

DIABETES



Diabetes mellitus is a medical condition that is characterised by the body's inability to regulate its blood glucose levels resulting in hyperglycaemia (excess blood sugar). This malfunction is often due to improper mechanism of pancreas thus rendering its inability to produce the hormone insulin sufficiently. There are 2 types of diabetes, type1 that is insulin dependent (IDDM) and type2 that is non-insulin dependent (NIDDM).

Type1 diabetes is due to destruction or breakdown of insulin secreting beta cells that are in pancreas. Lack of insulin leads to reduce conversion of glucose into glycogen. Thus increases glucose in the blood and leads to hyperglycaemia. The urinary system and liver try to remove the toxic level of sugar in the blood. As a result, the individual tends to urinate more frequently and exhibits increased sweating. Person living with diabetes also tend to suffer from auto-immune disorders due to the effect on immune system.

Type2 diabetes is estimated to be 90% of all diagnosed cases of diabetes. The non-insulin dependent diabetes is caused by the lack of insulin responsiveness in an individual. From a western perspective, this disease is non-curable, progressive disease especially if the individual has undergone prolonged therapy.

Explanation in Ayurveda

Ayurveda explains the disease 'prameha' and its subtypes. Explanation about 'prameha' is excess urination. Diabetes mellitus comes under the subtypes of 'prameha'.

Madumeha (IDDM):

According to Ayurveda, this form of diabetes is also incurable but controllable. This disease is caused due to Vata vitiating lifestyle. This means that the individual has depleted their system by too little sleep, too much worry and stress with a possible genetic connection

(karmic) of diabetes. The symptoms are similar to western medicine, but can also include complication due to ulcerations, diabetic neuropathy, frequent nausea or vomiting and a fruity odour in the breath. It can also associate problems like blindness, kidney failure, heart attacks and stroke.

Treatment of Madumeha: Conventional medicines tends to focus on the acute or immediate issue of reduction of the blood glucose whereas Ayurveda focuses primarily on the chronic issues lead up to the disease and treat the complications independently. There are generally four steps:

- Nidana Parivarjana – Avoidance of etiological factors.
- Ahara – Diet.
- Vihara – Lifestyle modifications.
- Oushada – Herbal medications.

Etiological factors like faulty dietary habits, working at night, day sleep and mental stress may play a critical role in onset of Madumeha. So avoiding these conditions is highly recommended. Ayurvedic treatment strategy advocates 'asanas' (yoga and exercises) as part of lifestyle modifications. Diet constituting of 'tiktha' (bitter) and 'kashaya' (astringent) taste dominant food is more helpful. Avoiding excessive use of sugar and high carbohydrate food is also helpful.

Many herbal supplements have been considered useful in controlling the Vata and Kapha imbalance like Nisamlaki, Neem, Triphala, Turmeric and extracts from Syzygium cumini. Mild detoxification also helps in controlling the disease complications.

Iksumeha (NIDDM):

Iksumeha is seen as a build-up of 'ama' or toxins in the body. It occludes the liver cells disabling the hormone ability to pass through the cell and perform specific metabolic action. The 'ama' affects the 'medas dhatu' (fat tissue). Poor lifestyle choices, lack of exercise and genetic conditions leads to Iksumeha.

Treatment of Iksumeha: Treatment modalities are quite similar to Madumeha. Here, more advices are given on dietary management like using less yogurt, meat products and avoiding any form of natural and artificial sugars. Exercise is the most important advice according to the strength of the patient. Detoxification in the form of 'Panchakarma' has to be done on regular intervals.

Conclusion

As per Ayurveda, both the form of diabetes is considered to be incurable but controllable and it concentrates on how to control the chronicity of the disease rather than the control of blood sugar directly.