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Safer Spring Cleaning

Spring is a time for cleanup, repair and restorations. Paints, solvents, wood preservatives, aerosol sprays, air fresheners, cleaners and disinfectants often have odors that are not only damaging to our indoor air quality, but also our health.

The VOC's or Volatile Organic Chemicals that these products off-gas can have a range of health effects. Symptoms can include respiratory tract and eye irritation, headaches, dizziness, visual disorder, memory impairment, liver damage, kidney damage and central nervous system damage. The extent and nature of health effects depends on many factors including level and length of exposure.

Manufacturers are now making "greener" products that advertise Low-VOC or No-VOC. These products have greatly reduced

emissions that cause air pollution and health effects. However, even some products that advertise zero-VOC may still contain some unregulated toxic ingredients such as formaldehyde, ammonia, acetone and other exempt solvents. To assist the health-wise consumer, there is a new rating system called **Degree of Green** which evaluates products with regard to:

1. Least adverse effects on human health.
2. Higher level of environmental sustainability.
3. Least adverse effect on the environment.

More information can be found at www.afmsafecoat.com & www.degreeofgreen.com. To learn more on specific chemicals search the IRIS (Integrated Risk Information System) at www.epa.gov/NCEA/iris.

Dr. Crystal Urban, Eagle River, WI



Skin Brushing

The skin is a robust absorber, yet we forget this ability when we use deodorants, make-up, and lotions. As the most potent eliminator in the body, the skin can become clogged with wastes and dead skin. By dry skin brushing before showering, you will promote the lymph system to

release toxins and wastes assisting in drainage, tightening the skin, and toning muscles.

The skin forms a new layer every day, so dry skin brushing helps remove old, dead layers leading to softer, smoother, healthier skin and more efficient detoxification.

Be sure to start gently using

long firm upward strokes from the toes and fingers toward the heart and counter-clockwise strokes around the abdomen. Loofa sponges, a dry towel or natural fiber brushes work great.

*Alicia Birr, Student at
National College of Naturopathic
Medicine, Portland, OR*

Seasonal Allergies

If you suffer from seasonal allergies, here are ways to strengthen your immune system so that you are less likely to react to allergens such as pollen.

Increase your intake of flavonoids. Flavonoids are plant pigments that help to strengthen your mucous membranes and protect your body from oxidative damage. They are found in blueberries, cherries, cranberries, currants, and red raspberries. Aim for eating 2-3 of these foods each day. **Quercetin** is a flavonoid that inhibits the release of histamine from immune cells. In other words, it's a natural anti-histamine. Quercetin can be taken preventatively before your allergies flare up. Good sources of quercetin are apples and onions.

Lessen inflammation. Allergic rhinitis, sinusitis, pharyngitis, and bronchitis are all states of inflammation. To decrease your body's burden, eliminate foods that inflame. Refined carbohydrates, such as white bread, pasta, and sugar, as well as dairy products can be highly inflammatory. Other inflammatory foods include wheat, citrus, corn, soy, and peanuts. Also, increasing your intake of **essential fatty acids** help fight inflammation. Sources of essential fatty acids include cold-water fish (salmon, mackerel, and sardines), walnuts, and flax seed. Fish oil supplements are also available as an alternative to eating fish.

Minimize exposure. Minimize mold and mildew in your house. Consider using **air filters** in your bedroom. Cleaning your carpets regularly with a **HEPA vacuum** can also minimize the total burden of allergic exposure.

Sarah Herman, Student at National College of Naturopathic Medicine, Portland, OR



Organic Doesn't Mean Expensive

If you live in an area where organically grown fruits and veggies are easy to find, you are fortunate. For many people organic foods are not only difficult to find, their price may keep your hand reaching for the conventional produce.

Follow these steps and you'll be eating organic vegetables in no time.

Buy a share of a local organic farm's produce. These farms have Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs where you invest in the season's crops and get a fresh box of veggies every week for a fraction of the cost if you were to buy them in the store. You will also connect with the land and the people that grow your food. To find a CSA in your area: www.farmfreshatlas.org

Grow your own food. It's easy to grow veggies and fruits organically at home. Healthy plants depend on the

health of the soil. Start your plants off right with rich compost and well-aerated soil. Building a cold frame is a great way to start and grow your veggies nearly all year long. A cold frame is basically a wooden box with a lid that sunlight can get through. Often people will use an old window for the lid. Plans for building cold

frames abound on the internet. Do a quick search and see what you can find!

