The Intelligence of Symptoms Part 2: Mucus, Cough & Skin Transcript

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Introduction: Symptoms as Protective Exits

Three exits that we talked about today, mucus, the cough, and the skin. Every one of them, a way your body carries something out and every one them a product is built to shut it down.

Next time we go to the gut. The drama that nobody wants to talk about. Least all experience and I'll tell you another personal story about this one. Vomiting, diarrhea and heartburn.

Symptoms that feel the most like the body is betraying you and are maybe the more obviously protective. Welcome to Vitality Radio, the podcast that helps you make sense of natural supplements and thrive without pharma drugs.

I'm Jared St. Clair. Welcome back to Vitality Radio. I'm Jared St. Clair. Last episode, well, last episode in this series, a couple episodes ago, we're doing one of these a week for the next few weeks.

We talked about the repair crew, fever, inflammation and pain, and the idea that runs underneath this whole series which is your body isn't malfunctioning when it produces a symptom, it's responding.

It's doing a job and in pretty much every case, its trying to do that job for you. for your own good. Today I wanna share some ideas about the importance of some of the most annoying symptoms you deal with because sometimes symptoms…

It may not be super serious or super painful, but some symptoms are just annoying. And I think it's human nature. We're all wired this way that we don't wanna be annoyed, right, by another person, a thing, or a symptom.

I just want the runny nose or the cough or itch to go away. Yet, even then, the body is doing a things it believes it needs to do to protect you and to help you heal.

That's what I wanna get into today.

Mucus and Decongestants

I'll ask you to bear with me a little bit because there are some genuinely interesting things to talk about here, and I'm going to do my best to give you some alternative things that you can actually do, but I will be upfront.

Sometimes, like I said, with a fever, You just kind of have to let the body do what the does. There's no universal level of a symptom that applies to every single individual, every circumstance, and I'm in no way saying that if your itch is driving you so crazy you can't sleep at night that you shouldn't do something to calm that down because sleep in and of itself is incredibly healing.

And the same could be said about mucus. If you cant sleep because you cannot breathe, you may need to do some thing to try to open those passages up. But in this episode, what I hope to is instruct on the whys of these types of symptoms and the why we want to avoid the pharmaceutical options because Well, there's some real heavy potential side effects associated with these and they're fighting against the body's natural mechanisms and give you some options that can accomplish some of the same symptom relief without creating those issues for you that you do not want.

And I'll explain what some those can possibly be. So that's where we're heading. We're staying with the same idea from the first episode in this series, shifting from a crew that fixes the damage to the channels your body uses to carry things out, because a huge share of what we call being sick is really just your and the windows and clearing things out from mucus through cough through the skin three exits and for every one of them there's a product on the shelf designed to slam it shut pharmaceutically all right let's get into this nobody likes mucuss snot boogers you

know all those things the runny nose the congestion the stuff you're blowing into tissues for a week and you're looking at the tissue box and thinking, I just opened this thing and now it's halfway gone, or it all the way gone.

I need another one. Because it's annoying, we do treat it like the enemy in many cases, but stop and ask yourself, what is it actually doing? Because, it is not random and it not an illness in and of itself.

Mucus is a transport system. Your airways are lined with it all the time, even when you're well. And it on purpose because it sticky and is designed to catch things, dust, particles, irritants, pathogens, and carry them up and out before they get into your lungs.

When you get sick or you breathe in something irritating, your body ramps up production, not to torture you, but because it's got more to catch and more flush out.

The running nose is the body rinsing the threat out of the front door. That is, the whole point of it. And years ago, in fact, I don't even know if this is a podcast episode, this might be back from the radio days.

I did a show that grossed a lot of people out, and I decided not focus on it here, It is another truism and that is that snot and specifically boogers, for lack of a better term, they can play a role too.

You know, when we're sick and we have a lot of mucus, we tend to sometimes swallow a lotta that mucuss, especially while we are sleeping at night. And you'll even see kids picking their nose and eating it.

