

# THE AVANTE TIMES



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## The Immunity Issue

By Bethany Buchanan, ANP

Welcome to our third newsletter! The community response from our newsletters has been very rewarding. We are glad everyone seems to be enjoying them and finding the information helpful. This fall our theme is colds and flues. There are several supplements that are reported to shorten the days you fight a cold or flu, but most important is not getting sick in the first place! A strong immune system is the key to good health and feeling well. A little information about echinacea and the impact of sugar on the immune system may be helpful.

Recently echinacea has come under fire, with a study showing it unhelpful. Echinacea has over 350 studies showing a benefit starting in the 1930s in Germany. I would think we would know before now if it didn't work! It is the most popular selling Western herb for a reason: it works. The key is using it correctly; it should not be taken in attempts to prevent a cold, use it to treat a cold, and it is important to take enough echinacea. To stimulate an immune response,

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take at least 950mg a day. Studies show 450mg a day is equivalent to placebo. At the onset of a cold or flu (or any virus), 3-4 ml of echinacea in a liquid preparation or 300 mg of a powdered form in capsule or tablet, can be taken every two hours for the first day of illness, then three times per day for a total of 7 to 10 days. It only has mild antibacterial properties, and avoid if you have an autoimmune disease, unless advised otherwise by a healthcare provider.

Nutrition plays the biggest role in the immune system. Sugar is incredibly detrimental to the immune system. Eating a 100g (4 oz) portion of carbohydrate such as glucose, fructose, sucrose, honey or even orange juice all

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## Avante Welcomes Medical Internist, Meg Cronin, MD!

Avante Medical Center is very pleased to announce the addition of Meg Cronin, MD to our clinic. Dr. Cronin is a medical doctor who graduated from the Medical College of Pennsylvania. She completed her internship in Internal Medicine at the University of Vermont Medical Center and her Internal Medicine residency at the University of Utah Medical Center. She is board certified in Internal Medicine. Dr Cronin began her practice in Utah focusing in primary care and urgent care.

She always wanted to move to Alaska after spending six weeks of medical school at Bethel Hospital in Bethel, Alaska. In 1997, she moved to

Anchorage and joined First Care's staff, later moving to Urgent Care Medical Center in 2002. She is looking forward to establishing a clientele in primary care at Avante Medical Center. She focuses her practice on prevention, proper nutrition, exercise and stress reduction. She adheres to this philosophy in her own life, making it easy for her to practice what she preaches. She enjoys treating clients with asthma, allergies, hypertension, diabetes, acute injuries and other difficulties adults may face throughout their lives. When she isn't working, Dr. Cronin enjoys hiking, biking, kayaking, skiing and all the opportunities available to Alaskans.

## Kudos for Coconuts

By Lori Zitzmann, ANP

Coconut oil has long been given a bad reputation, undeservedly. Old research done poorly used artificially hydrogenated oil. The process of partial hydrogenation kills nutrients and creates trans fatty acids, which are harmful to health. But, pure unrefined coconut oil is a nutritional paradise and immune system booster.

The coconut is relatively low in protein compared to other nuts and seeds. It provides calcium, iron, magnesium, phosphorus, and small amounts of B vitamins. It is 60% fat, which is 92% saturated. But this is no reason to avoid it. In fact, the principle fatty acid in coconut oil is lauric acid. Lauric acid converts to the very powerful antiviral compound known as



*Coconuts are heavenly for the palate and the immune system.*

monolaurin. I'll often recommend a supplement called Monolaurin for people trying to fight off viral infections. This medium chain fatty acid has potent anti-viral, anti-fungal, and anti-microbial properties. In vitro, it has been known to kill herpes, measles, and CMV viruses. Lauric acid is only found in one other food- mother's milk. In breast milk, it protects newborns from viruses and bacteria.

Pure, unrefined coconut oil is a nourishing food supplement. In addition to its immune

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## Treating the Common Cold

By Jennifer Lush, ND

With the onset of the fall season and the beginning of a new school year, many parents are worried about their children (and eventually themselves) catching what is known as 'the common cold'. One misconception about the cold is that it is caused by bacterial infections or exposure to cold weather.

