



**Dr. Amanda H. Fey,  
Naturopathic Doctor**

Integrative Medicine Center  
301 W. State St.  
Ithaca, NY 14850  
**(607) 275-9697**

[www.doctorfey.com](http://www.doctorfey.com)

## **Contents**

- ★ **GI Health and Disease**
- ★ **Why Detoxify?**
- ★ **Focus on Chaste Tree Berry**
- ★ **We Love Vitamin D!**
- ★ **FAQ's**
- ★ **In The News**
- ★ **Recipe of the Month**

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Naturopathic Medicine, visit  
[www.naturopathic.org](http://www.naturopathic.org)

## **GI Health and Disease**

Simply stated, the gastrointestinal (GI) tract is a long tube that reaches from the mouth to the anus. It's designed to optimally process the foods we consume, extract the nutrients we need, and eliminate the waste. It also functions like an "internal skin" by protecting us from pathogens and allergens. How do these pathogens get into our system? Well, we eat, drink, and breathe them as well as we produce them from within as the consequence of poorly digested or eliminated foods. This toxic assault makes it easy to see why the health of the GI is a key component of well-being.

### ***How the GI contributes to disease***

The consequences of a compromised GI system are endless. The GI acts as a barrier of foreign proteins in the body. This is a big job, and an estimated 50-60% of the body's lymph tissue surrounds the digestive tract to help "protect it" from toxin exposure. In fact, the intestine is generally recognized as the largest immune organ in the body. A thin layer of tissue consisting of tightly connected cells prevents toxins from entering our bodies. In addition, micro-flora, a layer of 100,000 billion viable bacteria, also assists in protection. When these bacteria are in balance and your GI is considered stable, symptoms

are less likely and harmful toxins are properly eliminated. This combination of tissue and micro-flora also ensures proper peristalsis, stimulates the immune system, and protects the body from toxic waste leaking back into the system.

### ***A compromised GI***

Many things can wreak havoc on a healthy GI system. Poor dietary choices and eating habits, refined and processed foods, alcohol, coffee, medications, chemotherapy, trauma, constipation, indigestion, stress, and so on all contribute to building an unhealthy GI tract. When the GI system is assaulted, its protective barrier starts to break down which results into an imbalance of micro-flora and a leaky barrier leading to a wide range of health issues.

### ***Dysbiosis & Leaky Gut***

Dysbiosis is an imbalance of normal micro-flora. Let's use antibiotics as an example. Antibiotics are prescribed to "kill bugs," the problem is that they kill the bad bugs as well as the good bugs which are found in our GI. Using a garden analogy, if you wipe out the garden with a rototiller what grows back first? It's not tomato seeds, it's the WEEDS! The same thing happens in the GI. The most famous GI "weed" is Candida- but there are others.

Once the micro-flora is disrupted, the tightly connected tissue that forms the GI physical barrier is exposed causing large spaces and gaps

to occur. It's through these gaps partially digested foods, toxins, and bacteria enter the system leading to acute and chronic inflammation. This is called Leaky Gut Syndrome.

When the GI barrier is damaged due to leaky gut syndrome, damaged cells called micro-villi become unable to do their job properly. Therefore, they can't manufacture the enzymes that are vital to good digestion. So, digestion is impaired, absorption of nutrients is effected, and damaging substances are able to invade the bloodstream. How does the body respond to these "foreign invaders"? It responds with inflammation, allergic reactions, and other unpleasant symptoms.

Dysbiosis and leaky gut have been associated with numerous health conditions. There is extensive research behind the role of the GI in diseases like rheumatoid arthritis, fibromyalgia, and multiple sclerosis.

Good digestion and a healthy gastrointestinal (GI) tract could be considered an obsession of many naturopathic doctors. Its many important functions truly make the intestines the seat of good health.

## Why Detoxify?

In the last 50 years our environment has become more polluted. Our bodies carry an ever increasing toxic burden. No matter how careful we are or where we live, we all have some level of toxic exposure.

Just as your car needs to have the oil changed regularly in order to run smoothly, your

body needs to be "cleaned out" for it to function at its best. The toxin-eliminating organs of the body are the kidneys, liver, lungs, colon and skin. Cleansing allows the above organs to focus solely on locating, breaking down and eliminating the toxins previously stored in the body.

