Ayurveda – Knowledge for Life

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Since we posted information about our new associate and Eastern medicine expert Vishal Verma, MSA, LAc, many of you have asked more about what is Ayurvedic medicine is, and how it can help our modern-day problems. So we thought we would take the time to discuss it.

Ayurveda is a medicine that comes originally from India. The word Ayurveda translates as “knowledge for long life.” It is likely the oldest form of recorded medicine. It even predates Chinese medicine and acupuncture. In fact, Chinese medicine is really a spinoff of Ayurvedic principles and practice. Ayurveda was actually the first medicine to identify using points on the body to move energy and heal disease. From Northern India, Ayurveda and it’s early acupuncture style traveled north to China, where the Chinese refined it to become the brilliant treatment modality it is today.

In India, Ayurveda focused less on acupuncture type practice, and more on describing a person’s individuality, and using natural means to heal. In Vishal’s practice, as it is true with a certified Ayurvedic practitioner, there is a focus on finding a person’s individual constitution, and learning how to balance aspects of that person that is unbalanced.

What Is Your Dosha?

In Ayurveda, the constitutions, or body types, are called doshas. The three doshas are: Vata, Pitta and Kapha. A good Ayurvedic intake will take a thorough history of your life and any conditions and decide which doshas may be out of balance for you. From there, you will be given suggestions as to what foods, lifestyle, exercise, and herbs might help bring you back in balance.

People who are Vata are typically intelligent and creative. They like to travel and learn things, and can appreciate many aspects of life. Vata people are typically a little more ‘airy’ – with a lot of energy moving in the head and brain area. When unbalanced, Vata constitutions are more prone to sleep problems, anxiety, palpitations, and nervous system complaints. Vata people often do not like windy situations and often do best in warmth. Oily massages are good to calm Vata. Also, well-cooked foods that include healthy oils and fats are helpful for calming.
**Pitta** people are a bit more fiery. They can be intense, driven and focused. Pitta people get things done, and can sometimes burn themselves out in the process. Unbalanced Pittas are prone to skin rashes, redness in the face and herpetic lip sores. Pitta people do better eating foods that are cooling, such as yogurts, melons and cucumbers. Coffee and spicy foods can make Pitta people feel worse.

The third dosha is **Kapha**. Kaphic people are solid, slow moving beings. They be thinkers and ruminate over things before making a decision. They are thick and more muscular, sometimes putting on weight quite easily to the point of obesity. Kapha people sleep well, and sometimes too much. Kapha people do better eating light, and coffee can help them keep up.

**Foods and Spices**

Ayurvedic medicine believes foods, spices and herbs can help balance the various doshas. A balancing meal generally will include all the tastes: salty, sweet, bitter, pungent and astringent (drying). When a person has a disease and the doshas are imbalanced, eating certain foods can help bring balance.

Herbs not found in other medical disciplines are also found in Ayurveda, and are at the top of their class in helping common diseases. For instance, the Ayurvedic herb guggulipds (known also as mukul myrrh) may be one of the best ways to lower high triglycerides, with one trial showing decreases of up to 30% of triglycerides. Another herbal comes from the bark and leaf of the neem plant (common name Margosa). Used in ancient times for gastrointestinal upset, the neem plant has been shown effective in modern research for stomach ulcers, gum disease, and scabies. Terminalia arjuna and Raulwolfia is another Ayurvedic herbal combination that is wonderful to help lower blood pressure.

**Safety of Ayurveda**

One recent concern in the medical journals regards the safety of Ayurvedic herbs, which have been found to contain heavy metals such as lead and mercury (1). These herbs originated from Southern Asia, and were sold in the Boston area. This is an important reason to work with a certified practitioner who recommends herbs from sources that have thoroughly checked for toxins and heavy metals. When taking any herbs or vitamins, it is important these products are well-tested for safety. Overall, Ayurvedic medicine, in its 5000 plus years of practice, has shown excellent safety.
Conclusion

In conclusion, the thousands year-old tradition of Ayurveda can offer an individualized perspective on health that is unique, and can truly offer safe treatments and results that other forms of medicines may not be able to describe and treat as individually.

References:
