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Ayurveda for All

Effective Ayurvedic self-cure for
common and chronic ailments

Symptoms and Causes

Prevention and Treatment

Herbal Therapies & Nature Cure

Nutrition & Diet



 **V&S PUBLISHERS**

Easy-to-follow Self-help Guide

*Effective Ayurvedic Self-cure for Common
and Chronic Ailments*

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to my mother Dr. Ch. Jhansi,
who has been teaching Ayurveda to me in terms of
“Beauty of Living” and to my father, Dr. Ch. Ranga
Rao,
who has been teaching Ayurveda to me
in terms of “Science of Life”.



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Preface

This book is in your hands because of the three incidents that took place in my life.

The first one relates to my father Dr. Chirumamilla Ranga Rao, an eminent Ayurveda physician who has imbibed both science and spirit of Ayurveda (he is currently working for Maharshi Mahesh Yogi's Vedic University and Ayurveda Research Centre, Holland). When I was studying Intermediate, an arthritis patient with severe disability was brought on a stretcher to his clinic. After visiting several doctors belonging to various medical systems, he consulted my father as a last resort and this was enough to arouse my curiosity to watch his progress. After three months of Ayurvedic treatment, when he started moving about on his own, I found myself admiring this particular system of medicine. Consequently, I appeared for entrance test for B.A.M.S. (Bachelor of Ayurvedic Medicine and Surgery).

The second incident as described here prompted me to study Ayurveda more deeply and empirically. While studying Ayurvedic medicine, I used to visit my native village on vacations. During one of those visits, I advised an elderly neighbour of mine, to stop drinking lest it would ruin his health. The gentleman, who retired as an army officer, asked me with a twinkle in his eyes "In my case, I am immune to ill effects of alcohol. Don't worry. However, tell me my lad, why some people are more susceptible to diseases than others? Members of the same family eat similar food, yet their health is not the same. Some people have good habits, still they fall sick easily while some people with bad habits are immune to diseases. Why is it so?" I had no answer till I entered into fourth year and was taught "*Charaka Samhita*". Then I realized that people fall sick not because of bacteria or infection alone, but due to three main causes namely, *Asaatmya indriyarthasamyogam* (Incompatible correlation of the senses with their objects),

Prajnaaparaadham (Wrong use of will), and *Kaalam* (Effect of time). These basic causes upset the fine balance among the bioregulating factors of the body—*Vaata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha* and make the person fall prey to opportunistic diseases. If one can take care to maintain the balance among these bioregulating factors, he is assured of good health. I went back to my neighbour with this reply, and unfortunately, I found him in the terminating illness due to alcoholic liver. With great difficulty, he stood up and shook my hand and congratulated me for not merely parroting the books but trying to analyze things in proper perspective. He added with a wry smile, had I explained him earlier, he would have probably taken precautions and averted the disaster.

The third incident took place when I was doing my post graduation. I was travelling in a train and a fellow traveller asked me, on learning about my qualification, why anybody should bother about Ayurveda when one can guard his health through easily available allopathic medicines. Then I explained to him that Ayurveda does not confine itself to treat a disease but goes much beyond. It tells how one has to lead his life, correlate body and mind, and take precautionary measures to prevent diseases. I told him that it is nature's prescription to physical as well as mental diseases that plague a person and that it is ancient wisdom best suited for modern man. At the end of the session, he vowed that he would opt for Ayurveda. Since I had no better thing to do during a journey, I could spend enough time to enlighten him. But what about the others who do not have proper idea about so called *National Medical Treatment* of this country? I decided to convey the teachings of Ayurveda by putting them on paper.

These three incidents made me think about ways and means to convey this ancient knowledge to public in a way that was simple and easy to understand. Since I believe that more than the foreign systems, Ayurveda is in tune with Indian way of living, I thought it is easy to convince the public if written in a native tongue. I discussed the concept with a young editor of a popular Telugu weekly and he readily agreed to give me a regular column in his publication, *Andhra Jyothi*. I must thank late Shri Tripuraneni Srinivas, through whom I could enlighten millions of readers, through tips and small pieces of information. Then followed my weekly column in *Vaaritha*, a popular Telugu daily, under the supervision

of Shri Jeedigunta Venkata Rao.

My writings in Telugu, my mother tongue, got me attention of the largest circulated English Daily of Andhra Pradesh, *Deccan Chronicle* and soon I began writing regularly for them. Most of the articles you are going to read in this book were published in that newspaper. Thanks to the editor Ms. Jayanthi and her team consisting of Ragini, Venu, Venu Lotriya, Margaret, Smitha, and Manjula Murari. I would like to thank Ms. Vanaja Banagiri, (Hyderabad Times Times of India), and Mr. Shankar, (Science Express The Indian Express) also. My friend Shri M.B.S. Prasad, an Indo-anglian writer of Telugu origin and Managing Editor of *Haasam*, a popular Telugu fortnightly devoted to humour and music, gave me some tips to make this book catchy, for which I am obliged to him. I also convey my gratitude to my wife, Smt. Radha for encouraging me in writing this book. Also, to my parents, Dr. Ch. Ranga Rao and Dr. Ch. Jhansi for their constant guidance.

I wish to acknowledge my debt to Shri Ram Avtar Gupta, Managing Director of Pustak Mahal, for agreeing to publish the book. But the book would not have taken shape if my efforts have not come to the notice of Shri S.K. Roy, Editor of Pustak Mahal. He compiled my articles, edited, and presented them systematically in book form. I am grateful to him.

A word for the reader before he proceeds further. This is not a technical book; it is meant for a layman; an uninitiated reader. That is why you do not find in-depth explanation or analysis of basic tenets of Ayurveda here. And, it is in no way a substitute to a qualified doctor. The aim of the book is confined to educate and bring people close to Ayurveda.

Let me state a fact very clearly at this point. If this book in whatever measure benefits you, the credit goes to Ayurveda. If it does not, the fault lies with my communicating skills but not with the science as such. Please let me know what you feel about this book. If you want to know about your personal health problem in particular or any clarification regarding Ayurveda in general, please do not hesitate to write to me. I shall feel honoured.

Shubhamastu. Satamaanam Bhavathi. May you be bestowed with bliss and longevity.

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AYURVEDIC CONCEPTS OF HEALTH & DISEASE

Ayurveda is the science of life or longevity, which helps in the promotion of health, prevention of diseases and in achieving a long life. The basic philosophy of Ayurveda is based on the panchamahabhoota (five elements) theory. This theory states that the universe as well as the human body is made up of five elements, namely air (vayu), space (akash), earth (prithvi), fire (agni) and water (jal). These elements combine to form controlling forces or biological humours called Dosha. These dosha are responsible for sustaining the living body in its normal state and are of 3 types: Vaata, Pitta and Kapha.

These controlling forces or the doshas act on the tissues of the body known as the Datus and help in the various physiological functions. The waste products formed as a result of various bodily functions are **Malas**, which are end products of the body.

Thus the science of Ayurveda deals with Doshas, Dhaatus & Malas.

VAATA

It is responsible for active movements of different organs and parts of our body. There are 5 types of Vaata:

1. Praana: Praana refers to functions of the brain and nervous system *i.e.* sensations of smell, taste, touch, hearing and vision, movements of upper and lower limbs, rectum and sex organs and breath.
2. Udaana: Udaana refers to movements of the chest, diaphragm and voice box. It controls movements of breathing out, sneezing and speech.
3. Samaana: Samaana refers to movements of the intestine along with digestion and absorption of food substances.

4. **Apaana:** Apaana refers to the movements of the bladder, rectum, uterus and is important for passing urine, stools, menstrual fluids, semen and foetus (delivery).
5. **Vyaana:** Vyaana is concerned with movements of all kinds of voluntary and involuntary muscles. It is responsible for movements of the heart *e.g.* blood vessels, lymph is a white fluid present in different parts of the body) glands and glands which produce hormones.

The diseases caused by the disorders of Vaata are: Asthma, Epilepsy (fits) and other mental disorders, Urticaria (a skin disease), Viral fever (due to temperature changes), Anaemia (lack of iron in blood), Obesity (increased weight gain), Diabetes, Diarrhoea and constipation Reduced functions of thyroid and adrenal glands.

PITTA

It is responsible for the chemical reactions that take place in our body. It is of 5 types.

1. **Paachaka:** Paachaka is due to digestive enzymes and other chemicals in the body, which control the digestion and absorption of food substances.
2. **Ranjaka:** Ranjaka is responsible for haemoglobin (the iron-containing pigment in blood) production.
3. **Alochaka:** Alochaka is responsible for the biochemical activity of the eye, which is responsible for perception of vision.
4. **Saadaka:** Saadaka is responsible for normal functioning of the mind.
5. **Braajaka:** Braajaka is responsible for removing waste products in the form of sweat and enhancing the natural glow of the skin.

The diseases caused by disorders of Pitta are as follows: Toxic fevers, Hyperacidity (Gastritis), Vomiting, Diarrhoea, Jaundice, Anaemia Bronchitis, Skin diseases associated with pus formation and All infections due to toxins, bacteria, viruses *etc.*

KAPHA

It refers to promotion or growth brought about by secretions of different types by the organs. It is of 5 types:-

1. Kledaka: Kledaka refers to secretions by the mouth, stomach and intestines, which dissolve the food and destroy bacteria.
2. Avalambika: Avalambika refers to secretions by the respiratory tract from the nose to the lungs and facilitates passing of air and flushes out foreign substances.
3. Bodhaka: Bodhaka is the watery secretion of the glands around the taste buds of the tongue, which help in perceiving the taste.
4. Tarpaka: Tarpaka refers to the cerebrospinal fluid which is a secretion surrounding the brain and spinal cord. It provides nutrition to the brain and protects it from toxic substances.
5. Shleshaka: Shleshaka is the fluid lying in the bones and joint spaces called as synovial fluid producing movements of bones and joints with ease. The watery fluid surrounding and protecting the heart and lungs are also referred to as Shleshaka Kapha.

The diseases caused by disorders of Kapha are as follows: Common cold, Infection of the lungs and other parts of respiratory system, Diarrhoea due to infection, Jaundice, Eczema, Pimples and other skin infections, Arthritis (painful joints), Rheumatic heart disease, Swelling and infection of the kidneys (glomerulonephritis), Peritonitis (swelling of abdominal cavity), Encephalitis, Meningitis and other infections of the brain and, Benign tumours of different parts of body.

DHAATU

It is a substance which is responsible for formation of basic structure of body. There are 7 types of dhaatus *i.e.* lymph, blood, muscle tissue, fat tissue, bone marrow, sperm and ovum.

MALAS

These are waste products of various dhaatus produced during the course of metabolic changes in the body. Examples of malas are sweat, urine, stool, gases, bile, earwax, nasal discharge, mucous secretions *etc.*

Thus a disease is due to imbalance of doshas, dhaatus and malas.



DIAGNOSIS BY AYURVEDA

Diagnosis of a disease using Ayurvedic methods consists of following details. The two main pillars on which the diagnosis is based are: History of illness, and Examination of the patient.

HISTORY OF ILLNESS

This refers to the following details:

- a) Details of the symptoms *i.e.* how, when where they occur, duration of medicines taken, relieving and aggravating factors *etc.*
- b) Past history of similar illness, medicines taken, surgery undergone *etc.*
- c) Personal history *i.e.* marriage, sexual life, family, occupational history, diet, sleep, bowel movements, smoking, alcohol intake, living conditions, financial status, social life and mental status.
- d) Family history of similar symptoms/illness and treatment taken.

EXAMINATION OF THE PATIENT

Examination of the patient is done in two steps. First is the general examination and second is the examination of the different systems of the body.

- a) General Examination or Ashta Vidha Pariksha: This consists of the following parameters: Examination of the pulse (Naadi Pariksha), Tongue, Urine and stool examination, Speech, Examination by palpation and percussion, Gait (bodily movement), General appearance of the patient, and, Examination of the constitution (Prakriti).

- b) Systemic Examination: This consists of examination of the following systems: Digestive system, Respiratory system, Heart and Circulatory system, Nervous system, Urinary system, Musculoskeletal system, Reproductive system, Skin and Hair, and Eyes.

Let us know about some important Ayurvedic diagnostic methods.

PULSE DIAGNOSIS (NAADI PARIKSHA)

Beyond your cells, tissues, and organs, there is an abundance of activity you are not aware of! It forms complex patterns and is important to your existence and can be perceived through the sense of touch. It is your Naadi or the pulse!

If any Ayurvedic doctor, just by touching your wrist, reels off about your chronic pain or abnormalities in blood sugar and digestion or heart murmurs or kidney failure or peptic ulcer... all without prior knowledge, do not attribute any extra-sensory perception or amazing occult power to him. It is just an interpretation of a profound theory, the *naadi tatvam*!

MODERN VIEW

The pulse is the pressure wave you can feel as the pumping heart pushes the blood through the arteries. According to modern medical science, the pulse gives an indication of the rate and pressure at which the heart is beating and of the pressure at which it is beating apart from the rhythm, character and volume.

In a normal individual, normal pulse rate is between 65 and 85, although it tends to be higher in children and the elderly, up to 100 to 110 beats per minute. Most of the times, the pulse rate changes according to the demand. For example, during and after exercise, the rate increases in order to supply the exercising muscles with more blood and oxygen. However, those who enjoy physical activity often have a slower pulse rate. Just as their body muscles develop and enlarge, so does their heart muscle, which as an outcome, becomes better conditioned and more efficient. Consequently, the rate at which it can perform the job of pumping the blood around the body is slower than it

would be in a less fit individual. The pulse also increases in response to nervous signals and the release of adrenaline like substances into the bloodstream, during psychological stress, excitement or emotion.

- Abnormally slow pulse: There are a number of medical disorders that can slow down the pulse below the normal rate and which, as a result, may also induce palpitations.
- Medication: Digitalis, the drug that is commonly used to control irregular heart beats, may cause slow pulse. Also, the beta-blockers, such as inderal, atenolol, commonly used for a range of disorders including high blood pressure, angina, anxiety, migraine and abnormal rhythms of the heartbeat, also slow the pulse.
- Hypothyroidism: Low levels of thyroxine, the hormone produced by the thyroid gland, causes a pulse rate steadily below 60, although in a very fit person the rate could be as slow as 40 (the other symptoms of hypothyroidism include weight gain, constipation, mental and physical inactivity, lethargy, thinning of hair and dry skin).
- Heart Block: If your pulse rate is below 60 and physical strain makes you feel dizzy and senseless, this suggests a heart block. (The messages transmitted by the conduction system of the heart sometimes fail to get through from their source in the upper chambers of the heart to the lower ventricular chambers. As a result, the muscles of the ventricles will not contract as often as they should.)

Abnormally fast pulse: Tea, coffee and soft drinks, all contain high levels of caffeine, which is a heart stimulant. So, drinking more than three or four caffeine containing drinks, or, for that matter, more than two or three measures of alcohol daily is enough to develop a faster pulse, particularly if the individual is a smoker, since nicotine enhances the effect.

- Anaemia: The pulse rate significantly increases in anaemia, a condition in which the oxygen carrying capacity of the

blood is reduced. Anaemic persons look very pale, are often short of breath, particularly during and after physical work, and may suffer from angina, since the condition puts more exertion on the heart. Though the blood carries less oxygen, the body's tissues are still in need of the same amount of oxygen. The heart, therefore, tries to make up in quantity what the blood lacks in quality, beating faster and faster to re-circulate the blood more quickly so that more of it goes to the required area.

- **Hyperthyroidism:** Just as an under active thyroid slows down the metabolism, so an overactive gland, by producing excess amounts of thyroxine hormone, enhances metabolism. This results in rapid pulse. (Associated symptoms include diarrhoea, increased appetite, weight loss, flushed, sweaty skin, and generally high energy levels. Palpitation is also a common symptom.)
- **Fever:** Most infections, producing a fever, raise the pulse rate, and the general rule is ten extra heartbeats per minute for each one degree Fahrenheit rise in the patient's temperature. (There are a few exceptions, notably, typhoid fever typically produces a pulse rate slower than would be expected for the degree of the temperature.)
- **Low Blood Sugar:** Low blood sugar is sometimes seen in diabetic patients due to excess of insulin, or missing a meal. The resulting rapid pulse is associated with sweating, behavioural changes, collapse and even coma also.
- **Bronchodilators:** Some of the bronchodilator drugs used to relax the airways of asthma sufferers can accelerate the heart rate, especially if excessive doses are taken. Drugs included are salbutamol, turbutaline *etc.* Other medications commonly used to treat asthma such as adrenaline, theophylline derivatives may have the same effect. Antispasmodic drugs such as belladonna and byoscine medications, that relax the smooth muscle of the intestine, produce a rapid pulse rate.

- Menopause: Most of the women while passing through menopause phase, may notice the hot flushing and palpitations along with rapid pulse. These are the result of circulatory changes caused by hormonal fluctuations.
- Heart Ailments: For rapid pulse, heart disease is actually a rare cause. However, after excluding other general causes, the disorders of the heart valves, conduction system of the heart and heart muscle efficiency are to be considered. Usually there are other, more prominent symptoms that would alert patient and doctor to the problem, including chest pain and shortness of breath, especially when lying down, as well as dizziness, loss of consciousness and weakness or numbness in the limbs. In angina sufferers, it is common for the heart muscle to be starved of blood, resulting in chest pain and a rise in pulse rate.
- Lung Diseases: In the lungs, pneumonia, with or without pleurisy, or a blood clot in one of the major veins, can produce a fast pulse, often with chest pain, fever and breathlessness as well. With a blood clot, there will also be bloodstained phlegm.
- Shock: Rapid and weak pulse is a general symptom of shock. Sudden, severe pain in the abdomen followed by collapse can be the first sign of a perforated peptic ulcer in the stomach or duodenum, and would certainly be associated with rapid pulse.
- Liver & Kidney Disorders: Malignancies at certain sites such as liver and kidneys and inflammations of the covering layers of the heart, can increase the basal metabolic rate of the body and cause a fast pulse often in association with fever, jaundice and loss of weight.

AYURVEDIC VIEW

Ayurveda has got something more than the above general information about pulse. According to Ayurveda, every cell in our body sends its own

unique signal to the heart via different vital organs, and the blood stream. These *praanic* currents of energy are then compressed into rhythmic pulsation, which can be decoded to reveal what is going on in the liver or the kidneys, the left ventricle of the heart or the right fallopian tube. One electro-magnetic wave is all it takes to telecast an entire scene; likewise, our constitution has devised out how to convey the entire body's activities through the pulse.

The first Ayurvedic classic to describe pulse examination is *Saarangadhara Samhita* (13th century A.D.). Later works such as *Bhavaprakasa* (15th century A.D.), *Yogaratanakara* (16th century A.D.), *Basavarajeeyam* (17th century A.D.) etc. deal extensively with the subject.

The term *naadi* literally means “a tube or channel through which something flows”. Pulse examination is the examination of the arterial pulses at certain points on the body. The early hours of the morning are the best times for pulse examination. It can be misleading or incorrect if done after the patient has taken food, exercise or bath, after taking intoxicants, having sex, sleep or when afflicted with hunger, thirst, anger, grief or worry. The pulse at the wrist on the right hand is selected for the men and on the left hand for the women. While examining the pulse, the patient is made to sit comfortably, relieved of his or natural urges, and with faith in the examiner.

When an Ayurvedic physician touches your wrist, he probes deep into your general state of health, ill health and even the bad prognosis. As the strings of a *veena* bring out all the *raagas*, so does the *naadi*. *Naadi spandana* is caused by heartbeats and the consequent movement of *rasa* (comparable to plasma) and *rakta* (comparable to blood).

Rasa dhaatu is the medium for the tridoshas to circulate all over the body, their signs being found in the *naadi*.

Proficiency in pulse diagnosis is gained by long practice, alertness and guidance from the preceptor. Though learning to detect disease from the pulse is a skill belonging to the physician, you can also become familiar with your own pulse and glean fascinating insights into doshas. Once you have worked with your doshas you can easily attribute them to pre-mentioned qualities, signs, symptoms etc. of corresponding doshas in the

classical texts. From this data-base, you can gain true intimacy with your own doshas.

HOW TO CHECK YOUR PULSE?

To check your own pulse, keep your right arm and wrist slightly flexed. Then see for radial stylus, the bump located outside your wrist bone just under the thumb. Approach with your left hand from underneath the right hand and move your index finger just below this bump. You will find the radial artery. Now line up the first three fingers and press down until you feel throbbing by all the three fingers distinctly. Then decrease the pressure of your fingers slightly to sense varying movements of the pulse. These deep and superficial impulses indicate the condition of the tridoshas (three basic metabolic principles which govern the physico-chemical and physiological activities of the body in a balanced state and diseases in a disturbed state), both constitutional and present state in the index finger they denote vaata in (which controls movement), the middle finger pitta (responsible for metabolism) and the ring finger kapha (responsible for body structure). Whichever finger you get a forcible movement, the corresponding dosha is said to be predominant. This examination is better done thrice with few seconds of interval.

The various factors to be noted during pulse examination are: pulse rate (spandana sankhya), Character (gati) and Qualities (gunas).

As we know, the doshas change all the time; you must be sensitive to many kinds of variations—your age, season and time of day—all make a difference in your pulse along with all the possible variations in your health. For example, the pulse in the morning is called kapha naadi, which is slow, soft and steady. In the afternoon, it is called *pitta naadi*, which is warm and unsteady. In the evening, it is the vaata naadi, which is rapid, feeble in nature. In the same way, during nights the naadi is called as sama naadi which will be slow, steady and feeble. Coming to the seasons, during Varsha (Rainy season; July to September) and Sisira (Late winter; January to March) ritus it is vaata naadi in Sarad (Autumn season; September to November) and Grishma (Summer season; May to July) it is pitta naadi and kapha naadi during Hemanta (Early winter; November to January) and Vasanta (Spring season: March to May) ritus.

There will be pulse variation with the tastes also. After astringent foods, it is hard and feeble and after salty foods, rapid. After exercise, sexual intercourse and fasting, it is rapid and weak. An ideal healthy pulse should be clearly perceptible (suvyakta), unmixed (nirmala), not very rapid (amanda) and regular (achanchala).

When vaata is predominant in the constitution, the index finger will feel the pulse strongly. It will be irregular, unsteady, neither hot nor cold and thin, moving in waves like the motion of a serpent.

When pitta is predominant in the constitution, the pulse will be stronger under the middle finger. It will feel active, soft and excited and will move like the frog's hop.

When kapha is predominant the throbbing of the pulse under the ring finger is most noticeable. The pulse feels strong, steady, cold, and full and its movement resembles the floating of a swan.

As it happens, all three of these different pulses are present in everyone, but most prominent one signals the particular body type. At times, there might be a combination of two or all the three doshas which gives a mixed picture.

BODY CONSTITUTION (PRAKRITI)

After knowing your prakriti (body constitution) with the pulse examination, you can apply it in maintaining the health and counteracting the disease as it plays an important role in health planning. If we know our natural constitution according to vaata, pitta, and kapha, we can take care of our problems and defend against diseases. We can know what sort of diseases are possible in us in different seasons, and can know how to prevent them before they attack us. It is also possible to perceive about the prognosis of disease with respect to prakriti.

For example, vaata prakriti persons, may suffer from vaata diseases (Eighty in number, mostly the diseases of nerves and bones). if they indulge more in a cold, dry, rough, bitter, pungent and astringent diet, over exercise, have irregular food habits, live in colder, drier climates. For seasonal consideration cold winter season, pre-rainy season and cloudy, dry windy climates, are not good for them. Illness may worsen if

already present. Any type of sickness may be increased at vaata time, like evening times, late in the night, and the third hour after meals and in old age. If they follow proper diet, behaviour, and tastes to decrease vaata, they may prevent their natural tendency towards the possibility of vaata type diseases.

In case of pitta prakriti, if they tend to indulge in hot, sharp, pungent, sour, salty things, work with fery, acidic substances, they may suffer from pitta diseases (Forty in number, mostly metabolic disorders) as pitta tends to aggravate from these causes. Hot climate, autumn, second hour after meals and midday (noon) and midnight are the specific times when pitta prakriti people's sickness may increase and medicines taken at this time may be more helpful for speedy recovery.

In the case of kapha prakriti, if they indulge more in unctuous, oily, heavy, dull, slimy food substances and eat sweet, sour, salty food, take more rest and live a comfortable life, with a lack of physical exercise, they may suffer from kapha diseases (Twenty in number, mostly diseases, concerned with structure), as these causes aggravate kapha. These people may fall sick in the spring, in cold and damp climates if they do not take proper care. Their sickness may increase in these climates and also at kapha time, like early morning. If proper medicine is given at this time, it may be more effective.

