

Lisa Nicholson

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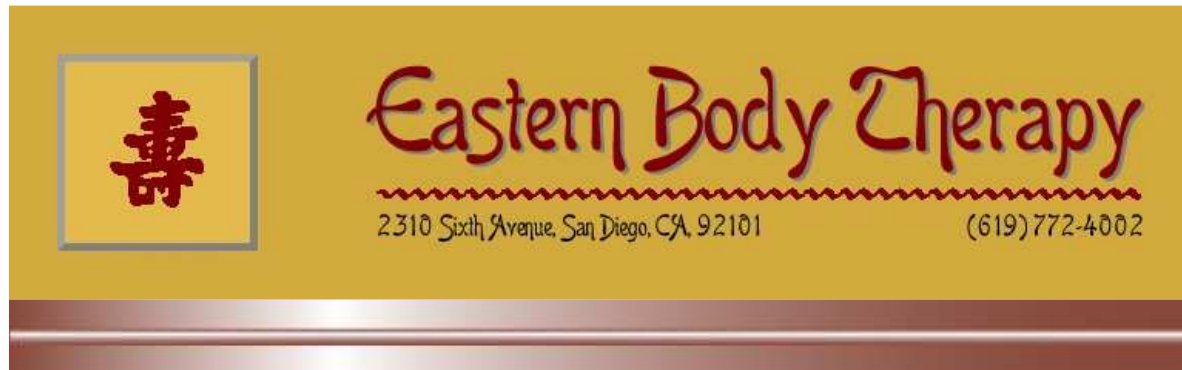
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To: lnicholson@ebtherapy.com

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Health Notes Spring Newsletter

April 2009 - Vol 2, Issue 2

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Dear Lisa,

Welcome to Eastern Body Therapy's Spring newsletter!

This newsletter is designed to give you useful health tips, recipes, and prevention information, not just to fill your in-box. I'm always looking for feedback on the articles, topics you'd like to see covered, and other suggestions. Please send your comments and suggestions to lnicholson@ebtherapy.com.



Feel free to forward this letter to anyone you think would benefit from it.

I'm here to be your partner in well-being. If there is anything I can do to help your Spring be more healthy, please let me know.

Peace and health,
 Lisa Nicholson, L.Ac.

Spring Cleaning



In Chinese Medicine, every season has an associated element, color, environmental condition, flavor and energy. Spring is the season of the

liver. Its color is GREEN, its flavor is sour, its element is wood, and its energy is windy. Spring is a time of movement and growth. Birds are nesting, flowers are starting to bloom, the scent of jasmine is everywhere in San Diego, the weather is alternately sunny and warm then cold and rainy. The weeds in my yard are growing with enthusiasm, and my CSA (Community Sustained Agriculture Program) is sending an array of produce from strawberries to more lettuce than two humans can consume in a week. Spring is a time of abundance and renewed hope, a time to plant the seeds for nourishment for the rest of the year.

As the days get longer, our activity level increases. We lose the strong urge to hibernate, and the desire to wake up and exercise becomes more insistent.

Here are some things you can do to bring yourself into harmony with the energy of spring.

Empty your closets When abundance is happening all around us, it is time to make room for what is to come. Take a look at what is accumulating in your home, and take inventory. Do you still need it? Does it still make you happy? If the answer is no, take the opportunity to clear the clutter and donate those items that are simply taking up space.

Wash your windows Nothing helps to bring clarity better than cleaning your windows. As the rainy season winds down, take an afternoon with a bottle of cleaner and wash away the winter debris. Then open those windows and let the fresh air and sunshine into your home.

Plant a garden Whether you live in an apartment or have 10 acres of land at your disposal, spring is the time to sow some seeds. Something as simple as a pot of herbs on your window ledge or balcony brings new life into your home, as well as a yummy addition to your meals for the rest of the year. If you have a few spare feet of land near your home, consider planting a garden. Choose your favorite veggies or herbs, dig up a small plot, add compost, and grab a few plants from your local farmer's market. When the tomatoes ripen in August, you'll be glad you did!

