

A Visit from Lena

I teach my *Foundations of Gemmotherapy* series a few times a year, and I'm always delighted by the fascinating mix of students it attracts. The group tends to be a blend of Homeopaths, Acupuncturists, NDs, Nurses, and moms, usually scattered across the US and Canada. Occasionally there will be a student from England, France, Romania or Australia, which are all areas where there is considerable interest in Gemmotherapy. However, in September during the group introductions, I met my first student from Kyiv. Lena, an entrepreneur, and mother of five has had a passion for natural medicine for over fifteen years. Despite the fact that Gemmotherapy is unavailable in Ukraine, Lena felt called to learn about this intriguing therapy.

The path that led Lena to Gemmotherapy is an interesting one. Sixteen years ago she began her search for natural solutions for her children when their symptoms were not resolved by conventional medicine. Through homeopathy, she found solutions for her sons' croup and panic attacks. Lena was spurred to study natural medicine on her own after her physician homeopath was unable to find the correct remedy for some ailments. To begin, she immersed herself in books while her children were young, and then as time permitted she enrolled in a formal training program in Kyiv.

Looking for a Solution

For sixteen years now homeopathy has been the primary support for her family's health and has served them very well. That is until there was an outbreak of *Staphylococcus aureus* at her youngest son's school three years ago. This form of Staph often leads to the manifestation of painful carbuncles. In the case of her son, this would re-occur every month, and before long it had spread to her entire family of seven!

The conventional medical approach to this in Ukraine, as in the U.S., is a course of strong antibiotics and the surgical removal of the carbuncle if it does not heal on its own.

During this time period Lena reached out to many homeopathic physicians, and while the remedies provided some relief, and the outbreaks occurred further and further apart there was not a complete resolution.

After nearly three years of struggling with the lingering effects of *S. aureas* Lena asked her Romanian homeopath physician about Gemmotherapy. She could see there was a problem within her family that neither conventional medicine nor homeopathy alone could resolve, and she was determined to find a solution.

Finding Gemmotherapy

The idea of Gemmotherapy made sense to Lena. She knew that our bodies need drainage and what she discovered on the internet led her to believe it could be a second instrument for her to use as it worked on another level. So in her search to discover more a Russian homeopath led her to my books which then led her to my training programs.

After the *Foundations of Gemmotherapy* course began, two members of Lena's family experienced outbreaks of *S. aureas*, and she was quickly in need of Gemmotherapy extracts. Getting extracts from the U.S. to Ukraine would take weeks but the Universe was conspiring on Lena's behalf. There just happened to be a lovely Romanian student in my class. After a quick email introduction Dumi became Lena's Gemmotherapy angel, and before long her family was benefiting from the support of Gemmotherapy extracts.

Bringing Gemmotherapy to Ukraine

Intuitively from the start, Lena knew there was more to this than the needs of her own family. With years of experience running her own bookshop in the center of Kyiv, her entrepreneurial spirit saw an opportunity in bringing Gemmotherapy to Ukraine.

Without hesitation, I offered my support to Lena in anyway she needed. We met a few times on Zoom, and Lena's game plan began to take shape. When I decided to make this trip to France, bringing us just a bit closer geographically, Lena's husband encouraged her to come and spend some days with me. And that is exactly what happened.

It was a remarkable four days together. Lena came prepared with her questions about the uses of Gemmotherapy, the organizational structure needed to support the sale of extracts and how to spread the message. But you can be sure we also talked about our families, food and even a bit of politics. We have had lovely walks through the cobblestone streets of Foix, and along the banks of the rushing Ariege. We've spent time in the kitchen preparing plant-based meals and sharing recipes, too. After the first twenty-four hours, we both felt as if we'd known each other for years.

I can't even begin to express how mentoring her in this endeavor fills my heart with joy. I have been blessed over and over again along my path with remarkable and generous mentors. To be able to pass along my lessons is a gift beyond compare. By Lena's final day, it was down to all business. The day began with a joint call with our parent company, Plant Extrakt, in Romania to discuss logistics. Our conversations then turned to translations for labels, shipping practicalities, and next steps. But to be clear we definitely reserved some time for another walk along the Ariege, some shopping and for preparation of one more soup together. In fact, I wouldn't

rule out a joint effort on a vegan soup cookbook in our future!

