

IHA

Your Ally in Community Health
Late Summer 2008

Ithaca Health Alliance Newsletter

Good Function Means Good Health

By Joseph and Laura Morse

When we think of someone who is healthy, we think of someone who exercises frequently or eats properly. These things contribute to good health but are not its only components. Health, as defined by the World Health Organization, is a “state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.” In other words, you aren’t necessarily healthy if you are symptom free.

Sometimes when symptoms are present and we feel lousy, it is a sign of our bodies working in a healthy manner. For example, if you eat tainted food at a restaurant, your body’s response may be nausea and vomiting. We may not typically think of vomiting as a healthy response, but your body systems are actually responding in a healthy manner in this case. So symptoms can be our friends, warning us of harm and triggering important responses in our healthy system.

Similarly, we can feel good yet be very unhealthy. We have all heard of a person who has never had a “sick day” but died suddenly of a massive heart attack, and a person who was feeling great and thought they were healthy but was diagnosed with cancer. The two top killers of Americans today, heart disease and cancer, have no associated symptoms until the advanced stages of these diseases — even though they occur in obviously unhealthy bodies.

So symptoms tell us very little about our health; they only tell us how we are “feeling.” True health is all about function. A person is healthy when every tissue, every organ, and every bodily system function

at 100 percent all of the time. Improve function and improve your health.

But what is it that controls how our bodies function? Your central nervous system (brain and spinal cord) is responsible for sending messages to every cell, tissue, organ, and system in your body. This vast communication network is in charge of virtually every function in your body and helps determine whether you enjoy good health or suffer from disease. When your nervous system functions at 100 percent, your tissues, cells, organs, and immune system are all working at their best, giving you your optimum level of health.

Physical or emotional stresses in our daily lives can cause the nervous system to decrease function, however. When bones in your neck and back have improper motion or position, nerve communication can be affected, and the result can be an interruption of the signals between your brain and body. For example, poor posture while sitting at your computer can cause muscle tension in your back, neck, and shoulders, a symptom you may know all too well. However, you may not realize that nerves from this area also

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ITHACA FREE CLINIC HOURS AND OPERATIONS

Mondays: 2 p.m. to 6 p.m.
Thursdays: 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Located upstairs at 225 South Fulton Street,
Suite B, Ithaca, NY • (607) 330-1254

The Ithaca Free Clinic is a project of the **Ithaca Health Alliance**. More than 90 percent of our work is done through volunteer efforts. If you're looking for a volunteer opportunity, call the clinic coordinator at 607-330-1254.

The Ithaca Health Alliance

IHA was founded in 1997. Our mission is to facilitate access to health care for all, with a focus on the needs of the un- and under-insured of New York State.

Become a member of the IHA!

IHA members receive discounts from participating health providers and are eligible through the Ithaca Health Fund for grants and loans that pay for emergency and preventive care. To learn more about membership, call 607-330-1253 and ask to speak to IHA's office manager.

Information for the IHA

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This quarterly newsletter is a production of the Ithaca Health Alliance.

Healthy Foods for All: An IHA-supported Program

By Elizabeth Viviana Karabinakis

The Healthy Food for All program continued to expand in 2008 to successfully provide 62 subsidized Community Supported Agriculture Shares (CSA) from six local farms. Counted among the 55 family shares and seven single shares are 93 adults and 94 children participating in the program.

Every Thursday over 15 shareholders choose to participate in the alternating workshops and hands-on cooking and nutrition classes offered by Cornell Cooperative Extension Nutrition Educators. Held this year in the convenient downtown location of the Presbyterian Church on Cayuga Street, these classes help people identify and prepare nutritious meals using the wide range of local produce received in their shares. Workshops have ranged from food preservation techniques such as canning to U-pick trips to a blueberry farm.

Feedback from shareholders has been overwhelmingly positive and participation in local food community events such as the Local Foods Potluck and Summertime Block Party has far exceeded expectation. Many shareholders have expressed a growing interest in eating more fresh, local produce and making healthy lifestyle choices, identifying the Healthy Food for All Program as their primary resource in helping them achieve these goals.

A series of four field dining gourmet dinners began August 24 to help raise the funds necessary to extend the 62 shares to the end of the growing season. Learn more at www.ediblefingerlakes.com or contact Liz Karabinakis at 607.272.2292 or evk4@cornell.edu.

Liz Karabinakis is a community food educator with Cornell Cooperative Extension in Tompkins County.

Lucky Break

By Shawn Tubridy

As I walked out of the laundromat, I hit a low step at an angle, my foot rolled to the outside, and I heard what sounded like a stick breaking. I knew immediately that my foot was broken, even though denial tried to convince me otherwise. X-rays at the emergency room showed that the outside bone of my foot was broken in two places. The staff there sent me home with a Velcro® shoe and an appointment to see the orthopedic doctor in the morning.

As I tried to fall asleep that night with a bag of ice and Velcro® shoe on my elevated foot, the pain and throbbing set in. After some restless time in bed, I got up and started crutching around my kitchen.