And I don't know if that's by design or not. I have my questions about that. But you know what mucus does trap are those things that we talked about. This is basically one of nature's ways of actually inoculating the system against things.

If we trap a pathogen, it's encased in mucous. It gets into the gut and into intestinal tract. That is your body getting a little taste of that bacteria or virus or whatever it is.

giving your body the notice, the fair warning that it needs to build up its defenses against that thing. So snot plays a role, whether you like it or not.

But here's where the cold aisle tries to sell us something else, right? There's these two things, mainly antihistamines and decongestants. And I want to talk about the decogestant because there's a story here that tells you almost everything you need to know about how this pharmaceutical industry operates.

And we already talked about this in episode one, but this is kind of a through line through these things. These symptom relievers, there's a lot of demand.

There's certainly a a supply. there is a money in it and sometimes there are a whole lot lies. So years, four years and years The go-to decongestant in America was actually Sudafed, Pseudoepinephrine, which is actually a synthetic version of ephedrine.

Ephadrine comes from an herb called mahuang, the Chinese name or efedra. And when the FDA and their infinite wisdom and stupidity, I mean, wisdom, obviously, because it's the F. D. A.

and it is the government, we know Pure wisdom pure wisdom just pouring out of Washington DC on a regular basis regardless, I digress When Afedra was pulled from the market because it was too big of a competitor for the fat-burning pharmaceuticals that were on the markets at the time, then eventually Sudafed was even pulled, for most part, from market, or at least as an over-the-counter, and then was put behind the pharmacy counter and you had to sign for it and show your ID because they thought, well, you're probably making meth if you are getting a box of Sudofed.

And that's still the case. But in that process, something else came along called PE, which was then put on the front shelves, so you didn't have to ask the pharmacist for it, and a lot of people didn' know that Sudafed was even still

available.

And this story is not about Sudefed, it's about the PE, Sudofed PE. Sudifed being the brand name, of course, but the ingredient itself is phenylephrine.

And phenolephrine been used by millions of people every cold season. A lot of use it during allergy seasons as well. And in 2023, an FDA advisory committee finally sat down and reviewed the evidence of whether or not oral phenolephrine actually works and the boat was unanimous.

It doesn't work. When you swallow it, less than 1% of it even reaches your nasal passages. it gets broken down way before that. and it's less effective actually than is a placebo.

Now, here's the part that should bother you about this. We have ineffective drugs. That's fairly common. And we certainly have drugs that cause a lot of side effects.

But this wasn't some brand new discovery. The ineffectiveness had been questioned for decades. Pharmacists have been raising their hands and saying, this stuff doesn't work for a long time.

In the same year that this actually finally came to a head and they voted and said, well, the stuff It sold almost $2 billion in sales just in America.

So a very, very lucrative drug, and that's a decongestant that an FDA panel then declared works less well than nothing at all.

Coughs and Suppressing the Reflex

People walking into the store sick, handing over money, trusting that the product on the shelf does what the box says, because, well, it's FDA approved, its a pharmaceutical, got all these claims, must be good.

was never better than a placebo. And then there's the other half of the aisle, antihistamines. The old standby there is diphenhydramine, which is also known, of course, as the brand name Benadryl.

It's in a mountain of allergy and nighttime cold and sleep products. Partly because it can knock you out. A lot of people especially are sensitive to it.

And a lot people use it as a sleep aid, even though it's technically a pharmaceutical that was an antihistamine. It's also in things like, you know, Unisom and Tylenol PM and things that.

Benadryl belongs to a class of drugs, and I want you to hear the name of this class Choline being this massive brain food, brain chemical, specifically acetylcholine, the kind of choline that's found in the brain, and Benadryl works against it.

Cholene is what your body uses for memory and learning. And in 2015, a large study out of the University of Washington published in a major medical journal followed adults.

65 and older for years and found that the more of these anticholinergenic drugs a person used over time, the higher their risk of developing dementia, including Alzheimer's.