To promote the sale of Gemmotherapy in a country where it's unknown is a challenge I am quite familiar with. I've learned so many lessons along the way and am delighted to share them. Lena will need to create a buzz and she will do that first with my books that she has currently begun translating into Russian. She has begun a social media campaign on Instagram and Facebook promoting the extracts themselves and plant-based meals so that when the extracts arrive there will already be some interest. Lena also aspires to host a Foundations of Gemmotherapy seminar this summer in Kyiv, and if it comes together I may find myself on a new adventure to a part of the world I've never been. No complaints here.

And so I ask you to join me in sending Lena well wishes. Another brave pioneering woman, forging a path for others to follow to live fuller, healthier lives.

Be sure to follow me @LaurenHubele on Instagram for a daily feed of photos from #30daysofwriting in the Pyrenees.

And while you are on Instagram you may also want to follow Lena @gemmo_in_ukraine and brush up on your Russian !

Vegan Borscht

So to be completely honest testing Borsch recipes was never quite on my radar, that is until I had a visitor from Kyiv. Who knew? Now I am an official Borsch fan and no doubt you will be too once you give Lena's vegan version a try.

Ingredients

- 2 medium sized potatoes
- 1 medium-sized carrot
- 1 medium-sized onion
- 1 medium-sized beet
- 1 small sweet pepper
- 60 g cabbage
- 4 fresh tomatoes (or 3 TBL of tomato paste or 1 cup of canned diced tomatoes)
- 1 package of dried mushrooms or 3 large fresh mushrooms, diced
- 80 g cooked white beans (optional)
- 2 pitted and diced prunes
- 25 g sunflower or olive oil
- 10 g coconut oil or Earth Balance Spread (this adds a rich flavor to replace butter)
- paprika, black pepper, vinegar, some honey, salt to taste
- 60 g sour cream
- 1 tbsp finely chopped parsley

Prepare

The first step is to reconstitute the dried mushrooms (if you're using them) and parboil the beet. Place a soup pot with 1.5 ltrs of water over high heat and bring just to a boil. Reduce heat to a simmer and add dried mushrooms. Allow to simmer 15 minutes, then add the whole peeled beet and simmer 15 minutes more. Turn off the heat and remove the vegetables from the pot of water with a slotted spoon. Set them on a plate and allow them to cool. If you're using fresh mushrooms, just parboil the beet and move on to the next step. Leave the water in the soup pot, as you'll return the vegetable mixture to it at the end to finish cooking.

Peel and cut the potatoes into 1-inch cubes. Peel and finely dice the onion, sweet pepper and mushrooms. Grate the raw

carrot and the parboiled beet. Cut cabbage into fine shreds.

Melt the coconut oil or Earth Balance Spread in a large skillet on low heat, add sunflower or olive oil to it. Add the onion, sweet pepper, cabbage and mushrooms and saute gently for a couple of minutes. Add the shredded beet, carrots and diced tomatoes and cook for a few minutes more.

Season the vegetable mixture with paprika, black pepper, a few drops of vinegar, honey, and salt, to taste. Allow to simmer for another 10 minutes over gentle heat, add the beans if desired, and diced prunes for sweetness. Turn off the heat and transfer the contents of the skillet to the water used for parboiling the beet. Bring the soup to a boil, reduce heat and simmer for a further 30 minutes.

Serve the borsch with dollops of a vegan sour cream or with a sprinkling of parsley.

Smachnogo!

Writer's Retreat for Beginners

I think I was ten when I first dreamed of being a writer. Of course, my dream was enhanced by my pre-adolescent imagination and had little to nothing to do with the realities of life. I never paid heed to how as a writer I might put a roof over my head and feed myself, let alone feed a family. I imagined sitting in a scented walled English garden pouring out my

heart into notebooks while dangling my toes in a rushing stream. It was an image I carried with me for years. By the time my grown-up self actually lived in England, I had long lost touch with the dream of my ten-year-old self. Yet to be honest, during my months in England, as I bobbed in and out of the depths of depression, it was writing that saved me. Because through my writing I could connect with a part of myself that had disappeared from all other realms of my life.

I never actually became a writer. I've just always written. When thoughts swirl in my mind, I'm compelled to put pen to paper and release what is there. Sometimes it may be just a string of lists or a few disjointed phrases, but this action can feel as important as my next breath. There are times I do worry that should I pass from this world unexpectedly, someone will try to make sense of my collection of scattered notebooks, making me out to be crazier than I deserve.

To remedy that, my truly crazy thoughts are saved for large sheets of white paper decorated with sticky notes and ideas in colored ink – and I'm sure I've hidden these quite well.

The Watergate hearings began with a rumble during my middle school years and I became enamored with the form of investigative journalism born in that era. I put all of my heart and soul into the editorial role I had for my school newspaper and looked for opportunities to expose injustice in the halls of my small town middle school.

In high school, I continued my passionate pursuit of journalism. I was encouraged by the radically liberal Mrs.

Adams who fueled my editorials each written with the intention to correct the latest injustice on my radar. Full of ambition, with Woodward and Bernstein as my patron saints, I wrote my way into an internship for the local newspaper. There at my spindly desk parallel to the editor smoking away on his pipe, I clinked away on a manual typewriter that surely had been rescued from someone's attic. Visually it looked like my dreams had manifested. That is, until you happened to glance at the copy in my machine. Naturally, I'd been assigned the obituaries. Well ok then, everyone must start somewhere! I vowed to myself to be the best obituary writer that exists. That was all fine and well until I reported with great flourish the death of the wrong person – a long-widowed, octogenarian sister who happened to have a twin. Seems I inadvertently switched the names of the sisters in my enthusiasm announced the wrong one had passed. I'm not sure her family or mine has forgotten. The lesson learned, however, is that when you no longer want to be assigned obituaries, make a mistake. How was I to know that my next assignment of reporting on Little League games would also prove to be a minefield!

On to college, I went, majoring in Communications, an up-and-coming field once called journalism. I immediately found my place on the staff of the school paper and could see a path from there to that scented English garden, or at least a smoky newsroom. That was all good and well until I was blinded by love (or what looked like love). And in its pursuit, I lost touch with that passionate young girl. The girl who put her writing first above all. Where she went is another story altogether, but what is important is that I found her again.

I found that passionate girl who wanted to change the world with her writing. And because of my life experiences, the

injustices I chose to pursue pertain to healthcare and a radically different approach. I began to write about taking back power – not politically – but personally and in regard to health because that was the story I've been born to share.

I also discovered along the way that I prefer to dangle my feet in a stream in France rather than England. I learned that my writing is best fueled by real work with clients and interactions with those I teach. The everyday stories of individuals in pursuit of better health is incredibly inspiring. I am also constantly reminded just how difficult it is to make a lasting change when you are surrounded by a culture that doesn't support a natural approach to health. And so here I am tasked with sharing a message that's foreign to what is commonly accepted yet resonates with the truth that many have come to know for themselves.

Breaking this down and delivering it in an accessible and believable format is a challenge, and it requires more of me than I sometimes feel I have to give. To speak from a place of my own truth and experience is the only way this can be authentically conveyed. So did I really need to come to France to find that deep connection? Maybe not. Maybe so. Have I plugged right in as I'd hoped? The answer is yes and no. It's different because first I discovered there was some preliminary work to do. Before I could get to the rich, juicy writing I had to make friends with myself. I mean really, I thought I had checked that off several meditation retreats ago. Seriously. Apparently, I needed to be even better friends. Friends with the parts of myself I don't really appreciate, like the critical, the shameful – and yes – even the fearful part of me. Oh dear.

So how has this gone, you might ask? Well, it's interesting what living alone can do for you, especially if you are used to the busy-ness of being around family. While being completely alone as I am may sound unbelievably delightful but let me share that it is just a bit scary as well. For instance, when you are all alone there is actually no one to blame your grumpy mood on but yourself, and at the same time there is no one around to shift that but you. That's a lot of personal responsibility!