In this way, knowledge of naadi and prakriti are very useful and important to maintain health in an individual. One can take proper care, adjust diet properly and avoid the diet which is harmful; one can adopt daily and seasonal routines properly and attain perfect health.



ROLE OF DIET IN HEALTH & DISEASE

Ayurveda stresses a lot on the role of diet in maintaining good health and preventing onset of diseases. According to the philosophy of Ayurveda, health is not just maintained by taking a balanced diet but it depends on various factors like: constitution or prakriti of an individual, digestive power or agni, taste or rasa of the food item, heating or cooling energy of food or veerya, and post-digestive (metabolic) effect or vipaaka.

CONSTITUTION OR PRAKRITI

The inherent constitution or prakriti of an individual consists of one or more of the doshas *i.e.* the vaata, pitta and kapha. This determines which type of food helps the person in promoting health and nutrition and which are not conducive for the same (Refer chapter 1).

DIGESTIVE POWER OR AGNI

The digestive power or agni is also based on the balance of the doshas in the body. Any imbalance leads to disorder of digestion and metabolism of food. Agni is of 4 types:

- 1) Vishama agni: Due to vaata dosha, the gastric fire becomes vitiated, causing irregular appetite, indigestion and gas. Emotionally, this can result in anxiety, insecurity, fear and neurological or mental problems.
- 2) Teekhna agni: Pitta dosha is responsible for this type of disorder. It may cause hyper-metabolism, hyperacidity, heartburn and hypoglycemia leading to inflammatory diseases.
- 3) Manda agni: This is due to excess kapha condition, leading to slow

metabolism, overweight, allergies and congestive diseases.

- 4) **Sama agni:** This type of agni is the result of balanced tridoshas. A person having this type of agni can eat almost any type of food without difficulty. Digestion, absorption and elimination are very normal for such a person.

TASTE OR RASA OF THE FOOD ITEM

Taste or rasa of a food substance is the feeling that we experience when we put the substance in our mouth. There are 6 types of rasas:

- 1) **Sweet (Madhura rasa):** Any food that is nourishing and brings satisfaction, generally, has a sweet taste. Eating sweet foods will bring on kapha qualities in the body—coldness, heaviness (by adding fat), steadiness and physical energy. Sweet foods are also soothing. They move the bowels and have the diuretic effect. If you are in a nervous and unsettled mood which is a sign of aroused vaata, sweet will calm you; it also puts out the fire of pitta and is considered as a brain tonic. However, too much sugar is not stabilising; it aggravates kapha, which produces lethargy. Excess of sweet causes greed and emotional dependence. Too much sweet becomes nauseating and leads to obesity, loss of appetite, respiratory disorders, goitre, swelling of lymph nodes, diabetes, worms *etc.* In the case of any kapha imbalance, sweets should be reduced or avoided. Example of sweet foods are rice, dal, jaggery, sugar, milk, honey, tubers, eggs, mango, bananas, apricots.
- 2) **Sour (Amla rasa):** Drugs and diet with sour taste stimulate appetite and add taste to food. They expel the gas and combat anorexia. They can be used as anticoagulants. Though it is refreshing to eat sour food, if consumed in excess, it increases thirst, which is the character of aggravated pitta. It can cause burning sensation in throat and chest. One has to drink lot of water to quell this heat. This in turn promotes fluid retention and swellings. The sharp qualities of pitta, such as sharp intellect and wittiness, are increased by sour foods. But too much pitta is connected with resentment and envy. Anaemia, haemorrhage,

vertigo, and defects of the vision are the common disorders caused by excessive use of sour food. Examples of sour foods are lime, tomato, citrus fruits, *etc.*

- 3) **Salty (Lavana rasa):** Salt increases both pitta and kapha. In small amounts, its taste adds relish to food, and starts the flow of saliva and stomach juices. However, excessive salt will make it harder to control food cravings. By making you eat extra, salt adds fat and leads to overweight. Salt also makes your body heavy, causing impotence, grey hair, premature wrinkling, falling of hair, haemorrhage, skin diseases, and gastric disorders. Excess salt is generally associated with cravings and uncontrollable desires. Examples are pickles and papad.
- 4) **Pungent (Katu rasa):** Pungency of hot and spicy food causes a burning sensation (the heating effect of aggravated pitta) and thirst (the drying effect of aggravated vaata). It stimulates the body and makes fluids—sweat, tears, saliva, mucus and the blood flow freely. So, digestion increases and congested tissues are cleaned out. In spite of these good qualities, if used in excess, pungency can cause harm—eating a raw chilli causes swollen lips, burning skin, hot sweat and even impotence. Too much spicy food makes you thirsty, dizzy and unsettled. Examples of pungent foods are pepper, ginger, chillies, onions, garlic, *etc.*
- 5) **Bitter (Tikta rasa):** Bitter foods instantly make the palate crave for more satisfying tastes. It speeds up digestion. When the body becomes toxic, inflamed, hot, or itchy due to pitta aggravation, bitter taste is the best corrective. (Bitter giloy and quinine-bark soothe fever, for instance). But, if used in excess, bitter aggravates vaata, leading to characteristic vaata complaints—loss of appetite, weight loss, headaches, unsteadiness, dry skin, debility, and dryness of the mouth. Examples of bitter foods are karela, methi, turmeric, spinach & spices.
- 6) **Astringent (Kashaaya rasa):** Astringent, the taste that makes our mouth dry, is not familiar to many. Astringency is light and sedative and causes granulation, absorption, and stiffness. This taste is cooling and constrictive; stops the flow of secretions such

as sweat and tears. In excess, its constricting effect may lead to *vaata* complains such as constipation and dry mouth, along with gas or abdominal bloating. Astringent taste controls excitement. However, if you take in excess, astringency makes you shrivel. The sudden condition when you are seized by fear and the dry mouth that anxiety brings, are both astringent qualities. Examples of astringent foods are lentils, tea, broccoli beans, cabbage, cauliflower *etc.*

It is advisable to change your diet a bit so that all the six *rasas* are represented in your meal without repetition and monotony. A balanced diet is one that contains all the six tastes (*shat-rasas*).

For example, even if you have only two chapattis and boiled vegetables a day, you do not lose weight because both wheat and vegetables have sweet taste that prevents weight loss. Or even on being a diet of salads, one gets constipation because there is no lubrication in the diet. A little cow ghee added to the salads prevents putting on weight and facilitates bowel movements everyday.

HEATING OR COOLING ENERGY OF FOOD OR VEERYA

Certain items of food have a heating effect on body or are of high caloric value *e.g.* meat, fish, egg, jaggery, dates, nuts, honey, mango *etc.* Others like milk, oranges, melon, bananas, curd, cheese *etc.* have a cooling effect on the body.

POST-DIGESTIVE (METABOLIC) EFFECT OR VIPAAKA

The post-digestive effect refers to the effect of the food substance on the digestive system metabolism and on the nutrition of the body.

TIPS FOR FOOD INTAKE

- Food should not be prepared with foul fuel.
- Half heated food should not be consumed.

- Be cautious in taking food items which are not fully ripe or overripe or which have had any unusual change.
- Never take food when you haven't urinated, during lack of appetite or prolonged fasting.
- Never take food in a crowded place.
- In order to stimulate appetite, one can chew and eat half teaspoonful of freshly grated ginger with a pinch of rock salt 10 to 15 minutes before each meal.
- The diet, especially hard food substances, should be properly chewed.
- Wherever possible, intake of curd or whey should follow eating of food.
- The food should be tasty, fresh and good in appearance.
- It should neither be hot nor absolutely cold.
- Avoid taking water at least 15 minutes before having food. The quantity of water taken after eating food should be little. Instead, drink often.
- Heavy food should be taken in a limited quantity.
- Heavy food should not be taken at night. The proper time for taking your dinner is approximately two to three hours before going to bed. After dinner, go for a short walk.
- After meals, heavy mental or physical work should be avoided. Some rest is advisable for proper digestion of food.
- While eating, only one-third of the capacity of the stomach should be filled with food, one-third with liquid and one-third should be left empty. This aids in proper digestion, gives room for air circulation in stomach and also promotes mental clarity.
- While eating, one should properly chew the food in order to soften it, and ensure that it is thoroughly mixed with saliva.
- Ayurveda insists that iced water should not be drunk

during or after a meal as it slows agni and digestion. Small sips of warm water taken during the meal help in digestion.

- If desired, one can finish a meal by drinking a cup of lassi or buttermilk along with ginger and coriander.

2. INCOMPATIBLE FOOD COMBINATIONS

- When two or three food substance of different taste, energy and post-digestive effect are combined together, agni can become erratic, inhibiting the enzyme system and resulting in production of toxins in the system.
- Combining foods improperly can produce indigestion, fermentation, putrefaction and gas formation. This condition, if prolonged, can lead to toxemia and disease complex.
- Let us analyse a few examples to understand the same:
- Eating bananas with milk can diminish agni, change the intestinal flora producing toxins and may cause sinus congestion, cold, cough and allergies.
- If fruits are eaten with potatoes or other starchy foods, there will be a difference in time for digestion.
- Melons and grains, taken together, cause indigestion. Melons digest quickly, whereas grains take more time. This combination will upset the stomach.
- Heated and cooked honey digests slowly by forming its molecules into a nonhomogenised glue which adheres to mucous membranes and clogs subtle channels, producing toxins.
- If meat and milk are taken together, meat causes heating effect and milk causes cooling effect, counteracting one another, disturbing the agni.
- Never take milk and melons together. Though both of them are cooling by nature, they are incompatible as milk is laxative and melon is diuretic, and milk requires more time

for digestion. Moreover, the action of acid in the stomach causes the milk to curdle.

DO NOT COMBINE THE FOLLOWING

- Sour foods with saltish, pungent, bitter and astringent tastes.
- Meat of amphibian, domestic and aquatic animals with honey, sesame oil, jaggery, milk, black gram, radish, sprouted grains and fatty substances.
- Sugar with fish.
- Raw meat with wine.
- Banana with black gram soup.
- Date with banana.
- Bitter substances with astringent tastes.
- Jaggery with radish.
- Sesame paste with Indian spinach.
- Milk with acidic tastes, salty foods, fish, meat of domestic, wild and aquatic animals, radish root, garlic, moringa, honey, mango, lemon, banana, jujube fruit, jack fruit, coconut, pomegranate, acidic fruit, Indian gooseberry, Dolichos bean, black gram, white gourd, mushroom, sesame ghany, curd, oil, sprouted grains, superfine flour, dried vegetables and wine.
- Curd with banana.
- Sweet substances with salt, acidic, acrid, bitter and astringent tastes.
- Honey with hot substances, oily substances, milk, honey followed by warm water, radish, water *etc.*
- Salty substances with acrid, bitter and astringent tastes.
- Fatty substances with rain water.
- Mustard oil with meat prepared in mustard oil, milk and

honey.

3. ANTIDOTES FOR INCOMPATIBLE FOOD COMBINATIONS

Proper combination of food substances, keeping in view the 5 factors given above, can enhance the process of digestion and aid in nutrition of body.

If the negative effects of food items are known, they can be made wholesome by combining them with appropriate counteracting food items or “antidotes” as given below:

- Cheese increases congestion and mucous. It aggravates pitta and kapha. To counteract this, you can add black pepper.
- Eggs in cooked form increase pitta, and in raw form, increase kapha. Turmeric and onions are the antidotes.
- Ice-cream increases mucous and causes congestion. If taking ice-cream is inevitable, then top it with clove and cardamom.
- Curd increases mucous and causes congestion. Cumin and ginger will take care of the ill-effects of curd.
- Fish increases pitta. Coconut, lime and lemon are the remedial measures to counteract the bad effects of fish.
- Meat is heavy to digest. Cloves or pepper powder makes the digestion easier.
- Alcohol has both stimulating and depressing effects. Chewing a pinch of cumin seeds or 1-2 cardamom seeds may minimise these undesirable effects.
- The bad effects of tea can be lessened with ginger. In the same way, ill-effects of coffee can be kept at bay with nutmeg powder.
- It is a known fact that sweets increase congestion. Addition of dry ginger powder (Sonthi/soonth) to the sweetmeats will decrease the congestion.
- Tobacco aggravates pitta and stimulates vaata. Brahmi,

calamus root (vasa/ vacha) are used as antidotes to tobacco.

- Rice and wheat increase kapha and fat. Clove and ginger are used to enhance the beneficial effects of these cereals.
- Legumes produce gas and distention. Garlic, cloves, black pepper, ginger, rock salt or chilli powder are the antidotes.
- Cabbage produces gas due to its sulphur content. Cook in sunflower oil adding turmeric and mustard seeds.
- Garlic increases pitta. Grated coconut and lemon counteract this effect.
- Green salad produces gas. Cooking reduces the gas formation but, at the same time, its therapeutic benefits may also be lost. If you want to have salad in raw form, add a little quantity of lemon juice to it.
- Onion also produces gas. To prevent this either you should take it in cooked form or you should add salt, lemon, curd and mustard seed powder to it.
- Potato, due to its high carbohydrate content, produces gas. This can be reduced with ghee and pepper.
- Tomato increases kapha. Lime and cumin are the antidotes to it.
- The ill-effects like increase in kapha of banana, can be counteracted with cardamom.
- Mango produces diarrhoea. Adding ghee with cardamom is the remedy.
- Melon causes water retention. Grated coconut with coriander is the solution to this.
- Almost all those who consume nuts and peanuts, experience gas and burning sensation in the stomach. As a remedial measure, either you should soak them overnight or cook them with sesame oil, ginger, roasted cumin powder and pepper.

Food faddism is robbing the joy of eating these days. Go ahead and

enjoy varieties of foods by planning your menu. Bon appetite and bon health!

4. NUTRITIONAL DISORDERS

According to Ayurveda there are 5 types of Nutritional Disorders:

1. Quantitative dietary deficiency, which includes under-nutrition due to insufficient food, and even starvation.
2. Qualitative dietary deficiency, which includes consuming the wrong food combination, thereby resulting in malnutrition, toxic condition and lack of essential nutrients.
3. Qualitative and quantitative over-nutrition, which includes emotional overeating resulting in obesity and/or high cholesterol, which can lead to hypertension, heart attacks or paralysis.
4. Digestive disorders due to toxins in food.
5. Digestive disorders due to intake of foods, which are antagonistic to your personal constitution.



ROLE OF SEASONS IN HEALTH & DISEASE

Ayurveda stresses a lot at the role of seasons on the body and advises that we must change our daily routine depending on the seasons. This is known as *ritucharya*. It helps in preserving the balance of the doshas as the season changes.

1. DISORDERS AND DISEASES DUE TO SUMMER

SUNBURNS

They occur easily on the mountains and near the sea as the cliffs and the water reflect sunlight strongly, especially the ultraviolet beam. Dark people are susceptible to sunburn less frequently than the fairer ones. People, used to exposing themselves to the sun, can withstand sunlight better than those who cannot. The signs of sunburn vary from redness to swelling and blistering. The eyelids may swell if the face is affected. There are certain measures that you can take to avoid sunburn and its after-effects:

- Sunburn can be minimised with sun-tanning. This is body's way of protecting the skin against the burning produced by the sun. The more melanin you produce, the darker you get and the better you are protected against burning.
- Mild sunburn can be treated with cool, wet compresses for 10-15 minutes. Use them three times daily. You might also try soaking in a tub of tepid or cool water for the same period of time.
- In order to get effective protection from the strong rays of sun, the best natural herbal sunscreens are sandalwood and aloe-vera.

- In more serious form of sunburn, your ayurvedic physician may prescribe you medicaments such as *Satadhouta ghritam*, *Aaranaalaadi tailam*, *Chandanaadi tailam* for external application.

PRICKLY HEAT (PIDAKA)

It is an uncomfortable rash that develops in those areas of the body where sweat glands have been temporarily blocked. The common accompanying complaints are burning, tingling and itching. External creams may precipitate or aggravate the condition and heavy sweating may also cause pidaka. Persons with pitta constitution are more prone to this problem. There are some remedial measures that you can take to counteract prickly heat:

- Make a paste by taking equal parts of the powders of sandalwood, coriander seeds, the tubercle of nutgrass (tungamusta) and the roots of khus-khus grass. Mix with rose water and apply on the body to get immediate relief from prickly heat.
- A cold water bath taken after the application of the watery paste of gram four on the body brings relief.
- The powder of sandalwood used as dust all over the body is very efficacious in bringing relief in prickly heat.
- Chandanabala taila is very good application for prickly heat. It is very efficacious in removing burning and itching sensation of the skin. It is very soothing and tonic to the skin and the nerves.
- Intake of Pravaala pishti in a dose of 500 mg twice a day, with honey, helps both in preventing and curing this problem.
- Saaribaadi paanakam, Draakshaadi kashaayam, Shadanga Kashaayam and Jambeeraadi paanakam are famous ayurvedic medicines used internally to combat excessive heat in the body. You can try these medicines on the

advice of an ayurvedic physician.

Some people's hair becomes dry and discoloured during the summer months because of over-exposure to the sun. But sun damage, unfortunately, can produce even more serious consequences; in frequent and excessive exposure, it can result in skin cancer.

HEAT CRAMPS

If you expose yourself to prolonged period of excessive heat and humidity, then you may develop heat cramps, which are the muscular pains and spasms. Although heatcramps are the least severe, they are an early signal that your body is having trouble with the heat.

HEAT EXHAUSTION

If you continue to work in humid places where body fluids are lost through heavy sweating, blood flow to the skin increases, causing blood flow to decrease to the vital organs, then this results in heat exhaustion, in which you may feel excessive thirst, profuse sweating, muscle cramps, dizziness, vomiting, fatigue, cold and clammy skin and fainting.

HEAT STROKE

The above condition, if continued, will lead to heatstroke, which can be fatal. Heatrelated deaths are especially tragic because they can be prevented. However, excessive heat can impair judgment and cause confusion, so take precautions before you get too hot.

During the heatstroke, the body temperature control system, which produces sweating to cool the body, stops working. (Normally sweating cools the body but if sweat is not allowed to evaporate or if the person has not consumed enough liquids to make up for the loss, the body's heat production may overwhelm its cooling system). The body temperature can rise so high that brain damage and death may result if the body is not cooled quickly. Symptoms of heat stroke include a fever

as high as 105 degrees Fahrenheit with too dry skin, mental confusion, and convulsions. Other signs include rapid pulse and heartbeat, dilated pupils, rapid and shallow breathing, either elevated or lowered blood pressure and unconsciousness.

While waiting for help to arrive, lie down the person in a cool place with elevated legs. Fan the sufferer and, if the person is fully awake, advise him to drink cold water. Loosen tight clothing and remove clothes soaked with perspiration. Apply cool, wet clothes to the skin or ice packs in the armpits, wrists, ankles and groin.

Due to excessive heat, elderly people with chronic heart disease are at high risk of heart attack during summer.

Tips to combat summer heat: There are certain measures that you can take to combat the summer heat and stay cool and comfortable. Follow these guidelines:

- Drink plenty of liquids like coconut water, sugarcane juice, fruit juice, buttermilk or at least 10 glasses of water a day.
- Eat light food—avoid hot, spicy, oily meals and opt for foods high in water content including fruits, salads, soups & buttermilk.
- Lassi made from churned curd, cream & ginger or powder of fried barley dissolved in water acts as a re-hydrating agent in summer.
- A fresh green mango baked in hot ash or raw mango with salt can quench excessive thirst.
- Avoid alcoholic beverages and drinks containing caffeine (tea and coffee), which can make the condition of heat worse.
- Curd rice prepared by adding boiled rice to curdling milk and kept overnight, should be eaten in morning with plenty of raw onions.
- While going out, wear a white handkerchief or use an umbrella to block sunrays.
- Do outdoor work in the early mornings or late evenings.

- Take frequent baths & showers and apply chandana (sandalwood) paste to body for cooling the body.
- Wear light-coloured, loose-fitting cotton clothes, preferably muted colours, such as tan.
- Smoking can constrict blood vessels & impair the ability to acclimatise to heat, so quit it.
- Fans blow hot air and increase the amount of evaporation of sweat. So, air conditioners are better.
- Here is a natural soft drink for you. Add 125 grams of khus (roots of *Andropogon muricatus*) or sandalwood powder or the powder of saariba root to one litre of water. Keep it aside for 12 hours. Then churn it and filter. To this filtrate, add three kilos of sugar and boil well to make into syrup. You can drink it as and when needed by diluting with water. This drink can be preserved for 15 days without being spoilt.
- Here is an interesting recipe from Rajasthan—Mix barley four in buttermilk and boil. Keep it aside overnight and drink the next morning.
- Your lunch should consist of boiled rice or roti with watery decoction of pulses or curries with thin gravy. Always end it with buttermilk or curd. Make it a point to drink some fruit juice in the afternoons after lunch. Similarly, the menu of supper should contain enough onions, mint and coriander leaves, in the form of chutney, made salty and sour by adding salt and lemon juice.

2. THE ADVERSE EFFECTS OF MONSOON & HOW TO COMBAT THEM

From the health point of view, the beginning and end of the rainy season are very troublesome. The initial days of the monsoon can cause problems for the body because of the sudden transition from bone-dry heat to days soaked in a downpour. The premonsoon gone-dry days are packed with clouds causing intense suffocation, resulting in excessive

sweating.

The body is weakened during summer, as it is the period of dehydration. The digestive power is also weakened. It is further weakened due to the vitiation of *vaata* (one of the triads that govern physico-chemical and physiological activities of the body in a balanced state) and other *doshas* during the rains. The power of digestion during this period is also affected and there is an increase in acidity of the water. Hence, it is advisable to be moderate regarding diet during the rainy season.

One should abstain from sleeping during the daytime, avoid drinking untreated water, abstain from exercise and moving about in the sun after a spell of rain. Use honey liberally in your diet. *Panchakola choorna* (powder containing dried ginger, long pepper, root of long pepper, piper chava and leadwort), if used with food, is found to aid digestion.

If the days are cooler due to heavy rains, one should take diet and drinks that are conspicuously sour, salty and unctuous.

These serve as an effective antidote to the vitiation of *vaata* during the rainy season.

In order to maintain normal digestive power, one should take old barley, wheat and 'saali' variety of rice along with the meat of arid animals and vegetable soup. Moreover, drink *maadhvika* or *arishta* types of liquor, pure rainwater or water from the well or pond, boiled and cooled, mixed with a little honey. It is advisable to massage the body, take bath and wear fragrant garlands during the season. One should wear light and clean apparel and try to keep the rooms devoid of humidity.

Do not allow water to stagnate in your compound. Such pools are a breeding ground for mosquitoes and other insects. Cholera, malaria, diarrhoea and dysentery also contribute their mite to human suffering during this period.

3. HOW TO COMBAT THE WINTER COLD?

This is the time when a lazy wind starts blowing during the day and the winter responds by showing a reluctance to leave while the summer tries desperately to rush in. An ideal time to fly kites, no doubt, but the body too has to weather the change. Our body is programmed to take care of

the changes, but occasionally you may have to aid the process of adjustment through food and suitable alterations in lifestyle!

When a cold, dry wind begins to blow, the vaata (the air in the body system according to Ayurveda) responds, because it too is cold, dry and moving. It senses that something akin to itself has begun to dominate the scene. 'Like speaks to like' Vaata starts accumulating.

Traditionally, Ayurveda advises everyone to follow a seasonal routine to preserve balance as the seasons change. This routine does not involve major alterations in your lifestyle, only a shift of emphasis.

During winter, agni (digestive fire) becomes stronger and it can effectively digest heavy and large quantities of food. If you do not eat the right food, agni may even absorb the dhaatus (tissues). To arrest this, take plenty of food. Consume milk, ghee, fat, oils and new rice as dietary staples. Include sour, sweet and salted soup or meat of aquatic and marshy animals in the diet if you are not a vegetarian.

Try wine, vinegar and honey in the diet. Regularly massage the body with oil. Apply oil on the head. Use room heaters or spend time in heated chambers. Expose the body to the sun's rays. Avoid light and cold foods. Also avoid bitter, pungent and astringent tastes. To prevent drying up of the skin, take 100ml milk, add 5 drops of olive oil and 8 drops of rose water to it. Apply on the skin gently and smoothly. Then expose yourself to the mild sun for ten minutes before a warm water bath. To keep the face glowing, wash it at least two times a day with lukewarm water. Make a paste of pure flour of bengal gram by adding raw milk. Apply on the face, neck, etc., both in the morning and evening. Alternatively, you can apply the expressed juice of cucumber with 5 drops of mustard oil and rose water to it.

Massaging the skin with mustard oil is good for the skin during winter. Sunrays will enhance the good effects of this procedure. Eat plenty of greens and seasonal fruits. They contain the micro and macro elements, which are required for the smooth functioning of the body.

Soyabeans and other pulses are good for cracked lips. Take two teaspoonfuls of castor oil. Add a pinch of Tankana bhasma (borax) to it. Apply it on the cracked lips.

