



# Vital Signs

## Winter 2017

SCIENTIFICALLY PROVEN TO BE BETTER THAN KISSING BOO BOOS

ABOUT US

## State of the Clinic

by Alicia Hart, ND

Winter is approaching, with dark quiet nights, cozy quilts, and all of the holiday cacophony that both invigorates and overwhelms this time of year. Since our last newsletter we've had a few changes here- we joined the Vaccines For Children project to be able to give vaccines to our OHP kids, our IBCLC spent a day out with Dr. Ghaheri gaining depth in her knowledge of tongue tie, and Dr. Stacie Wolfe began seeing patients. All of these things have been exciting and will add to our depth of service to the community.

In light of the recent election, we are preparing to help people who may see some of their insurance benefits decrease. Since one of the things that the

affordable care act made affordable were birth control, we'd love for you to come in and discuss getting your prescriptions in order or what to consider for a switch to a long acting method like an IUD. We can also help you have an inhaler, an epipen, etc around. Let's keep you safe and make sure you have what you need.

Starting in January we will begin running seasonal detox groups, which will focus on seasonal eating, supporting orthomolecular systems, and exercise within a small group for increased accountability and support. We're here to support you in reaching your best health. In 2017, resolve to really stick with your resolutions!



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# How I Came to Medicine

by Stacie Wolfe, ND

Once upon a time, my working life looked much different. Instead of a beautiful office in the suburbs, my interactions with folks took place in a tiny private room in the emergency department or on rain spattered sidewalks. In that once upon a time, I spent my time working in various social services on issues ranging from sexual assault to injection drug harm reduction. I loved the work. I loved my co-workers. I loved the frustrating struggle of trying to solve a puzzle when half the pieces had been lost under the couch. There is an extraordinary beauty in working with others to create workable solutions with very little resources. What I didn't love were the limitations in what I could recommend. I absolutely hated hearing stories from my clients about being treated like human trash when they attempted to access medical services. And I would be lying if I tried to convince anyone that I was always okay never knowing how things turned out for someone.

I can't pinpoint the exact moment that I knew it was time to walk

away from the work I loved in order to pursue something more. I started with public health, thinking that perhaps working in policy would allow me to take those voices who had shared so many amazing and vulnerable stories with me to the ears of those who could affect real change. As graduation loomed and I started planning my next moves, I kept coming back to the memory of a young man and his tale of being dismissed at the ED because they thought he was drug seeking. This memory amplified, screaming into the echoing chambers of my brain until I knew I needed to take advantage of my privileged access to higher education. I applied to naturopathic medical school and, to my incredible surprise, got in.

I don't think that wellness care can be divorced from an understanding of the complex intersection of our different identities or places on the hierarchy of social power. Simply



treating a cold without addressing all those other complexities that may have suppressed the immune system isn't exactly holistic medicine. Neither is refusing to see the patient and their immediate need through a complex history such as injection drug use. This is what brought me to medicine, and this is what drives me forward on this path every day. We all deserve to be happy and well, no matter what.

My office may look different, but my commitment remains the same. I feel fortunate to have joined the team at Vitality NW, and I look forward to helping each and every one of you find your footing in health and happiness.



*"When a flower doesn't bloom, you fix the environment in which it grows, not the flower."*

*Alexander Den Heijer*

# Breastfeeding and the Holidays

by Adrienne Koznek, IBCLC

As if the holidays aren't stressful enough, adding a newborn into the equation can be overwhelming. Well-meaning relatives want to hold the baby. They want to give the baby a bottle but you're exclusively nursing. What about a glass of wine - can you have one while you're nursing? How does a new mom overcome some of these challenges?

The good news is, babies can be a great excuse to remove yourself from stressful situations. It's always ok to take your baby to a quiet room to relax - many babies often nurse better without distractions. It can be difficult to navigate with family members - especially those whom may be

seeing the baby for the first time - but always remember, you as the parent get to make decisions about your baby. Especially with cold and flu season happening, it's not at all unreasonable to ask that people wash their hands before holding the baby. This is a good practice and just common sense.

