

Diabetes According to Ayurveda

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June 15, 2012 www.ayurveda-seminars.com

Dedication

This talk is dedicated to those sincere seekers who have suffered from any of the many (20 according to Ayurveda, the world's oldest holistic health science) types of Metabolic Syndrome. A diabetes diagnosis indicates multiple underlying imbalances of the tissues, organs, mind and consciousness. This talk focuses on Type II Late Onset Diabetes, the most common of the Metabolic Syndromes (Prameha).

Introduction

The Ayurvedic concept of 'Six Tastes Science' (Shad Rasa) provides deep insight into blood sugar balance. The specialized metabolic functions of the pancreas to regulate blood sugar levels reflect not only blood pH (acid/alkaline balance), but also the ratios of the six tastes to one another. The six main tastes in Ayurveda are sweet, sour, salty, bitter, pungent and astringent. The blood of a Type II Diabetic is over acidic due to excess sweet taste. PRAMEHA means literally 'increasing water element' or 'flourishing water'. This signifies that in relation to space, air, fire and earth elements, water is increased in the individual's body. Water element is also called 'Kapha dosha' in Ayurveda, the world's oldest holistic medical science. Water is sweet and astringent in taste. It is heavy, soft and cool.

Dina Charya

A regular daily routine is most helpful in restoring normal blood sugar balance. Ayurveda suggests to strictly avoid daytime sleeping, so the body does not fall into nighttime slowed metabolism. Early rising before dawn is suggested to help metabolize over stored Kapha molecules, best accomplished during the time of Kapha accumulation in the early morning.

Hot water can be taken after cleaning the mouth in the morning on rising. After eliminating the bowel movement, breathing practices can begin. Heating pranayama exercises such as bastrika (bellows) and kapala bati (skull shining) can be performed, starting slowly and gently on an empty stomach, then building slowly to about 15 minutes over 3 months or so. Individual supervision is best during this period of metabolic adjustment from excessively cold to warmer and warmer. Stay with it!

Bitter and astringent tastes are the ones to emphasize in food choices due to their history of chronic insufficiency in the food program. Irregular eating will give way to a regularized program of eating according to one's hunger while observing early dinnertime, before 6pm. Sleep earlier to arise earlier.

Six Tastes

Bitter and astringent tastes are commonly insufficient in the diabetic. This insufficiency is considered the main causes of Prameha in Ayurveda. Additionally, there may be an imbalance (excess or insufficient) of pungent taste. Each of the duodenum, jejunum and ileum (3 main sections of the small intestine) is evaluated for their specific digestive competence, in relation to liver and pancreatic function, and other metabolic systems.

Digestion

The six tastes are digested in succession: sweet taste is primarily digested in the mouth, sour taste is mostly digested in the stomach, salty taste within the duodenum, bitter taste in the duodenum and early jejunum, pungent taste mostly in the jejunum and ileum, and astringent taste is primarily assimilated within the ileum and especially, the colon. The solar plexus is the latitude of the disease Prameha, therefore all functions of the solar plexus must be balanced together with one another and its other related systems. Ayurveda suggests including bitter melon and fenugreek in meals to help normalize the digestive processes, which have been long disturbed in the case of diabetic change. The relationship between time, hunger and blood sugar cycles must be re-calibrated.

Bitter gourd (*Momordica charantia*) or bitter melon, also called 'karela', is an extremely bitter tasting vegetable. Despite its bitter disposition, it is one of the tastiest vegetables in all Indian cuisine. Bitter gourd helps to reduce blood sugar levels in Type II late-onset adult diabetes. It also is rich in powerful antioxidants, making it an ideal supplement and essential dietary component for diabetic and pre-diabetics (those with a history of blood sugar disturbances, candida, and irregular or late eating.)

Fenugreek (*Trigonella foenum graecum*) seeds and leaves are commonly known as 'methi', and are used as an integral part of Indian cooking. Fenugreek has powerful anti-diabetic properties, as it helps in reducing blood sugars and improves insulin resistance. One tablespoon of the fenugreek seeds can be soaked in water overnight and eaten in the early next morning on an empty stomach.