Cream of milk is also good for cracked lips, if used as an application.

Honey is a good and valuable natural healer. Apply it over cracked lips after diluting it with double the quantity of water.



AYURVEDIC CONCEPTS OF TREATMENT

Ayurvedic treatment is a multidisciplinary approach, unlike Allopathic treatment where the main stress is on medicines.

Methods of treatment: According to Ayurveda, there are different methods of treatment for any disease or disorder.

1. Palliative treatment: Palliative treatment refers to means for reduction of increased doshas for curing the disease or decreasing its symptoms. It consists of following measures:-
 - a. Sneha Karma or use of oily substances externally for massage *etc.* or internally.
 - b. Sweda Karma or fomentation
 - c. Exercise
 - d. Exposure to sun
 - e. Exposure to fresh air
 - f. Taking medicines which increase digestion
 - g. Taking medicines which destroy toxins
2. Purification treatment: Purification refers to removal of accumulated toxins or doshas from the body. This is done by 5 methods known as Panchakarma. They are as follows:
 - a. Vamana or induced vomiting
 - b. Virechana or induced purgation
 - c. Basti or enema
 - d. Nasya or nasal medication
 - e. Rakta mokshana or blood-letting.
3. Other forms of treatment:
 - a. Fasting

- b. Urine therapy
- c. Rejuvenation (rasaayana) therapy
- d. Virilisation (vaajeekarana) therapy
- e. Fish therapy (for asthma)

In Ayurveda, the types of medicines based on the source from which they are obtained, are classified as follows:

1. Herbal medicines—which are extracted from plants & herbs.
2. Mineral (metal) medicines—which are extracted from minerals, gems and jewels.
3. Herbomineral preparations—which are a combination of both herbs and minerals. A few of the above treatment procedures, herbs and metals are discussed in detail below.

1. OIL MASSAGE OR SNEHA KARMA

Ayurveda, the all-time healing system, has some specialised therapeutic procedures of its own. Among them, sneha karma is one. It is a therapy, which is usually employed as a pre-operative procedure to panchakarma. This procedure produces snigdhatta (suppleness) in the body. Ayurvedic texts compare the exhausted human body with a dry stick, which breaks easily. Application of oil to the body makes it supple. This therapy can be employed either by administering oily substances internally or by using them externally in the form of oil massage. This article throws light on abhyanga and mardhana—a specialised oil massage therapy of Ayurveda.

Charaka Samhita, the Ayurvedic treatise, advocates oil massage as a regular health care measure in maintaining positive health. Massage preserves the body energy. It improves the blood circulation and helps in excreting toxins out of the body through sweat, urine and mucous; thus rejuvenating and relaxing the body. It protects against the vitiation and aggravation of vaata and kapha doshas. Massaging oil into the body makes it strong and helps the skin become smooth, says Ashtanga Hridaya, another Ayurvedic treatise. So, one can expect good results from massage in treating skin disorders like eczema, blisters, scabies,

seborrhoea and other conditions like neurasthenia, headaches, sleeplessness, gouty arthritis, polio, obesity and mental disorders.

Massage increases physical stamina and mental alertness apart from sexual vitality.

SCIENTIFIC VALIDITY

The Ayurvedic system of medicine calls the lymph system as the kapha or mucous carrying system. Lymph contains most of the elements in blood *i.e.* plasma, amino acids, glucose, fats, hormones, enzymes, salts and lymphocytes which fight infection. It acts as a transport medium between cells and the blood stream. It also aids circulation by maintaining the balance of the fluids in the body. The massage technique is pointed towards increasing lymph flow in the body by applying pressure at the marma (vital) points as described in the *Sushruta Samhita*. Increasing the kapha activity by massage is purported to increase the nourishment of the body and give proper stimulation to joints and body tissues.

If lymph flow is increased by massage, then there are several likely processes, which may be involved. Lymph possesses a relatively large amount of the amino acid—tryptophan. This subsequently causes a parallel increase in the neurotransmitter (chemical between nerve endings), serotonin. Serotonin has been implicated in several psychiatric diseases with low levels of its metabolite found by researchers in depression, hallucinations, headaches, anxiety and irritability. So, massage is beneficial in treating these conditions. Another interesting point is that lymph contains approximately 30 times as much histaminase (an enzyme which breaks the allergy and acidity causing histamine) as in blood. So, the pathological conditions where histamine is involved, like painful and swollen tissue areas, gastric irritation, headaches, skin allergies, can be treated with lymphatic massage in order to provide increased supply of histaminase.

POINTERS ON AYURVEDIC OIL MASSAGE

- The effects of massage vary with the time of day. During the day it relaxes and refreshes, giving increased energy. In the evening it is more tranquillising.
- To be a good masseur, one needs to look at the formation and function of the musculature. One who follows the natural contours and fows of the body ensures the most effective massage.
- In cold seasons, hot or warm oil should be used and in the hot seasons it is vice-versa. The easiest way is to put the oil into a plastic squeeze bottle and then hold it submerged in hot or cold water until it is pleasantly warm or cool according to the situation.
- Oil should be applied at the joints or marma points in a circular manner, in a clockwise direction. And, on the other body parts, against the direction of the hair growth. This will direct the lymph towards the heart.
- Before the massage, just relax. Take some deep breaths, and then rub your palms together until they feel warm. This charges the hands with energy and makes them pleasant to touch.
- If we take the body to be an inverted tree, the brain is the root, the spine is the trunk, and limbs are the branches. So for maximum benefit, massage should commence from the upper leg. It should be massaged first on the outside and then inside. The lower part of the legs should be massaged followed by a foot massage. After this, the hips and sides should be worked with and the lower back should be massaged, moving upwards, covering the upper back. Then the chest and the arms should be massaged. The head should always be massaged last.
- If daily massage of the whole body is not possible, at least the feet should be massaged every night before sleeping and the head could be given a massage every third day.

A wide range of oils is available for massage. Simple oils that are advised

for general massage are sesame oil and mustard oil. Olive oil is also good. But it is too costly to use in our country.

Sesame oil is hot, heavy and sweet. It works on all the three doshas by removing swellings of all muscles, strengthening the skin texture and preventing premature aging. The shape of breasts can be improved by massaging them regularly with this oil. Oil of black sesame seeds is recommended in Ayurveda to keep the hair in good condition.

Sesame oil is usually preferred to mustard oil, which may sometimes irritate tender skin because it is pungent and bitter, while sesame oil is neutral.

Apart from this, there are specific oils for specific conditions. For example, Brahmi oil induces sleep. Mahaanarayana taila can be used to treat muscle pains and arthritic conditions. Aswagandhaadi taila can be used in muscle atrophy. In the same way Mahaamarichyaadi taila can be used specifically for controlling itching.

These oils can be used on the advice of an Ayurvedic physician.

2. FOMENTATION OR SWEDA KARMA

Heat therapy relaxes you; loosens muscles and ligaments; dilates blood vessels; boosts circulation; increases metabolic processes; warms the skin and, of course, makes you sweat. So, heat therapy in Ayurveda is called sweda karma (sweda means sweat). This is one of the prerequisites for Ayurvedic Panchakarma Therapies.

Heat works to promote wound healing. When applied to a wound, heat raises the metabolic rate. The resulting increased blood flow carries away waste products and provides a greater supply of nutrients and infection fighters to the affected area. It helps reduce the pain of arthritis and sore muscles. It is also used for treating cancerous tumours.

Ayurvedic classics have described a wide range of fomentation procedures, which are classified into different categories depending upon various factors:

1. Whether it involves agni (fire) or not. (agni sweda or niragni sweda).
2. Is it used for a specific part of the body (ekaanga sweda) or the

whole body (sarvaanga sweda). Generally, locally applied heat as in hot packs can be better for wounds, muscle and skeletal injuries; heat therapy for the whole body is generally for relaxation.

3. Whether the fomentation is wet (snigdha) or dry (rooksha). Moist heat is thought to penetrate deeper than dry heat and so may be better for sore muscles or injured ligaments. Some skin ailments may benefit from less penetrating dry heat.

Ayurveda recommends heat application in all Vaata, Kapha and Aama disorders. Heat can be effective supporting therapy in case of many diseases like bronchial asthma, cough, catarrh, hiccups, bloated belly, inactivity, catch in waist, sides and back, painful urination, urinary stones, tumours, paralysis of the limbs, loss of sense in the limbs, *etc.* However, for those with poor blood circulation, diabetes or heart disease, heat therapy should be used only under a doctor's supervision. It is not for expectant mothers, children and aged persons.

Ayurveda has restricted its usage in case of bleeding disorders, diarrhoea, debility and indigestion. Also fomentation will not give the desired results if you are mentally disturbed by emotions like fear, sorrow or anger.

Heat application in the pubic region should be milder than for other regions. Testicles, eyes and chest must be covered properly while taking this heat therapy. Among the wide range of fomentation procedures, some of the important ones are described below.

UPANAHA SWEDAM (POULTICE)

This is the hot application of a paste of drugs such as kola (*Zizyphus jujuba*), kulattha (*Dolichos biforus*), suradaaru (*Cedrus deodara*), raasna (*Pluchea lanceolata*), maasha (*Phaseolus radiatus*), fruits of eranda (*Recinus communis*) *etc.*

If you are suffering from Vaata disorders (skeletal-muscular pains), powder and mix these drugs in sour buttermilk or wine along with salt. This is to be applied while it is still hot, over the affected parts, covered with cloth or castor leaves or other leaves. A poultice that has been tied

in the morning must be removed in the night or if it has been tied in the night, it should be removed the next morning.

OOSHMA SWEDAM (STEAM BATH)

Inducing sweat by means of steam is called ooshma swedam. For generating steam, ordinary plain water is boiled or sometimes medicated decoction may be used. The steam so generated is directed to the whole body or any particular part.

For this you need not go to any health spa or health centre. You can sit or lie on a rope cot or chair and cover yourself with a blanket. Place the steaming decoction below the cot. The decoction should be frequently stirred.

AVAGAAHA SWEDAM (SITZ BATH)

In this therapy, the patient undergoing treatment gets into a tub filled with prescribed herbal decoction. When it is comfortably hot, the patient is covered with a blanket to preserve the heat. As the decoction loses heat, it should be replaced time to time with hot decoction. The rule is that medicated oils selected according to the ailment must be added to the decoction.

This procedure is especially suited in generalised body pains, painful or obstructed urination, pelvic inflammatory diseases and hernia. The drugs for preparing the decoction are the leaves of drumstick, castor, karanja (*Pongamia pinnata*), holy basil, black basil, sireesha (*Albizzia lebbek*), vacha (*Acorus calamus*) and fish meat.

If the whole body is to be subjected to fomentation then the patient should immerse up to the neck in the decoction. Otherwise, immersing the patient up to the naval region is sufficient. The patient and the tub should be covered fully with a thick blanket.

KAMBALA SWEDAM (USING A BLANKET TO PROMOTE SWEATING)

This is a simple and yet effective method. Take a blanket and immerse it in hot decoction. Ensure that it is comfortably warm. Cover the patient with it after squeezing the extra fluid from it. You can repeat the process if desired or you can use two blankets, one after the other for continuous fomentation.

TAAPA SWEDAM (DRY SWEATING)

In this therapy, sweat is induced by rubbing or pressing the body with a heated stone, tile, hot water bottle or similar material. It is more suited in inflammatory swellings with discharge. This effect can also be achieved with an electric room heater. You can get hot air from it by placing a table fan behind it. This is advantageous over the moist heat in some aspects. The primary disadvantage of steam heat is that your body can't dissipate heat as effectively as in a hot-air bath because heat evaporates more readily in dry air. In a steam room, the sweat lingering on the skin creates a stifling effect that increases the skin temperature, even though a steam room is kept at a comparative low temperature.

NAADI SWEDAM (USING A TUBE TO INDUCE SWEATING)

This is very convenient if a particular area is to be subjected to fomentation. Fill a pressure cooker with plain water or prescribed drugs and water. Remove its weight and attach a gas stove pipe to its nozzle. Generate steam and direct it to the desired area. This procedure has to be done carefully as the steam is capable of scalding the exposed part.

There are other procedures like pinda sweda, bhaashpa sweda, etc., which need professional supervision and help for conducting the act.

Heat therapy is a pre-pancha karma procedure. To start with, usage of medicated oils externally and internally loosens up the accumulated doshas in the body. With heat therapy, they melt and the flow is directed into the bowels. It is then easy to expel them with vamana (emesis) or virechana (purgation).

Thus sweating is essential before any cleansing process. This concept is exclusive to Ayurveda.

3. FASTING

For many philosophers, scientists and physicians, fasting is an essential part of life and the healing process needed to maintain good health. Intellectuals like Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Charaka and others used and believed in fasting therapy.

Ayurveda discourages long-term fasting because the sense of deprivation created by a long-term fasting encourages the person to follow it up with a spell of indulgence in overeating.

While fasting, you should follow the restrictions applicable to your constitution:

1. Vaata people should never fast on water or any other severely restricted diet for more than a day or two. They should select a single food, like curd rice on which they can live for a month or more, at a time.
2. Pitta people can fast on liquids, like fruits or vegetable juices or on raw fruits and vegetables, but not on water alone. They should avoid all sour juices, as they tend to aggravate pitta.
3. Kapha people may indulge in a prolonged water fast if they so desire. Kapha people especially need regular weekly fasting to maintain strong digestion. During fasting, they should avoid intensely sweet and sour juices.
4. For mixed constitutions, juice fasting is commonly used (rather than water alone) as a mild and effective cleansing plan.

CONDITIONS IN WHICH FASTING IS BENEFICIAL

- Whatever the conditions may be, during the fever, and such other illnesses, one needs more liquids than usual, due to the high temperatures and sweating and should fast as long as there is no real desire for food.
- Some cases of fatigue will respond well to fasting, particularly when it results from congested organs and energy.

- Back pains that are due to muscular tightness and stress rather than from bone disease or osteoporosis are usually alleviated with a lighter diet or juice fasting.
- Many patients with mental illness, from anxiety to schizophrenia, have relief by fasting. The purpose of fasting in the case, however, is not to cure these problems but to help understand the relationship of foods, chemicals, or drugs to the mental difficulties.
- Obesity may be remedied by some degree of fasting.
- Colds, atherosclerosis, coronary artery disease, bronchitis, angina-pectoris, headaches, hypertension, constipation, diabetes, indigestion, diarrhoea, fatigue, food allergies, back pains, environmental allergies, asthma, insomnia, skin conditions and epilepsy—in all these conditions, fasting may be advocated.

4. URINE THERAPY

Most people are horrified when they first hear about the medical uses of urine. But then, do you know that you have already reused and re-ingested your urine, that too large amount of it for a long period of time, and it's one of the reasons you're alive today? Yes! Urine is the main component of the amniotic fluid that bathes the human foetus, according to latest medical researchers.

Drinking of one's own urine is mentioned in Ayurvedic treatises like *Yogaratraakaram*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Bhaava Prakaasa* and *Ashtaanga Sangraha*. Detailed information on auto urography can be obtained from the Dhaamara Tantra under the heading of Shivaambu kalpa vidhi. This contains 107 verses extolling the virtues of urine as a medicament, complete with extremely detailed instructions on everyday use.

In our country, Ravjibhai Patel and Dr. Paragji Desai contributed a lot in popularising this invaluable therapy. It is well known that Morarji Desai, the former Prime Minister of India, was a strong proponent of this therapy. Morarji Desai was even interviewed in 1978 on American television during the CBS news programme, during which he discussed the benefits of urine therapy.

Dr John Armstrong, for the first time, revolutionised the concept of natural urine therapy and re-established its scientific validity in his book, *The Water of Life* (1944). During recent times, the medical application of urine and its constituents have been tested, discussed, researched and utilised throughout the world. Hundreds of research evidences and thousands of case studies are documented. Medical scientists sat in their laboratories and watched as urine completely devastated rabies and polioviruses, tuberculosis, typhoid, gonorrhoea, dysentery, bacteria and cancer cells.

Urine has also been found to be useful in treating diseases like cancer, gout, osteoporosis, impotence, obesity, asthma, burns, tuberculosis, blisters, cuts, wounds, cataract, coughs and colds, constipation, diabetes, eczema, gangrene, heart disease, hyperacidity, diseases of the stomach and intestines, pulmonary tuberculosis, psoriasis, piles and ringworm, uterus inflammation and stiffness of the vertebral column.

Our disgust for urine is the result of prejudice conditioned by cultural influences. Otherwise its taste is not very unpalatable.

An individual's own urine contains elements like antibodies that are specific to one's body alone and are medically tailor-made to particular health disorder. That is why you should use your own urine for therapy.

SOME FALLACIES AND FACTS

Fallacy: Urine is a biological waste, which contains a host of micro-organisms.

Fact: Urine is only a derivative of the blood. It is a fluid, which has tremendous variations of composition. These excess elements from the circulating blood are filtered and collected within the kidney in the form of a purified, sterile, watery solution called urine. This is almost free from all kinds of micro-organisms like bacteria.

Fallacy: The body has excreted it because it does not need it anymore.

The function of the kidneys is not excretion, but regulation. The kidneys do not filter out important elements in the blood not because those elements are toxic or dangerous for the body, but simply because the body is not in need of that particular

Fact: concentration of the element at the time it was excreted. Researchers have observed that urine, because it is actually extracted from our blood, contains small amounts of almost all the life-sustaining elements, enzymes, proteins, hormones, antibodies and immunising agents that our blood contains.

Fallacy: Synthetic derivatives of urine are better option.

Fact: Urine in its natural form is beneficial because it does not produce side-effects. And extract of urine called urokinase which is used to dissolve blood clots can cause serious abnormal bleeding as a side-effect. In contrast, not even a single case with such serious side-effects was reported when natural urine (though it contains measurable amounts of urokinase) was used. Moreover, urine contains thousands of therapeutic agents, such as important natural antibodies, enzymes and regulating hormones that extracts like urea, uric acid or urokinase do not contain.

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Urine therapy is simple, but remember that these instructions are not given as medical guidance, but are simply to be taken into account as general information.

- Before starting the therapy, diet and general health should be reviewed. All the three doshas should be in a balanced

condition. Chemical drugs and poor dietary habits affect the quality of urine. Synthetic additives, preservatives, refined and denatured foods; sugars, caffeine, nicotine *etc.* should be avoided.

- For internal use, midstream urine is collected in a clean cup. As urine breaks down quickly outside the body, it is to be used as soon as it is collected.
- To start with, only a few drops are to be administered each day in the early morning. Urine can be taken with ink filler and one or two drops should be placed under the tongue. The dosage can be increased to five to ten drops twice a day over a period of three to five days.
- Diluting or boiling the urine decreases the efficacy. So these practices should be avoided.
- Urine therapy should not be taken during pregnancy and by people suffering from kidney disorders without a doctor's supervision.
- Some individuals may experience mild headache, nausea, diarrhoea, tiredness or skin rashes, which are the body's natural responses against stored toxins. These symptoms normally disappear within 24 to 36 hours.
- In most cases, frequent small doses of one to three ounces for two to three weeks will suffice. Regular users say that it assists in the maintenance of energy levels, reduction of aging and prevention of illness.
- Applying urine to the skin is an excellent treatment for many types of skin disorders such as skin rashes, eczema, psoriasis, acne, insect bites, *etc.* The urea in urine is excellent for cosmetic use and moisturising the skin. Fresh or old urine can be used as external application. In fact, old urine with its high ammonia content is more beneficial in many stubborn skin diseases.
- A small cotton ball or pad is to be soaked in urine and rubbed over the affected area. This is to be discarded and another one is taken to repeat the process for five to ten

minutes.

- For additional healing benefits, a soaked pad can be secured with a gauze.

5. REJUVENATION THERAPY

A person, who takes suitable diet and practises selfcontrol, lives a full span of 100 years of 36,000 nights, without illness, says Ayurveda. The idea is to add life to years, not merely years to life. This concept is embodied in 'Rasaayana (rejuvenation) and Vaajeekarna (Verilization) of Ayurveda. *Charaka Samhita*, the ancient ayurvedic classic of our country claims that it is possible by a special course of rejuvenation of six months duration, to transform entirely an aged and diseased body into a fresh and youthful one.

Many have sought the secrets of longevity but they remain mostly hidden. On the other hand, agents for 'shortevity' and 'dejuvenation' seem to be better understood. It is generally agreed that longevity and vitality have genetic and hereditary factors. Again certain factors like climate, air, soil or water are conducive to longer life.

In experimental animals, three factors are known to affect the life span—heredity, diet and ionising radiation. Recent reports by the Atom Bomb Casualty Commission reveal that the atom bomb survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (1945) are now showing signs of ageing at a much earlier age than is usual in Japan.

CHANGES DUE TO AGEING

Ayurveda divides human life into: 1) Childhood, which extends up to the age of 16, 2) Youth and middle age, which extends from 16 to 60 years, and 3) Old age, "wherein, after 60 to 70 years the body elements, sense organs, strength, energy, manhood, memory, understanding, speech and discrimination begin to decay".

In old age the organs and virility become weak. Hair turns silvery white, skin looks dried and wrinkled, and marks or dots termed as crow's footmarks appear. The skin sags down and becomes fabby. The hair

begins to fall off. Respiration becomes laboured and painful. The body gets worn-out like an old building and shakes with bouts of distressing cough. Such man is incapable of all acts, and all his bodily functions are imperfect.” Twenty centuries after these words were written in Ayurvedic texts, the changes in physiological ageing are exactly the same as described!

THEORETICAL PREMISE FOR REJUVENATION

Based on our current understanding of cell injury and its repair, it is theoretically possible to postulate mechanisms, which will prevent cell injury and facilitate its repair, and form the basis of rejuvenation. Quenching of free radicals, using membrane stabilizing agents; using Lathyrogens—which are capable of inhibiting cross-linkage of collagen in the connective tissue; and in certain autoimmune conditions, using immuno-suppressants—all these can delay ageing and prolong the life. Interestingly the drugs, which are the main ingredients of certain ayurvedic preparations, contain most of the above properties.

Rasaayana, meaning rejuvenation therapy has two words: The phrase Rasa + aayana. Rasa means biologically transformable liquid nutrient of all the tissues in the body and aayana means a pathway. Thus, Rasaayana bestows the strength of all dhaatus of the body! Rasaayana chikitsa helps slowing down the ageing process, enhances memory, improves the functioning of vital organs, increases the ojus (the immunity factor) and nourishes all the tissues.

Rasaayana can be of three types according to the methods adopted. They are:

1. **Kuti pravesika:** Strictly indoor management with specific diet and rasaayana drugs in a specially constructed house (kuti).
2. **Vaataatapika:** Outdoor management, which is suitable to all.
3. **Aachaara rasaayana:** Management without drugs, based on the mode of living, behaviour, conduct *etc.*

Rasaayana can also be classified into three types according to its utility.

1. **Kaamya rasaayana:** Meant for a healthy person for long life, good vision, improvement of memory or intelligence *etc.*
2. **Naimittika rasaayana:** It is useful in curing diseases and strengthening the body while preventing a relapse.
3. **Ajasrika rasaayana:** Regular use of cow milk, ghee, and honey throughout the year helps facilitate the maintenance of health and keeps the body free from disease.

The qualifications of a person suitable for rejuvenation, according to *Charaka Samhita* are as follows: A man who has fortified himself with resolution and purpose, full of faith and single-mindedness, having cast off all evils and nurturing goodwill for all creatures. No man who has not rid himself of the evils both of mind and body, beginning with the gross ones, can ever expect to get the benefits resulting from vitalization.

6. VAAJEEKARANA, THE AYURVEDIC SEXUAL MEDICINE

Next to the need for food, water and sleep, the sexual urge is the most powerful biological drive. This dominant sex instinct, so essential to the survival of the species, is one of the main springs of human motivation, and its fulfilment or frustration is closely bound up with human happiness or misery. The importance of this aspect of human life is duly recognised by Charaka, the ancient ayurvedic scholar by assigning a complete section of the *Charaka Samhita* to *vaajeekarana* or virilification. According to Charaka, “It is a therapy which enables one to approach women in an unrestricted manner, endowing him with great strength and robustness, like that of a stallion, makes one greatly endearing to women, increases one’s proportions and strength, causes the seminal secretion even in the aging to remain undiminished and fertile, and enables a man to have excellent offsprings.”

OBJECTIVE OF APHRODISIAC THERAPY

The primary objective of ayurvedic sexual medicine is procreation. Recreation is always secondary to it. In this perspective, *Charaka Samhita* says, “A person of selfrestraint should always seek aphrodisiac

measures because righteousness (dharma), wealth (artha), affection (preethi) and fame (yasas) are dependent on the maintenance of healthy manhood. A person gets these benefits through his progeny and the aphrodisiac therapy enables him to procreate children.”

