Mother's Healing Basket

Class 1~ A Strong Foundation: Vitamins, Minerals, Immune Health, and Building Your Home Apothecary

I desired to create this class for one main reason and that was to create a space of support and sharing for parents to raise wildly healthy children. With over 11 years of experience raising my own four children and over 13 years working in the natural health field, I have gone through plenty of trial and error, and while I wouldn’t consider myself an expert, I certainly have learned a lot along the way that I am yearning to share.

It seems to me these days, that we have more access to knowledge than we have ever had, but the over-abundance has caused a sort of analysis paralysis. I have seen the natural health consensus of what “works” swing greatly over time, and as time marches on, our health concerns are also shifting in a big way. Even in the short 13 years of practicing as an herbalist I have seen a swing from seeing children mainly for acute illness: coughs, colds, fevers, flu etc. to a huge jump in chronic illnesses. There is a multi-faceted answer to the question of “why” that would be, and we can certainly discuss these in class...

Feeling supported within your social network

Humans are social creatures that depend on their community in order to feel vital. Without the feelings of love and having a support system to fall back on, we recover from illness slower, and have increased levels of cortisol (stress hormone) and lowered immune profiles. It seems fairly clear that building “family”, however that looks for you, is of utmost importance, not just for emotional/spiritual health, but for physical health as well, (which we all know is intimately intertwined).

Getting Enough Sleep

Feeling rested is HUGE when it comes to the proper functioning of our immune system. Sleep debt is the number one cause when it comes to many auto-immune disorders, as well as chronic fatigue, chronic pain, and mental health disorders as well. Lack of sleep is the quickest way to catch a cold or flu, which most of us can attest to from experience.

Vitamins + The Minerals that Run the Show ~ This is not your high school nutrition class...

The main issue that I see these days with new clients is that they are deeply confused when it comes to nutrition. Diet can be a very emotionally charged conversation and exploration for many. For this reason, I think it is important to outline that the information I am sharing here is not my opinion, but physiologic truth as it is understood today. I am not going to recommend that every one of my clients follows a “carnivore” or “keto” or “vegan” or any other type of diet, I am simply going to outline the most important vitamins + minerals that our culture is missing out on today, and the most bio-available forms to get these nutrients.

Vitamin C- I'd like to first make it abundantly clear that I am NOT talking about ascorbic acid. When shopping the aisles at the health store, I see a wide array of bottles marked “vitamin C”, but when I turn the bottle around it **almost always** says “as ascorbic acid”. **Cringe** Ascorbic acid is only ONE part of the vitamin C full-spectrum complex. When you are working with whole food vitamin c, you are not only getting ascorbic acid but also, rutin, ascorbigen, factors: j choline, k, and p, tyrosinase and copper! Vitamin C (the whole thing!!) is not only incredibly important for proper immune function and detoxification, but the elements provided by whole food vitamin c, are what we need in order to create cellular energy (adenosine triphosphate, ATP). The GREAT news is that you can get whole food vitamin c from a myriad of foods and herbs: kiwi, papaya, citrus fruits, rosehips, camu camu, amla, acerola cherry, and the list goes on and on.

Fat Soluble Vitamins A, D, and K- 3 Incredibly important vitamins for immune health, energy production, and cardiovascular health to name a few. These vitamins in their fat soluble, easily assimilated form, can not be found in a plant-based diet. Fat soluble Vitamin A (aka retinol) can be found in ruminant animal organs (especially liver), raw milk, cheese, and butter, cod liver oil, and eggs. Retinol is hugely important in the proper healing from acute childhood illness, especially the common cold, measles, and chicken pox, but not only this, it is absolutely vital in being able to load oxygen into the red blood cell.

Vitamin D (actually a hormone, not a vitamin,) can be found in grassfed dairy products, mushrooms dried pore or gill-side up in the sun, food eaten in the sun, ruminant animal lard/tallow/fats, cod liver and cod liver oil. I do not support the synthetic supplementation of vitamin d anymore. My **very** basic reasoning behind this is 1) The main “active” ingredient in supplemental vitamin D, Cholecalciferol, is the same main active ingredient in rat poison. I know.....2) Cholecalciferol enhances calcification in the body (something we don't need any more of), while also depleting the body of important stores of magnesium (something we are already depleted in). Low active Vitamin D levels acutally mean low Magnesium levels! If we up levels of magnesium it will convert our storage vitamin D into active vitamin D! We can certainly dive into this in class, but for more information Jim Stephenson Jr. has a lot to say on the matter as well as Morley Robbins.

Vitamin K also known by Dr. Weston A. Price as Activator X, supports healthy dental, bone, metabolism, atp production, brain function, antioxidant defenses, and cellular signaling. There are three main forms of Vitamin K. K1, K2 in MK4, and K2 in MK7. K1 deficiency is rare, it can be found in Evening Primrose herb. MK-4 we receive from animal foods, beef liver is the highest source, along with grassfed meats, butter, and eggs. MK-7 can only be found in fermented soy or natto, as well as raw aged cheese. MK-7 has been shown to reverse arterial blockages, prevent heart attacks, increase bone density, and reduce the risk of alzheimer's to name a few. It does this by reducing the amount of free flowing rock calcium throughout the tissues and assimilating it into the bones and teeth, where it belongs.

