *J Agric Food Chem*, 1/19/10

Bad Habits Can Age You by 12 Years Lindsey Tanner Assoc Press 4/26/10

Influences of Individual and Combined Health Behaviors on Total and Cause Specific Mortality by E. Kvaavik et al. *Arch Internal Medicine* 4/26/10

Four Behaviors to Extend Your Life: *Journal PLOS Medicine*, 1-8-08

Ginger Scalone, RN, CCT, certified thermography nurse for Asheville Integrative Medicine travels to areas outside of Asheville to bring thermography to Tennessee, South Carolina and North Carolina.

See our website for a location near you!

www.docbiddle.com.

Asheville Integrative Medicine

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Dr. Biddle and Maureen McDonnell are available to speak to your group or organization on a multitude of topics.

For information or to schedule a talk, please contact Jayne at 828-252-5545.

HCG Weight Loss Diet

Losing weight can be a challenge for many people and is especially hard as one ages. At Asheville Integrative Medicine we have several strategies for assisting patients in this process.

We start with a sustainable diet which is primarily organic with adequate protein, high fiber, healthy fat and limited carbohydrates. It's important to avoid hydrogenated fats, processed foods and especially artificial sweeteners. If weight loss is desired, we recommend a 1:1 ratio of "effective" carbs to protein. (Effective carbs= total carbs minus fiber). Regular exercise combining aerobics and weight lifting should be implemented.

Then we look at what may be sabotaging weight loss. How is your thyroid functioning? Are gender hormones out of balance? Is there adequate absorption of nutrients? We address the possibilities of sleep apnea, heavy metal toxicities, chemical toxicities and food allergies.

Once all of the basics have been covered, we can then move to the HCG protocol if weight loss is still needed. HCG is a pregnancy hormone that is given in very small doses to help mobilize stored fat. It is usually only during pregnancy that we are able to utilize these deposits of stored fat. This enables weight loss in those problem areas not addressed in other diets.

HCG is given by injection, each morning for a period of 3-6 weeks. During this time a very low calorie diet is eaten. Often diets that utilize low calories will sabotage thyroid utilization so that the pounds lost (and often more) is quickly regained. The difference with the HCG protocol is that fat stores are being mobilized and utilized by the body, thus preventing the usual diet rebound.

During this phase of the protocol, sometimes the weight loss that occurs can be one pound per day. During a 3-6 week period of the HCG diet, one often loses 15-25 pounds. Again, much of the weight lost will be from the "problem" areas of the body.

Following the HCG phase of the protocol is a three week transition diet. After this, if one needs to lose more weight, they may repeat the HCG phase.

At Asheville Integrative Medicine we guide and support you through this process. We are available to help you initiate the diet, transition to the interim phase after completing a round of HCG, and later to move into a sustainable nutrition program.

Watermelon Salad makes a beautiful presentation for summer entertaining!

- 4 cups watermelon, seed removed, cut into bite-size pieces
- 1 pint blackberries
- ¼ c mint leaves, rolled and cut into thin strips

Toss all ingredients and let sit for 1 hour to blend flavors.

Watermelon Gazpacho is so refreshing on a hot day!

- 3 cups watermelon, seeds removed, cut into cubes
- 2 cups peeled seeded cucumber, cubed
- 1/2 cup chopped cilantro
- 1/4 cup minced chives or green onions
- 2 teaspoons finely chopped jalapeño pepper



Place all ingredients in food processor and blend until smooth. Season with salt, pepper and chopped herbs and let sit for 1 hour to blend flavors. Top with fresh yogurt.

The Facts About Vitamin D

- Vitamin D increases absorption of calcium from food and reduces loss of calcium through urine.
- Vitamin D is normally obtained through the diet or produced by the skin from the ultraviolet energy of the sun.
- As more people avoid sun exposure, Vitamin D supplementation becomes even more necessary to ensure your body receives an adequate supply.

How much vitamin D you need varies with age, body weight, percent of body fat, skin coloration, season of the year, latitude, use of sun block, individual variation in sun exposure, and—probably—how ill you are.
~ www.vitaminCouncil.org

Whoever wishes to investigate medicine properly should proceed thus: in the first place to consider the seasons of the year. ~ Hippocrates, the father of medicine (circa 400 B.C.)

Vitamin D

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Liquid 2000 IU per drop	1 oz	\$17.99



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