Clean up your attitude Has winter made you grouchy? Are some things not working in your life? Take a few moments or a day (whatever you need!) to take inventory and make some changes. An awesome book for helping you check in with your attitude is [Lies and Self Deception](#) by the Arbinger Institute.

Do a cleanse After a winter of exercising too little and eating hearty foods, your body would welcome a week or two of rest. Consider trying an anti-inflammatory diet of simple steamed rice and vegetables without wheat, corn, animal products, or soy. If you need guidance on how to do this, call me and we can discuss your particular needs and make a plan for giving your digestive tract a well-deserved break.

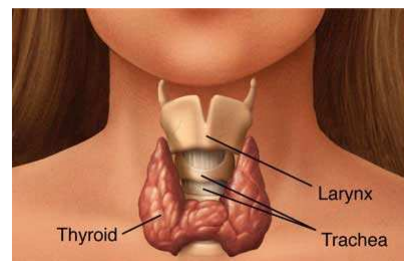
Have an acupuncture treatment The change of seasons is a perfect time for a qi tune-up. Even if you are not having symptoms, it is worth it to come in once per quarter for a pulse balancing, stress reducing treatment. You'll bring your car in for an oil change every 3000 miles, so how about doing the same for your body?

I'm looking forward to helping you spring into summer in great health and great spirits!

A Summary of Thyroid Problems

There are a variety of things that can go wrong with a thyroid, and there are a variety of things which can look like a thyroid problem, but are really something else.

The thyroid gland can malfunction in two primary ways. It can hyper function, meaning that it produces too much thyroid hormone, or it can hypo function, meaning that it does not produce enough thyroid hormone.



The pituitary gland detects the level of thyroid hormone in the body, and produces thyroid stimulating hormone (TSH) to stimulate the thyroid gland to produce thyroid hormones when the level drops below a certain point. A blood test for TSH is the most common way to diagnose thyroid problems. This measures how much the pituitary gland is stimulating the thyroid gland to do its job.

Sometimes, problems with thyroid hormone production are not caused by the thyroid gland. A percentage of people make antibodies against their own thyroid tissue. Antibodies are what your body's immune system makes to recognize viruses, and mark them for attack by the immune system. When your body makes antibodies against the thyroid tissue or against certain enzymes within the thyroid tissue, your own immune system can attack your thyroid. This is what happens in Hashimoto's Thyroiditis and Graves Disease. These conditions are called autoimmune diseases because the body's immune system attacks its own tissue.

Autoimmune thyroid conditions are NOT related in any way to HIV or other autoimmune diseases, though a person may have multiple autoimmune conditions at the same time. Autoimmune thyroid conditions do NOT mean the immune system is weak. In fact, they often mean the immune system is too strong and the parts of the immune system that tell the body to quit attacking are not working.

Here is a summary of the most common thyroid disorders.

Hypothyroid The thyroid is not producing enough thyroid hormones. TSH levels are elevated. Symptoms can include weight gain, fatigue, difficulty getting going in the morning, feeling abnormally cold relative to the people around you, difficulty losing weight despite exercise and diet.

Hyperthyroid The thyroid is producing too much thyroid hormone. TSH levels too are low. Symptoms can include weight loss, difficulty sleeping, palpitations, anxiety, feeling warmer than the people around you, irritability.

Hashimoto's Disease The immune system is attacking the thyroid gland. While the immune system is attacking (and killing thyroid gland tissue), the thyroid produces too much thyroid hormone so the TSH levels go down. When the attack is over, there is less thyroid gland remaining to produce hormones, so the levels of thyroid hormone decrease and TSH levels go up. Symptoms can include any or all of the symptoms of BOTH hypothyroid and hyperthyroid.

Graves Disease The immune system is attacking the thyroid and the thyroid is over producing thyroid hormone in response. Symptoms include palpitations, elevated heart rate, elevated blood pressure, feelings of anxiety or panic, feeling as if you are on speed, insomnia, hot flashes, headache, etc. This condition can become dangerous, and should be treated by a qualified endocrinologist!