And so here I am, and each morning looks a lot like the picture above. It's my writer's retreat for beginners. I wake, meditate, eat my fruit, make my tea and write without fail. Sometimes what I write is pretty damn good and sometimes, as Anne Lamott says, it's "a really shitty first draft". But I've already discovered this time away is about so much more than writing. It's about making friends with all of me so they can join in and help me write this next book.

Be sure to follow me @LaurenHubele on Instagram for a daily feed of photos from #30daysofwriting in the Pyrenees.

Root Vegetable Soup

A bowl of this soup really could not be easier to make or more comforting to eat. What it takes, however, is a handful of good, quality vegetables and the willingness to peel and chop. And yes there is kohlrabi on this list and it totally is not a root vegetable! But it was looking so lovely at the market I couldn't leave it out. Kohlrabi, by the way, is a brassica just like cabbage, broccoli, and cauliflower. I enjoyed this soup my first weekend in Foix after an invigorating hike up

the hillside taking in the view of the city and the fall colors in all of their splendor.

Ingredients

Peel and chop all of the following into similarly-sized cubes:

- 4 wax potatoes (red potatoes or Yukon gold are good options)
- 2 large carrots
- 2 kohlrabi
- 2 – 4 young turnips (peeling may not be necessary)
- 1 medium to large celeriac root
- 2 young leeks, cut lengthwise and chopped, first removing roots and the very tough leaves at the top
- 2 TBSP of dried or a handful of chopped fresh herbs that include a mix of any of the following: chives, parsley, oregano, rosemary, thyme, and savory

Prepare

Heat olive or coconut oil in the bottom of a large heavy soup pot. Saute leeks until soft and fragrant. Add dried herbs and vegetables one at a time taking a few moments with each to coat in the oil and herbs. Cover with water, add vegetable bouillon cubes, bring to a boil, reduce heat, cover and simmer. When vegetables are tender you can choose to add more water if needed and season to taste.

Enjoy!

Four Weeks in Foix

The skies were just clearing from the afternoon downpour as I left the train station. Crossing the Ariège into the medieval town of Foix, the cobblestone streets glistened in the glow of the late afternoon sun. With my luggage in tow, I made my way along rue du Rival until reaching Place Dutilh as instructed. From there I spotted rue St-Vincent in the historic sector. Here was my flat for the next four weeks, tucked away among shuttered row houses, most dating from the 16th century.

Securing the key from the lockbox, I felt both relief and satisfaction after nearly twenty hours of travel that included 3 flights, a train, and a bus. Opening the door I exposed a steep narrow staircase to what would become my writing refuge. Beautiful, except for one minor challenge. There was no possible way in which that amazing rolling duffel that performed so well thus far was going up those stairs – with me – while it was full. Hmmm...and so there right in the doorway, offering thanks for the invention of packing cubes, I unloaded my bag. After a few more trips up the stairs than my jet lagged body desired, the mission was accomplished.

Settling in was a snap. The space is cozy yet open and light-filled with gorgeous pine plank flooring, a modern IKEA-issued kitchen, and a loft bedroom and bath. Perfect. Well it would be perfect if there was a resident cat, but I can survive! Before long Philipa and Martin, the owners, came along to welcome me with a prepared vegan soup and bowl of fruit. What a delight! And then, since the unpacking had been accomplished upon my arrival there was time for me to set out on a quick city tour on foot before sunset.

Foix is really picture perfect and extremely livable. Home to 9,000 residents it ticks all of the boxes – with two lovely rivers, a castle with foundations dating to the 10th century, a train station, a Friday market that fills the streets, and a rebellious history. Shopping is easy on foot and made even better when I discovered the organic grocers literally outside my door.

Now that you know where I am, let me share the back story to my arrival. It all began with the sale of our Mary street home last June. Before departing for Europe we arranged a short-term term lease for a furnished home in South Austin. We were delighted to find one that met all of our needs; in theory. However, upon our late August move in it didn't take long before we began to question our logic. When the three of us, one being a 6'5' 16-year-old male requiring tremendous space, and a calico, a Great Pyrenees, and budgie, began to live, work and study in the adorable two bedroom house, things got just a bit tight.