BALANCE IS THE KEY

The three major biological components of the living body (metabolic principles) called tridosha, which govern all the physical and mental functions of the body, are responsible for different aspects of sexual expression. The equilibrium of these tridosha is essential for sexual fulfillment.

Vaata controls movement, and in the context of sexuality, vaata is responsible for the sex act and sexual retention. If vaata is aggravated, both the sexual act and retention are affected adversely. One feels fatigued and breathless rather quickly, and the power of retention is considerably diminished.

Pitta dosha controls cellular metabolism, subtle level, energy at gross level and is responsible for sexual vigour. An imbalance of pitta leads to a lack of initiative for sexual activity. It gives rise to all those problems that make one sexually less desirable. It may give rise to body odours, sweating and thickening of the skin, rashes, acne, herpes *etc.*

Kapha which controls structure, is responsible for sexual potency. Vitiating of this dosha leads to diminished or abnormal sexual excretions. This may give rise to abnormal progeny or sterility.

For a healthy sexual life, one needs to balance all these tridoshas.

ENHANCE SENSUOUS POWER TO ENHANCE SEXUAL POWER

Sexuality begins with sensuality. During the sexual process, one transcends the senses. In other words, all the five senses are used, and it is their coordination that accounts for the intensity of sexual pleasure. For enhancing sexual power, the prime most thing is to augment the power of individual senses in the following ways:

1. Touch: The tactile sensation of the body, the sense of touch, plays a significant role in sexuality. For enhancing tactile sensation, it is important to have a regular oil massage. Through Ayurvedic massage the body and mind are nurtured. The skin is seen as a receptacle of a variety of energies. Some forms of massage are aggressive while others are soothing. What type aids an individual's healing process depends upon the constitution and the nature of the imbalance. Through the knowledge of Ayurveda, different base oils such as sesame oil, almond oil, coconut oil or mustard oil are selected. These oils are chosen because of their unique properties. Some are warming while others are cooling. Some nourish the body through the skin while others are invigorative. In addition, specific hand motions are utilized to balance the subtle energies defined by Ayurveda. Besides the care of the skin, a regular body massage makes you aware and sensitive to your body. This is essential for complete sexual expression.
2. Sight: Sharpening the sense of sight is to develop keen observation and act in an appropriate way. Through our eyes we take in thousands of impressions each day. These impressions are actual energies with different vibratory rates. Each colour is a different energy or vibrates at a different rate. Some colours are harmonious for us and some agitate us in subtle ways. We interact with colour all the time through the clothes we wear and our home environment. Conscious use of colour can help create a healthy and revitalizing environment. Ayurveda teaches us that each person is an individual and hence, every colour has a healing capacity if prescribed for the right person. Not only is colour important but also how colours interrelate. Clashing colours in general create greater agitation while those that blend harmoniously create a greater sense of calm. In Ayurveda we also look at the quality of the impression received by the eye. Violent images as seen in real life or in the movies create agitation and disharmony. Viewing nature and flowers creates a feeling of calmness and clarity and thus benefits our journey toward health and sexuality. An enhanced sense of observation is essential at every step of sexual relation. You should be able to notice and appreciate each and every change in your

partner. If you are to learn to enhance your sexual energy, begin by seeing.

3. **Smell:** Sense of smell is important for many reasons. If your body smells bad, people do not want to be near you. Bad body odour can be anaphrodisiac (opposite to aphrodisiac.). Your body odour depends upon your dosha arrangement, and it is possible to change it and make pleasant and sexually exciting by keeping the doshas balanced. Aromatherapy is an important part of Ayurveda, as smell has long been known to evoke emotion. From the perfumes and scents long used in mating rituals to the relaxing feelings evoked by a walk through a rose garden, aromas have always played a large role in our lives. Rose, jasmine, water lily, sandalwood, smell of the soil, the favours from food products... all are exhilarating smells. While most people use aromas (perfumes and aftershaves) unconsciously, Ayurveda teaches us that some aromas create harmony while others contribute to disharmony and ultimately to diseases. From this understanding we can see that aromas are also medicine in the context that they can be intelligently used to balance the subtle energy of our bodies. In Ayurveda specific aromas are prescribed to aid specific conditions.
4. **Taste:** To enhance the sense of taste, begin to recognize a variety of exotic spices or fruits from their favour and taste. Through the sense of taste, we interact with the foods and their therapeutic benefits. Each of the six tastes affects the body and mind differently. Each taste has its benefits and negative consequences if we overindulge in them. Sweet taste as an example is very nourishing and builds tissue and strength, but overindulgence, as we all know, leads to excessive weight gain, diabetes and other complications. In Ayurveda we do not count calories, grams of fat, or the cholesterol content of food. From an Ayurvedic perspective, if we learn what balance of tastes are right for us, then we will eat in harmony with our body's constitution and the body will respond with great health. Some benefit from hot, spicy food while others from milder or bland foods. Some people benefit from meat while others thrive as vegetarians. Some people need the nourishment of sweet-tasting grains and others the cleansing qualities of bitters. What tastes and

types of foods are correct for each individual depends upon that person's constitution and the nature of any imbalances that may be present.

5. Sound: Our ears take in the vibratory energy of sound. Some sounds are calming and others agitating. Of course, which sounds balance our energy depends again on our constitution. We may think that only quiet, calming sound is healing. Again we must remember the tenet of Ayurveda that teaches us what heals each person is different. For instance, agitating music can also be motivating. If lethargy and depression is a challenge, motivation is what you want. Moreover, for anxious individuals, the calming nature of new age music is beneficial. In Ayurveda, special sound energies called mantra are sometimes prescribed to induce specific reactions in the body. As far as human sexuality is concerned, fine sounds are associated with women and reveal presence and actions, their gestures and movements. A man's imagery of a woman is associated with subtle sounds of bangles, anklets, earrings, and other jewellery worn by her. In addition to the sounds of jewellery, there are sounds of birds, music, tidal waves, and blowing wind that enhance the sexual energy in both men and women.

THE WORLD'S BEST APHRODISIAC

“A sexually excited partner is the aphrodisiac par excellence,” says Charaka Samhita. “When the desired sense objects yield great pleasure even if singly experienced by the senses, then what need be said of woman in whom the delectable objects of all the senses, viz., Shabda (sound), sparsha, (touch), roopa (visual form), rasa (taste) and gandha (smell) are found established together? Such a combination of the enjoyable objects of all the senses is found only in woman and nowhere else. The woman who is good looking, youthful, endowed with auspicious signs and is good-natured, friendly, and skilled in the fine arts, acts as the best aphrodisiac.”

Charaka Samhita further describes the excellence of women, “People in this world have different types of likings. If by fortune or effort a person gets a woman of his liking, then his appearance and other qualities

improve. Similarly, for a woman, the feminine qualities are enhanced on finding a suitable man. The woman who is excellent in terms of age, beauty, voice, and affectionate movements enters the heart quickly and is like celebration. A woman who has a mind and psyche similar to her male partner is submissive (vasya), pleased with what he likes (kaama, the god of sex), and is like noose for all the senses due to her excellent qualities. Separated from this woman, the man feels restless and does not find any interest in this world. Without her his body seems vacant of senses, and finding her he is no more subdued with grief, agitation, restlessness or fear; finding her he feels solace and seeing her, he is exhilarated and meets her sexually ever fresh due to his strong sexual urges, and even when he has frequent intercourse he does not get contented.”

DIVERSITY IN SEXUALITY

While sexual capacities are instinctive, human being must learn to engage in sexual acts and to experience sexual feelings in certain personal and socially acceptable ways. The natural expression of the sexual impulse is greatly modified before and during marriage by social, economic, religious and cultural forces, acting in different ways in different societies. It is not proper to assume a uniform pattern of sexual behaviour common to all human beings; in fact the range and diversity of human sexuality is its most significant feature. Charaka fully appreciated this fact, as is evident from the following citations from Charaka Samhita:

“There are men who are great in size and strength but feeble in sexual capacity. Some are small in size and strength but powerful sexually. There are some who mate with females many times like sparrows, while others, though not mating many times, are given to copious seminal discharge like an elephant.”

If sexual behaviour and its physiology and pathology are to be discussed in a realistic way, account must be taken of the modifying forces by which sexual urge is controlled, diverted or distorted. This is evident from the following passages of Charaka Samhita: “Some men get invigorated by the season, some get steadied by constant practice, some

maintain their virility by means of aphrodisiac preparations and some are virile by nature. The sexual stamina and the quantity of semen get diminished by anxiety, old age, disease, strain of physical work, starvation and excessive sexual indulgence. By fear, suspicion, grief, seeing deformities of a woman, lack of response in the woman, abstention from sex, and just after full sexual enjoyment, a man is rendered incapable of mating with a woman.”

CONCEPT OF BRAHMACHARYA (CELIBACY)

Proper diet, sleep and observance of reasonable celibacy—these three factors are mentioned as the pillars of life. Brahmacharya or celibacy is a concept of turning away from liberalism towards self-discipline. Here, absolute celibacy is not desirable; if a person keeps himself absolutely free from sexual intercourse, then this gives rise to mental stress (manoh kshobha). Ayurvedic tradition prescribes brahmacharya up to the age of 25 years, the formative period when the emphasis is on education. This should be followed by grihasthashrama wherein full opportunity can be availed for enjoyment of sexual pleasure. Both for the individual and society human sexuality has come to serve many purposes besides that of reproduction. The recreational (as against procreational) sexual activity serves to strengthen the male-female relationship and thus helps to ensure a stable family background. A satisfactory sexual relationship can be maintained if man and woman share a close, understanding, companionship and mutual respect. The ability to create and sustain an unselfish relationship with a member of the opposite sex is an approved measure of emotional maturity. Merely emphasizing the physiology of sex act may completely miss the essence of the beautiful sexual relationship. It is a tragic example of emotional immaturity and lack of affection in the midst of materialism.

RIGHT AGE FOR SEX

Young persons only after attaining maturity should take part in the sexual act. Children and very old persons are disqualified for indulging in sexual intercourse.

There is no fragrance in a bud. Fragrance appears only when the flower blossoms. Similar phenomenon takes place in the case of living beings. A person desirous of longevity should not indulge in sexual intercourse with women before the age of sixteen years. A young boy of very tender age does not possess all the tissue elements in their matured form. If he enters into sex act with a woman, his body gets dried up like a pond having little water.

Vigorous sexual acts are forbidden after the age of seventy years. A piece of wood which is dried and shrivelled, gets broken immediately by a little pressure of touch. Similarly, indiscriminate sexual intercourse with a woman decays the body of an old man. With the passage of years, the sexual impulse becomes less powerful and is more readily quenched by other emotions and circumstances.

EROTIC ARTICLES IN DIFFERENT SEASONS

Summer season: Big ponds having lotus flowers, surrounded by intoxicated black bees, fragrance of jaati (jasmine) and utpala (water-lily) and underground rooms which are cold.

Rainy season: Rivers with waves of foam, mountains with blue peaks and the onset of black clouds.

Autumn season: Rise of beautiful moon at night, wind that is pleasant to touch and which has the smell of the pond full of water lilies.

Early and late winter: Nights which are long enough for sexual indulgence and women smeared with saffron and aguru (eagle wood or Aquilaria agallocha)

Spring: Pleasing companions, cooling sound of the cuckoo bird, flowers in the parks and forests, pleasing diet and drinks, sound of the music, mind which is broad and free from afflictions, accomplishment of the objective, freshly initiated love affair and women—these are the weapons of cupid (the God of sex).

MEASURES TO ENHANCE VIRILITY

A person who takes ghee and milk, is free from fear and diseases, indulges in sex regularly is youthful, and has determination, gets vigorous sex with women.

Persons who have friends in similar profession, are accomplished in their objectives, are attached to each other, are skilful in arts, who are similar in mind and age, have noble lineage, expertise, good conduct and purity, regularly indulge in sex acts, are excited, are free from grief and pain, have similar conduct, have lovable and pleasant disposition as well as speech—friendship with such good companions promotes virility of a person.

A man gets sexually excited by massage, unction, bath, use of scents, garlands and ornaments, comfortable home, bed and seat, happiness, wearing of clothes which are not worn out and to the liking of the person, pleasing sound of the birds, sounds of ornaments of women and kneading (samvaahana) by his partner.

POINTERS ON APHRODISIAC THERAPY

- A person without a child is like a tree with just one branch devoid of fruits and shadows with an unwanted smell. On the other hand, a person who has children is bahu moorti (having many images), bahu mukha (having many faces), bahu vyoocha (having many dimensions); bahu kriya (having multitude of activities), bahu chakshu (having many eyes), bahu jnaana (having multi-dimensional knowledge) and bahvaatma (having multitude of souls). Love, strength, happiness, professional excellence, wide spread influence, fame, utility to the world, pleasure— all these are dependant upon children. Therefore, a person desirous of children and the qualities associated with them should daily use aphrodisiacs if he wants kaama (satisfaction of the worldly desires) and sukha (happiness).
- One should take aphrodisiac recipes in an appropriate quantity and in proper time, when the channels of circulation of his body are clean. As a dirty cloth does not

get properly coloured, similarly in an unclean body, the aphrodisiac recipes do not produce the desired effects. Therefore, depending on the strength of the person, elimination therapies (panchakarma) should be administered to him, before he resorts to the aphrodisiac recipes.

- Articles which are sweet, unctuous, nourishing and heavy are capable enough to arouse the sexual desire. Therefore, a person should first of all be impregnated with these articles and then copulate with a woman. He gets excited by his own urge and also by the erotic attributes of the woman. After sexual indulgence, he should take bath and drink milk or any juice or soup before going to sleep. By doing so, his semen and strength, both increase.
- Aphrodisiac therapies should be administered only to a person who is selfcontrolled. Otherwise if a person of immoral habits is administered this therapy, he, with additional potentiality gained through the therapy will prove to be nuisance to the society through his illegitimate sex acts.
- Aphrodisiac therapies are required to be taken regularly (nitya) as daily diet. On the other hand, rejuvenation therapies are required to be taken for a specified period only.
- Quality is important than the quantity in case of sexual act. One should judge the quality in terms of satisfaction but not in terms of frequency of the act. A person who is satisfied after sex does not possess the strength for entering into sex act immediately because this power is dependent on excitement and the excitement is dependent on satisfaction.
- The semen is ejaculated from the body because of eight factors, namely, excitement, passionate desire, fluidity, sliminess, heaviness, anu bhaava (atomicity), pravana bhaava (the tendency to flow out) and the force of vaayu.

As water comes out of a wet cloth when squeezed, similarly, the semen is ejaculated during copulation because of sexual act (chesta), and passionate attachment (samkalpa) and physical pressure (peedana). If any of these factors is lacking, the person may experience problem with ejaculation.

FEW APHRODISIAC RECIPES FROM CLASSICAL AYURVEDIC LITERATURE

- Boil ghee, black gram and testicles of goat with the soup of the meat of buffalo and fry this with fresh ghee, after adding sour fruits. Add small quantity of salt, dhaniya, jeera, and dry ginger. This is an excellent recipe for the promotion of virility, strength and nourishment.
- If a person takes the meat of the chataka (tree sparrow) to his satisfaction, and thereafter takes milk, then his genital organ will become sturdy, and there will be no ejaculation of semen even if he indulges in sexual intercourse for the whole night.
- Boil shashtika type of rice, add some ghee and salt. Eat this with black gram soup. After eating this, take a glass of warm sweetened milk. The one who eats this 'remains awakened with sexual impulse the whole night'.
- Add sugar, honey, black pepper and tugaaksheeri to the cream of curd and to this, add cardamom in appropriate quantity. Mix this properly in a fresh earthen jar. Thereafter, add these ingredients to cooked shashtika type of rice along with liberal quantity of ghee. This is called rasaala. Take it in appropriate quantity, and thereafter, eat shashtika type of rice. This recipe promotes complexion, voice, strength and virility.
- Take thirty long peppers (pippalee), grind them to a fine paste and fry with oil and ghee. Add sugar and honey in appropriate quantity and over this pour the expressed milk

directly from the udder (nipple) of a cow. Mix well. It is said that, “By taking this according to his strength, and thereafter by taking Shashtika type of rice along with milk and ghee, the genital organ of the man remains strongly erected all through the night, and it does not become flaccid even after ejaculation of semen.”

- Express juice from gokshuraa (*Tribulus terrestris*) and vidaaree (*Pueraria tuberosa*) and add four times milk. Add ghee in sufficient quantity and boil after adding together black gram and shashtika type of rice. This recipe promotes virility.
- Ghee boiled with shataavaree (asparagus), in ten times milk along with sugar, long pepper and honey, makes an excellent aphrodisiac recipe.

7. FISH THERAPY

“It works,” says 28-years-old Ravi Shrivastav, who is into advertising. He smokes and lives life in the fast lane—something unthinkable for an asthmatic patient. The secret—he religiously takes the fish medicine (administered by the Bathini brothers) every year (in spite of knowing that a complete cure is guaranteed in three years).

Same is the case with Debashree Roy, a medical professional, who came all the way from Calcutta to Hyderabad for three consecutive years to take the medicine. “It’s given me great relief,” she vouches. While there are success stories like these, there are people who have been disillusioned by this treatment. Take the case of Saraswati K, a chronic asthma patient, who despite taking the medicine, had so severe an attack while on a trip to London that she had to be hospitalised there and ended up paying a fat bill.

Even as the pros and cons of this treatment for asthma is being weighed, lakhs of people are willing to give it a try in order to get some relief from this disease for which allopathy has no permanent cure, other than educating the patient on how to keep away from allergens and take prescribed medicines in case of an acute attack.

India is well known for its folk remedies for various ailments. Among

them the Hyderabad fish therapy is one, which has been in the news worldwide. For the last 150 years, the Goud family has been administering fish medicine to lakhs of people who flock to Hyderabad city in the month of June on the day of Mrigashira Karthi. On this day, more than 500 volunteers administer 2-inch to 3-inch long murrel fish which carry a drop of the secret formula. The ingredients of this medicine are collected over a period of two to three months prior to the appointed day. They are mixed a day before, using water from the Goud family's well. This medicine is distributed free of cost to the public and the patient has to take this therapy for three consecutive years to get permanent relief.

It is necessary that a person should not eat or drink four hours prior to and two hours after the administration of fish medicine.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Since the formula of the medicine is a closely guarded secret, it is impossible to tell how the medicine works. However, we can at least analyse the other factors.

- According to Mr. Harinath Bathini, the fish carrying the medicine slips down the throat easily and enters the alimentary tract clearing the mucus and phlegm which is supposed to be the contributing factor to asthma. Even Ayurveda supports this theory, as it believes that asthma is an allergic disease, which starts in the digestive tract and not in the lungs as, is perceived by allopaths. The symptoms in the lungs are caused by ingesting things that trigger an attack.
- The peculiarity of the Hyderabad fish medicine is that it is administered on a particular day, Mrigashira karthi. The Bathini brothers have nothing to say about the significance of this day, except that they are following the instructions of the saint from the Himalayas, who taught this formula to their forefathers. However, as per Ayurveda, Mrigashira karthi occurs in the period between two seasons namely

summer and rainy season, (rithu sandhi) which provokes vaata disorders. Asthma according to Ayurveda, is a disease caused by the obstruction of aggravated vaata by the kapha. So this is the right time to administer an anti-vaata medicine.

- Why murrel alone and not any other fish? It could be because murrel is a very agile fish and does not die easily when taken out of water, as such it can move about in the alimentary canal for a longer time compared to other fish.
- As most people believe, this treatment is not a gunshot treatment but has to be followed for 45 days with diet restrictions. Six pills are given to the patient to be taken on the 15th day, 30th day and 45th day. The pills are to be taken on an empty stomach in the morning and an hour after the evening meal. The diet prescribed surprisingly tallies with the one prescribed by Ayurvedic physicians for asthma. It includes 26 items which include old rice, fgs, tea, ginger, garlic, ghee, old turmeric, hot chilli, peppers, sweet lime, dried mango pieces, palak, ambothi bhaji, mat bhaji, arvi leaves, white sugar, white jowar and tur dal. The items that do not match with the Ayurvedic prescription are mutton (goat), black gram and buttermilk, which is contraindicated for asthma patients.

WATCH OUT

- Even as people flock to get the medicine, allopaths warn that ingesting raw fish can cause problems. For example, these fish may be infested with helminths which can infect the person who eats it.
- Fish is a known allergen and in people who are allergic to fish, the condition may become even worse.
- Since no one knows what the composition of the medicine is, where is the proof that steroids and compounds like arsenic are not mixed in the secret formula!

- Just like most unconventional therapies, there has been no scientific research or clinical trails under medical supervision done on this particular medicine, as the Goud brothers refuse to reveal the formula.
- Neither the Medical Council nor the Department of Indian Medicines and Homeopathy could do anything about it.
- As far as the cure is concerned, only a small percentage of the people get relief to some extent. It is possible that there may be some factor—the fish, the medicine, or the particular day is having some effect. It is also possible that this effect can also be attained with placebo therapy or faith healing.

Whatever the case may be, if at all this formula works, then the whole world can benefit from it. This is possible only through clinical trails under medical supervision.

In this context, the author wishes to quote an incident: In 1976, William Withering, the master physician and botanist from Birmingham, identified digitalis as the active ingredient from a mixture of 20 different herbs used by an old woman in Shropshire for the treatment of dropsy. The old woman's medicine had worked miracles in a few hopeless cases of dropsy. In this way, an unique cardi tonic was introduced to the world. This was possible only with the broad-mindedness of the old woman.

8. GOLDEN RULES FOR PHYSICAL & MENTAL HEALTH

For a sound health both psyche and physique should be normal and also in equilibrium. For maintaining physical health, Ayurveda has laid stress on natural urges that should not be suppressed. On the other hand, for perfect mental health, one needs to suppress urges relating to rash behaviour.

NON-SUPPRESSIBLE URGES

Ayurveda identifies thirteen natural urges that should never be suppressed and that can cause grievous repercussions when forcibly ignored.

1. **Suppression of Urine:** Suppression of the urge for urination (micturition) causes pain in the bladder and penis. Difficulty in passing urine, headache, lack of muscular strength (atony) of the bladder, urinary stones and inflammation of urinary tract are some of the problems that can occur on regular suppression of urge to urinate for a long period. One should resort to tub bath, massage, nasal drops of ghee along with the three types of enemas (vasti karmas) described in the Ayurvedic texts. A doctor should monitor these treatments.
2. **Suppression of Stool:** If one holds the urge for evacuation of the bowels (defecation), it causes abdominal pain, headaches, retention of stools (feces), gas in the digestive tract, cramps in the calf muscles and abdominal distention.
3. **Suppression of Wind:** If one suppresses the urge for passing flatus, this causes retention of stool, urine and gas in the digestive tract, abdominal bloating (distention), abdominal pain, heart disease, constipation or diarrhoea, exhaustion and other abdominal diseases due to the vitiation of vaata. In that case, unction, fomentation, suppositories, intake of food and drinks having carminative action and enema are the best.
4. **Suppression of Semen:** Just before the time of ejaculation, if semen is suppressed then it may produce stones (spermolith), pain in the penis and testicles, exhaustion, chest pain, retention of urine and difficulty in intercourse. In that case, massage, tub-bath, and a diet of wine, chicken, rice and milk, along with non-greasy enema and sexual intercourse are prescribed.
5. **Suppression of Vomiting:** When food is not digested, or any poisonous material gets ingested into the body, the body tries to expel it. If this act is suppressed, then the undigested matter of poisonous material is circulated in the body, thereby producing different types of diseases and conditions like eruption of weal with severe itching (urticaria), giddiness, loss of appetite, black

pigmentation of face, oedema, anaemia, fever, skin diseases, nausea and hyperacidity. In such cases, induction of vomiting, dhoomrapaanam (medicated smoke inhalations) fasting, raksta mokshna (blood-letting), non-greasy food and drinks, physical exercise and virechana karma (purgation) are prescribed.

6. **Suppression of Sneezing:** This phenomenon is for getting rid of the foreign matter out of the nose thereby clearing the nasal passage. If this is suppressed, the foreign matter in the nose may produce rhinitis and chronic cold, headache, sinusitis and diseases of the respiratory system. Apart from this, due to excessive strain in the neck, face and associated muscles and other structures, ailments like stiff neck, facial paralysis, migraine and weakness of the sense organs are caused. One should massage, do fomentation in the head and neck region and take medicated smoke inhalations along with nasal drops. One should also take food useful for the alleviation of vaata and take ghee after meals.
7. **Suppression of Eructation:** This leads to hiccups, breathlessness (dyspnoea), pain in the chest, cough, and loss of appetite (anorexia).
8. **Suppression of Yawning:** This leads to diseases of the eyes, throat, ear and nose. Suppression of yawning also causes bending, convulsions, contractions, numbness, tremors and shaking of the body. For the treatment of these ailments, one should use drugs for alleviating vaata.
9. **Suppression of Hunger:** Desire to take food is suggestive of requirements of nutrition or some emotional breakdown. By keeping hungry, either nutritional disorders or debility or irritability are produced. By suppressing hunger, one subjects oneself to emaciation, weakness, change in complexion, discomfort (malaise), loss of appetite, and giddiness. One should take unctuous, hot and light food.
10. **Suppression of Thirst:** Desire to drink water is suggestive of requirement of the bodily fluid or replacement of fluid loss. Suppression of thirst causes dryness of throat and mouth, deafness, exhaustion, weakness, dehydration and cardiac pain. In that case one should take cold demulcent drinks.