Many folks equate feeding the baby with bonding with them. While this does certainly have merit, offering a bottle to an exclusively nursing baby is more harmful than helpful. Maybe a relative wants to give a bottle to be helpful. I encourage you, the parent, to decide how you feel about this - knowing that giving bottles to breastfed babies in the early weeks may potentially

disrupt breastfeeding if it's not well-established. Some alternative suggestions to giving a bottle could be to help you get ready to breastfeed - bring a snack, a pillow, a glass of water - or help with changing diapers. The close up face-to-face time that comes with diaper changing is highly valuable for bonding as well.

Have that glass of wine, mama! The general rule to follow is: if you can drive, you can nurse. The amount of alcohol passed into your milk from one glass of wine (or beer, or a cocktail) is minimal. Use your best judgment - "pumping and dumping" is not necessary.

Breastfeeding does not need to be an added stressor to the holidays. Remember your goals, and tell people your intentions. People are understanding and gracious. Happy holidays!

# Healing Toddies

by Stacie Wolfe, ND

I know you have gotten lectures from a doctor before about avoiding alcohol when you are not feeling well, but let's be real here. Sometimes when you have a cold or a sore throat, a hot toddy is just about everything and is simple enough for even your fever addled brain to concoct. The basic recipe is as follows:

1 lemon wedge – muddled

About 1 tbsp of honey

A shot or two of whiskey or brandy (if you so desire)

Hot water to fill your mug

Here is where the rest of the recipe is left to creative license, and where we get all the room in the world to take this liquor delivery vessel and turn it into medicine. For those illnesses accompanied by the chills, add cinnamon sticks. For sore throat, a few whole cloves might be the ticket. Are you so congested and besot with cough that you can barely even breathe? How about adding some thyme, rosemary and chili flakes to your drink? Or are you feverish with one of those horrible dry racking coughs that sage is so good at alleviating? The possibilities are endless for taking a simple tea and tweaking it to your specific illness signature. To your health!

# Lactation Cookies

by Adrienne Koznek, IBCLC

<http://www.bellybelly.com.au/breastfeeding/lactation-cookies/>

Lactation cookies are a popular food to help increase milk supply. It's important to note that they don't magically make a mama make more milk - or any milk at all. But they *\*do\** nourish mamas in a time when eating is arguably more important than ever and are a yummy way to get calories into her. These lactation cookies have brewer's yeast, flax, and oats, all of which are associated with boosting milk supply. So if you have milk supply concerns, please work with an IBCLC to get to the root of the cause.

Prep time: approx. 15 minutes

Oven temp: preheat to 170C or 338F

Makes approx. 14-16 cookies

- 1 cup self raising whole meal flour (if you have plain flour, add 1/2 teaspoon baking powder)
- 1/2 cup butter or virgin coconut oil
- 3/4 cup brown sugar (if you want to reduce sugar, you could try just 1/2 cup)
- 2 tablespoons flaxseed meal
- 1 egg
- 2-3 tablespoons of water (depends on how moist you prefer the cookies to be)
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract (optional)
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon (optional)
- 1-2 tablespoons of brewers yeast – do not substitute with bakers yeast or any other yeast
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 & 1/2 cups oats – organic, steel cut oats are best for you, but rolled oats are fine

OPTIONAL: 1/2 cup of your favorite cookie add-ons (chocolate chips, raisins, etc)

DO NOT leave out or substitute the brewers yeast when making lactation cookies. It's one of the main ingredients that makes them work. Nutritional yeast and bakers yeast are different and will not work in the same way.

In a large mixing bowl, cream the butter and sugar, then add the egg and vanilla. Mix well. In a separate bowl, combine the flax seed and water, let them sit for a few minutes before adding to mix. Add the dry ingredients (apart from the oats and your additional ingredients) and mix well again. Finally, stir in the oats and your additional ingredients. Make the cookies and place them onto a lightly greased or lined baking tray. Flatten them a little with your fingers or a spatula. Bake for around 10-12 minutes.