It was dose dependent, more use, and more risk. Troublingly, this is the worst part, researchers suggested that effect might not fully reverse even after stopping.

Now, an occasional Benadryl Probably not the end of the world. I've used Benadryl myself from time to time, although it's certainly not a common thing for me.

But it does make sense. Sometimes if that's the thing that will work in the moment in an acute situation, I'm not

necessarily going to raise major red flags.

It is the chronic use of it that seems to have all of these issues with it. But step back from whether the drug actually works or not and whether or it has side effects and let's talk about the actual logic because even the decongestants that do work are attacking the wrong thing.

The stuffy nose, the mucus, that's not where the illness is, right? that's the body actually clearing the threat of the illness for you. That's a body doing the work for.

You chemically shutting down that process doesn't fix what caused it. It just leaves the irritant in place and stops the cleanup. So this is important though.

I can hear many of you saying, Hey, Jared, but what if I. Can't sleep. Cause I, can't breathe. Well, that where I said at the top of this show, some of these symptoms.

you let them run their course if they're not messing with you too badly, I guess is the best way to put it. But if you can't sleep because you cannot breathe, that's a problem, right?

So then what do you do naturally? Well, there are a lot of different things that you A classic that so many people have used over the years is eucalyptus oil on the pillow.

Eucaliptus Oil in a diffuser or even on a cotton ball. Breathe in that kind of thing. Some people will put eukalypts oil. On a Cotton ball and a Ziploc bag and they'll carry it around with them.

If they've got congestion during the day, just kind open things up and that's totally fine. That's not. Stopping the body's natural production of mucus is not stopping the clearing of the mucous or any of that kind of stuff.

It's just opening up the passages a little bit. I also, it's critical to realize that mucuss is mostly water. So if you become dehydrated and you've got thick muquus, then you can thin it out simply by drinking more.

Hydration makes a big difference. hot showers, warm steam, humidifiers, with or without eucalyptus, all can be very, very useful. And I am a huge believer in neti pots or my favorite called nasal pure that we have here at Vitality that I think it's easier to use.

There's Nelly Med, there's a whole bunch of them out there. I don't really care which one you use, just use a good clean salt saline solution in it and rinse the passages.

That is another way that of actually instead of fighting against your bodies, normal way of doing things. You're assisting your body in doing this thing because you're then irrigating the sinus cavity and helping your buddy flush all that stuff out.

All of those things are better than shutting down the reaction that is your bodily making more mucus to make you better. And if you do feel like you've got an infection that's creating that issue, particularly in the sinus cavity, my favorite thing in world is nano silver in that department as a nasal wash.

So these are all things that you can do much, much better than any of the decongestant things, but safer. They actually work and they don't have the side effects of potentially causing Alzheimer's.

Okay, let's talk about coughing because I will tell you a personal story about a cough here in a minute. that was debilitating. So I get it, I'm not saying, hey, you know, coughing is no big deal, everything's gonna be fine.

A cough is literally an explosion. It is a partner of mucus, it's trying to get things out of the body. Its your diaphragm, your abdominal muscles, and your throat all filling together to blast air up and out your lungs at an enormous rate of speed to clear the airway.

What is it clearing? Well, all the same type of stuff that mucous is going after, irritants, debris, bacteria, all that kind of stuff. Your lungs can't stay clear without this reflex, which is why you immediately cough if you swallow something down the wrong tube, right?

That kind thing. It is your body's emergency eject button for the airway. So think about what a cough suppressant is actually doing in this case. it goes to the part of your brain that triggers the cough and it turns the signal down.

The urge to cough fades. It feels like relief, but the material the cough was trying to move, well, it's still in your lungs. You didn't clear it, you just disabled your tool that your body used to clear with, and that left the junk sitting down there, which does not make you better.