By week eight, the walls began closing in on all of us and the harmony we were all accustomed to was difficult to maintain. It was all complicated by the fact that on top of my teaching and coaching, I had set this time aside to finish my book, *Restoring Your Immunity*. Connecting with this project in the tight quarters was becoming more difficult by the day. And so it came to be that during my pre-dawn writing one fateful Saturday morning, a nagging question would not leave me be. "Why are you not in France?" My logical brain was on it, France was not "in the plan". The "plan" was to finish my book in Austin in preparation for our move to San Marcos in January. That was "the plan" for months and so far the plan had served us. And besides, Joachim and I were working on establishing a rhythm in which we worked from Europe in the

summers and the rest of the year we would work in Texas to be near our children. The problem was, currently things weren't working so well...at least for my writing.

So I ponder this question further until sunrise when I wake Joachim with a cup of tea and my wild idea. What would you think, I say, if I were I to take my work and return to France until mid-December? I can finish my book, practice my French and further test our idea of a part-time life in the Pyrenees. I hadn't even rolled into the full pitch when he endorsed it wholeheartedly. There is absolutely no good reason not to do this, he told me, and within minutes I was booking a flight.

As writing was my primary goal and the Pyrenees were already dusted in snow, I chose the urban setting of Foix, which is just a 45-minute drive south of Toulouse and bordering the natural preserve for the Ariège Pyrenees. I could be car free, arrive by train and take care of my daily needs on foot which sounded delightful. I'll spend four weeks directly in Foix and then for my final 11 days, hire a car and venture to the very rural setting of a hamlet near Castelnaud-Durban.

I am filled with gratitude for this opportunity and plan to fill each day with heartfelt writing and walks to take in all of the breathtaking beauty, and if a little more French creeps into my vocabulary all the better. I look forward to sharing this adventure with you as it unfolds.

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Celeriac a boulangère

Embracing the seasons can get challenging as winter approaches. To lend a hand, and keep you inspired I'll be dedicating the weeks ahead to a few unsung cold weather veggie heroes. Today's recipe features celeriac, a root vegetable I came to appreciate during my years in Germany. Now available in the U.S. you will find Celeriac this season at local farmer's markets or a well-stocked produce section of your grocery store.

This gratin style recipe called a boulangère in France pairs celeriac and potatoes with a mix of herbs. If this happens to be your first time prepping celeriac you may want to have a look here.

Ingredients

- 2 Tbsp of mixed dried green herbs. I like a combination of parsley, thyme, rosemary, sage, chives, and oregano
- 2 yellow onions, peeled and sliced very thin
- 1 lb of Yukon gold or red waxy potatoes sliced thin (you can also use sweet potatoes or turnips)
- 1 large celeriac (approx 1.5 lbs), trimmed, peeled and sliced thin
- 2 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 shallot, peeled and finely chopped
- 400 ml organic vegetable stock (can be prepared from a bouillon cube)
- 50 g Earth Balance spread – cut into small chunks
- A mixture of ground nuts or gluten-free breadcrumbs (prepare from stale or toasted bread)

To Prepare

1. Preheat the oven to 400°F
2. Heat the oil in a frying pan and sauté the onions with most of the herbs until soft. Add shallot and cook until tender, being careful not to brown.
3. In oiled casserole pan layer the potatoes, celiac, and onions. Add salt and pepper.
4. Top layered vegetables with bits of the Earth Balance spread, vegetable stock and cover with tin foil.
5. Bake for 45 minutes.
6. Mix the nuts or breadcrumbs with the rest of the herbs and a drizzle of oil.
7. After 45 minutes, remove the foil, sprinkle over the herb/crumb mixture and bake for a further 15 to 20 minutes, or until golden.

Enjoy!

Adapted from this Jamie Oliver recipe.

Influencing Immunity

An essay from Lauren's forthcoming book, Restoring Your Immunity

The good news and bad news about immunity is that it can be influenced; influenced to be stronger and more responsive or influenced to be sluggish and downright lazy. If you're like me, you'll appreciate the fact that there are steps within your reach that you can take to make a positive difference. These four factors are directly linked to our immunity:

- Sleep
- Daily movement
- Plant-based diet
- Optimal bowel elimination

Let's take a look at each one and possible actions you could start right away.