I prefer to use coconut oil in place of butter. If you don't love the taste of coconut oil, go with butter. Happy eating!

# Vegan Chocolate Mousse

by Alicia Hart, ND

So many parties come up this month! This is my go-to potluck dish because A) it's amazing and looks really fancy, B) It takes less than 30 minutes to prep and C) it's nut free (if you're careful with sources), gluten free, dairy free, fairly low glycemic index, and vegan. Don't be weirded out by the inclusion of tofu- this tastes like a chocolate mousse.

Ingredients: 1 package of silken tofu, 3/4 cup of almond or coconut milk, 1 cup of chocolate chips (enjoy life brand is not processed in a plant with any of the top 8 allergens), 1 tsp of vanilla extract, 1/2 tsp of orange zest

Directions: melt chocolate chips with milk over a double boiler or at 30 second intervals in the microwave. Stir together until you get a rich chocolate milk look.

Add chocolate mixture to tofu, orange zest and vanilla in a food processor or blender and process until smooth. Taste test it- if you can still taste the tofu, melt and add more chocolate (but not more milk, otherwise it won't set right).

Once you have your mixture to taste, pour it into ramekins or small dishes and chill for 2-3 hours. You can pour it into a big bowl but it takes longer to set and may not set properly. I've scaled the recipe up to triple and down to half with no trouble. You can easily make this ahead of time, it keeps fine in the fridge when covered.



# Winter Herbal Spotlight

by Alicia Hart, ND



Many of you will bring many medicinal plants into your house this winter- Decking the halls with some of our vibrant, beautiful winter foliage like juniper, red cedar, holly, and mistletoe. In the center of the celebration one of the most common Christmas trees is called a Douglas Fir. One of the tallest trees on the continent, easily topping 300 feet in old age, this beautiful giant has excellent medicine for the winter season no matter what you're celebrating.

Doug fir is native and ubiquitous to the region. It's used for lung conditions and as an anti-inflammatory mostly. The needles contain a high level of

Vitamin C and many different monoterpenes, including the more commonly known limonene and citronellol. With the high vitamin C and the monoterpenes, it's an effective antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory, and expectorant. Traditionally it has mostly been used for common cold and cough, but it's also been used in arthritis and some digestive complaints. It's role as a safe antioxidant and vitamin supplement gives it a lot of diversity, and with the light and nearly lemony flavor, getting people to want to take it isn't hard. Kids love the magic of "eating a Christmas tree" and might find it more exciting than cough syrup.

The emotional component of this tree can be another important part of the holidays. Douglas fir on the emotional level helps you to stand your ground, step into your power, ground your ideas, and take action. This can be particularly important when navigating dynamics of family, travel, and celebration.

There are many food and drink recipes that call for Douglas Fir, which are generally delicious. Think about including it in your holiday martini, your turkey seasoning, and even in your shortbread. For a cough, use a tablespoon of needles per 8 ounces of hot water and steep for 10 minutes. Ideally you'd harvest new green leaves in spring from a healthy plant with a lot of healthy tree friends, but winter needles work just as well. Look for downed limbs from wind storms over taking from the tree itself. Douglas fir has soft needles that spiral around the branch, but the easiest way to ID the tree is to look at the cone. Under each scale, three bracts protrude. Folklore says they look that way because during a fire, a mouse jumped into the cone for shelter, with its tail and hind paws sticking out behind them.

No matter how you spend your winter months, Douglas fir is a wonderful support and essential part of making it through the winter.

# Who Counts Sheep, Anyway?

A few pointers for better sleep

by Stacie Wolfe, ND

If you are anything like me, sleep is a wily creature. Just as you nod off, some little noise awakens you and it is all over. Or perhaps the house is silent and your brain up and decides that 3 am is the exact correct time to rapidly overview every little thing you have ever done less than perfectly. Sleep difficulty impacts many of us and is among one of the more common complaints that I see patients for.