The common cold is actually caused by a virus and does not respond to antibiotic therapies. One belief is that the increase in colds (and flues) in the colder months is due to the fact that school children and everyone in general are inside more and exposed to the various viruses in enclosed spaces versus being outdoors during the warmer weather. Regardless of the reason for the

*"One misconception about the common cold is that it is caused by bacterial infections or exposure to cold weather"*

increased viral exposure, keeping the immune system strong and efficient is key to warding off the common cold. Advice from your mothers and grandmothers such as fluid intake, rest, and vitamin C still hold strong today. In fact, according to one reference site a review of 21 controlled trials using 1 to 8 grams of vitamin C per day found that "in each of the twenty-one studies, vitamin C reduced the duration of episodes and the severity of the symptoms of the common cold by an average of 23%."

However, the immune system is a complex and intricate system which often requires additional therapies, depending on the needs of the individual. For example, if you are the type of person whose cold often starts in the sinuses, then you need to maintain the integrity of the mucosal membranes of the sinuses during the fall and winter months. The mucosal membrane is a first line defense in preventing viruses from invading our bodies. One way to maintain mucosal membrane health is via the use of saline, or salt, to physically flush the viruses from the membranes. Neti pots are devices commonly sold

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## Children and the Immune System

By Liane Erickson, ND

Children have a unique relationship with their immune systems. While most adults have been exposed to numerous viruses, bacteria and fungi over the years, children are experiencing most for the very first time. This has the potential for kids to develop many illnesses both acute and chronic. But there are a number of things we as parents can do to ensure that our children develop strong, competent immune systems to fight off infection on a daily basis.

What can cause a decrease in our children's immune system? Antibiotic overuse is the most common culprit today. Unhealthy food choices are another problem: sugars weaken essential fatty acids, and decrease magnesium and B vitamins in the system. Saturated fats compete with enzymes and promote free radical damage. Pesticides in foods decrease T-cells. Chemicals in household cleaners will suppress white blood cells and the thymus gland from working effectively.

Signs of a chronically low immune system include environmental and food allergies, fatigue, listlessness, chronic infections such as ear infections and upper respiratory infections and slow wound healing.

What can we do to strengthen our children's immune systems? Diet is my number one recommendation. Decrease or eliminate saturated fats and sugars. Make sure kids have adequate proteins to help with antibody production and consume essential fatty acids, which are responsible for a healthy cell membrane and functioning organs. Even little ones should drink ample filtered water to flush their system of toxins. Zinc is the most important vitamin for the immune system as it ensures tissue healing, T-cell production and is an antiviral. Zinc is often depleted in diets high in cheese and milk. Selenium, vitamins A, B's and C are also essential for a proper functioning immune system. Herbs such as nettles, red clover, astragalus and ginger help to boost our little one's systems and taste great when added to recipes.

Most importantly, try to create a loving and stress-free environment for your children to ensure they are both happy and healthy.

*Want to start the school year off right? Join Dr. Erickson as she teaches "Cooking For Kids" Thursday, October 6<sup>th</sup> at 6pm.*

## Antiviral Action of Vitamin A and Zinc

By Bethany Buchanan, ANP

A cold or upper respiratory infection is a common occurrence in the fall and winter. Having a strong immune system is a way to make a cold a not so common occurrence in your life. Our immune systems kick into high gear when it senses a virus trying to invade our cells. If you have strong immunity, the cold isn't such a big deal, but a weaker immune system lends itself to a longer lasting cold and creating a better environment for a bacterial infection, like a bronchitis or sinusitis. It is a common belief that there are not good antivirals to fight colds. Not true! Many herbs have antiviral properties, but my favorites are the actions of Vitamins C, A, and Zinc.

Zinc is a mineral that is a component of more than 300 enzymes needed to repair wounds, create protein, preserve vision, help cells reproduce and boost immunity. Zinc is involved in every single aspect of immunity. When zinc levels are low, virus-

fighting T cells decrease, thymus hormones lower (the thymus makes white blood cells which fight infection), and overall white blood cell function slows down. Zinc can produce a dramatic reversal of low immune function (especially in the elderly). Without zinc, white blood cells can't be made and when zinc is taken in higher doses it has antiviral properties. Zinc dosages for general health support are 15-20mg a day. If used therapeutically to fight a cold, then take 90mg a day for ten days, or up to two months for a weakened immune system. Doses exceeding this may have the reverse effect and weaken the immune system.