11. **Suppression of Tears:** Emotional conditions like pleasure or grief can bring down the tears and if suppressed, eye diseases, rhinitis, mental disorders, pain in chest, giddiness and digestive disorders can take place. Sleep, intake of wine and pleasant conversation are helpful in overcoming this.
12. **Suppression of Respiration:** Breathing caused by over-exhaustion should not be suppressed. Sudden holding of breath may cause suffocation, respiratory disorders, heart diseases and even death: Praanaayaama is an important yogic exercise and one should gradually practise this breathing exercise.
13. **Suppression of Sleep:** By keeping awake forcefully, the brain, sense organs and the voluntary organs are tired. As a result, diseases like insomnia, mental disorders, digestive disorders and diseases of sense organs are caused. To overcome them, apart from rest and sleep, one has to resort to the regimen prescribed for the alleviation of vaata.

SUPPRESSIBLE URGES

A person desirous of his well-being should suppress urges relating to rashness and evil deeds—mentally, orally and physically.

Similarly, a wise person should refrain from urges relating to greed, grief, fear, anger, self-centredness, shamelessness, jealousy, too much of attachment and malaise.

One should also refrain from speaking harshly, backbiting, lying.

Violence or an urge to succumb to physical weaknesses like adultery should be controlled.

A person free from all defects relating to mind, speech and physical actions, is indeed happy and begets dharma (virtue), artha (wealth), and kaama (desire).

9. EVEN HERBS HAVE SIDE-EFFECTS

In the last few years, traditional systems of medicine are being looked upon with more acceptance in the Western world. Current estimates

suggest that a large proportion of the population relies heavily on traditional practitioners and medicinal plants to meet primary health care needs. In our country, though modern medicine enjoys immense acceptance, herbal medicines have maintained their popularity for historical and cultural reasons. Concurrently, many people in developed countries have begun to turn to alternative or complementary therapies, including medicinal herbs.

Unless diagnosis and the appropriate treatment is done with all the modalities of ayurvedic treatment—diet, deeds and drugs—it is very likely to backfire.

Here we shall discuss a few medicinal plants from exhaustive list on ayurvedic *materia medica* with their side-effects:

LICORICE ROOT

Prolonged use of it *i.e.* more than 50 grams per day may increase water accumulation causing swelling of the hands and feet, which is a warning sign that you are retaining too much sodium and excreting too much potassium. Under no circumstances should a person try to fast while using licorice root. Also, licorice should not be used in conditions such as low serum potassium; high blood pressure; cardiovascular disease, particularly illnesses involving abnormalities of heart rhythm; gall bladder disease; kidney disease; pheochromocytoma and other adrenal tumours; diseases that cause low serum potassium levels, such as primary and secondary aldosteronism and severe chronic alcohol abuse; diseases that may result from low potassium levels such as certain kinds of flaccid paralysis or limb disorders; fasting or anorexia/bulimia; untreated hypothyroidism.

GARLIC BULB

Consumption of large amounts of garlic may increase the risk of post-operative bleeding. Garlic has also been reported to evoke occasional allergic reactions such as contact dermatitis and asthmatic attacks after inhalation of the powdered drug. Those sensitive to garlic may also have

a reaction to onion. Ingestion of fresh garlic bulbs, extracts, or oil on an empty stomach, may occasionally cause heartburn, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhoea. Garlic odour from breath and skin may be perceptible.

ALOE JUICE

Major symptoms of overdose are griping and severe diarrhoea with consequent loss of fluid and electrolytes. Aloe should not be used in patients with intestinal obstruction or stenosis, atony, severe dehydration with electrolyte depletion, or chronic constipation. Aloe should not be administered to patients with inflammatory intestinal diseases, such as appendicitis, Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis, irritable bowel syndrome, or diverticulitis, or to children less than 10 years of age. It should not be used during pregnancy or lactation except under medical supervision. The herb is also contraindicated in patients with cramps, colic, haemorrhoids, nephritis, or any undiagnosed abdominal symptoms such as pain, nausea or vomiting. As it contains laxatives, it should be used only if no effect can be obtained through a change of diet or use of bulk-forming products.

ISABGUL

Isabgul products should always be taken with sufficient amounts of liquid, and at least half an hour after other medication or supplements such as calcium, vitamins, to prevent delayed absorption.

RAUWOLFIA (SARPAGANDHA)

Its products are contraindicated in patients with a history of mental depression, epilepsy, decreased renal function, and in patients receiving electroconvulsive therapy. As Rauwolfia preparations increase gastrointestinal motility and secretion, they should be used cautiously in persons with a history of peptic ulcer, ulcerative colitis, or gallstones.

10. METAL THERAPY FOR AILMENTS

Though metals, minerals, gems and jewels are used in the Ayurvedic system of medicine since the Vedic times, it is only in the post-Buddhist period that these have been extensively used in treating various health problems. Several Buddhist saints, like Siddha Nagarjuna, have carried out research on metallic medicine.

According to Ayurvedic treatises, there are seven dhaatus (metals)—gold, silver, copper, iron, tin, lead and zinc—which are essential elements of the body. Perfect health is attributed to the state of equilibrium of these dhaatus in body tissues. Any imbalance—excess or deficiency—disturbs the functioning of the body.

GOLD

Gold is present in trace amounts in blood, semen, eyes, upper layer of skin and intestines. Imbalance affects vision, causes general weakness in the body, dullness of intellect, loss of imaginative power, voice and general complexion of an individual.

SILVER

Silver is present in the bone marrow, upper layer of bones, gall bladder, pancreas, inner layers of the skin, lungs, muscles, blood vessels, meninges (the membranes investing the spinal cord and brain), and septum of nose. Imbalance leads to neurological disturbances, problems related to teeth, cataract, sores and absorption from gut.

COPPER

Copper is present in the upper and inner layers of skin, mucosa of soft tissue, large glands, pupil of the eye, hair, pleura and pericardium. Imbalance causes defects in cardiovascular, central nervous and skeletal systems. Deficiency affects production of red blood cells and hair keratinisation. Imbalance causes chronic inflammatory disorders in soft tissues.

IRON

Iron is the major constituent of blood, present in the villi of the intestine, pupil, hair and in small quantity in all tissues of the body. Imbalance causes arteriosclerosis, anaemia and general debility.

LEAD

Lead is present in blood and lymphatic tissues. Imbalance causes anaemia, disturbance in gastrointestinal tract due to poor secretion of digestive juices, haemolytic anaemia and ascites.

TIN

Tin is present in every tissue. However, it is found more in abdominal muscles, blood and blood vessels, synovial membranes lining the capsule of joints, outer layer of uterus. Imbalance causes malformation in bones, diseases of reproductive tract, affects formation of urine, polyurea and increased perspiration.

ZINC

Zinc is present in blood, brain, nerve tissue and muscles. Imbalance causes problems related to nervous system like depression, anxiety, dullness of intellect, extreme forgetfulness and irritable temperament.

Every mineral or metal in its native form is basically a biological product and Ayurveda has a way of converting the minerals into a biological form, which can be easily assimilated into the body. There is enough evidence of experiments being conducted on such mineral medicines and they have also been proved to be beneficial.

For example, *Journal of University of Health Sciences*, Andhra Pradesh, in its second volume, has published a paper on toxicological study of 'rasabhasma', a bio-metallic compound of mercury. It states that, "Rasa bhasma has proved to be an effective haemopoietic drug and a good anabolic agent." Ayurveda uses mineral ash after restoring its biological

qualities. Different herbs are brought together and made to react with the mineral by rubbing, boiling or burning together.

According to Ayurveda, swarna bhasma, the calcined powder of gold acts as an antacid, haematenic and alternative. It is useful in tuberculosis, diabetes, anaemia, oedema, epilepsy, skin diseases, general debility, asthma and heart affections. Gold is believed to be a wonderful tonic for the nervous system. It is an antidote to poisons, particularly those of bacterial origin. In loss of appetite, cough, asthma, anaemia etc., swarna bhasma can be used as a tonic with adjuncts like dried ginger, long-pepper and black-pepper powders. For chronic fever, swarna bhasma in combination with abhraka bhasma can be taken along with honey. Swarna bhasma can be taken with aamla juice in heart diseases; with milk to promote strength and energy; with ghee as an alternative; with padmakasar choorna to improve complexion; with butter, sugar and honey for tuberculosis; with sugar for burning sensation in lower and upper extremities, with vidarikand as an aphrodisiac.

Roupya bhasma, the calcined powder of silver, according to Ayurveda, works as a sedative and aphrodisiac. It gives fair complexion to skin and gives strength to the body. Can be used to cure excessive heat, impotence, seminal weakness. Also used in painful and irritable conditions of stomach. It is also effective in treating leucorrhoea and menorrhagia, arthritis and general debility.

Taamra bhasma, the calcined powder of copper is an astringent, sedative, antispasmodic, prescribed in liver disorders, dysentery, anaemia, plague, worms, skin diseases, gonorrhoea and dyspepsia.

Calcined powder of iron is called as Ioha bhasma. It is haematenic and restorative, prescribed in anaemia, disorders of liver and spleen, jaundice, oedema and general debility.

Naaga bhasma, the calcined powder of lead is prescribed in diarrhoea, tumours, haemorrhoids and diabetes.

Vanga bhasma, the powder of tin, is prominently used in the diseases of genito-urinary organs and in cases of premature ejaculation in men and dysmenorrhoea, menorrhagia and infertility in women. It is also used to treat staphylococcal infection in treatment of boils and skin diseases. It is a proven anthelmintic.

Yasad bhasma, the powder of zinc is an alterative, diuretic, hypoglycaemic and astringent.



DISEASES OF THE DIGESTIVE SYSTEM

1. HYPERACIDITY

Everyone knows that excessive secretion of acid leads to hyperacidity. Inside the stomach, nutrients are broken into small units for the purpose of assimilation. The stomach can digest things similar to its own structure and composition—like a piece of meat. But, then how come the stomach does not digest itself? The process of digestion takes place because of many different gastric secretions, which are highly acidic. What prevent the stomach from digesting itself are the cells, which form its inner lining? These cells have a special permeability barrier, which does not let anything permeate. If this is challenged with certain foods like too much tea, coffee, alcohol or certain chemical drugs, especially some pain-relieving and anti-arthritis drugs, then this will be weakened or damaged.

As a result, the highly acidic medium, which prevails in the stomach, traverses the stomach wall, thus causing pain and discomfort. If the same thing is repeated again and again, it may give rise to acidity and gastritis thereby inflaming the lining of the stomach. Ayurveda calls this condition as ‘amla pitta’.

To understand the disease amla pitta, one has to understand the concept of ‘agni’. Ayurveda has described this agni as fire of life. It has been given a pivotal place in the delicate balance between health and disease. In other words, ‘agni’ is the fire that cooks or digests the food.

A normal ‘agni’ means a healthy person and conversely, an abnormal agni is a sure pointer to disease.

At times, this ‘agni’ may be impaired due to intellectual blasphemy (prajnaaparaadha), unwholesome conjunction of sense organs with their objects (asaatmyendriyaartha samyoga) and vagaries of weather and time (kaala or parinaama). This impaired ‘agni’ shows effect on ‘pitta’,

the fiery energy of the body responsible for transformation. 'Amla pitta' is the by-product of this defective process.

"It is difficult to produce fire either without fire logs or with too many fire logs occupying the whole furnace." The same is the case with digestive fire. This will be hampered either with low amounts (mandaagni) or with high amounts (teekshnaagni). Amla pitta is the resultant of teekshnaagni, says Ayurveda.

SELF-HELP GUIDELINES & AYURVEDIC REMEDIES

As we know that acidity is due to improper regimen, it can be easily tackled by following simple methods:

- It is clear that amla pitta is mainly due to aggravation of pitta. Factors responsible for aggravation of this pitta dosha are excessive intake of pungent and sour food items, alcoholic preparations, salt, hot and sharp stuff which cause burning sensations. Anger, fear, excessive exposure to sun and fire, intake of dry vegetables and alkalis, irregularity in taking food, *etc.* should be avoided as far as possible.
- As a rule, all persons with acidity can take a milk diet excellently, although some, at first have trouble in absorbing milk. This is because the large amount of acid in the stomach forms hard curds combined with the proteins of the milk. Often these are vomited. Yet milk is excellent in the condition, especially when preceded by a fast, adjusted to your general condition.
- The milk diet should be adhered to several weeks if possible. Along with this, drink warm water freely. Ayurveda insists on this because, according to it, "hot destroys hot" (ushnam ushnaena hanti). Moreover, it has been found by physiological experiments that cold water increases the amount of acid secreted in the stomach. When the stomach seems to be in better condition, the milk may be taken with an evening meal consisting of easily

digestible and non-irritating foods.

- For a time, it is better to use foods requiring only moderate mastication, since mastication naturally increases the flow of gastric juice with its acid. Yet insufficient mastication of the food chosen will aggravate acidity problems by causing gastric irritation. So, mastication should always be moderate in this particular condition.
- It is important not to overeat, but to take small meals, three times a day. Avoid artificial stimulants, all of which raise pitta. Alcohol, in any form, is like throwing fuel on the pitta fire. The drawback of the caffeine in coffee and tea is that it increases acid production in stomach if consumed excessively.
- Even an excess intake of sweets can cause acidity as the sugar causes fermentation and produces acid in the stomach, particularly if wrongly combined with other food types.

According to Ayurveda, the pre-digestive characters of a particular food need not correlate with its post-digestive effect. It calls this effect as 'vipaaka'.

- Avoid salt, oil, pickles, curd, fried foods, sour foods like tamarind, etc., all of which heat the body.
- Take pitta pacifying diet. It should contain bitter and astringent tastes, which are usually supplied mainly through salads and legumes. These two tastes curb the appetite, dry up excessive moisture and keep the palate sharp.
- To bring down aggravated pitta, a standard recommendation is to take two teaspoonfuls of ghee in a glass of warm milk. This also acts as a laxative, which helps flush excess pitta from the system. Ayurveda recommends this laxation (virechana karma) to be the best therapy to correct the aggravated pitta. Have your ghee and milk instead of dinner, or two hours after a very light

dinner. You can also have it in place of breakfast (do not take ghee, however, if you have a problem with high cholesterol).

- Avipattikara choorna relieves all the agonising symptoms caused by acidity. It moves the bowels and flushes them. It also maintains your appetite. This powder can be taken in a dose of 3 to 6 grams with water before and during the meal. Dried grapes, fruit bark of harad (*Terminalia chebula*) in powdered form and sugar pounded together and taken in 12 grams quantity does relieve acidity.
- Buttermilk is not found useful in amla pitta. Hence, it may be avoided.
- Cereals from fresh crops should be avoided. Pulses should be moderately used.
- Two to three years old rice, wheat flour, milk, green leafy vegetables and fruits containing sweet juice are all permitted.
- Coconut water is exceptionally good in this condition.
- Sukumaara ghritam is specific for this condition and may be taken in doses of one to two teaspoonfuls mixed with a cup of milk in the morning.
- Amla (*Emblica officinalis*) in powdered form is also helpful. The standard dose is two teaspoonfuls three times a day.
- Alternatively, Dhaatri lauha (calyx of iron mixed with the juice of amla) may be taken in one teaspoonful dose twice a day. In acidity, iron absorption is impaired and this will be corrected with this medicine.
- In severe cases, Ayurvedic physicians usually prescribe Swarna parpatee, Leela vilaas ras, Soota sekhara ras *etc.* If needed, these medicines may be taken under medical supervision.
- A decoction of sandal (chandan) consumed thrice daily, gives good relief from hyperacidity. Kamadudharas (with

pearls) is a drug of choice for hyperacidity in the dose of 1 tablet thrice daily.

2. GASTRITIS

Gastritis is a broad term for inflammation or irritation of the inner lining (mucosa) of the stomach. In some cases, it can even lead to an ulcer. In Ayurveda, this condition is known as urdhvaga amlapitta. You are prone to this disease, if you have pitta body constitution, according to Ayurveda.

The causes of gastritis include:

- Ingestion of caustic poisons, alcohol, and certain medications like aspirin or steroids.
- Physical stress from flu, major surgery, severe burns, or injuries.
- A drug allergy or food poisoning.

Atrophic gastritis is a form of gastritis found in the elderly, where stomach cells are destroyed, potentially leading to pernicious anaemia.

A bacterial infection, helicobacter pylori, is believed to be a major cause of gastritis during the recent years. When addressing gastritis, many researchers now look for substances that eradicate H. Pylori.

If suffering from gastritis, you can adopt these dietary and lifestyle changes and take the following herbal supplements to keep yourself comfortable.

SELF-HELP GUIDELINES

- You can take almost all foods in moderation except chilies, spices, and sour food. Avoid chillies, meat soups and extractives, tamarind and unripe citrus fruits such as orange, sweet-lime, *etc.* Restrict the use of garlic, ginger, coriander (dhania), and cumin seeds (jeera). Avoid papad, chutney, or pickles. You can use ghee in cooking as it pacifies pitta. However, restrict the fried food and recycled

cooking oil, as they are difficult to digest. Restrict the intake of salt as it irritates the stomach lining. Bland diet such as khichdi, that contains cooked rice and dal, is perhaps the best diet in gastritis. Always prefer the old rice that has been preserved for one year. A snack or small meal every three hours does the trick in most of the cases.

- Milk has always been known to relieve pain in the peptic ulcer. Always choose milk instead of coffee or tea.
- Caffeine found in coffee and tea, some soft drinks, chocolate and many medications increase stomach acid. Avoiding these substances can, therefore, aid in the healing of gastritis.
- In some individuals, food allergies or intolerance may cause gastritis. If you are suspecting food sensitivity or allergy, you should consider discussing an allergy elimination programme with your physician.
- When helicobacter causes gastritis, free radical levels rise in the stomach lining. These unstable molecules contribute to inflammation and gastric damage.
- Vitamin C, an antioxidant that helps squelch free radical molecules, is low in the stomach juice of people with chronic gastritis. This is the reason, some of the vitamin C rich fruits, such as amla, are found to be helpful in gastritis. There is some evidence that the antioxidant beta carotene may also reduce free radical damage in the stomach, and eating foods such as carrots, that are high in carotene, has been linked to a decreased risk of developing chronic atrophic gastritis.
- Moreover, people with active gastritis have been reported to have low levels of beta-carotene in their stomach. Combining vitamin C rich foods and carotene food lead to improvement in most people with chronic atrophic gastritis.
- Avoid tobacco. Smoking damages the mucous membrane and may even increase acid secretion. Smoking also causes

pyloric incompetence and reflux of duodenal juice into the stomach. Tobacco chewing causes shedding of the stomach lining and may have a role in the production of gastritis.

- Avoid alcohol. Alcohol inhibits the secretion of the protective prostaglandin, thereby causing gastritis.
- Many medications, such as aspirin and related drugs, can induce or aggravate stomach irritation. People with a history of gastritis should never take aspirin or aspirin-like drugs without first discussing the matter with their doctor.
- Mental tension is usually associated with gastritis. Brooding, frustrations, and inner resentment regarding matters connected with the family or place of work not only predisposes you to gastritis, but also contributes to the perpetuation of symptoms and subsequent recurrences.

AYURVEDIC REMEDIES

- Licorice root has been traditionally used to soothe inflammation and injury in the stomach. It also stalls the growth of H. Pylori. Take one teaspoonful of this powder and mix with half a teaspoonful of pure ghee and one teaspoonful of pure honey. Take this medicine twice daily on an empty stomach, once in the morning before breakfast and once in the afternoon before tea when the stomach is nearly empty.
- If you are having constipation along with gastritis, then Avipattikara choorna is the medicine of choice. Take two teaspoonfuls at bedtime. This neutralises the acid, stimulates the liver, and thus works as a laxative.
- Asparagus racemosus (shataavar) is a refrigerant and antispasmodic. It allays internal heat. Several studies have demonstrated that the root of this plant is an effective drug in hyperacidity. Mineral contents, which are biochemically important for the human system, were found in significant concentration in different parts of the herb. This powder

should be taken three to six grams, twice daily.

- *Emblica officinalis* (amla) is found useful in dyspepsia, burning sensation, anorexia, vomiting and haemorrhage. You can take this in powder form, two teaspoonfuls four times a day. (Clinical studies were conducted to investigate the effect of amla in gastric syndrome. Aamalaki choorna was given in 20 cases in a dose of three grams, three times a day for seven days. The drug was found effective in 85 per cent of the cases).
- Dhaatri loha, Sootasekhara rasa, Sukumaara ghrita, etc., are some of the ayurvedic medicines that are prescribed commonly to treat gastritis. Always consult your physician before using them.
- Other useful medicines are Kaamdudha ras, Leelaavilas ras, Chandrakala ras and Amalpittantak ras.

3. CONSTIPATION

Medically, constipation implies failure to evacuate waste matter from the body, on a regular basis. In ayurveda, it is referred to as Aanaaha. Koshtha baddhata is the other term also in use.

Passage of faeces takes place in two phases. Propulsion from the colon and expulsion from the rectum. Interference with any aspect of this process may give rise to constipation. According to ayurveda, it is usually a vaata disorder, particularly, if it is a long-standing condition or in the elderly. It may also be due to high pitta (heat which dries out the stool) or high kapha (mucous congestion clogging the colon).

Assimilation and elimination are the two basic needs for natural health. Inactivity of the eliminating organ i.e., the colon causes retention of waste and morbid matter, which results in systemic poisoning or autointoxication.

When the colon does not function promptly, the result is an accumulation of offensive and highly poisonous wastes, which not only contaminate the body through absorption with the blood but also upset the whole digestive process. In general, the residue is passed into the

colon or lower bowel and stored there until a convenient time comes to expel this refuse from the body. In this colonic garbage pile, there is no antiseptic digestive juice to prevent putrefaction and as a result, the microbes generate toxins with great rapidity. Ayurveda calls it “aama.”

The normal duration between the time the food is eaten until the faeces is expelled, is normally between 16 to 24 hours. If the residue remains for 24 hours or more, it gives rise to aama. There is a simple test to know whether you are constipated or not. Just consume small amount of charcoal and watch the stools thereafter. The black colour will make its appearance eventually in the stools. If it does not make its appearance in 16 to 24 hours, you are suffering from constipation. Also, you should note carefully how long the colour continues to be conspicuous because if it is observed several hours after it makes its appearance, it indicates a true colonic congestion.

There are several causes for constipation and constipation is also a symptom of several diseases. So while treating constipation, all the possible causes should be kept in mind.

The causes of constipation are many—constitution of the individual (prakriti), habit of suppressing the urge over long periods (vega dhaarana), absence or non-availability of articles habitually used before defecation, such as smoking tobacco, drinking coffee or tea, frequent use of laxatives and purgatives etc., ingestion of vaata promoting food which is dry (rooksha), powdery (pishtha), cold (seeta), astringent (kashaaya), bitter (tikta), quickly digestive and residue-free diet (laghu), very little food or starvation (anasana), plenty of exercising (ati vyaayaama); Intestinal obstruction (aantra avarodha) by foreign body or due to intussusception (sammoorchana), worms (krumi), impacted faeces (pureesha); slow peristalsis due to debility during fevers, nervous diseases, tuberculosis, anaemia etc.; Psychological factors like grief (chinta), sorrow (shoka), hatred (dwesha); ingestion of certain drugs; inadequacy of water intake or excessive water elimination as in cases of vomiting (chhardi), diarrhoea (ateesaara), diabetes (prameha).

SELF-HELP GUIDELINES & AYURVEDIC REMEDIES

Treatment is three fold—diet, drugs and daily routine.