In many cases, could make it worse. That acute cough that would have cleared your lungs in a few days now has nothing moving it along and a chest that won't clear is exactly how someone can actually get worse rather than getting better with their illness.

So the cough again is your friend. Now I'll tell you my story and then I will tell this next story because they're related. I was a kid a long time ago who was raised without pharmaceuticals almost entirely.

In fact, trying to think if I ever took an over-the-counter pharmaceutical until I was an adult even. Boy, that's a tough one. I'll have to ask myself that question.

We just didn't have that stuff. And as such, at the time, I wasn't very familiar as a young man with pharmaceuticals at all. I just didn't have a point of reference for them.

And I hadn't started doing this podcast yet for sure. So I haven't starting educating myself on all these things. Anyway, when I was in my late twenties, 26, 27, 28, somewhere in there, I got a case of bronchitis.

I've never had bron- bronchetis before, and I'd never heard it since. It was really interesting. In almost every case, when I get a cold, it's all sinus stuff and almost no chest stuff.

Just rarely get lung congestion or, you know, major coughing episodes or anything like that. But I had one this time so bad that I eventually coughed two of my ribs out of place, which created a tremendous discomfort.

So I was in pain because of that, I couldn't shut the cough off. And therefore I could not sleep and the thing was just getting worse. I did something up to that point I think I had only ever done for a sprained ankle before.

And that was I went into like a instacare type of a place. have a lot of experience in this helping with your emergency instead of the emergency room.

Anyway, I go into this place and I said, hey, i can't sleep at night. I can stop coughing. i've got two ribs that are out of place now because of this.

What do you got for me? He said well let me write your prescription for a cough syrup. So he gives me this cough syrup. I'd never had an over-the-counter cough, let alone a pharmaceutical cough.

You may know where this is going. Anyway, this cough syrup had hydrocodone in it, I'd never had that before. I took some and I passed out basically. And I slept like I haven't slept maybe in my life to that point, like the dead.

Skin Eruptions and Topical Steroids

and… I'll always remember my best friend Will gives me a call and it woke me up and i'd been asleep for like 12 hours. He said, are you high? Are you drunk?

What is wrong with you? What's going on? I feel really weird." And he goes, well, what did you take? And I told him what I took. And, I know I sound incredibly naive right now, but I was, super naive at the time.

I did not realize what was going. So first, there has to be a lesson to you. Research anything before you put it in your mouth, particularly if it's like pharmaceutical.

This is in my younger and dumber days when I do this. And the second, be careful with some of these things because there are some nasty, nasty things that can happen from products like this.

This doctor did not warn me that this was an opioid. I had no idea. If you know Jen's story, you'll know that she was also told that it was a opioid that got, but that was not addictive.

And of course, many people deal with addiction for years and years in their entire life. In some cases, Jen did for about eight years herself. Thankfully, didn't have any addictive anything with it at all.

and it knocked me out and helped me sleep. And it was kind of a godsend for me at that time. I was grateful for it because it did the job that needed to be done so that I could sleep and start finally getting better.

But I think I took it twice, maybe three times. Here's the flip side of that besides the addiction in adults. For a long time, codeine, an opioid, was put into prescription cough syrups and post-surgery pain relief for children.

The problem is your liver converts codein into morphine. It turns out that a slice of people have our ultra-rapid metabolizers. It's a genetic thing. And you don't know until you know.

Their liver enzymes go to work and just break this stuff down really quickly, which means that you can essentially take a normal labeled dose and end up with an overdose in your bloodstream.

There were many deaths in children who had recently had their tonsils and adenoids taken out because of the airway shutting down completely. Basically, this is stuff putting them to sleep and not allowing them wake up.

They couldn't breathe anymore. The FDA's own review found dozens of cases of serious breathing problems in children and more than 20 deaths tied to coding directly and probably many more that weren't.

And if you watch the timeline, this is where the negligence of the pharmaceutical companies and the prescribers and just shines. Once again, they put out a warning in 2012. They added their strongest boxed warning.