Many health conditions may arise from the toxic load in your body. Cleansing may improve digestive problems, allergies, fatigue, blood sugar abnormalities, migraines, immune deficiencies, fibromyalgia, skin issues, and many other chronic conditions.

Detoxification protocols may be used preventatively, or to directly treat an existing problem. A wide scope of "detox" protocols exists ranging from radical fasting to simply ingesting an herbal combination and/or adjusting the diet. It's important for you to be comfortable with the intensity of the detoxification process, and I highly suggest seeking out a professional who understands the body and detoxification process to assist you in developing an individualized protocol.

Since the times of Hippocrates, the father of medicine, the merits and mechanisms of detoxification have been explored and have evolved into what we know today. I, personally, cleanse yearly, and am very passionate about the process. If you are at all interested in participating in a cleanse and have questions regarding it please feel free to contact my office for more details.

## Focus on Chaste Tree Berry



The dried ripe fruit of the chaste tree, *Vitex agnus-castus*, has been used as a medicine since ancient Greece and was cited by both Hippocrates and Discorides for its effects on female reproduction. Many recent research studies have also confirmed its affect on the female hormonal system.

Chaste tree berry acts on parts of our brain by binding to dopamine receptors, which in turn increases dopamine levels in the blood. This increase in dopamine inhibits prolactin synthesis and release. Prolactin is an important hormone in pregnancy causing milk glands to begin producing milk. For women who are not pregnant, high prolactin levels may be associated with breast pain and symptoms of PMS, such as bloating, cramps, irritability, and mood swings. Chaste tree berries inhibition of prolactin leads to an increase in progesterone production during the second half of the menstrual cycle, which reduces symptoms of PMS.

Although chaste tree berries are not believed to contain female hormones, their effect on dopamine affects the balance of female hormones in the body. Therefore, for some women, chaste tree berry supplementation may help to relieve hot flashes and other symptoms associated with menopause. They may also help to treat acne for some individuals, especially women whose acne seems to be associated with their menstrual cycles.

Chaste tree berry is exceptionally safe. In one study, chaste tree berry was given up to 9 years with very few side effects. It's advisable to not take it if you're pregnant. Chaste tree berry may counteract the effectiveness of birth control pills and other hormone therapy. It's always important to notify your physician if you are taking any sort of herbal or nutritional supplement.

"There are two ways to live, you can live as if nothing is a miracle, or you can live as everything is a miracle"  
~Albert Einstein

## **We Love Vitamin D!**

Vitamin D has recently been found to be involved in a wide variety of diseases. Current research indicates vitamin D deficiency plays a role in causing seventeen varieties of cancer as well as heart disease, stroke, hypertension, autoimmune disease, diabetes, depression, chronic pain,

osteoarthritis, osteoporosis, muscle weakness, muscle wasting, birth defects, and periodontal disease.

This does not mean that vitamin D deficiency is the only cause of these diseases, or that you will not get them if you take vitamin D. What it does mean is that vitamin D levels are important for individuals striving to achieve and maintain a greater state of health.

Vitamin D is a fat soluble vitamin. It's found in numerous dietary sources such as fish, eggs, fortified milk, and cod liver oil. The term "vitamin D" refers to several different forms of this vitamin. Two forms are important in humans: ergocalciferol (vitamin D2) and cholecalciferol (vitamin D3). Vitamin D2 is synthesized by plants. Vitamin D3 is made in large quantities in your skin when sunlight strikes it. D2 has far less effect in the body. Taking D2 orally is an extremely inefficient way to get D. Unfortunately, it's the form often used in milk and many supplements, even some prescription forms of D. It's important for people who are deficient in Vitamin D to obtain the most efficient form which is Vitamin D3 or cholecalciferol.

Studies show that if you go out in the summer sun in your bathing suit until your skin just begins to turn pink, you make between 10,000 and 50,000 units of Vitamin D3 in your skin. This is 100 times more vitamin D than the government says you need!