Vitamin A has several functions in the body, and is required for proper immune function. First it plays that essential role in maintaining the mucous membranes (like in your nose) so that viruses have a harder time invading. Vitamin A also has direct antiviral properties and enhances the immune response during a viral infection. It does this by

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significantly reduce the ability of white blood cells (wbc) to destroy foreign particles and microorganisms. The negative effects start in less than 30 minutes, lasts five hours, and creates a 50 % reduction in the ability of wbc to destroy and engulf foreign particles. One study showed that consuming 24 tsp of sugar (2 cans of soda) caused a 92% decrease in wbc efficiency.

Considering that the average American consumes 125g of sucrose, plus 50g of other refined simple sugars each day, the inescapable conclusion is that most Americans have chronically depressed immune systems. It is clear, particularly during an infection, that the consumption of

simple sugars, even in the form of fruit juice impairs immune function. Ingesting increasing amounts of glucose progressively lowers wbc function. In other words, the more sugar you consume, the greater the negative impact on your immune system.

*We hope you will find the information in this issue helpful, and perhaps you will have a few more tools to help yourself this cold and flu season.*

### **Kudos for Coconuts from page 2**

system benefits, the medium chain triglycerides can provide quick energy and enhance fat burning metabolism. It can be used as an ideal substitute for shortening in all recipes, and is an acceptable alternative to butter. The mild flavor works well for sautéing and wok cooking. A teaspoon a day in your favorite smoothie or protein drink will add extra infection protection. A colleague recently shared with me her experience of seeing previously

suppressed levels of white blood cells raised to normal levels in a patient with regular use of coconut oil! Health food stores usually carry organic, unhydrogenated coconut oil. Once you open it, keep the bottle refrigerated and protected from light. Other sources are Body Ecology (800) 478-3842 or Omega Nutrition (800) 661-3529.

*"A teaspoon a day of coconut oil will add extra infection protection."*

### **Antiviral Action of A and Zinc from page 3**

helping the induction of antitumor activity, building white blood cells and increasing the antibody response in the body. Deficiency of Vitamin A may predispose one to a viral infection, especially children. It has been shown that in children, the lower the A stores, the greater the severity of RSV, measles and rubella. Several studies show that high dose for a few days can fight most viruses very effectively. For acute viral conditions in infants, 50,000u for 1 or 2 days appears safe. For acute viral adults, 100,000-300,000u for 3-5 days is safe. **Don't do this if you have a liver disease or are pregnant.** For those who instantly rebel on the notion of these doses, there is plenty of research to support this and in my clinical experience I have never noticed a problem with toxicity. Vitamin A is not something that needs to be taken as a separate vitamin. What is found in a multiple vitamin is adequate for daily intake. I only use A therapeutically (specific doses for specific conditions for a specific time frame). Interestingly zinc and vitamin E are important for the proper function of Vitamin A. At the first sign of your next cold, take high doses of vitamin A and zinc as recommended along with Vitamin C and you may find the symptoms are less severe and you on the road back to being well.

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at health food stores, which are designed for this purpose. The addition of therapeutic essential oils such as lavender, eucalyptus, and tea tree oil all enhance the disruption of the viral replication on the membranes. Saline-based nasal sprays are also very effective, many of which also have botanical and homeopathic ingredients as well.

Zinc is a mineral, which is powerful against viral invasion of the mucosal membrane and subsequent viral replication. It can be taken as a lozenge to soothe sore throats and is also a key ingredient in a popular homeopathic nasal spray. Throat lozenges providing 13 to 25 mg of zinc (as

zinc gluconate, zinc gluconate-glycine, or zinc acetate) can be used every two hours while awake (but only for several days) and are most effective when taken at the onset of the cold. Additionally, there are various herbs such as Echinacea, Goldenseal, Astragalus, Ginseng, and Elderberry, which stimulate the immune system throughout the entire body. No matter what type of herbs or vitamins you chose to prevent and treat the common cold, avoiding stress, sugars, alcohol, and maintaining high quality nutritional habits will all aid your body in keeping it's natural defenses strong through the coming fall and winter seasons.