Earlier in July I had gathered some St. Johnswort flowers to make oil, which is traditionally used for trauma, pain, and inflammation. I strained the flowers out of the oil and made them into a poultice for my broken foot. The relief was immediate! After wrapping the flowers securely to my foot, I went back to bed. With the pain gone, I was able to fall right to sleep. It's good to be an herbalist!

In the morning I went to my appointment with the orthopedic doctor. He said that the bone was in place, but still considered a cast. I told him that if it were possible I would prefer to avoid a cast because I wanted to be able to treat my foot with poultices. "What do you mean?" he asked. I explained that I am an herbalist and that I used plants to heal. He responded, "Plants? Do you mean like spinach? I know that it was good for Popeye!" He then honored my request not to have a cast.

I went home and immediately made a poultice of fresh comfrey leaves, a plant that grows near my house. Anyone familiar with the plant knows that it is regionally quite prolific, which is also the healing gift of comfrey. It helps cells to proliferate quickly, which is why it is such an ally in healing wounds and broken bones. In *Healing with Whole Foods*, by Paul Pitchford, I read that the poultice should be made

by mixing apple cider vinegar with comfrey leaves, because apple cider vinegar keeps blood from stagnating around the broken bone. Interestingly, the author also mentioned that, while not as effective as comfrey, other greens can be used such as plantain, cabbage, chard, or SPINACH!

Because of the nature of the break, I did end up with a cast, but I still feel fortunate that I had the opportunity to use herbs to deal with the initial trauma. I also feel fortunate that the Ithaca Health Fund will help me with expenses from the emergency room visit and services for my broken bone that are not covered by my insurance. It's good to be an herbalist and a member of the Ithaca Health Fund! Now I just need to find a way to avoid laundry.

Shawn Tubridy is an herbalist who works in the social service sector of the community. She has been a member of the IHA member since 1997.

Good Function, Health

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travel to your stomach and that your indigestion or ulcers may also be a result of nerve interference from poor posture.

This nervous system disturbance can be addressed through wellness chiropractic. Specific chiropractic adjustments focused on the areas of dysfunction are designed to keep your nervous system working at its best, in addition to improving motion and flexibility. When your nervous system is restored with a chiropractic adjustment, your body begins to regenerate and revitalize itself, restoring proper communication between your brain and your body. In addition to eating right, exercising, and getting adequate sleep, specific chiropractic adjustments are an important component in living a healthy and vital life.

Joseph and Laura Morse, both doctors of chiropractic medicine (DC), have a practice located on State Street, between Gimme! and Tuff Soul.

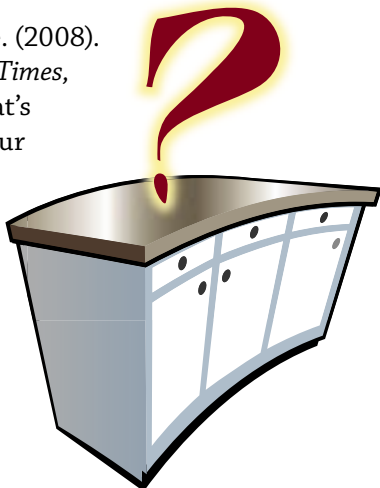
Compiled and reported by Brooke Hansen and Bethany Schroeder

Hidden Household Health Hazards

Every day we hear much in the news about car emissions, toxic waste dumps, and chemicals in our water systems. Reports of hidden hazards in our homes are less frequent but no less important, especially because this is the “primary environment” for most of us. In July, the *New York Times* reported on the possible dangers of granite countertops. In tests done with Geiger counters, results showed that granite counters emitted ten times the radiation as other sites in homes. The major culprit is a radioactive gas called radon, which can cause lung cancer. Many of us may have had radon tests done in our basements but few have thought of checking counters. Granite varies in its composition, depending on where in the world it came from, and some types may be safer than others. Investigate thoroughly before installing granite in your home.

For other ideas on improving the health of your house, there are numerous web sites and magazines like *Natural Home* that can provide the latest information on how to green your primary environment.

Murphy, Kate. (2008). *The New York Times*, July 24, “What’s Lurking in Your Countertop?”



Brooke Hansen is associate professor of anthropology at Ithaca College and a former IHA board member. Bethany Schroeder is a local writer and healthcare worker, as well as the current president of the board of the IHA.

Vaccines and the Public Health

Earlier this year, an outbreak of measles in San Diego, California sickened 12 children, nine of whom had not been inoculated to prevent the virus. The other three children were too young to have received vaccines. The cases of these children exemplify an increased trend among some parents, also known as “vaccine skeptics,” who believe that vaccines are responsible for conditions such as autism.

Parents who elect not to have their children inoculated against childhood diseases are allowed to do so in 20 U.S. states because of laws that permit exemptions based on personal beliefs or religious convictions. Epidemiologists and others working in the field of childhood health have raised concerns over the practice. According to researchers and health professionals, the trend, which began to develop in the 1990s, may contribute not only to increased susceptibility to illness among children who do not receive vaccines, but also to children who may be too young for inoculations and to those who get vaccines but may not have received them all at the time of exposure.