Magnesium- Where to even begin? Magnesium for everything! Truly, It is responsible for over 3,700 enzymatic functions in the body. Icredibly necessary for our body's ability to cope with stress, imperative for restorative sleep, hair,skin, and nail health and so much more. Unfortunately, due to the quality of our soil from factory farming, and NPK fertilizer usage, it is impossible to get enough magnesium from our food and water alone. This means we NEED to supplement. Magnesium rich foods + herbs include: coffee, chocolate, oats, soaked nuts and seeds, oatstraw/milky oat tops, nettle leaf, cacao bean/nib, gotu kola. My favorite forms of magnesium to supplement are: Magnesium bicarbonate (this is the form that used to be in our food and water). I make my own using powder and converting it via a co2 extraction (using my sodastream). Other powerful forms are glycinate/bisglycinate, and l-threonate.

Now that we have a strong foundation through food and have gotten some myths straightened out about necessary vitamins/minerals and supplementation, let's dive into some ways to support our children (and ourselves!!) through the addition of safe, simple herbal remedies.

Before we get into the remedies themselves, who here is fully informed on how to make various herbal preparations?

The main herbal preparations I will be outlining today will be the ones that extract vitamins + minerals in the best way. Those would be: water based preparations, (tea, tisanes, herbal syrups, and nourishing herbal infusions), Vinegar based extractions (steeping nutrient dense herbs such as nettle leaf, oatstraw, red clover, rosehips, in apple cider vinegar (or others) for 2-4 weeks and then straining and taking by the spoonful, mixing with honey and oil for salad dressing or mixing with honey and bubbly water as a fun mocktail.

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All About Herbal Teas

Herbal teas are a wonderful way to take your herbs! They are useful for increasing fluid intake, as well as beautiful to look at and a lovely way to show yourself love and care. Making a simple (an beverage tea of just 1 herb,) is also a very valuable practice for getting to know the taste and personal effects that an herb has for you! I highly recommend drinking a simple when you are trying to get to know an herb~bonus points for drinking a simple \*while you read about that herb!

Teas are water based preparations useful for extracting bitter compounds, essential/volatile oils (soluble in cold water), enzymes, vitamins and minerals, flavanoids, gums and gum-resins, mucilage (cold water), proteins, saponins, and starches to name a few. There are various ways to prepare herbal teas and infusions, here is a breakdown.

Beverage Tea or Tisane- An herbal tea or tisane is usually comprised of fragrant/aromatic leaves and flowers, or bitter nervines that are steeped for a short amount of time usually about 10-15 minutes. Tisanes are a great way to get to know a plant or to enjoy it for the sheer pleasure of drinking tea, the magic and medicine of tisanes are mostly in the self-care aspect.

This preparation is not too useful for harder berries, roots, or barks.

How: 1-2 tsp dried, cut + sifted herb or 1 Tbsp. Loose fluffy herb per 8 oz. Cup of just boiled water. Let steep, covered, for 5-15 min. It is important to cover so that the tea doesn't lose its precious volatile oils.

**Sleepytime beverage tea**

~2 pt. Chamomile blossoms ~1 pt. Lavender flowers

~1 pt. Lemon Balm leaf ~1 pt. Skullcap herb

~1 pt. Rose buds/petals ~1/4 pt. Marshmallow root

~1 pt. Passionflower herb ~1/2 pt. Spearmint leaf

**Gut Healing herbal tea**

~2 pt. Calendula blossoms ~1 pt. Spearmint leaf

~1 pt. Marshmallow root ~1 pt. Meadowsweet herb

~1/2 pt. Licorice root ~1/2 pt. Fennel seed

~1/2 pt. Burdock root ~1/2 pt. Dandelion root

Infusion- An infusion, or “nourishing herbal infusion”, is a much longer steeped herbal preparation, using a lot more herb. Infusions are made using the more nutritive and nourishing herbs such as: Red Clover, Nettles, Oatstraw, Comfrey, and Linden that are then steeped for hours in order to extract the optimal amount of vitamins and minerals.

How: 1 handful-1 oz. Of dried nutritive herbs to 1 quart just boiled water. It works easiest to use a quart canning jar or a french press. Cover herbs with water and steep, covered, anywhere from 4 hours to overnight. Strain and drink.

Decoction- Decoctions are made using the woodier plants, barks, berries, seeds, mushrooms and roots. Decoctions can be done once, or as is traditional in TCM (Traditional Chinese Medicine,) they can be done even 3 times! (This is known as a triple decoction) You may also make brews which I do in a crockpot, or simmer on the stove on low for hours/days at a time, adding more water when it has cooked off-this I like best for immune boosting brews or syrups.

How:

Decoction: 1 oz herb per 32 oz. Water. Bring to a boil and then simmer for 20-30 min. This simple decoction may be strained and drunk and then the herbs composted, or the herbs may then be decocted a 2nd and even 3rd time for a much more medicinal outcome.