How do you know if your thyroid problem is due to the thyroid gland, the pituitary gland, or the immune system? If the only thing tested is TSH, you can't know. A complete thyroid panel including TSH, T3, T4, T3 re-uptake, and thyroxine binding index combined with tests for TPO antibodies is required for an accurate diagnosis. One clue that a thyroid problem might be due to the immune system is symptoms of hypothyroid (including elevated TSH) in a person who is not overweight.

Allopathic medicine treats hypothyroid, from either the thyroid gland or the pituitary gland, by giving the patient additional thyroid hormones. Synthroid is the most common medication prescribed. TSH levels are monitored and the dose is adjusted based on reduction of symptoms and return of the TSH levels to normal. Hyperthyroid is treated by destruction of all or part of the thyroid gland, often with radioactive iodine. Depending on how much gland function remains following this treatment, thyroid hormones may be given to keep the TSH levels in the normal range. Allopathic medicine typically uses the same treatment for autoimmune thyroids.

In Functional Chinese Medicine, we recognize that in Hashimoto's disease the thyroid is the

victim of a bullying immune system. Because TSH levels fluctuate based on whether the thyroid is being attacked, TSH is not the best way to determine the health of the thyroid gland. Treating only the thyroid is kind of like taking a 5 year-old who has been beaten up at school and giving him a Band-Aid and a lollipop, and then sending him back to school for another beating. To really fix the problem, the bully (in this case the immune system!) needs to be addressed. A combination of dietary changes and supplements can go a long way towards re-balancing the immune system. Depending on how badly the thyroid was damaged, you might still need to take thyroid hormones as well.

If you suspect you have a thyroid problem, I can order the appropriate blood tests to determine whether the issue is with the thyroid gland, the pituitary gland, or the immune system. Some thyroid conditions require treatment by a qualified physician. I can help you to manage the symptoms of many thyroid disorders, give you diet and supplement recommendations to support your body's normal function, and refer you to an endocrinologist or internal medicine specialist if necessary. Please call me at (619) 772-4002 to schedule a consultation to discuss your particular case.

Spring Training

The start of baseball season is upon us. In college and high school sports, basketball, swimming, water polo and gymnastics are winding down while baseball and others are ramping up. Here in San Diego, as the days get longer there is more time for after-work activities like running, cycling, climbing, and surfing. As the days get sunnier and warmer, more people are out playing tennis and golf, and also enjoying weekend pick-up games of football, Frisbee and basketball.



Weekend warrior syndrome is what happens when relatively sedentary people suddenly get an urge to rapidly get back into shape to fit back into that awesome swimsuit. Rapid increases in activity can lead to strains, sprains, and over use injuries that will slow you down in a hurry.

Here are some simple strategies to help you pick up the pace without injury.

Stretch, stretch and stretch some more! Before getting on the bike or trail, make sure you stretch for 15-20 minutes. Move into the stretch gradually, until you can feel the muscle resisting without pain. Hold that position for 30-60 seconds without bouncing, then gradually release and repeat. It takes at least 30 seconds for large muscles to lengthen when they are stretched!

Build up your activity level gradually Don't make a marathon your first run of the season. If you are training for a long endurance event, start small and gradually increase your activity. For example, last summer I trained for a bicycle tour which was just shy of 500 miles ridden over 7 days. I started with 25-mile rides which I had been doing occasionally all winter, and added 5 miles per week until I was comfortably riding 65 miles at a time. I was able to do the entire tour and have fun with it because I kept this training pace.