*Avante Medical Center is a unique facility established to provide Alaskans with a broad range of integrative and progressive medical services. We provide care to clients with acute and chronic health challenges in a nurturing, warm and beautiful environment. Our goal is to educate, empower, and enrich our clients' health through a caring, professional and personable experience.*

## Who's Who at Avante Medical Center

**Jason Harmon, ND**--Co-owner of Avante, Dr. Harmon is a Naturopathic Doctor specializing in cancer care. Dr. Harmon currently sits on the national board of the Oncology Association of Naturopathic Physicians. He continues to provide Alaska with primary as well as cancer care, committed to advancing education and world class medical care in the state of Alaska.

**Bethany Buchanan, FNP**--Co-owner of Avante, Bethany is a Family Nurse Practitioner practicing family medicine and women's health.

**Lori Zitzmann, ANP**--Lori is an Adult Nurse Practitioner who sees men and women for primary care, preventative health issues, chronic illness management, and hormone balancing.

**Liane Erickson, ND**--Dr. Erickson is a Naturopathic Doctor, specializing in pediatrics and family medicine, and is a Doula qualified to assist in births. She also practices Bowen therapy, a gentle form of bodywork.

**Kaycie Rosen, ND**--Dr. Rosen is a Naturopath specializing in primary care medicine. She also utilizes botanical medicines and craniosacral therapy, an energetic form of bodywork.

**Margaret Cronin, MD**--Dr. Cronin is a medical internist who provides a wide array of primary care services for Alaskans. She enjoys caring for patients with complex conditions and is welcoming new patients.

**Jennifer Lush, ND**--Dr. Lush is a Naturopath recently joining us from her successful clinic in Seattle. Dr. Lush provides comprehensive primary care, specializing in women's health, detoxification and weight loss programs.

**Judy Hartford, CMPTP**-- Judy is a board certified Myofascial Triggerpoint Therapist, in practice for 21 years. She treats all musculoskeletal and neuromuscular issues, including pain and weakness.

**Julie Tummonds, CCT, LMT**-- Julie is a massage therapist, specializing in full body relaxation massage. She is also a certified colon hydrotherapist, focusing on detoxification.

**Cathy Floyd**-- Cathy is working in our allergy department using a provocation and neutralization for comprehensive allergy treatment elimination.

# Avante Lecture Schedule

**September 29:** Jennifer Lush, ND: **Fall Cleansing-Systemic Detoxification.** 6-7:30. Free. Call Avante to register.

**October 6:** Jason Harmon, ND: **Nutritional Walk-Through.** 5:45 PM. Natural Pantry. Free

**\*October 6:** Liane Erickson, ND: **Cooking for Kids Class.** Call Avante to register. \$60. 6:00 PM. Class held at Alaska Healing Arts Chiropractic.

**October 13:** Jennifer Lush, ND: **Fall Cleansing-Systemic Detoxification.** 6-7:30. Free. Call Avante to register.

**October 18:** Liane Erickson, ND: **Cancer Cooking.** Call Avante to register. \$60. 6:00 PM. Class held at Alaska Healing Arts Chiropractic.

**November 3:** Jason Harmon, ND: **Nutritional Walk-Through.** 5:45 PM. Natural Pantry. Free

**November 10:** Jason Harmon, ND: **Immunity Cancer Treatment and Prevention** 6:00PM. Call Avante to register. Free

**November 15:** Liane Erickson, ND: **Diabetic and Hypoglycemic Cooking.** Call Avante to register. \$60. 6:00 PM at Alaska Healing Arts Chiropractic.

**December 1:** Jason Harmon, ND: **Nutritional Walk-Through.** 5:45 PM. Natural Pantry. Free

**December 7:** Bethany Buchanan, ANP: **Coping with Darkness; Options for Treating SAD.** **Must** call Avante to register. Free. 6:00 PM.

**\*Cooking Class:** Want to start the school year off right? Join Dr. Erickson as she teaches "Cooking For Kids" Thursday, October 6 at 6pm. Foods that strengthen the immune system as well as gluten and dairy free cooking will be covered in this class.

**Fall Cleansing- Systemic Detoxification:** Fall is a wonderful season to prepare yourself and your body for the coming winter season. By participating in a fall cleanse, you can balance your metabolism, increase your energy, and shed unwanted pounds before the hibernation state of winter sets in. Examples of cleansing foods will be available as snacks.

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