Diet: Drink a glass of water early in the morning after washing the face and mouth. It is better, if the water is kept overnight in a copper vessel. Or, soak twenty to thirty black raisins in a glass of water at night and drink the water after adding juice and pulp of lemon to it. Some people are in the habit of taking bed tea for this purpose. The reflex action produced by bed-tea is different from the one produced by the cold water. The latter only produces pressure, thus stimulating the intestines to start their movement for evacuation. Tea, being hot, stimulates the intestines so strongly that its stimulating effect loses its significance after some days and the individual develops constipation apart from the diuretic action, which produces fluid loss thereby causing constipation. In case of vitiation of vaata, oily food should be taken. Adequate oil and ghee should be included to ensure lubrication of the colon. It is a better idea, if you can take a glass of warm milk at bedtime after adding a teaspoonful of ghee to it. Adequate bulk should be taken as well, such as whole grains or bran. Beans, dry grains, cabbage, family plants, mushrooms and other light or dry food should be avoided. Spices, which balance digestion—asafoetida, ginger, cardamom or fennel, should be taken with food to alleviate gas and promote the downward movement of vaata.

Pitta type of constipation often involves liver dysfunction with congestion or obstruction of the bile. Hence, hot spicy food should be avoided. Adequate fluids should be taken.

If you are having kapha type of constipation, then you have to avoid foods like sugar, cheese, curd, bread, potatoes and pork.

- Wheat is better than rice in case of constipation.
- Eat plenty of fruits and leafy vegetables.
- Use whole meal flour and not refined flour.
- Papaya and sugarcane are very effective in relieving constipation.
- Avoid fried food. The body takes a long time to digest them.

Drugs: The best evacuant is castor oil. Castor oil is not only useful for bowel evacuation but also has therapeutic and curative values. All other purgatives produce roughness (rooksahta) while castor oil produces unctuousness (snigdhata). The castor oil used should be purified and diluted. Castor oil prepared through ghani or indigenous expeller is found better than the present market preparation. 20-30 ml of this oil is to be taken with warm milk. Triphala powder is very popularly used by the ayurvedic physicians for the treatment of chronic constipation. It contains three drugs namely—Hareetaki (harad), Vibheetaki (Beleric myrobalan), and Aamalaki (amla). Of these three drugs, hareetaki alone works as a purgative. But while manifesting its action, it produces certain adverse effects like gripping pain and wind formation in the stomach. To avoid these adverse effects and to make it more useful as a tonic, the remaining two drugs are added. Triphala powder is used in two different ways. One or two teaspoonfuls of this powder is mixed with a cup of warm milk and some sugar is added to it. It is to be taken at bedtime and its purgative effect is manifested early morning. For those having chronic constipation and simultaneously a costive bowel, the powder alone does not help. It is to be taken as a decoction prepared by boiling 20 gm of the powder in 16 times of water and reducing it to one-fourth. The powder is to be filtered and the liquid taken. Since it is strong, two to four teaspoonfuls of honey may be added to it, if needed.

There are other medicines, which help eliminate chronic constipation by strengthening the intestinal valves and their functions. One such drug is known as Agastya rasaayana. Two teaspoonfuls of this drug should be taken regularly, twice a day, along with any hot drink of choice. Other drugs include Pancha sakaara choorna, Abhayaadi modaka, Madhu yashtyaadi choorna *etc.* These should be taken under medical supervision only.

POINTERS

- In cases of severe constipation, ayurvedic detoxification procedures like Vasthi karma (enema therapy), Virechana karma (purgation therapy), Udvartana massage therapy (to strengthen the abdominal organs) are recommended.

- As constipation is a habit, the overcoming of it must become a habit too. One does not feel the urge for it. It should be a part of your daily routine.
- Deficient mastication is unquestionably one of the most important causes of constipation. The digestive process cannot be carried out properly when the stomach and the small intestines are called upon to do the triturating and macerating, ordinarily done in the mouth.
- Physical exercises are must.
- Cut down your mental worries and anxieties. Avoid over-exposure to severe heat or wind.
- Sukhavirechana vati, ½ to 1 tablet with warm milk at bedtime, is an effective remedy for constipation. Dry ginger powder along with senna leaves powder in equal quantities taken with a cup of lukewarm water at night can help in easy passage of stools.

4. GAS/FLATULENCE

Many a time, intestinal gas is a cause for humour. But for the person who experiences gas in a public place, it is no longer a laughing matter.

As many as 30 to 40 per cent of people experience bloating and gas, which they attribute to gastric trouble. Most of the patients even refrain complaining about fatulence, excessive belching, increased intestinal gas and bloating to the physician, as they are embarrassed.

Our intestines cannot digest everything we eat. The leftovers are passed on to the colon. The processing or fermentation of leftover carbohydrates by the colonic bacteria leads to the formation of intestinal gas.

While it may appear that some people pass too much gas compared to others, there may not be any difference in the amount of gas produced in the complainers and the non-complainers. It is just that some people are more sensitive and feel it more than others do.

Several factors cause people to swallow air. For instance, if dentures do not fit well, the person tends to swallow more saliva, which carries air

bubbles with it. If the patient has post-nasal discharge, then he tends to swallow more often, carrying more air to the stomach. Smoking a cigar or pipe may also increase the amount of saliva produced and swallowed, contributing to excess gas.

Some patients have a habit of belching frequently. To do this, they swallow air, which they then belch. Unfortunately, the patient is never able to belch out all of the swallowed air, thus producing intestinal gas. Rapid eating increases the amount of air that people swallow. Gum chewing and sucking on hard candies also increases the amount of air swallowed. Avoid carbonated drinks. Some gas is also created as the carbonated drink enters the mouth.

However, the most common source of intestinal gas is beans. Beans cause gas, as the body cannot digest the complex sugars they contain. These starches pass into the intestine, where they become food to the bacteria present there. While they use the starch as food, gas is passed as a by-product. Similarly, milk is gas forming in adults. Incomplete digestion of milk can lead to gas, stomach cramps, bloating and diarrhoea. Certain medicines like narcotics, calcium channel blockers slow the gut, and may lead to gas being trapped in the bowel, due to slow movement.

In ayurveda, fatulence is called as Aadhmaana. Treatment modalities include measures to promote deepana (by carminatives), paachana (by digestives) and vaataanulomana (by gas expellers).

SELF-HELP GUIDELINES & AYURVEDIC REMEDIES

- Drink a cup of warm water with two drops of peppermint (pudina), cinnamon (daalchini) or ginger extract.
- Dried ginger and ajwain in equal weights should be steeped in double the quantity of limejuice, dried and powdered. Add a little black salt to the powder. Two grams should be taken with warm water as and when needed.
- Tie two handfuls of bajra and a handful of crystal-salt in a bag, warm it over the hot plate and foment the abdomen.
- If the sufferer is a child, you can apply a pad of cotton

wool or cloth steeped in hot water, in which asafoetida has been dissolved. Alternately, one part of turpentine oil and two parts of castor oil can be applied over the abdomen in lukewarm condition. Warmed castor leaves can also be wrapped over the abdomen.

- Prepare a compound powder by taking equal parts of fried asafoetida (hing), black-salt (souvarcha lavana), cardamom (elaichi), ginger (sonth) and Solanum-xanthocarpum (kantakaari). Take in doses of 3 to 5 grams.
- Mixture of two parts of celery seeds (ajamoda) and one part of fennel seeds (saunf) and sugar, taken in doses of half to one teaspoonful, helps relieve fatulence.
- For children, there is an 'user friendly' preparation to use. Take fine powders of 5 parts of rutagraveolens (sadaab), 4 parts of celery seeds (ajamoda), 3 parts of mint (pudina), 1 part of saffron, 2 parts of black pepper, and 10 parts of honey. Keep in fresh bottle and use as and when required, in a dose of one to half teaspoonful.
- The common prescription for fatulence consists of Hingwaashtaka choorna in a dose of one teaspoonful, twice daily, mixed with one teaspoonful of ghee, followed by hot water. Also, taking Kumaari aasava in a dose of 20 ml, twice daily after food with an equal quantity of warm water, improves the condition.
- Don't eliminate all the gas producing foods at once. Instead, avoid one food at a time.
- Dentures should be fitted properly.
- If you've post-nasal discharge, then you should take treatment for the same.
- Slow down when you eat, avoid gulping food and chew each bite thoroughly.
- Don't talk while eating.
- Avoid drinking through straws or narrow-mouthed bottles. Use a glass or cup instead.

- Don't lie down immediately after eating. Sit for a while.
- Eliminate carbonated beverages from your diets. Remember that beer also contains gas.
- Cut on fatty meats.
- Exercise regularly. Reduce undue mental stress. Yoga is a good option.
- Don't use synthetic drugs. Self-medication is dangerous.
- Be cautious about 'recycled' restaurant tea, as it irritates the inner lining of intestines, thereby forming gas.
- Hingutriguna taila in the dose of 2 teaspoonfuls on empty stomach with warm water, relieves gas and constipation. Ark pudina (liquid) if taken, gives results in minutes. Raj vati, Lasunadi vati are also effective for fatulence.

FOODS THAT PRODUCE GAS

Beans • Nuts (especially groundnuts and cashew-nuts) • Pulses (blackgram and bengal-gram) • Vegetables such as potato, cabbage, onions, garlic, cauliflower, radishes, cucumbers, peas • Prunes such as jujube fruit • Apples, grapes, bananas Bran and whole grains • Dairy products and milk • Eggs • High fat foods • Fried foods • Fermented foods such as dosa, dietary fibre and salads • Fatty meats • Rich pastries • Uncooked chutneys • Rich sauces, gravies • Thick saambaar

5. INTESTINAL WORMS

Human body plays host to a variety of worms, which cause a variety of diseases. These parasites gain an entry into the body through raw and stale food, polluted water or directly through the skin. The worms can be broadly categorised as fat worms and round worms.

Pinworms or threadworms are tiny roundworms found in the lower digestive tract of human beings. Commonly found in children, even the adults are susceptible to an infection.

Symptoms include a very mild tickling to severe itching or pain, which

occur when the migrating female worms are in the anus or surrounding skin.

In women, migrating worms may enter the vaginal area causing a discharge. In some individuals, restlessness, sleeplessness, loss of appetite, loss of weight, and sometimes nausea and vomiting occur. Infected children are often irritable, hard to manage and inattentive at school.

Another common intestinal parasite, *Ascaris lumbricoides* resembles the ordinary earthworm. Rats spread this infection and the larvae enter the human body through food. If only a few worms are present, there may be no symptoms and the condition is discovered when a worm is detected in the stools.

On the other hand, there may be a capricious appetite, with itching of the nose, sickness and vomiting with blood in the stools. There may be convulsions in children. If a worm enters the bile duct, it could also lead to jaundice. However, if there are a large number of worms, this may lead to the obstruction of the bowel. The infection is spread through under-cooked beef, pork, fish, and through contaminated food, water and vegetables.

SELF-HELP GUIDELINES & AYURVEDIC REMEDIES

If you are infected with threadworm, all infected persons in the family should be treated at the same time. Dryness and heat kill the eggs. Hence, when the treatment is on, the nightclothes and towels should be cleaned daily in very hot water. Personal hygiene and household cleanliness are two ways in which the spread of pinworms can be prevented. Pinworm eggs can be removed by washing with soap and warm water. Wash hands frequently, especially before meals and after using the toilet. This will also prevent the spread of pinworms. Keep fingernails short and clean to avoid an infection.

Prevention of other intestinal parasites, especially tapeworms, requires using adequate sanitation and avoiding un-cleaned vegetables and under-cooked beef, pork and fish.

- Take 20 gm of jaggery early in the morning. After 30 minutes, take one gram of khurasai ajvayan seeds (*Hyoscyamus niger*) with cold water. This expels intestinal worms.
- Threadworms in children can be eradicated by taking onion juice.
- For expelling intestinal worms, especially tapeworms, *Embelia ribes* (vidang) will help. Powdered seeds are used for this purpose and they should be taken on an empty stomach. Take two to three grams of the powder with honey. A suitable purgative should be taken after 24 hours of the intake of medicine.
- Seed of *Butea frondosa* or Forest fame (palaasa beeja in Sanskrit) is a good medicine for roundworms. One to three grams of the powder has to be taken with buttermilk twice a day. This can also be taken in the form of decoction.
- As a general remedy, one to two grams powder of drumstick seeds is taken with water twice a day.
- Take internally, one to two grams of the paste of unripe betel nut, with two teaspoonfuls of lemon juice.
- Ingudi (*Balanites roxburghii*) is a very good medicine for round worms, threadworms and tapeworms. The decoction of its bark will give relief from the infection. The powder of the seeds can also be taken.
- Sweet basil (sabzah) is a very good anthelmintic, and effective cure for intestinal worms. A decoction made of the leaves or the powder of the seeds should be taken.
- The glandular hair found on the fruits of *Mallotus philippinensis* (kampilla) are an excellent anthelmintic for expelling intestinal worms including tapeworms. One to two grams of the powder should be taken with honey, Jaggery or curd. No purgative is required in it.
- Take four tablespoonfuls of the fresh milky juice of unripe papaya fruit with one tablespoonful of honey and four

tablespoonfuls of boiling water. This acts as an effective anthelmintic in expelling round worms. After two hours, a reasonable amount of castor oil with limejuice is to be taken.

- The powder of either the bark or the fruit peel of pomegranate is effective in expelling round worms and tapeworms. Three to six grams of the powder should be taken along with sugar. A laxative should be taken after an hour.
- Krimi-kuthaara rasa, Krimi-mudgara rasa, Vidangarishta, Krimi kalanal ras and Krumihar rasa are some of the important ayurvedic formulations that will help in treating intestinal parasites. Consult your ayurvedic physician before using them.

6. PILES

Haemorrhoids are dilated or swollen veins (low pressure blood vessels that return blood to the heart) under the rectum around the anal opening. They can be classified into internal and external haemorrhoids.

There is a dentate line in the anal canal, which separates two types of anal skin. While the skin above the dentate line is not sensitive to pain, the skin below this line is quite sensitive to pain. Internal haemorrhoids occur above the dentate line and are, therefore, usually painless. They can cause bleeding or they may push out of (prolapsed) the anal opening when they become quite large. External haemorrhoids occur below the dentate line and are generally painful. External haemorrhoids can become very distressing when the blood in the haemorrhoid clots and inflammation irritates the nearby pain-sensitive skin.

Symptoms include: Rectal bleeding, pain and/or itching, painful bowel movements— especially with straining, a lump that can be felt in the anus, and sometimes—mucous discharge after a bowel movement.

Piles are common and most people have some bleeding from them once in a while.

Though disturbing and discomforting, haemorrhoids are never a serious

health problem.

Still the reasons to seek medical treatment for haemorrhoids include: the presence of a painful blood clot in the haemorrhoid, excessive blood loss, infection and the need to rule cancer of the rectum or colon.

SELF-HELP GUIDELINES & AYURVEDIC REMEDIES

- Drink plenty of water and other fluids—at least 10 glasses a day. Eat foods, which are good sources of fibre, such as whole grain or bran, cereals and breads, fresh vegetables and fruits, and, if necessary, add bran to your foods (about three to four tablespoonfuls per day). This will make the passing of stools easy.
- Pass the bowel as soon as you feel the urge. Don't strain yourself to have a bowel movement.
- Lose weight if you are overweight.
- Exercise regularly.
- Keep the anal area clean. Use a 'sitz-bath' with hot water.
- Take warm baths.
- Don't sit too much on a hard surface because it can restrict blood flow around the anal area.
- With a cotton swab apply on your anus, any one of the following preparations before going to bed:
 1. Half-a-teaspoonful mustard powder with a tablespoonful of honey.
 2. Half a teaspoonful of turmeric with a tablespoonful of mustard oil, papaya juice, aloe vera gel or juice.
 3. Kaaseesaadi taila, when applied externally, shrinks the piles and cures itching in the anal region.
 4. Peel a clove of garlic and insert it in the rectum. Put in a fresh clove at bedtime, pushing it up high, to make sure it stays in overnight.
 5. The hot poultice of dry radish is very good in non-

bleeding piles.

6. For painful and protruding piles, you can use the ointment prepared out of turmeric, the leaves of Indian hemp and onion with hot sesame oil.
7. Cooked carrots eaten with whey checks bleeding from piles.
8. An oral mixture containing 10 grams of pulp of ripe bael fruit, 3 grams of sugar, powder of 7 black peppers and 3 cardamoms is very efficacious in checking bleeding from piles.
9. To stop bleeding from piles, you can take naagakesar and black sesame seeds, powdered and mixed with fresh ghee or butter.
10. Burn the outer covering of the seeds of reetha, and take it orally with honey.
11. Abhayaarishta, a liquid preparation, should be taken in the dose of 30 ml in equal quantity of lukewarm water before going to bed to control constipation and piles. Nityodit Ras 250 mg and Arsha kuthaar ras 250 mg along with honey thrice daily are also effective.

7. INFLAMMATORY BOWEL DISEASE

Ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease are the two most severe digestive problems, which are classified under the medical rubric of inflammatory bowel disease. Ulcerative colitis is an inflammation of the lining of the large intestine. Crohn's disease usually occurs in the lower portion of the small intestine, but may occur anywhere in the digestive tract. Tens of thousands of Indians are affected by these disorders and the incidence of IBD has been on the rise over the years. The disease is called kshatodara in Ayurveda.

CAUSES

Although the causes of inflammatory bowel disease are not yet known,

genetic factors do play some role. Up to 25 per cent of people with IBD have family members suffering with the disease. Some researchers believe that the disease develops in people who have a genetic susceptibility that enables virus or bacteria to trigger an abnormal immune response.

Different bacteria may be responsible for either Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis. Viral infections during pregnancy may also increase the child's risk of being infected by IBD. It is being suspected that the tuberculosis-causing organism also causes Crohn's disease.

Experts believe that environmental factors and diet also play an important role. It was found during recent studies that high fat intake, particularly animal fat, was associated with development of ulcerative colitis. There was a relation between high sugar intake (from non-fruit sources) and inflammatory bowel disease. A high intake, on the other hand, of fluids and diets rich in fruits, vegetables, potassium, vitamin C, and magnesium, were associated with a lower risk for both disorders. The severity of symptoms and flare-up rates vary with seasons, with the risk being highest in winter and lowest in autumn and summer.

SYMPTOMS

- The most common symptom of IBD is diarrhoea.
- Constipation may develop during active flare-ups of IBD.
- Cramps can occur from intestinal contractions caused by inflammation.
- Eating becomes associated with fear of abdominal pain.
- There could also be loss of weight, pain in the joints, inflammation in the eyes, ulcerated skin, fistulas, abscesses and fever.

SELF-HELP GUIDELINES & AYURVEDIC REMEDIES

- Eat small, frequent meals and avoid overeating. Drink plenty of buttermilk and fluids that are fully nutritional.

- Condiments, spices, seasoning or sauces of any kind should be avoided. Be careful while eating meat, fish, eggs, as these are the most putrefactive of all, are prone to affect the colon and irritate and rekindle inflammation.
- White sugar, green gram (mung dal) and all white flour products are also extremely harmful.
- Foods which have detoxifying and cleansing effect upon the intestines—such as fruits, vegetables and curds, should form an essential part of your diet. It is possible that patients suffering from colitis will be unable to take fruits and salads right away. To begin with, bland food will help. But once the inflammation subsides, foods containing roughage should be added in moderation.
- Some people with IBD have food allergies and have been reported to do better when they avoid foods they are allergic to.
- Rest is important as strain can further aggravate the problem. Relax after each meal and ensure that you sleep well.
- Crohn's disease often leads to mal-absorption. As a result, the patient often has inadequate levels of nutrient elements common being zinc, vitamins and iron.
- Hence it is advisable to use Yasad bhasma, Loha bhasma after consulting an ayurvedic physician.
- Take the powder of bael fruit with equal quantity of jaggery, three times a day.
- Paste of banyan shoots helps a lot. Three to six grams is to be taken with rice water, thrice daily.
- Mix powders of naagakesar, chandan (sandalwood), crystal-sugar and honey in equal parts and add it to enough quantity of butter. Take 10 to 15 grams of this preparation thrice a day.
- Decoction prepared from equal parts of fruit bark of pomegranate and bark of Holarrhena antidysenterica

(kuda/Kodisapaala), is to be taken in doses of three to four teaspoonfuls with a spoonful of honey, twice a day.

- During recent studies, several ayurvedic plants were studied for their therapeutic effect on IBD. One study has been done using the gum resin of *Boswellia serrata*, an Ayurvedic herb. Administration of *Boswellia* (350 mg thrice daily for six weeks) was found to be as effective as the drug sulfasalazine. Other plants that have given positive results include Licorice (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*) and Aloe.
- In extreme cases of IBD, specific ayurvedic procedure like Anuvaasana vasti (oil enemas with ulcer-healing herbs) and compound preparations such as Kutajaghan vati have proved to be beneficial. Consult an ayurvedic doctor before going for this regimen.

8. GALLSTONES

The most common problem associated with the gallbladder is gallstones, most of which are made up of cholesterol. Some gallstones are made up of calcium and bile pigments. Although gallstones are often associated with a higher-than-normal level of cholesterol in the bile, a constant swap between going on a diet and weight gain also leads to this condition in a majority of cases. Oestrogen levels have also been suggested as a cause, because of which women get gallstones four times as frequently as men. Women over 40, who are fair skinned and overweight, are more prone to gallstones.

SELF-HELP GUIDELINES & AYURVEDIC REMEDIES

- Identify and avoid food allergies, especially eggs and/or milk products. Quit smoking and do exercise and yoga regularly.
- If you are overweight, lose weight slowly and sensibly. Eat less. Overeating puts stress on the gallbladder.

- Constipation has also been linked to the formation of gallstones.
- Drink 8-10 glasses of water in a day to maintain the water content of bile.
- Coffee increases the bile flow and, therefore, may reduce the risk of gallstones. However, as coffee can exacerbate symptoms of insomnia, peptic ulcer, panic attacks and a variety of other conditions, it is advisable to consult a physician beforehand.
- Vitamin C is needed to convert cholesterol to bile acids. In theory, such a conversion should reduce gallstone risks. So, consume Vitamin C rich fruits such as amla and citrus fruits.
- Numerous herbs known as cholagogues and choleretics have been found useful in preventing gallstones in traditional ayurvedic medicine. Cholagogues are herbs that stimulate the gallbladder to contract, while choleretics stimulate the liver to secrete more bile. Both these actions could help reduce the risk of developing gallstones. Turmeric, citrus fruits, dried ginger, black pepper, long pepper, hing, etc., fall under these categories. Mineral compounds like Saindhava lavanam and Yavakshaar also serve a similar purpose.
- Before breakfast, on an empty stomach, take a tsp of Saindhava lavanam or ordinary table salt in a glass of hot water. After drinking this, lie down for about 45 minutes on your right side. Do this once or twice a week.
- Apply castor oil pack over the gallbladder area. Take a cup of castor oil, and soak a fannel cloth in it. Place the saturated cloth over the gallbladder area, and cover with plastic. Over the plastic, apply a heating pad, and leave it on for half an hour. Initially, do this once a day, every day for a month. Continue the treatment thrice a week, increasing use of the packs during an acute condition.
- Apatarpana (fasting), langhana (light diet) and virechana

(mild purgation) are some of the therapeutic procedures that are usually advised as a part of the treatment for gallstones.

- Specific Ayurvedic remedies such as Shankavati, Sootasekar ras, Pravaalpanchaamrit, Hingwaashtak choorna, Avipattikar choorna, etc., are generally prescribed to treat this condition. The duration of the treatment and dosage of these medicines depends on the severity of the condition.

9. JAUNDICE

Jaundice or icterus, is yellowing of the white portion of the eyes, skin, and mucous membranes that is caused by excessive amounts of bile pigments in blood tissues. These pigments, normally present in the blood because of the breakdown of haemoglobin, are filtered through the liver and excreted in faeces. The excessive accumulation of bile pigments is usually due to liver disease or hepatitis, in which case, the yellowing is referred to as Koshtaasrita kaamalaa in Ayurveda.

Saakhaasrita kaamalaa (surgical jaundice) on the other hand, refers to yellowing caused by an obstruction. Any thing from gallstones to a cancerous growth can cause the blockage and surgery is often required to remove it.

There are various types of hepatitis such as haemolytic jaundice, in which there is an increased production of bile pigment because of damage to red blood cells. Antibodies created by a mismatched blood transfusion can also cause damage.

Newborns can also have jaundice because of a condition known as hyperbilirubinemia. In these cases, there is a temporary defect in synthesis of the enzyme that breaks down bile to an excretal form.

Obstructive jaundice follows physical obstruction of the ducts that transport pigment from the liver to the intestine. Blockage can be due to gallstones, tumour, or inflammation.

Hepatocellular jaundice occurs when liver cells are damaged either by viruses or by excessive intake of alcohol.

The disease is common during the rainy season. Poor sanitation and overcrowding favour the spread of infection, giving rise to water-borne and food-borne epidemics.

SYMPTOMS

Symptoms of hepatitis vary depending on the specific cause of illness (virus, bacteria, toxin, etc.) and flu-like symptoms, which may include—fever, a generally tired or ill feeling, loss of appetite, nausea and vomiting, diarrhoea, and muscle aches. There may be itching all over the body.