Treatments for insomnia range from lifestyle intervention to pharmaceuticals, with all the colors in between. Before turning to the heavier hitting options, I always like to work with folks on how they can make small changes to increase the likelihood of getting a good night's sleep. Here are some things you can try to get a better rest.

**1. Lay off the alcohol.** Yes, it is a depressant. But alcohol consumption only helps us get to sleep, it won't keep us there. Studies have shown that alcohol intake is correlated with increased sympathetic activity (the one that gets us going in stressful situations) and shorter sleep duration.

**2. Eat some protein before bed.** I think of the snacks that we eat as firewood. Carbohydrates are like the kindling; immediately satisfying

but rather short lived. While protein is that big old cherry wood log that takes a minute to get going but lasts for a long time. Eating a little bit of protein about 30 minutes before bed keeps the blood sugar more stable than say, a bowl of popcorn. Which in turn increases the likelihood that you stay asleep instead of waking up in the middle of the night hungry as a bear.

**3. Get your sleep space in order.** Look around. What does your bedroom look like? Is it a serene space full of airy fabrics and the soft sounds of birds playing the harp? Or is it a hurricane of laundry that you hunker down into to watch Netflix as you drift off to slumber? Throughout medical school I heard my teachers reiterate the point that the bedroom is for sleep and sex. That means your room, too. Watch your shows elsewhere, leave the snacks in the rest of the house. Are there a bunch of electronics kicking out light and white noise? Move those to another part of the house. Use this opportunity to your bedroom space into more of a sweet sanctuary than a storage space. It really does help.



**4. Set a sleep schedule.** I used to laugh at this recommendation. Sleep schedule? I can barely commit to a solid awake schedule. But as I grow older I have come to recognize the value in prioritizing at least eight hours in bed, if not eight hours of sleep. Life is busy and it is nice to be able to say that the time between 11 pm and 7 am is for being a horizontal slug. Once you settle into the idea that bed time is a real thing, your brain should follow suit.

If these easy interventions don't do the trick and you need advice on things ranging from herbs to sleep medications, we are here for you. The providers at Vitality NW are no stranger to disrupted sleep and we have several ways to help you get the sleep you so richly deserve.

# Doctor's Note

by Alicia Hart, ND

With the hustle that swirls through this time, please remember self care. Many people find themselves overcommitted, overstressed, eating in a way that doesn't make them feel good, and perhaps dealing with difficult relationships during this time. The rain is setting in, and the light of spring is a few months off. Your care of yourself is critical for your capacity to deal with winter. Take a minute and do these 5 things for yourself.

1. **Breath.** Intentional breathing has hundreds of studies on how it affects our stress level and anxiety. Take 10 conscious breaths whenever you stop and think about it- try to get to 100 conscious breaths per day.
2. Before you accept an invitation, consider whether the obligation brings you joy. If it doesn't, what would change if you were able to say no? Are the consequences of refusing not that bad? Don't spend time where you are sad and uncomfortable.
3. Give yourself permission to celebrate without guilt. We often approach this season with a feeling of "should"- should have cleaned more, should have avoided more calories, should have put out those holiday cards before valentines of next year... You are doing enough. You are enough. You deserve to celebrate with your loved ones. It's ok to have holiday food and drink- everything in moderation, including moderation.
4. Write down your own best coping mechanisms for stress. Do you need a bubble bath? A cup of tea? A 30 minute run? A counselors appointment? What do you need to do in your life to make one of these things happen every day? How can other people around you support this self care? How can you support theirs? Everyone will answer these questions differently, and that's ok. Recognize that your community wants to support you.
5. Find some childlike magic in your day! One thing that I've noticed since having kids is that I suddenly have more time where I am reminded to wonder at the beauty of a falling snowflake or to feel exhilarating anticipation. Arts and crafts, ice skating, watching a favorite movie or reading a favorite book in a blanket fort, singing at the top of your lungs- we never outgrow the need for play. Tap into your inner child and find more joy in the mundane magic that follows us everywhere we go.



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