In 2013, and it took all the way until 2017. This is modern times here to actually say codeine is off limits for kids under 12 after it killed dozens of children.

And even after the warning, in 2013 the big black box warning they found that at least one in 20 children were being prescribed this same syrup after tonsil surgery, even though it was known in some children to cause death.

Now, if you let that sit with kind of the whole thesis of this series, this symptom series that I'm doing, a cough is the body protecting the lungs. And here we take the most vulnerable patients, children, some of them already struggling to breathe, And then we silence that protection with something that could stop their breathing for good.

To suppress a cough, a cold that in almost every childhood case needed no drug at all, or to just numb the pain from the surgery. And yeah, pain is no fun.

Chronic coughing is not fun, but is it worth that potential side effect? Of course it's not. So here's what actually helps the cough. This is one of my favorite things.

because it is as natural a medicine as there possibly could be a spoonful of honey. Now, some people also put a little bit of apple cider vinegar with that.

Some people put in a bit a ginger with, that some, people will put little peppermint with. That some. People will do honey with a, little vinegar and some onion or garlic.

All of those things are fantastic, but honey on its own, which your child and you will probably never complain about taking because, it tastes delicious.

holds up head to head against any of those other pharmaceuticals. And then of course, the same things that we talked about with mucus, warm fluids, humidity, steam, hot shower, eucalyptus, which can soothe the passages and kind of sooth the irritation that creates the cough.

Because again, I'm not saying cough it out. I am saying do things to support your body to calm your body so that you can sleep at night, but don't suppress your buddy.

Don't fight against your. And then always remember to that a cough that drags on for weeks that creates real breathing trouble that brings up blood. Those are things that are not routine.

Make sure that your, you know, looking more deeply into those things to make sure everything is okay. The last thing I want to talk about is skin eruptions.

Let's talk the biggest organ that you've got and one that I think to a large degree we understand the very least and that is your skin. Rashes, eczema, breakouts, hives, all types of things like this are oftentimes creamed over by the dermatologist or the over-the-counter section.

Here's the frame that I hope changes it and that i think you understand listening to this show already. The skin is an elimination organ. It's one of the ways that your body pushes things out and it's believed traditionally more so than pharmaceutically or modern medicine-wise that basically if your liver, your kidneys, or your bowel, if they're overloaded, bogged down, your body recruits the skin and starts to push things out that way.

And I've always believed that. I know it to be true, even though there's not super strong evidence of that, what we do know is that the scan pulls things in.

It's a two-way valve, so to speak, and it also lets things. And while the science on how much the skin is actually recruited when things aren't working in other areas is a little up for grabs, what I would say is it does not hurt ever, ever ever to assume that if your skin is experiencing those things, there probably are things going on in your gut.

There oftentimes will be things on your liver, maybe your kidneys, but I would say generally gut and liver. I always say the skin as a window to the gut, a windows to liver doing a good liver detox like liver vitality for a month or two can do wonders for your scan in many cases.

Doing spore probiotics like the vital spores for three to six months depending on the individual. can make a huge change in your skin. Most people notice difference within the first 30 days, but it typically does better the longer that you go up until you've kind of reloaded the microbiome for lack of a better term.

So we always want to look at the skin and what's going on as a symptom from your body saying, okay, something's is going and we always, I think, should at least consider, if not assume, that what is on the outside that you can see is an indication of something deeper going in on inside of the body.

So when we are looking at what's happening, especially if it seems like more of an allergic thing, then we might have a different story. Now the liver clears allergens to a large degree.

The gut also can potentially. And so we still, it doesn't make sense. to eliminate the possibility of just cleansing the liver, doing some dandelion tea even, things like that, if your skin is erupting in some way.

But if it feels like an allergic thing, remember that the skin IS a two-way door. It goes in and out. And the first thing to test is, what did I do to my skin recently that I've not previously been doing?

New clothing, new detergent. new carpet in the house, you know, whatever it is that might actually be creating an issue at the skin level. Look at that.