With significant liver inflammation, liver chemicals may build up in the blood and urine, causing the following symptoms: jaundice (a yellow tint to the skin and whites of the eyes), bad breath, a bitter taste in the mouth, dark tea coloured urine, and light clay-coloured stools. There is also pain or tenderness around the liver.

SELF-HELP GUIDELINES

- Maintain personal hygiene and public hygiene.
- Wash your hands before eating and after going to toilet.
- Follow sanitary methods while disposing of the excreta.
- Purify your drinking water by filtration, adequate boiling, and chlorination.
- Avoid raw milk and shell fish such as oysters especially from unreliable sources.
- When you are away from home, you can take coconut water. Fruits will also help quench thirst. But all fruits should be washed and peeled personally with clean hands. Avoid having ready-made fruit juices or fruit salads, which are handled by others.
- You may take tea or coffee because water is boiled before their preparation.
- When eating out, only fresh food served steaming hot,

should be taken. All foods served cold should be avoided.

- If you have a past history of jaundice, then you should not donate blood unless tested. Blood for transfusion and blood products must be checked for infection to prevent post-transfusion hepatitis.
- Choose safe sex. Practise monogamy with an uninfected partner, or use condoms.
- Avoid injecting illegal drugs.
- If you are about to undergo a surgery, ask your doctor about donating some of your own blood beforehand. If necessary, this blood can be transfused back to you during surgery.

AYURVEDIC REMEDIES

In Ayurveda, during the initial stages of jaundice, usually mild purgatives are given. This is to stimulate the function of the liver and to increase the flow of bile in the bile duct. Trivrit, Kutaki and Triphala are used for the purpose. You can use the root bark of trivrit and rhizome of kutaki, either separately or mixed together in a powder form. Daily take one to two teaspoonfuls with hot water. If you prefer to use triphala choorna, you can take one teaspoonful of the same with warm water, twice daily. Two compound preparations, that are commonly used to treat jaundice, are Avipattikara choorna and Aarogyavardhini vati. However, take them after consulting a physician.

Bhoomyaamalaki (*Phyllanthus niruri*), a small herb with numerous leaves, is commonly used in the treatment of all types of jaundice. One teaspoonful of the juice of the plant or fresh root in the form of paste can be taken thrice daily mixed with honey.

Punarnava mandoor 1 tab thrice daily should be taken for 2 to 3 weeks. Navaayas Loha taken in the dose of 125 mg thrice daily is an effective remedy for Jaundice. Other useful medicines are Kumaaryaasava, Lohaasava and Punarnavaasava.

10. MOUTH ULCERS

Mouth ulcers are open sores in the mouth that appear as white or yellow sores surrounded by a bright red area. Usually painful, they appear on non-keratinised mouth tissue including the inner surface of the cheeks, lips, tongue, soft palate, and the base of the gums. They usually begin with a tingling or burning sensation followed by a red spot or bump that ulcerate.

Occasionally, a severe occurrence may be accompanied by non-specific symptoms of illness such as fever or malaise. Recurrence is common and may continue for years.

There are many possible reasons why you have these recurring ulcers:

- You may be feeling run down or suffering from stress.
- Mouth ulcers may run in your family.
- Hormones also play some part—ulcers often appear at puberty or during menstruation, if you are a teenaged girl.
- Your diet may be lacking greens or you may be an anaemic.
- You may be brushing your teeth over-vigorously. Such brushing causes abrasions on the gums that can turn ulcerous.
- You may be irritated by particular chemicals, spices, tobacco or even alcohol.
- The culprit may be the herpes simplex virus, which also causes cold sores. The first attack can be severe, with sore throat and ulcers inside the mouth. Subsequent attacks are less severe, with fewer and smaller ulcers.

In Ayurveda, the inflamed conditions of the mouth are described under Mukha paaka. Due to fallacious diet and deeds, pitta is vitiated, which in turn aggravates the symptoms.

SELF-HELP GUIDELINES & AYURVEDIC REMEDIES

- For immediate relief from ulcers, you should avoid hot or

spicy food, coffee, tea, alcohol and tobacco. If the ulcers coincide with feeling run down, you should check if your diet is well balanced and possibly take more rest. Avoid sour things, including curd and pickles. Papaya and soorana kanda (jami-kand) in the form of food are very useful in this condition.

- Usually constipation is associated with oral ulcers and/ or stomatitis. If you notice such a situation, you should take mild laxative, which will give some relief. Triphala choorna is the proper laxative for this purpose. You can take a teaspoonful of the same at bedtime. If you don't like its astringent taste, you can mix it with a cup of milk. Triphala choorna can also be taken in the form of decoction. To a cup of water, add a teaspoonful of this powder and boil till half. Filter it and drink.
- The decoction of the leaves of either aamla or heenna (mehandi), or the guava tree singly or mixed with alum powder is a very good gargle for oral ulcers.
- Alternately, you can gargle the decoction of the bark of milky trees (*Ficus* species) such as *Ficus benegalensis* (vat), *Ficus religiosa* (peepal), *Ficus racemosa* (goolar), *Thespesia populnea* (paaras peepal) *etc.* Also the decoction of the leaves of jasmine (chameli) is specifically indicated in oral ulcers.
- Fine powder of the Chebulic myrobalan (abhaya) macerated with honey is an excellent application that is very effective.
- If you want to try the compound formulation, then Khadiraadi vati is the drug of choice. This medicine is available in pill or tablet form. Keep it in mouth and slowly suck it as it dissolves in saliva. This medicine produces soothing effect on the ulcers and inflamed parts.
- Licorice (mulathi) is proved to be beneficial in the treatment of oral ulcers. Chew on a piece of it. It refreshes the mouth and cleanses the teeth, arresting tooth decay. It

heals the sores in the mouth. When it is boiled in water, it releases a sweet taste, so you can drink a warm infusion or decoction similar to tea. A mulathi extract, hardened into different shapes, is even more effective. During recent studies, deglycyrrhizinated licorice (DGL), a chemically altered form of the herb licorice, is proved to be effective in oral ulcers. DGL adheres to inflamed mucous membranes, which has made it a useful treatment for ulcers. This significantly and rapidly reduces symptoms. Pain levels noticeably decrease within minutes, and remain reduced for hours. According to anecdotal reports, frequent use of DGL throughout the day can almost entirely eliminate the discomfort caused by oral ulcers.

- Oral ulcers, with proper care, usually heal within three or four days. Other symptoms should disappear in 7 to 10 days.
- However, if they persist for more than two weeks or are accompanied by a skin condition or by other symptoms such as white patches in the mouth or throat, always get them diagnosed by the physician to rule out oral cancer or secondary bacterial or fungal infection.
- Local application of Irimedadi taila on the mouth ulcers gives early relief from pain & helps in healing. Powdered camphor, when applied on ulcers, can also give relief.

11. FOOD ALLERGY

Allergy is a condition present in certain individuals that can be described as a chemical “idiosyncrasy.” Its manifestations such as swelling, itching and bodily discomfort are often brought about by a particular article of food, the most common being fish, eggs, milk and wheat. For example, if after a meal all the partakers fall ill something is probably wrong with the food; but if only one person becomes ill then that individual is probably allergic.

Allergy is caused by that ‘antigen’ which is unfamiliar to the body. Ayurveda has a general term for all kinds of such antigenic material—

aama. Every piece of improperly digested food that is absorbed into the system is aama. Antibodies are special proteins created by some white blood cells against specific antigens. The antibodies bind tightly to the antigens, and if the immune system is healthy, this antibody-antigen complex is swept away from the body.

The body immune system can identify the source of each sort of aama: cheese, pork, peanut and so on. When one is exposed over and over again to the same aama, more and more antibodies are produced. If you know that you do not digest eggs well, and yet you regularly consume them, these imperfectly digested eggs persistently form aama. In due time an egg-like aama accumulates in you so that whenever an egg touches your tongue your immune mechanism gets alerted, assuming that it too will be improperly digested. This reaction is so striking that you are made aware of it by some bodily or mental symptom caused as a sideeffect of the internal conflict.

Humans can become allergic to almost anything. One source has estimated that 30 per cent of the Indian populace has some degree of food allergy. Some people are allergic to mould, others to hydrocarbons and petrochemicals, still others to cat or dog hair and some when they are exposed to sudden cold. There is even a condition called exerciseinduced anaphylaxis in which strenuous exertion produces an allergic reaction which can be life threatening. This, like the allergy to cold, is probably due to the toxic state of the body, and not to a specific allergy to aerobics. The sudden stress of the activity causes toxins to be mobilised from their tissue storage sites and food the circulation.

Allergies occur in excessively sensitive bodies. While specific allergies may respond to specific desensitisation techniques, management of the allergic state involves reducing the hypersensitivity. Vaata and pitta are the principal doshas involved in allergy, because it is their mutual intensity which oversensitises the body.

Allergies can be of many different types. Some only occur if you take the allergen often adequately, since otherwise antibody levels never build up high enough to induce an obvious reaction. Others occur every time you consume a substance. The most entrapping are the addictive allergies. As long as you take the substance you are allergic to, you feel fine; as soon as you quit, you start feeling withdrawal symptoms.

This can be tested by examining your cravings carefully. Suppose you like to eat fish. If you crave it only occasionally, and feel satisfied after a small piece, your body probably produced that craving with the help of some factor, which is found in fish.

If, however, you take to have fish and then suddenly experience an almost uncontrollable craving to consume all the fish in the container, then you are very likely to have an addictive allergy to the fish. All addictions, even to the most fatal drugs, probably become allergic in nature with time.

The allergic tendency develops early in life, and is highly influenced by prakriti. Vaata and Pitta types are much more commonly affected by allergy than kapha types.

Moreover, after pregnancy when the child is growing in the womb, the mother gives some of her immune protection to her foetus across the placenta in the form of antibodies. If she is too much toxic, she may send too many antibodies or transmit antigens of her blood to her foetus. Immune reactions may be established in the baby's body even before birth. After birth, the mother's breast milk is supposed to provide passive immunity to the child. If it also carries antigenic material to the body, or if the child is not breast-fed long enough, its immunity will suffer.

The nature of the allergens, to which you are exposed, is also important. For example, allergy to alcohol, which probably influences the development of both hangovers and alcoholism, may actually begin as allergy to the substance used in the fermentation process.

Likewise, milk allergy may develop from lactose intolerance, or it may begin as allergy to the penicillin, which is given to the cows or buffaloes against some disease and then progress to allergy to the milk itself. In the same way mass-produced chickens are fed with different drugs, all of which might irritate the body against the chickens.

Just as aama created from improper digestion of food can disturb the alertness and agitate the emotions, disturbed emotions can undermine the digestion and create aama, which then incites the immune system to react against it. The continuous presence of aama in the system creates a condition of permanent immune alert called allergy.

Seeta pitta is the Ayurvedic term for allergic hives. It is known that

anything, antagonistic to one's nature, may cause allergy.

In Ayurveda, the term Saatmya denotes anti-allergy and Asaatmya denotes allergy. Ayurvedic approach to allergy is to convert Asaatmya nature to saatmya nature. This includes both purification and pacification therapies.

THERAPEUTIC PRINCIPLES

1. Lightning therapies (Langhana chikitsas) to counteract aama.
2. Usage of therapeutic oils, both externally and internally (Snehana).
3. Subjecting to fomentation (Svedana).
4. Five eliminative therapies (Panchakarmas) and
5. Pacification therapies (Samana chikitsas).

12. OBESITY

Obesity is the most common nutritional disorder among the affluent in our country. At any given time, approximately 40 per cent of women and 20 per cent of men report that they are presently trying to lose weight. Lakhs of rupees are spent every year on weight loss treatments. Still, with the current medical treatment, the failure rate remains high. And in most cases, there is a strong tendency to regain weight; about one-third of lost weight is regained within a year, and almost all within five years.

According to one study, by 2010, an estimated 130 million people in Asia-Pacific region will be suffering from obesity as a result of change in lifestyles, which involve less exercise and more food.

IDIOSYNCRASY

Why do some people stay on a diet of burgers and fries, while others gain weight eating brown rice and vegetables? The answer is that people react differently to various foods, depending on their metabolism! Just like fingerprints, each of us has a unique metabolism—which is how we

convert food into energy for running the body's processes. In fact, many chronic illnesses may be simple symptoms of an underlying disturbance in metabolism. Your body type could be the key to your health.

CAUSES OF OBESITY

Obesity is a condition of the body, characterised by over-accumulation of fat under the skin and around certain internal organs. Sthaulya is the ayurvedic term for it. It is often referred to as Medoroga, as the medas or fat is the main cause for this condition.

According to Ayurveda, there are seven basic tissue elements in the human body known as dhaatus. These are present in every human body in a particular proportion, and any change in their equilibrium leads to diseases. Fat or the medas is one of these seven dhaatus.

Like other dhaatus, medas also serve many purposes. The most important one being, it helps to create and maintain body heat, without which life would be impossible. It also acts as a cushion to protect the deep, delicate organs and tissues from shock, injury *etc.* Besides these factors, it is essential in filling up many hollows, rounding out the sharp angles of the skeletal structure of the body, by bringing about distinctive lines and curves so fundamentally necessary for a beautiful form.

The degree of obesity in a person is dependent on the accumulation of fatty globules or cells. As long as the accumulated fat remains stored up as adipose tissue, it does not harm, however inconvenient it may be. But when it begins to enter the cellular elements of the body, especially the muscles, it becomes a source of danger.

There is a simple test to know whether you are obese or not. Just pinch a fold of flesh on your abdomen. If it is more than two inches thick, you are accumulating more fat than needed.

One cannot expect to enjoy and maintain good health in a state of excessive obesity. It leads to sluggishness, heaviness in breathing and lethargy, keeping us from physical inactivity and causing serious malfunctioning of various organs. When such a stage is reached, obesity is considered a disease. That is why it is said, "Your waist line is your life line".

Excessive obesity is caused by heavy intake of sweet, cooling and unctuous food, want of physical exercise, abstinence from sexual intercourse, sleeping during the day, lack of mental exercise and last but not the least—heredity. Ayurvedic concepts regarding the course and cause of disease are quite interesting.

The obstruction of the fat, the movement of food is confined to koshtha (abdominal viscera) resulting in the stimulation of the digestive power and absorption of food. The individual digests food quickly and becomes a voracious eater. In the event of disproportionate increase of fat, the body becomes vulnerable to many diseases. Owing to an excessive increase of fat and muscle tissue, the buttock, abdomen and breast become pendulous and the body strength becomes disproportionate to physical growth.

Obesity may be classified into different divisions. The commonest type is alimentary in origin. The person eats too much or does not exercise regularly. It is the question of proportion. With the same amount of food and more exercises, obesity would not occur. Very small quantity of surplus food taken every day for a long period will cause accumulation of fat in the body.

Some people are more prone to accumulate fat than others. Some can apparently eat excessively, with no exercises and yet show no tendency of putting on weight. This is due to the basic body type i.e., vata nature, pitta nature or a combination of both.

Often, the real cause of obesity is wrong eating habits and laziness, initiated in early life, at home. There is also a natural tendency to increase weight during the middle age, but this should be slight and gradual.

Lastly, obesity can also be caused due to alterations in the metabolic processes. In most cases, there is some disorder of one or more of the secreting glands. Treatment has no effect, and they must be treated according to the basal condition.

Sometimes, a person puts on weight after menopause. It may also arise after childbirth, due to overeating on part of the mother or due to inactive or sedentary life. Other causes are waterlogged condition of the body, intake of drugs, which produce changes in the tissues.

Consumption of alcohol in large quantities is also responsible for accumulation of fat because many alcoholic drinks contain sugar and also because part of the body heat is derived from the alcohol and a corresponding amount of the starchy and sugary food is converted into fat.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Reduction of longevity, premature ageing, low sex drive, poor sexual performance, unpleasant body odour, excessive sweating, breathlessness on exertion, difficulty in breathing, excessive hunger, excessive thirst, difficulty in walking, tiredness, general debility, loss of vitality and mental confusion.

COMPLICATIONS DUE TO OBESITY

Obesity is not merely a cosmetic problem. This is a medical condition involving complex mechanisms. Diabetes, fistula and lipomas occur in people with kapha constitutions. Arthritis is more common in the vaata groups. Pitta types suffer from complications like hypertension, hyperacidity, hyperhydrosis (excessive sweating) and kidney disorders.

TREATMENT PLAN

Depending on your body type, the medication varies. If you are diagnosed as vaata type, then purification procedures for vaata, like cleansing enemas, will be carried out. After this, you may be subjected to mild oil application and fomentation. Only minimum oil application is used for treating obesity, enough to protect the body from the heat of fomentation.

External oil application is carried out with oil containing hot herbs like calamus, ginger and mustard. Fomentation or sweating methods will be done externally or internally. External fomentation can be done by various methods, like whole-body fomentation via a steam box. After fomentation, oil enemas will be given followed by cleansing enemas. The

latter usually contains a decoction of dasamoola, honey, salt, some specific herbs and water. However, most of the ayurvedic physicians prefer alternate oil and cleansing enemas.

If you are diagnosed as kapha type, then for alleviating kapha, external massage with powders of agaru, calamus, ginger or mustard will be done. These substances help to remove excess fat deposited under the skin. They also help to restore the elasticity to the skin and improve complexion.

Treatment of aama, which is an important treatment modality, will be done by two methods—one by administering the herbs which remove aama (aama paachana) and secondly by increasing the conversion power of agni by giving substances that stimulate digestion. The herbs used for this purpose are dry ginger, black pepper, gudoochi, turmeric, cyperus, triphala *etc.*

In obese persons, though the digestive fire may be optimum that of the adipose tissue level is impaired. To improve its power, herbs like trikatu, shilajit, cyperus, kashtha, barberry, calamus, ativisha, katuka, chitraka, karanja, turmeric, guggulu, arjuna, catechu, camphor, neem, rohitaka, shinshipa, apaamarga, brahmi, bilwa are used.

SELF-HELP GUIDELINES

- As far as the diet is concerned, you can use basmati rice, barley, green gram, red gram and horse gram.
- Honey is the only sweetener that is allowed while treating obesity, but it should be original honey, directly collected from honeycombs.
- Drink warm water instead of refrigerated water.
- For cooking purposes, use sesame oil or mustard oil with spices like turmeric, black pepper, ginger and rock-salt.
- Use vegetable with astringent, bitter and pungent tastes. If you are particular about your weight, then, fasting for one to two days a week or partial fasting and drinking fruit juices, warm water and honey, will be helpful.

- Avoid eating substances prepared with refined wheat flour like white bread, cakes, pastries and abstain from dairy products and sweets prepared from milk and sugar. You should also avoid cold drinks, alcohol and deep fried foods and non-vegetarian diet.
- Follow an active pattern of life by increasing work and mental activity. Staying up late at night is beneficial as well. You should avoid taking too much rest, sleeping during the day (particularly after meals), applying oil to the skin, and bathing with cold water.
- Whatever the ultimate cause of obesity in your case, the immediate cause is energy imbalance, and weight reduction can be achieved only by reducing energy intake or by increasing output, or by a combination of the two.

AYURVEDIC REMEDIES

Following are the prescriptions to reduce overcorpulence:

- Diets and drinks that alleviate *vaata* and *kapha* and which can reduce fat.
- *Vasthi karma* (ayurvedic special procedure resembling enema) with drugs that are sharp, ununctuous and hot.
- Unction with ununctuous drugs.
- Intake of *Gudoochee* (*Tinospora cordifolia*), *Mustaa* (*Cyperus rotundus*), *Hareetakee* (*Terminalia Chebula*), *Bibhitaka* (*Terminalia belerica*) and *Aamalaka* (*Embica officinalis*).
- Administration of *Takraarishta*.
- Administration of pure honey.
- Intake of *Vidanga* (*Embelia riba*), *Naagara* (*Zingiber officinale*), *Yavakshaara* (a preparation of barley containing sodium and potassium bicarbonate), powder of black iron along with honey and powder of *Yava* (*Hordeum*

vulgarae) and Aamlakee (*Emblica officinalis*).

- Administration of Silaajatu.
- Administration of the juice of Agnimantha (*Clerodendrum phlomis*).
- The ayurvedic method to treat obesity is to go on a heavy and non-nourishing diet and drugs. For example, honey. Due to their heaviness, they minimise the force of the aggravated power of digestion and due to their non-nourishing nature, they help reduce the fat.

It is generally recognized that no two persons are exactly alike, scientifically speaking, nor do they react alike, and a diet or drug that agrees with one may disagree with another. That is why, ayurveda, while describing the principles of therapeutics, mentions that 'the physician must take into consideration the fact that drugs differ with respect to land, season, source, favour, taste, potency, post-digestive effects and specification, and also that men differ with respect to their body, constitution, age, vitality, gastric fire, morbid tendency, proclivities, homology and the state of disease. In other words, a more personalised approach is necessary while treating obesity.

POINTERS

- There are no shortcuts to reduce fat, and if there is one, it could be fraught with many dangers to the heart, nervous system and internal organs.
- Reducing weight requires understanding, will power, patience and a desire to work at it, diligently and faithfully.
- Diet, systematic approach, exercise, massage with special herbal oils, walk, Sveda karma (sweat bath) apart from the prescribed drugs, are some of the appropriate measures.
- Acquire health consciousness, not figure consciousness.
- Never skip your meal. Hunger can be controlled by taking three small meals a day.

- Don't mistake ayurvedic lightening therapies (langhana chikitsas) for simple fasting. Indiscriminate fasting will lead to starvation, which is definitely a destructive measure.
- Complete absence of butter or oil in the diet for a long period is not advisable as it would lead to deficiency of vitamin A, affecting the eyesight. Also, complete stoppage of salt is detrimental to health. The body requires a certain amount of salt, unless one is on a raw diet. Excess of salt results in retention of water, not of fat.
- Pure protein or meat diet will amount to losing weight rapidly but it is bound to tax the depurating organs, especially the kidneys. The best diet in the long run is the one that is nutritionally balanced which includes vegetables as well, especially raw vegetables and fruits.
- Heredity does play a significant role, but obese families are usually the result of patterns that are taught, not inherited.
- Vyaayaama (special exercise) is definitely helpful in burning some calories but the most important factor is that it brings the body into shape and creates a general feeling of well-being.
- There are periods when there is no apparent weight loss. It involves a real adjustment of the water balance in the system. This is no excuse for terminating the treatment as this phase is automatically followed by weight loss, if one continues with it.
- Obesity is best reduced by omitting white sugar and starch from diet for some time.
- Many people are in the habit of taking coffee or tea to satisfy their hunger. But they themselves contain sugar. So try to reduce the intake.
- Other medicines are Arogya vardhini vati and Medhohara vidangadi loha.



DISEASES OF THE RESPIRATORY SYSTEM

1. COMMON COLD

As the monsoon sets in, a variety of factors conspire to weaken the immune system and make us vulnerable to colds and flu. People tend to spend more time indoors and keep windows and doors closed, which, in turn, becomes a breeding ground for microbes. Children also tend to bring viruses back home from school.

Cold and flu are both acute viral infections. Cold typically produces nasal congestion, a scratchy throat, sneezing, blocked sinuses and Eustachian tubes. Flu tends to come suddenly with high fever, severe headache, body pains, exhaustion, and often a dry cough. These symptoms affect sleep during night, due to which the infected person experiences fatigue.

While it's a fact that there is no cure for cold and flu in allopathy, considerable research has been done in the recent years to check the effectiveness of medicinal plants.

Following ayurvedic herbal supplements and guidelines can help you weather cold and flu, during this season. The dosage, however, depends on the person and his constitution.

SELF-HELP GUIDELINES & AYURVEDIC REMEDIES

Defend Yourself: Strengthen your immune system and keep yourself healthy. Cold weather, stress, lack of sleep and poor nutrition can damage your immune system and increase susceptibility to viruses. Two plants that will help you strengthen your immune system are amla and tulsi.

- Amla is the highest natural source of vitamin C, containing about 1000 mg per 100g. This is so even in

dried powder. Recent clinical tests have shown that vitamin C in amla is more quickly assimilated by the body than the synthetic vitamins. Two to three tablespoonfuls of fresh juice of amla or half to one teaspoonful of powder of the same is ideal.

- Tulsi, on the other hand, is heat-generating in action and is useful in respiratory infections. Its anti-bacterial, anti-tubercular, anti-asthmatic and antiinflammatory effects have been confirmed in recent times. Leaves of this plant, mixed with an equal quantity of dried ginger powder, form an excellent substitute for tea during cold and flu. This may be taken by adding milk and sugar three times a day.

Early Stages: If you wake up with a scratchy throat and a stuffy nose, you know you have missed the opportunity to stop a cold before it starts. Garlic and turmeric will help solve your problem.