**“Love Your Liver” decoction**

~2 pt. Burdock root ~1 pt. Crushed Milk Thistle seeds ~ 1 pt. Fresh Turmeric rhizome ~1 pt. Dandelion root ~1/2 pt. Sassafrass root bark ~1/8 pt. Cinnamon bark or twig

Put all of the herbs in a saucepan, enamel pot, or glass pot and cover in cold water and cover with a lid. Bring water to a boil and then turn down to a simmer. Allow brew to simmer for 20-40 min depending on how strong you prefer your herbs, many of the herbs in this recipe are on the bitter side of things. Turn off burner and strain through a strainer, coffee filter, or cheesecloth and drink. This decoction is delicious with a smidge of honey and a dash of vanilla coconut milk creamer! This delicious decoction can be further enhanced for an even more decadent and nourishing experience!

**Bullet Tea-** Bullet Teas are sometimes my most enjoyable way to administer herbal medicine to myself and those around me. A bullet tea is called this (I believe?) because they are made in a blender or “Magic Bullet” which is an herbalist's best friend due to the fact that it can be used in a myriad of ways. These frothy beverages are delicious and help folks to get a serving of healthy fats, nourishing herbs, and anti-inflammatory/carminative spices into their daily diet. What makes a bullet tea: some kind of hot herbal tea blended with a fat source and a sweetener of choice (if wanted/needed,) I usually use butter, ghee, or coconut oil.

**“Love Your Liver” bullet tea**

Take your “Love Your Liver” decoction and pour it into your blender of choice, (I personally use a “bullet” type of blender for this. Add either 1 Tbsp. of butter and/or 1 Tbsp. Coconut oil, a scoop of coconut manna, your cream of choice, maple syrup or honey, and a pinch of sea salt or Himalayan pink salt.

Blend for 30-45 seconds. Pour into mug and in-joy!

All teas/infusions/decoctions, may be stirred with intentions and prayers as to what purpose for healing they are to serve, and drunk with great reverence for the plant spirits that have come to bring you healing at this time.

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Even if you are supporting your families immune systems with plenty of lifestyle enhancements as well as herbal medicine, it is STILL normal for kids to get as many as 6-8 upper respiratory infections A YEAR!, 15-20% of kids get as many as 12 colds a year! Many kids that go to the doctor for common colds and upper respiratory infections go home with antibiotics. We now know that 70% of antibiotics given to children are unnecessarily prescribed. These types of practices can cause gut flora imbalance, which in turn actually causes more colds/flus or more serious issues such as IBS. Another huge issue with giving anti-biotics inappropriately is the fact that many of our infections are now becoming anti-biotic resistant. If only more parents were educated on the appropriateness of anti-biotic use, as well as common cold and flu herbs to give, we could drastically cut this statistic down!

Immune Tonics~ Gentle Giants

Herbs to bolster immunity-

~Elderberry syrups, jams, chutneys, etc. This is really easy to get kids to take! You can even put it on pancakes!

~ Prepare foods with raw garlic and onion.

~Astragalus root, wonderful to add to soups, stews, and stocks!

~Andrographis is another wonderful immune boosting herb\*\*\*\*\*

~Calendula- (Calendula officinalis) is an aster family plant that is easily cultivated, and once cultivated, grows in abundance. It is useful both internally and externally for wounds, rashes, and eczema. It is also a fabulous immune tonic herb traditionally used in soups and stews along with Astragalus, for the winter time, tea and tincture are also useful for its anti-fungal properties, lymphatic moving properties, also for those suffering from Candida overgrowth.

Other immune tonics: Chaga, Lion's Mane, Reishi mushroom, Turkey Tail mushroom, and Maitake mushroom.

Immune Recipes

Hi-C Vitamin Tonic Tea

4 parts Rosehips

3 parts Hibiscus Flower

2 parts Lemongrass

1 part Cinnamon chips

Combine all and store in an airtight container. This will keep indefinitely. Your child can drink as much as he/she likes. It will keep their Vitamin C levels high and serve as a form of protection against colds and flus.

Triple 'Shroom Immune Cocoa with Roots!

2 C. powdered, roasted Cacao powder

1 C. powdered mushroom blend of mushrooms of choice. I use Reishi, Chaga, and Cordyceps.

1 C. powdered roots blend of Astragalus, Burdock, and Codonopsis.

¼ C. Maple sugar or to taste

1/8 C. Marshmallow root powder

Blend together and serve either as a creamy bullet tea or plain using 1 tsp. Per cup freshly boiled water.

Elderberry Syrup

Ingredients: -1 cup fresh or ½ cup dried elderberries

 -3 cups water

 -1 cup honey

\*Optional: 1 cinnamon stick, a pinch of Ginger, 2 Cloves

Put berries, (and other herbs if using) in a saucepan and cover with water. Bring to a boil. Let simmer on low heat for 30-45 minutes.

Smash the berries. Strain the mixture through a fine mesh strainer and add 1 cup of honey to taste.

Bottle the syrup and keep in refrigerator. This will keep for 2-3 months. You may add a splash of brandy if you desire to up the storage time.