Is there a new lotion? Is their new cleaner? is there new, anything? That's thing number one. And then I think that if you have more of a chronic thing like eczema and that kind of thing, we always have to look at We always have to look at the liver as well.

Now, conventional care generally, because this can also be an annoying thing, will reach for something like a steroid cream, hydrocortisone at mild end or stronger prescription ones at top end.

And the thing is, in many cases, this works because it suppresses the skin's natural immune inflammatory response. and shuts down the visible flare which can calm down itch problem solved it seems but this is where things turn negative again and that's something called topical steroid withdrawal when someone uses these creams heavily over a long stretch and then tries to stop the skin can erupt again often worse than the original problem burning angry red skin spreading past where the eczema ever was and what happens next In a typical doctor's visit, well, the rebound gets read as eczema coming back or getting worse.

So the answer is to go harder with the steroid, oftentimes with a stronger one, and then you get in the vicious cycle. It's not a whole lot different than what they do with antibiotics for like a urinary tract infection where you don't ever need an antibiotic for a Urinary Tract Infection.

or at least not 99% of the time. You don't need a steroid for your skin 99 percent of time either. There are always things that can be done or should be tried prior to that.

And if you get in that vicious loop, there's some really nasty stuff that could happen to the skin. that you do not want. So that's a slippery slope I highly recommend staying away from.

There are things that can do and I'm not saying that, you know, throw out every cream that got and white knuckle this miserable rash. What I am saying is try not to shut down your body's natural immune response.

And so the support that I recommend is checking all of the things that already talked about, is there something going on in your gut? Is there's something on your liver?

Adding extra water, adding things will help to detoxify the bloodstream, dandelion, red clover, burdock root, those types of things or combinations that have those things in them.

Look at parasites as a possibility because the skin oftentimes will show parasitic activity in breakouts and things like that as well. And then if you want something that is topical, that's a relief thing that doesn't fight against you.

I talked about this not too long ago in a show, so I won't belabor it here, but Amine Naturals, a Utah company owned by Melanie Skelton, and a friend of mine who owns a health store out in Tooele, she's just fantastic herbalist.

She makes the herbal balm. It's made by Omini Naturals. We have it on our website. Chickweed, calendula, olive oil, beeswax. It melts into the skin, leaves a breathable, protective barrier over the scan while the botanicals go to work.

Its built to soothe and shield while letting the body do its thing underneath, not overriding it at all. She also has one called Itch Away Balm. Some of the same ingredients, but a few extras as chickweed.

Oatmeal, tea tree, lavender, aloe.

Gut Symptoms and Closing Thoughts

For itching, it is fantastic and again, nourishes the takes care of the skin doesn't replace the skins natural process or shut down the Skins natural Process and there are a lot of other things that are fantastic like that to my wife Jen Oh my gosh Castor oil is her favorite thing in the world and she uses it for all kinds of things like this and has a ton of success with it So there's plenty of thing short of steroids that you can use that don't shut Down your body's

processes, but they can calm things enough that You can not you know dig a hole in your skin scratching or stay up all night scratching, those types of things.

So three exits that we talked about today, mucus, the cough, and the skin. Every one of them, a way your body carries something out and every one them a product is built to shut it down.

Next time we go to the gut, that drama that nobody wants to talk about, at least all experienced and I'll tell you another personal story about this one.

vomiting, diarrhea, and heartburn, the symptoms that feel the most like the body is betraying you and are maybe the more obviously protective. Here's what I want you to carry out of today's show, if you will.

When your body opens a door, it usually has a reason for it. Before you slam it shut, ask what it was trying to do. What was it trying move out? Your body's intelligent.

It's working for you, not against you. I'm Jared St. Clair. If you have any questions, call us 801-292-6662. or jump on our website vitalitynutrition.com.

And if you're interested in those Omni products to support another great local business and a wonderful human being, they are listed in the show description as well.

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