Amazingly, the skin prevents vitamin D toxicity. Once you make about 20,000 units, the same ultraviolet light that

created cholecalciferol, begins to degrade it. The more you make, the more is destroyed. So a steady state is reached that prevents the skin from making too much cholecalciferol. This is why no one has ever been reported to develop vitamin D toxicity from the sun, though it is possible when taken orally.

Remember, our ancestors lived naked in the sun for several million years. Then 50,000 years ago, some of us migrated north and south to places with less sun. Then we put on clothes, started working inside and living in cities where buildings blocked the sun. Then we started traveling in cars instead of walking or riding horses and glass blocked even more of the UVB in the sunlight. Then, only a few years ago, we started actively avoiding the sun and putting on sunblock. All this time we humans have been steadily reducing the tissue levels of the most potent steroid hormone in our bodies, one with powerful anti-cancer properties.

The really significant reductions in sunlight exposure have occurred since the industrial revolution, just the time the "diseases of civilization," like cardiovascular disease, diabetes and cancer, seem to have greatly increased. Pretty frightening when you think about it.



## FAQ's

### **What is Naturopathic Medicine?**

Naturopathic Medicine is an alternative form of health care where natural therapies are utilized to restore and optimize health.

The philosophical approach of naturopathic medicine includes disease prevention, patient education, and encouragement of the body's natural ability to heal.

Naturopathic Doctors are committed to identifying and treating the cause of disease rather than focusing solely on symptomatic treatment and view each person as a unique individual.

### **What training do ND's receive?**

Naturopathic Doctors (NDs) receive a 4-year postgraduate level training at an accredited naturopathic medical school. The 4-year training includes graduate level study in the medical sciences and clinical medicine; in addition to, training in naturopathic therapeutics. After graduation, NDs must pass a national board examination consisting of basic medical sciences, clinical sciences as well as naturopathic modalities to become licensed doctors.

### **What therapies do ND's utilize?**

Clinical nutrition  
Herbal medicine  
Homeopathy  
Hydrotherapy

**Where can I learn more?**  
[www.naturopathic.org](http://www.naturopathic.org)

## In the News

### **NIGHT LIGHTS LINKED TO BREAST CANCER**

Epidemiological studies of nurses, flight attendants and others who work at night have found breast cancer rates 60% above normal, even when other factors such as differences in diet are accounted for. On the basis of such studies, a branch of the World Health Organization announced in December 2007 its decision to classify shift work as a "probable carcinogen." That put the night shift in the same health-risk category as exposure to such toxic chemicals as trichloroethylene, vinyl chloride and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs).

The mechanism of such a link, many scientists suspect, is melatonin. Secreted by the pineal gland in the brain, the hormone helps prevent tumor formation. The body produces melatonin primarily at night, and levels drop swiftly in the presence of light, especially light in the blue part of the spectrum produced in quantity by computer screens and fluorescent bulbs.

### **SAW PALMETTO AFFECTS URINARY SYMPTOMS**

Recent study published in Journal of Urology indicated that saw palmetto improved urinary tract symptoms associated with benign prostatic hyperplasia after 12 weeks of treatment. 92 men between 49 and 75 years old with lower urinary tract symptoms were randomly assigned in this double-blind, placebo controlled trial. After 12 weeks, urinary flow rate was higher, flow resistance was lower, but no change in prostate volume was seen between control vs. placebo group.

## **Carrot and Coconut Soup (Serves 4)**

### **Ingredients:**

1 large onion, chopped                      2 TBS fresh ginger, sliced  
4 medium cloves garlic, chopped  
1 tsp curry powder                      5 oz canned coconut milk  
3 cups chicken or vegetable broth  
2 cups sliced carrots, about ¼ inch thick  
1 cup sweet potato, cut into about ½ inch cubes  
salt and white pepper to taste

**Directions:** Chop onion and let it sit for at least five minutes to bring out its hidden health benefits. Heat 1 TBS broth in a medium soup pot. Sauté onion for about 5 minutes, stirring often. Add garlic, ginger and continue to sauté for another minute. Add curry powder and mix well with onions. Add broth, carrots, and sweet potato and simmer on medium high heat until vegetables are tender, about 15 minutes. Add coconut milk. Blend in batches making sure blender is not more than half full. Add salt and pepper to taste. Return to soup pot and reheat.