To learn more about cold frames and how to garden organically year-round, I suggest reading Eliot Coleman's book "Four Season Harvest: Organic Vegetables from Your Home Garden All Year Long."

Dr. Allison Becker, Janesville, WI



organic veggies in the school's gardens

**On average,
\$50 worth of
seeds will
produce
\$1250 worth
of groceries**

The Four R's of Digestion

In our hurried day-to-day world, many people suffer with digestive problems including indigestion, gas, bloating, heartburn and constipation. In addition, most chronic diseases including allergies, joint and muscle pain, skin problems such as acne, eczema, psoriasis, fatigue, chronic sinusitis, bronchitis, asthma, cardiovascular diseases, anxiety and depression are often related to some form of digestive dysfunction.

Why, you may ask, are chronic diseases linked to digestive function? This is because of two reasons. First, if you are not able to digest and absorb nutrients from your food, body systems will begin to break down. Second, 60-70% of your immune system is centered in the digestive system. When digestion is not functioning optimally, the immune system cannot function optimally to keep you healthy and free of 'dis-ease'.

Most people are hurrying through their day functioning in the fight or flight response of the sympathetic nervous system, even when there is nothing to fight or flee from. In order to optimize digestive function, you need to be able to switch into what is called the feed and breed response of the parasympathetic nervous system. This means taking the time to **slow down the**

thoughts and actions of the day before you have a meal. If you pause before eating a meal, this tells your body that it is time to slow down and take in food. Then by eating slowly, chewing your food thoroughly, and removing any drinks during the meal you are preparing for proper digestion. With just these small actions your digestive function will significantly improve.

To address digestive complaints, as well as chronic diseases stemming from digestive dysfunction, naturopathic doctors will use the Four R Method to heal the gut and in turn helps to restore health to the whole person.



Remove

- Assisting in identifying and removing any allergy triggers. This includes allergic or intolerant foods, food additives and preservatives, as well as environmental allergens.
- When appropriate, evaluating the need for and providing education about medications that may be altering digestive functions.
- Evaluate and recommend removing any overgrowth of organisms that should not be living in the gut.
- Assessing stress level and recommending ways to diminish any stress triggers.

Replace

- There may be the need to work with the diet to add in foods that are most appropriate for the body's health and healing. If needed, digestive aids like hydrochloric acid and digestive enzymes may be appropriate for short-term use.

Reinoculate

- Reinoculate with both the "good" bacteria (called probiotics) as well as the food for these "good bacteria" (called prebiotics). This is essential in rebalancing digestive health and thereby treating chronic diseases.

Repair

- Naturopathic doctors use many tools in the repair of a damaged digestive system including foods, nutritional supplements, herbal medicine, homeopathic medicine, and mindfulness practices.

Dr. Robin DiPasquale, Madison, WI

Quick Tips

- **Chew slowly and consciously** to thoroughly macerate your food and stimulate digestive enzyme secretion. Ideally this is 20-30 chews per mouthful.
- Fatigue, mood swings, diarrhea or eczema can all be signs of **food allergies.**
- Good food sources of **probiotics** include yogurt, sour cream, sauerkraut and raw milk & cheese.
- L-Glutamine, butyric acid and slippery elm are **nutrients** that heal the gut.



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Wood Violets

Wood violets, the state flower of Wisconsin, fill our fields and forests, heralding in spring. The cold, moist nature of this plant, preferring to grow in shady areas, speaks of its medicinal uses.

Tea made from the violet leaves can be taken internally to sooth sore throats and inflamed tonsils, inflamed joints, hot flashes, and emotions that flare with anger. Foot soaks using a tea made from the leaf and flower before bedtime can help procure a more easeful sleep. Topical applications such as a compress, cream, or ointment can soothe dry and inflamed skin conditions. Violet is probably best known, however, for its effects on coughs



when used as a syrup.

To make violet syrup, collect violet flowers and leaves in the morning after the sun has dried any dew. Chop these and pack them into a clean, dry glass jar with a

lid. Make a supersaturated sugar water by dissolving 1 ½ cups organic sugar to one cup filtered or spring water that has been heated. Pour the warm sugar water over the chopped flowers and leaves until it covers all the plant parts. Put the lid on and gently shake it each day. After one week, decant off the plant material, refrigerate the syrup, and use as needed. To best preserve your violet syrup, keep it refrigerated.

Dr. Robin DiPasquale, Madison, WI

SAVE A TREE
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