Sleep

Without sleep, our body can not heal naturally. Sleep is the single most restorative state for our body. While the amount we each need may vary, a healthy immune system requires consistent sleep.

If you've ever been a parent or a caregiver of someone who regularly interrupts your sleep, you're probably acutely aware of the impact loss of sleep has on your cognitive functions. But what you may not have realized is that this lack of sleep has a direct impact on your immune response. Sleep disruption interrupts circadian rhythms at the cellular level of our immune system. The imbalance it causes can deregulate the immune responses and lead to susceptibility to infectious and inflammatory diseases.

So what about those of you with chronic sleep disturbances? I see this often in my practice, and many of you have come to believe nothing will help. I can understand your hopelessness, and I will tell you this: sleep is not its own entity in the body. It is a necessary state heavily influenced by our adrenal glands, nervous and digestive systems. The root of most insomnia is not poor sleep routines but the function of those glands and systems. I will address this a bit further along down this path we are traveling, but for now, it's enough to know that a regular pattern of uninterrupted sleep supports your immunity; irregular sleep patterns weaken in. If sleep is within your control then take charge and make

consistent restful sleep a priority. If you have already tried everything, keeps an open mind – there could be a perspective you haven't considered.

Daily Movement/Exercise

It's widely accepted that daily movement has a positive influence not only on mood and outlook but also a wide range of physical conditions. Individuals who partake in moderate daily exercise will insist they feel healthier but is there a proven correlation between exercise and immunity?

Actually, there is. Research shows that a regular program of moderately intense exercise reduces inflammation and enhances immune responses.

So what does moderate intensity look like?

The answer to that depends on you your current fitness level. For some that can mean a 30-minute walk daily, or 15 minutes on a rebounder. For others, moderate intensity would need to be a 45-minute power yoga course or 30-minute swim. Perhaps you are just starting out, and all of those seem completely out of reach: then 15 minutes of stretching each morning and evening is a wonderful place to begin.

What's important is that you find an activity that you enjoy enough to do it regularly. Committing to go to the gym when its across town from where you work isn't going to last long. Spend some time thinking this one through. What can you do daily? What can you do if the weather or work schedule gets in the way. Consider all possible obstacles to your success and make contingency plans in advance.

Another note to consider is that extreme workouts don't increase the benefits received. In fact, the opposite may be true as immunity dips during post-workout recovery periods.

Eating a Plant-based Diet

Over the past ten years, there have been great gains in understanding the link between what we eat and how we feel. We've also learned that all the exercise in the world can not make up for a diet that's heavy in animal proteins and processed foods. Regardless of current diet trends, it's indisputable that the consumption of more fruits and vegetables leads to better health. Eating fruits and vegetables in their natural state, either raw or cooked, will provide your body with the most nutrients.

Eating plant-based is not a diet fad but rather a lifestyle of choosing whole fruits and vegetables to play the lead in each meal prepared. How much plant material does it take for a meal to be plant-based? The standard seems to be 80%. However, that's the goal; the place to begin is where you are right now. If you're eating meals that are 10% plants then dial it up week by week. Take a look at each plate of food you serve yourself and begin by filling half of it with whole raw or cooked fruits and vegetables. Each week challenge yourself to push it a bit further.

As you begin to fill that plate up with vegetables you might wonder if some choices are better than others. When it comes to directly supporting immunity, there happens to be a family of vegetables that are the stars of this show: cruciferous.

Broccoli, Brussels sprouts, kale, cauliflower, and cabbage all contain an important phytonutrient that is transformed by our stomach acid. When transformed it actually provides a frontline defense against intestinal pathogens.

So now that you know about these magic five veggies perhaps you will want to include one each day as you fill up that other side of your plate to attain 80% plant-based meals.

Optimal Bowel Elimination

Did you know that the frequency and consistency of your stool elimination is one of the most telling indicators of your current health? Regardless of what is regular for you, there is an important difference between regular and normal. Under normal conditions, the body was designed to process dietary and metabolic waste product multiple times a day in order to maintain the alkalized state key to healthy cell reproduction and immunity.