Pay attention to your diet When you increase your activity level, you need to increase your protein intake because building muscles requires extra protein. Make sure you are staying adequately hydrated, and either supplement electrolytes or use a low-sugar sports drink with electrolyte replacement while you are exercising. Working out in warm weather can deplete critical electrolytes. After your workout, make sure you have a protein-based snack within 30-60 minutes to aid in recovery. Don't assume you will immediately lose weight when you start working out - many people gain 5 or more pounds before they begin to lose weight. Muscle tissue weighs more than fat, so as you change your body composition you may gain pounds while you lose inches. I can help you with a diet appropriate for your increased physical activity.

If you do wake up with aches and pains after a workout, get a treatment! Acupuncture can

help to reduce inflammation, relieve muscle spasms, improve circulation, and decrease pain, helping you heal more quickly and get back to doing what you love.

Qi Boosting Recipe - Mixed Grain and Spring Vegetable Salad



This salad combines three grains and a variety of spring vegetables, making it a perfect lunch or light supper. Use the recipe as a guide; feel free to try substituting green beans, zucchini, cauliflower, peas, edamame, or other vegetables if you have them on hand.

Quinoa is one of the grains with the highest protein content. It is endemic to Peru, and there are a number of heirloom varieties available. Barley is sweet, salty, and cool, and helps to nourish qi and blood. Rice is neutral in temperature, sweet, and also boosts the qi. The vegetables in this recipe are generally sweet, slightly bitter and mildly cooling. Most are mildly diuretic, and most nourish the qi of the spleen and liver. It is a perfect recipe for the time when cool moist days are followed by hot dry ones, and the qi is sluggish from winter while you want to move like the winds of spring.

- 1 c quinoa
- ½ c organic purple barley (or any barley EXCEPT for pearly barley)
- ½ c sprouted brown rice (or other short grain brown rice)
- 3 ½ c water
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 broccoli crown, chopped in to ½ inch pieces
- ½ lb asparagus, chopped into ½ inch pieces
- 1 large cucumber, cut into ½ inch dice
- 2 medium carrots, cut into ½ inch dice
- 1 medium red or yellow bell pepper, cut into ½ inch dice
- 2 celery stalks, cut into ½ inch dice
- 6 green onions, cut into ½ inch lengths
- ¾ c chopped fresh parsley
- 4 oz cherry tomatoes, cut in half
- ½ c pine nuts
- ½ c golden raisins
- 8 oz crumbled feta cheese (the Israeli feta at Trader Joe's is my current favorite!)
- Juice of 1 lemon
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tsp salt
- ½ tsp ground black pepper
- ½ tsp oregano
- 1 tsp ground cumin

Combine the quinoa, barley, rice, water and 1 tsp salt in a medium saucepan. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer for approximately 35 minutes until the grains are tender. Remove from heat and drain any excess water.

While the grains are cooking, toast the pine nuts. Heat a small skillet over medium heat. When the pan is hot, add the pine nuts and stir regularly until they are lightly browned. Remove them from the pan immediately (they will keep on cooking in the hot pan, even if removed from the heat source!) and set them aside.

Chop the vegetables as instructed in the ingredients list. In a small pan, bring ¼ c water to boil, then add the broccoli and asparagus. Reduce the heat, cover, and steam until the vegetables have turned bright green and are tender but not mushy (5-10 minutes). Remove the pan from the heat, uncover, drain any excess water, then set aside.

Combine the cooked grains, chopped vegetables, steamed vegetables, toasted pine nuts, and all other ingredients in a large bowl. Mix well. Feel free to adjust the amounts of cumin, oregano, salt, and pepper to your personal taste.

This is delicious served immediately, but it gets even better if it sits at room temperature for an hour or two, allowing the flavors to combine and the cheese to reach an optimal serving temperature.

This recipe makes enough salad to bring to any pot-luck event and serve a crowd. As a main dish, it will serve at least six hungry people.

Where do I get this stuff?! Purple barley, quinoa, and sprouted brown rice are available at Whole Foods Market.

I hope you have enjoyed this Spring edition of Health Notes! Look for the next one in your in-box in 2-3 months, and please call or e-mail if you would like to see articles on specific topics in future editions.

Peace and Health,

Lisa
Eastern Body Therapy

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