Once almost eradicated in the U.S., measles can lead to pneumonia, swelling of the brain, and even death. The decision against inoculating children began in the 1990s, following reports of various studies, including research results that have lately been refuted about the relationship between vaccines and autism. According to a recently published *New York Times* editorial, researchers from Columbia University, Massachusetts General Hospital, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention tried and failed to replicate earlier findings that pointed to a connection between the two.

Steinhauer, Jennifer. (2008). March 21, *The New York Times*, “Public Health Risk Seen as Parents Reject Vaccines.”

Eds. (2008). September 9, *The New York Times*, “Debunking an Autism Theory.”

TWO ART SHOWS AT THE FREE CLINIC

Don Morrison, a local photographer and stained-glass artist, is showing his work at the Free Clinic through October. The artist has asked that proceeds from the sale of his work benefit the Clinic. Photographs from the Compos Mentis program will be on view through the months of November and December at the Clinic. Feel free to come by during Clinic hours (2–6 p.m. Monday; 4–8 p.m. Thursday) to see the art work.

VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION

As many IHA members know, Lou Munchmeyer, MD, and former medical director of the Free Clinic, died August 19 at his home in Ithaca following an illness of several months. Lou was a champion of the overlooked and a protector of patients throughout his distinguished 30-year career as a gastroenterologist in the area. Much admired for his technical and diagnostic medical skills, he was also an avid naturalist and world traveler. In his last weeks, Lou took time to speak candidly to local reporters about the needs of visitors to the Free Clinic, along with his concern that more should be done in behalf of these visitors. Rather than flowers at Lou's remembrance service, the family asked for donations to the Free Clinic, which we continue to receive. A plack in Lou's honor will be placed in the Clinic waiting room; we welcome IHA members and residents of the community to view it.

Lou was named as the volunteer of the quarter in the Winter 2008 issue of this newsletter. To mark his passing, volunteers who produce the newsletter have asked that the memory of Lou Munchmeyer be noted here again — and always.

ASK YOUR HEALTH ALLIANCE

Question: What's the connection between the Ithaca Health Alliance and the Ithaca Free Clinic?

Answer: With the help of donors and interested healthcare providers, members of the Ithaca Health Alliance opened the Free Clinic in January, 2006. The Clinic is a project of the Ithaca Health Alliance and therefore belongs to the members of the IHA. Along with the board of directors, staff, and volunteers, the Clinic is managed in behalf of the members and the community we serve. The Free Clinic is one of two medically integrated Clinics of its kind in the U.S. The other medically integrated Clinic is in New Orleans.

PROGRAMS AT THE FREE CLINIC

We have suspended employee physicals on the fourth Tuesday (4–8 p.m.) of the month until mid-to-late October, when we hope to be able to provide them again.

Nutrition consultations are once again available by appointment every other Thursday through November. Call the clinic coordinator at 607-330-1254 for information.

OT Services at the Free Clinic

During the 2008-2009 academic year, the Occupational Therapy program at Ithaca College will provide services at the Free Clinic on Tuesdays from 4-7 p.m. If you're interested to learn more, call the clinic coordinator at 607-330-1254. An appointment is required.

The clinic is located at 225 South Fulton Street, Suite B (upstairs) in Ithaca. Hours are Monday 2–6 p.m. and Thursday 4–8 p.m.



Ithaca Health Alliance

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Ithaca, NY 14851

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Find us online at

www.ithacahealth.org

Ithaca Health Alliance Newsletter



10 Minute Gazpacho from the American Institute of Cancer Research • www.AICR.org

Fresh summer tomatoes are appearing in upstate NY. Tomatoes are a good source of the several cancer fighting phytochemicals, including lycopene, which has been associated with reducing risk of prostate and breast cancers. When eaten uncooked is in this recipe, tomatoes are also a good source of vitamin C.

Ingredients:

1/4 cup finely diced cucumber
1/4 cup finely diced green bell pepper
2 medium tomatoes, finely diced
1/4 cup red onion, finely diced
1 cup tomato juice, preferably reduced-sodium
2 garlic cloves, chopped
2 tsp. olive oil
2 Tbsp. bread crumbs
1/2 Tbsp. white wine vinegar
Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
1/4 cup zucchini, finely diced (optional)
1 hard boiled egg white, finely chopped (optional)

Instructions:

In a blender, purée tomato juice, garlic and olive oil. Add bread crumbs and vinegar, and blend to combine. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Pour into a covered container and chill well, from 2 hours to overnight.
When ready to serve, adjust seasonings if necessary. Divide soup among 4 serving bowls. Add 1 Tbsp. each of diced cucumber, pepper, tomato and onion, plus zucchini and egg white if desired. (Or add diced vegetables to juice mixture before serving.)

Nutritional Information: Makes 4 servings.

Per serving: 70 calories, 3 g. total fat (less than 1 g. saturated fat), 10 g. carbohydrate, 2 g. protein, 1 g. dietary fiber, 97 mg. sodium.