When our bodies do not eliminate the dietary and metabolic wastes throughout the day, the tissue of organs and organ systems deteriorate over time, and states of acidosis occur. These states of acidosis can be identified externally quite simply by observing symptoms expressed in our eyes, nose, ears, skin, teeth and hair.

While you likely know what your regular stool pattern is, let me share what is normal. A stool twice and possibly three times daily, in the morning, midday and or evening, is normal and natural. The stool should be fully formed, not break up when flushed, and pass easily without discomfort. You can learn more about stool types from the famous Bristol Stool chart. A #4 stool is optimal, as is a minimum of two complete stools a day in order to keep the body cleaning at regular intervals.

The first steps in restoring your immunity will involve optimizing your stool elimination. Sleep, exercise, diet and a supportive Gemmotherapy protocol will all play part in this process.

Weakening Immunity

Knowing what weakens immunity is equally important as knowing what strengthens it. While innate immunity takes shape from

conception, acquired immunity is another story. Your acquired immunity is influenced by the microbes your body begins to collect from literally everything you come in contact with after birth.

Research in recent years has revealed that within the first three years of life the potential of our acquired immunity is established, Everything you were exposed to (or not exposed to) as a baby and toddler has had an impact on the current state of your immune system. Unfortunately, you cannot undo events that weakened your immunity, but you've just learned what can be done to strengthen what you have.

Here is a collective list of just some of the commonly accepted items that play a role in reducing immunity:

- C-section birth
- Absence of breastfeeding
- Vaccinations
- Antibiotics
- Diet
- Hormone-controlling birth control
- Lack of sleep
- Smoking
- Lack of exercise
- Stress
- Poor bowel elimination
- Environmental toxins such as GMOs and Fluoride

While this list is far from exhaustive, it's based on current research from Dr. Michael Blaser, director of The American Microbiome Project and author of *How the Overuse of Antibiotic is Fueling our Modern Plagues*.

How you were born and nourished during the first few years of your life is not something you can control, but there are dietary and lifestyle changes you can make now that can build

up your immunity. Are there items on this list that you can do something about today or soon?

Are there choices you could be making every day in order to support and strengthen the immunity you do have?

YES is the true answer. Some of these steps will make a difference in just weeks, others may take months or years because optimizing organ function to restore immunity, while possible, is no small task.

The path to restoration isn't exactly linear as our body is a network of systems, and improving one part will influence another. So your process at times may feel like a few steps forward and then a few backward or at least to the side, but that is normal.

Regardless, I hope you experience empowerment in realizing that you personally can take action. You might not believe this is possible right now but I am going to guide you through a process that will deepen your self-awareness and encourage you to take your power back in areas you have given away.

Previous Post

Grain-Free Granola

There is just one problem with this granola, and that is keeping it on hand because it's just so delicious! The good news – making a double batch is no extra effort. Enjoy this list of ingredients as is or feel free to mix and match with what you have on hand. I must say, the pecans really make it special.

Ingredients

- 1 cup raw cashew pieces
- 1 cup raw pecan pieces
- 1 cup raw pistachios
- 1/2 cup raw pumpkin seeds
- 1/2 cup raw sunflower seeds
- 1/4 cup chia seeds
- 1 cup shredded unsweetened coconut
- 1/4 cup ground or whole flax seeds
- 1/2 cup date syrup
- 1/4 cup coconut oil
- 2 tablespoon ground cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon of nutmeg
- 1 teaspoon almond or vanilla extract
- sea salt to taste

To Prepare

1. Preheat oven to 300 degrees.
2. Melt coconut oil, blend with date syrup and vanilla or almond extract and spices in large mixing bowl.
3. Chop nuts and pumpkin seeds in a food processor in small batches to break them up into pieces – leaving them large enough to add texture.
4. Transfer chopped nuts/seed mixture and remaining ingredients to the large mixing bowl.
5. Mix well with hands or large wooden spoon, spreading on two parchment paper lined cookie sheet.
6. Bake for 10 minutes, stir the mixture and continue baking for another 10 minutes watching carefully not to overcook.
7. Allow granola to cool. Break into chunks to serve or store in an airtight container.
8. Note: Feel free to mix and match nuts and seeds to accommodate allergies or taste preferences.

Enjoy!