Ayurveda suggests to 'eat to one's hunger and drink to one's thirst', an aphorism that is no longer reflected in today's discussion of blood sugar diseases. Bitter herbs and substances can be taken on an empty stomach to help balance the blood sugar when the individual is not hungry. Much expense and anguish can be avoided by choosing timely tested herbal supplements.

Herbal Management of Blood Sugar Fluctuations

Turmeric (*curcuma longa*) is one of the most commonly used plants to support normal pancreatic function. Its action is both 'dipan' (pre-digestive measure) when taken just before food, and 'pachan' (post-digestive measure) when taken after food. An 'average' adult can take one '00' sized veggie cap of turmeric both before and immediately after the meal. Turmeric is bitter and astringent, and has affinity for the specialized cells of the pancreas called 'Islets of Langerham', which regulate insulin levels for carbohydrate (sweet taste) metabolism. Avoid any isolate products, such as curcumin, which does not include the entire plant, and offers only one principal active ingredient, eliminating the unrepresented and secondary components. Isolate assimilation is less than whole plant assimilation, and may be harmful, especially if cumulative. Turmeric has been extensively used in Ayurveda for the treatment of Prameha. Research has found that turmeric lowers blood sugar levels and works at many levels in improving insulin sensitivity and inhibiting specific enzymes associated with Type II Diabetes. Turmeric reduces inflammation throughout the body tissues. Chronic low-grade inflammation is as an important effect of many metabolic diseases, evident in diabetes, cancer and other chronic conditions. In auto-immunity the cause becomes an effect and the effect then becomes a causative factor for complications.

Shardunika or Gurmar (*gymnema sylvestre*) is well known in Ayurveda to curb sweet cravings, caused by long-standing avoidance of bitter, astringent and sometimes pungent tastes in the diet. The name gurmar means 'to destroy sweetness'. It not only helps in regulating blood sugar levels, but also helps in regeneration and repair of beta cells in the pancreas. It is drying and helps reduce excess water element accumulated into the tissues.

Neem (*azadirachta indica*) is bitter, astringent, cooling and has specific affinity to the liver and pancreas. It helps normalize Ranjak Pitta, one of the critical digestive functions of the solar plexus related to blood manufacture quality. Neem is anti-inflammatory and useful to reduce pitta and kapha doshas, especially in the skin. It is used in Kapha and Pitta types of Prameha, but is avoided in Vata Prameha (wasting). It can be useful in restoring sensation in neuropathy, along with other substances. Neem is useful when rashes appear on the mid-section of the body as a complication of toxicity build-up in the meda (adipose

Triphala can be taken at bedtime in the amount of ½ to 1 tsp. with warm water to help balance all six tastes and rejuvenate the specialized digestive cells of the G.I. tract.

Exercise

Exercise to the point of light sweating done in the early morning before food is the best way to help the water carrying channel system to normalize its volume, and tastes, and eliminate toxins. Rinse or shower off the sweat after exercise so it does not re-absorb. Sweat is generally salty, therefore hydrophilic or retentive to water. Heavy sweating can be too much for an individual, and possibly lead to depletion of the blood volume, which only complicates the process of restoring wellness. The turtle won. Take it gradually and steadily! You'll power up in due course of time.

Conclusion

Signs and symptoms of diabetic syndrome vary from person to person. Thus, Ayurveda advises dietary supplement or lifestyle adjustments according to individually specific health requirements. Understanding your Ayurvedic body type or Prakruti, and current Vikruti or health status, including your digestion, immunity, genetic and psycho-emotional factors, can help decide which Ayurvedic dietary program and supplements may best you. Then, not only the disease can come under long-term management, but additionally the person can be supported to restore one's health and well-being.

Note: This paper is offered as an educational outline and is not intended to diagnose or treat any disease. Please consult a qualified holistic health care practitioner for your individual health needs.

For further information and to contact the author, please call 604-290-8201 (Can.) or 408-378-2880 (U.S.)