- Many ayurvedic physicians prescribe Garlic to help prevent cold, flu, to stimulate circulation, lower high blood pressure, aid digestion, and heal superficial wounds. Modern research has substantiated many of these therapeutic uses. Garlic is considered to be a natural antibiotic as it can destroy foreign bacteria and viruses. However, eating more than five pods a day may result in heartburn, flatulence and may also slow down clotting of blood. Scientific reports have shown that freshly taken garlic juice, and steam distilled garlic oil are effective in curing infections of mucous membrane. Internally, 4 grams of fresh garlic or 8 milligrams of volatile oil daily is recommended. But if you prefer capsules, make sure that they are enteric-coated to protect the allicin from stomach acids.
- Turmeric is a proven antiinflammatory agent. Add one teaspoonful of the powder or paste of turmeric to a cup of milk and take the same thrice a day. This helps in early recovery. Turmeric decreases malaise and corrects

constipation, if any. It keeps the lungs clear of phlegm and activates the liver. Fried turmeric powder taken with 1-2 gm of ghee mixed in hot milk, taken internally, gives immediate relief. Gargle with warm turmeric powder two to three times a day to relieve a sore throat. Inhalation of smoke from the burning turmeric brings quick relief by causing copious nasal discharge during cold.

Full-blown: If a cold has persisted for three or four days, your throat, sinuses, and lungs may be severely inflamed. The phlegm is thick and your chest feels tight and sore. Then try these remedies:

- If you are unable to sneeze or blow nose to open the blocked passage, then, here's solution. A powder made of equal parts of cinnamon, black pepper, cardamoms and the seeds of *Nigella sativa* (krishna jeeraka) is to be taken as a snuff.
- To stop a running nose, you can apply the paste made of nutmeg (jaiphal) and cow's milk along with a little opium on the nose and forehead.
- Black pepper and long pepper, taken along with dried ginger, is supposed to help chronic inflammation of the mucous membrane, such as those lining the throat, sinuses, and lungs. During cold and flu, the body loses moisture, and mucous becomes thick and difficult to expel. Thick mucous provides a place for germs to multiply. Trikatu, the combination of the above three, can help by keeping the mucous in the lungs wet and fluid-like, and decreasing inflammation of the respiratory tract. You can take half a teaspoonful of trikatu powder mixed with honey.
- Drink a glass of hot water mixed with the juice of two lemons and sugar to taste. Take the same at bedtime as it gives relief from nasal catarrh.
- Vyoshaadi vati, Anutaila (nasal drops), Kantaraaryaavalehya, Tribhuvanakeerti ras etc., are the

specific medicines for cold and fu. Laxmivilas ras, in the dose of 1 tablet thrice daily after meals with water, is a very effective remedy for common cold. Kafa ketu ras in the dose of 2 tablets thrice daily is equally effective. One to two drops of Shadbindu tel, taken intra-nasally twice daily also produce good results.

Prevention and Self Care: There are several ways in which you can keep the infection levels low:

- Keep away from others who are infected with cold.
- Wash your hands often. Turning a door knob or picking up a telephone recently touched by someone with a cold may infect your system, particularly if you rub your eyes or nose afterwards. The eyes and nose, rather than the mouth, are the most frequent routes for infection.
- Eat a well balanced diet and get enough rest.
- Take plenty of hot beverages. If you like hot chicken soup, have it. These substances open clogged nasal passages and let you breathe more easily.
- Drink plenty of fluids. Inhale steam to relieve a stuffed nose. Fill a bowl with hot water, put a towel over your head to trap the steam and inhale for a few minutes at a time. You can add aromatic oils of your choice for added benefits.
- Get some fresh air—take a gentle walk.
- Do not overheat the room. Let the body lose heat naturally.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Is it a cold or the fu?

A cold and the fu (also called influenza) are alike in many ways. But the fu can sometimes lead to more serious problems, like the lung disease pneumonia. A stuffy nose, sore throat, and sneezing are usually the signs of a cold. Tiredness, fever, headache, and major aches and pains

probably mean you have the fu. Coughing can be a sign of either a cold or the fu. But a bad cough usually points to the fu.

2. How to avoid getting a cold?

Wash your hands often. You can pick up cold germs easily, even when shaking someone's hand or touching doorknobs or handrails. Avoid people with colds when possible. If you sneeze or cough, do it into a tissue and then throw the tissue away. Clean surfaces you touch with a germ-killing disinfectant. Do not Touch your nose, eyes or mouth. Germs can enter your body easily by these paths.

3. Will antibiotics help?

Do not take antibiotics for a cold or fu. Antibiotics won't work against cold and fu germs. Antibiotics should be taken only when really needed.

4. Help yourself feel better?

A cold usually lasts only a couple of days to a week. Tiredness from the fu may continue for several weeks. To feel better while you are sick, drink plenty of fluids and get plenty of rest.

2. SINUSITIS

You cough now and then and sneeze a lot when you get up in the morning. You are feeling tired and your body aches. You suspect you have a cold. You go on to take medication for the common cold. It doesn't work. You now have a terrible headache as well. You finally consult the doctor. After listening to your history of symptoms, examining your face and forehead, and perhaps seeing a sinus X-ray, the doctor says you have sinusitis. This is the day the health problem begins.

When you say that you are having a sinus attack, you are actually referring to symptoms in one or more of four pairs of hollow cavities, or air spaces, known as para-nasal sinuses. These cavities are located within the skull or bones of the head surrounding the nose.

Each sinus has an opening into the nose for the free exchange of air and mucous, and a continuous mucous membrane lining joins each sinus with the nasal passages.

Therefore, anything that causes a swelling in the nose, either an infection or an allergic reaction can affect the sinuses. Air trapped within

an obstructed sinus, along with pus or other secretions may cause pressure and pain on the sinus wall. The swollen membrane at the opening prevents the air from entering into par-anasal sinuses that creates vacuum and causes pain.

SYMPTOMS

Sinusitis simply means inflammation of the sinuses. It has its own localised pain signals, depending upon the particular sinus affected. Recurrent headache or congestion that changes with head position and disappear shortly after getting out of bed is the characteristic of sinus involvement. You may have stuffy nose and loss of smell with yellowish green nasal discharge. You may experience bad breath; pain in the upper jaw and tenderness over the facial sinuses is also present. Fever, if present, indicates the acute nature of the disease. In addition, drainage of mucous from the sinuses down the back of the throat can cause a sore throat and irritate the membrane lining, and the upper windpipe causing cough.

CAUSES

Sinusitis can be caused by infections, allergies, or medicines. It can also occur because of changes in temperature, air pressure and irritants in the air. A cold can put you at risk of sinusitis. Overuse of decongestant nasal sprays, smoking, swimming and diving may also increase your risk. Nasal polyps and other problems with the sinuses also increase the probability of getting sinusitis.

Sometimes, fungal infections can cause acute sinusitis. Although these organisms are abundant in the environment, they are usually harmless, indicating that the human body has a natural resistance to them. Fungi can cause serious illness in people whose immune systems are not functioning properly. Inhaling airborne allergens such as dust, mould and pollen, often sets off allergic reactions that, in turn, contribute to sinusitis.

SELF-HELP GUIDELINES

- If you are susceptible to sinus disorders you should avoid cigarette smoke and other air pollutants. Inflammation in the nose caused by allergies provokes sinusitis. Drinking alcohol also causes the nasal-sinus membranes to swell.
- Do not swim in the pool treated with chlorine, since chlorine irritates the lining of the nose and sinuses.
- Air travel, too, poses a problem if you are suffering from sinusitis. A bubble of air trapped within your body expands as air pressure in a plane is reduced. This expansion causes pressure on surrounding tissues and can result in a blockage of the sinuses or the eustachian tubes in the ears. The result may be discomfort in the sinus or middle ear during the plane's ascent or descent. In the same way, some people with sinusitis feel worse just before a rainstorm, when the air pressure is changing.
- If you suspect that your sinus inflammation is getting worse with dust, mould, pollen, or food or any of the hundreds of allergens that can trigger a respiratory reaction, you should take medical help.
- Avoid curd, banana, ice-cold drinks, and frequent head baths. Mosquito repellents are the major culprits. If possible, use mosquito nets in the place of repellents.
- Household remedies such as turmeric, garlic, ginger, and black pepper are always helpful for both the prevention as well as cure of the disease.
- Although sleep is important to help you feel healthy, too much sleep may worsen your sinus symptoms. This happens because lying down increases nasal congestion. If only one side of your sinuses is affected, try lying on the side that is not congested when you go to sleep.
- For some people who have chronic sinusitis, exercise helps reduce congestion by increasing nasal discharge. For other people, exercise can worsen symptoms.

- Make sure your eyeglasses fit well. If your glasses pinch your nasal bridge, your symptoms may get worse.
- Steam can be very helpful in relieving congestion. You can use steam inhalations with or without astringents such as eucalyptus or menthol. Simply breathing in the steam from a cup of hot water works. You can also place a damp cloth heated in the boiling water or microwave oven over your face, but make sure you do not burn yourself.
- Saline rinse helps moisten dry nasal membranes, and makes the mucus wetter and easier to remove. The saline rinse can be prepared at home by mixing one-fourth teaspoonful of table salt with 200 ml of warm water. Use a bulb syringe to squirt the liquid into your nostrils and rinse the sinuses. Nasal wash with the lotion prepared from fried Tankana bhasma (borax) is also very effective.

AYURVEDIC REMEDIES

After diagnosing sinusitis and identifying a possible cause, your doctor can prescribe a course of treatment that will reduce the inflammation, relieve the symptoms, and build up the resistance power. Sinusitis is treated by re-establishing drainage of the nasal passages, controlling or eliminating the source of the inflammation, and improving the immunity power.

- Ayurvedic doctors generally recommend nasal drops such as Anu taila or Shabdindu taila to reduce congestion. These oils initially may provoke bouts of sneezing and running of water from the nose. If properly inhaled, these oils remove the blockage of the path from the sinuses of the nasal cavity.
- To reduce the inflammation, you may be advised to take medicines such as Khadiraadi vati, Vyoshaadi vati, and Kaanchanaara guggulu. These medicines will produce a soothing effect and reduce the inflammation.

- Other symptoms such as headache, pain, and nasal allergies are treated with appropriate medicines. Medicines such as Laxmi vilas ras, Chyawana praasha, Abhraka bhasma will build up the immunity if used for a long period.
- Chitraka hareetaki available in lehya form in the dose of 2 teaspoonfuls with warm milk twice daily is also an effective remedy that is commonly prescribed for sinusitis. Along with it, nasal inhalation of steam to which a few drops of Jeevan dhaara (a mixture of camphor, menthol etc.) are added, should be inhaled twice daily for about a week.

3. TONSILLITIS

The tonsils are a pair of small almond-shaped structures on either side of the throat, just behind and above the tongue. The structures act as a defence against infections that invade the body through the nose and mouth. Tonsils are a part of the body's protective lymphatic system, which dispatches cells that literally gulp down bacteria. Adenoids are structures located at the back of the nose, above the tonsils. They too help keep away respiratory tract infections.

Occasionally, bacterial infections overwhelm the tonsils. This infection, known as tonsillitis, is often one that children come down with between the ages of three and six. The symptoms are similar to those of fu, and so it may be difficult to distinguish between the two. The primary symptom is a sore throat that makes it difficult to swallow. Others are headache, ear pain, fever and chills. The tonsils become swollen and red. You may also notice specks of white discharge on the infected tonsils. Occasionally, the adenoids swell too, giving a nasal quality to the child's voice.

Earlier, the only known cure for recurrent throat infections was tonsil surgery. Medical opinion has changed, however, and now this procedure is less common. More often than not, having tonsillitis, even when it recurs up to seven times a year, does not mean that the tonsils should be removed (in a surgical procedure called tonsillectomy). You don't have

to pressurise your child's doctor to remove tonsils just because this was commonly done years ago or on the basis of any of these misconceptions:

1. Tonsils are useless.

This is not true. Medical scientists continue to report new evidence that shows tonsils are a valuable part of our defence mechanism against invading germs and viruses.

2. My child is always sick.

Chances are your child is going through a normal stage of growth, irrespective of the condition of his tonsils. Before a child can build up antibodies to fight off bugs, he must be exposed to them. Therefore, it is not unusual to expect a certain number of mild respiratory diseases during a child's early years.

3. My child will be healthier with them out.

It is a myth that a tonsillectomy and adenoidectomy make a child less susceptible to colds, sore throats and other respiratory diseases. Nor does the operation relieve an allergy or a chronic problem such as asthma.

4. They are enlarged.

What you observe as swelling may be the tonsils' normal size. Tonsils are very small at birth, and then enlarge gradually, reaching maximum size at age six or seven. Thereafter, they usually shrink to walnut size. Adenoids grow between the age of three and five and then shrink, eventually disappearing altogether during puberty. Unless a medical problem is diagnosed, enlargement alone is no basis for surgery.

In Ayurveda, tonsillitis is called as galaayu. Ayurvedic physicians consider recurring infection and inflammation of the tonsils to be a key factor in illness in later life. Therefore, the entire immune system is treated, aiming to eliminate the risk.

SELF-HELP GUIDELINES

- Gargle every few hours with a solution of a quarter teaspoonful of common salt or yavakshaara dissolved in half a glass of warm water or decoction prepared from the

bark of Acacia (Babul) tree, if your child is older than eight years.

- Drink plenty of warm beverages such as tea (with or without honey) and corn soup, if tolerated.
- Eat foods that are soft and easy to swallow.
- Avoid spicy foods, chocolates, milk-based sweets, sour substances, curds, butter milk, cold drinks and fried substances.
- Suck a piece of hard candy or medicated lozenge such as licorice extract occasionally (if your child is five years of age or older).
- Avoid passive cigarette smoking and atmospheric pollution.
- Apply hot fomentation externally on the front side of the neck twice or thrice a day.
- Take the powders of mulathi, vacha, and kulanjan after mixing together in equal quantities along with honey. This soothes the throat and cures inflammation.
- Make a solution with half gram of sphatika (alum) in 100 ml warm water and gargle with it many times a day.
- Avoid frequent head baths and rain showers.

AYURVEDIC REMEDIES

Your Ayurvedic doctor may recommend Khadiraadi vati. It is to be kept in the mouth and chewed slowly. Sitopalaadi choorna is another common medicine that is usually prescribed in a dose of three grams, to be taken thrice daily along with honey and ghee to minimise the symptoms. To develop immunity against any future attack of tonsillitis, you can give your child Agastyarasaayana lehya in a dose of one teaspoonful, twice daily mixed with honey.

Kanchanara guggulu in the dose of 2 tablets twice daily with warm water or Kapha ketu ras 2 tablets thrice daily or Tundikeri ras 1 tab thrice daily for 4-6 weeks, give permanent relief.

4. NOSE BLEEDING

Bleeding from the nose (naasagata rakta pitta is the ayurvedic term) is a common problem faced by most of us during the summer. If you have regular bleeding on one side of the nose, which happens any time without warning, you can attribute it to the weather, physical exercise, sneezing and having a cold.

If you are over 50 with frequent nose bleeds, it is advisable to get yourself checked for blood pressure, as the raised blood pressure damages the walls of the blood vessels, causing them to rupture and bleed copiously.

SELF-HELP GUIDELINES

- Sit upright in a chair and stay as quiet as possible. Do not tilt your head backward. Keep it in normal position to allow the blood to flow out from the front of the nose rather than down the back of the throat.
- Applying cold compresses or ice cubes above the nose or across the bridge of the nose will also help control the bleeding.
- If you are a smoker, then it is high time for you to stop smoking.
- Don't expose yourself to dry atmosphere. Air-coolers and air-conditioners are the best as they maintain some humidity in the air.
- Be careful in choosing oral contraceptives, as they can increase nose bleeds. Also, watch your aspirin and salicylates intake, as they can interfere with clotting.

AYURVEDIC REMEDIES

- Fine powder of alum (spatika/phitkari) along with cow ghee, instilled in the form of nasal drops, will stop bleeding.

- A small amount of camphor, dissolved in the juice of green coriander leaves, and dropped into the nostrils, stops the bleeding quickly.
- Soak 20 gm of dried aamla in water overnight and strain in the morning. Drink this water and apply the paste of aamla on the forehead and around the nose after grinding them to a paste.
- Red sandalwood (rakta-chandana), liquorice (yashtimadhu/mulethi) and cobra's saffron (naagakesara) act as good styptics. Take them in equal parts. Make them into a fine powder and take 3 gm of the same internally, with a glass of milk.
- Make a fine powder from the dried flowers of pomegranate and use it as snuff.
- You can eat ripe figs (peepal) with honey or jaggery to check bleeding.
- Juice of pomegranate flower, powdered fruit rind of Chebulic myrobalan (harad), powder of lac (lakka/lakh) and gum of silk-cotton tree (deokapas)—act excellently in controlling bleeding. Take them internally with honey, milk, *etc.*
- Alum, camphor and oak-galls (majuphala) in equal quantities should be powdered and dropped in small doses into the nostril from where the blood is oozing.
- Make a decoction by boiling equal parts of coriander, adhatoda (adoosa) leaf, grape fruit, fruit-rind of aamla, whole plant of parpaatakam (taap-Jhad). Add sugar, and honey and drink half a cup, twice a day.
- Make a paste of 2 gm of young tender leaves of banana tree and mix with 20 gm of crystal sugar and 1/4 litre of water. Take this mixture once a day regularly to control chronic bleeding from nose.
- Extract juice from crushed onion, doorva (doob) grass, Vitis quadrangularis (harjora) and shelled mango seeds.

Use the liquid as nasal drops.

- Old rice, barley, green gram, lentil, bengal gram, red gram, crystal sugar, honey, sugarcane juice, cow ghee, banana, snake gourd, bitter gourd, cucumber, stem of lotus, leaves of neem, fruits of pomegranate, coconut, wood apple and grapes help to cure nose bleeds.
- Keep away from sour, salty, and pungent tastes as they aggravate the problem.
- Vasa avalehyam in the dose of 1 teaspoon dose mixed into a cup of cold milk taken orally thrice daily controls bleeding. Anu tailam in a dose of 2-5 drops in each nostril can stop bleeding.

5. BRONCHIAL ASTHMA

Bronchial asthma is a common disease affecting 10-20 per cent of the population. In the vast majority of cases, the disease is mild and often unrecognised. There is evidence that the prevalence of asthma is increasing. In spite of better understanding of the pathophysiological processes involved in this disease, mortality from asthma has not been influenced, and in our country, it has been increased!

Asthma means twitchy airways! These narrowed airways may lead to coughing, wheezing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, symptoms often being worse at night.

Invasion of allergens into our daily life is the prime cause for it. Increasing industrialisation and spreading urbanisation are the provoking factors for it. Surprisingly, in a majority of the cases, allopathic drugs such as beta-antagonists, aspirin and non-steroidal antiinflammatory drugs often cause acute attacks of asthma. It is often aggravated by non-specific factors such as cold air, tobacco smoke, dust and acrid fumes, respiratory viral infection and emotional stress.

Asthma is a clinical condition characterised by attacks of wheezing, breathlessness and cough due to the narrowing of the air passage within the lungs. There are two types of asthma—extrinsic and intrinsic.

Extrinsic asthma occurs in the younger age group. Patients are usually

sensitive to pollen, house mice, feathers, food, fur, and drugs and have a family history of similar sensitivities. Exposure to the precipitating factor causes an inflammatory allergic reaction in the mucous membrane. This type of asthma tends to be sporadic. Intrinsic asthma tends to occur in older patients. It is a chronic condition. It has no apparent allergic cause or family history. This type of asthma is precipitated by bronchial infections, chronic bronchitis, strenuous exercise, stress or anxiety.

Throughout the world, bronchial asthma is on the rise. Out of sheer desperation, sufferers readily fall for any wonder cure. Consequently, hundreds of traditional healers make tall claims of having found a permanent cure for asthma. Most of these healers are quacks. Bronchial asthma is a complex disorder, which needs to be treated by a qualified medical doctor. Instead of searching for symptomatic relief or a magical cure, it is always better to concentrate on predisposing conditions and causative factors. If you identify them, then you can avoid frequent attacks.

AYURVEDIC VIEW

Bronchial asthma is known as tamaka svassa in Ayurveda. This medical science emphasises on gastro-intestinal factors apart from the respiratory affections to be the cause for bronchial asthma. That is why in the preliminary stage of the disease or just before its onset, the patient complains of indigestion, constipation or diarrhoea.

It is mainly a kapha syndrome, though differentiation of humoral types also exists. In other words, bronchial asthma can be from any of the three humours—vaata, pitta or kapha. Most often, the disease is kapha in nature.

Vaata type asthma is characterised by dry cough and wheezing. Additional symptoms are thirst, dry mouth, dry skin, constipation, anxiety and craving for warm drinks. Attacks occur predominantly at vaata time—dawn and dusk.

Pitta type asthma is characterised by cough and wheezing with yellow phlegm. Other symptoms are fever, sweating, irritability and need for cool air. Attacks are at pitta time—noon and midnight.

Kapha type asthma is characterised by cough and wheezing with abundant clear or white phlegm. The lungs are often congested producing a whistling sound. Attacks are at kapha time—morning and evening.

SELF-HELP GUIDELINES & AYURVEDIC REMEDIES

The treatment of asthma consists in the employment of remedies to allay the paroxysms, and in the adoption of measures likely to prevent the recurrence.

According to Ayurveda, the asthma of recent origin can be treated effectively but if it becomes chronic, it can only be managed. It is not the drug alone that can give relief from asthma but regulation of diet and the change of conceptual thinking can also play a great role. Along with proper medication and control over eating and living, asthmatics can get better and quick results.

- During an acute attack, a hot chest and shoulder pack, repeatedly given every half an hour, will have a sedative effect upon the nerves and a relaxing influence generally, giving the quickest and the most satisfactory relief.
- Hot milk or hot water when sipped little by little, provides immediate relief from the attack. The inhalation of steam-laden air may be provided by using an ordinary teakettle, attaching a funnel to the spout, and inhaling from the upper wide end of the cone. This is very effective in relieving spasms. In many acute attacks, relief will be found in a simple, hot hand-bath or hot foot-bath (immersing hands or feet up to the elbows or knees).
- Concussion to the cervical vertebrae from the fourth to the seventh for six to eight minutes with half minute interruptions every minute is excellent to relieve attacks.
- A creeping plant known as somalataa (*Ephedra vulgaris*) is found to be highly efficacious in relieving asthma. This grows in western Himalayas in abundance and is sent in

hundreds of tonnes to western countries where ephedrine is prepared from it. The powder is made from the whole plant, after drying in the shade and is given in the dosage of 100 to 250 milligrams, mixed with honey or water at the intervals of 8 to 4 hours.

- At the time of a full attack, wrapping a hot brick in a rough cloth and then giving dry fomentation with it to the chest is found to be useful in asthma. Smearing chandanaadi oil and then giving heat fomentation is also good. Turmeric paste used as poultice on the chest or warming the chest with it is very soothing.
- Taking pippalee (*Piper longum*) powder along with pure honey, makes an attack of asthma subside.
- The rhizomes of turmeric are to be baked in hot sand slightly and made into fine powder. This is to be taken 3 grams twice a day with sugar. The dose can be increased up to 10 grams in due course.
- During an acute attack of asthma, drink some hot water with the juice of one clove of garlic.
- Take the juice of the whole plant of *Solanum surattense* (chote kateri)—7 to 14 ml as such, or with Trikatu (equal parts of dried ginger, long pepper and black pepper)—one gm twice a day. You can even take *Terminalia bellirica* powder (baheda)—3 to 6 grams with 4 to 6 grams honey twice a day.
- Mustard oil (sarason) is a good remedy. Take a spoonful with jaggery, twice a day.
- If you wish to use a compound formulation, then here is a medicine for you. Prepare a decoction by boiling equal parts of root of *Adhatoda vasica* (adoosaa), rhizome of turmeric, stem of *Tinospora cordifolia* (giloa), and the fruit of *Solanum surattense* (chote kateri). Take this decoction internally, 14 to 28 ml with one gram of powdered black pepper twice a day.
- Smoke leaf of *Datura stramonium* (dhatura). This gives

instant relief but needs medical supervision.

SPECIFIC MEDICINES

1. Kapha kartari: This cuts the kapha like scissors, hence the name. About 200 milligrams of this powder is to be wrapped in a betel leaf and chewed slowly. As soon as the saliva mixes with the powder and reaches the stomach, its effect will be clearly felt. Even when the attack subsides, four doses of it are to be taken for the next 24 hours.
2. Bhaarangee guda: It is a good remedy for asthma. It also relieves all types of coughs. A dose of 12 grams is taken together with one boiled fruit of hareetakee (harad/ *Termilalia chebula*).
3. Kanakaasava: It is a proven medicine for asthma and allied complaints like cough, tuberculosis, bronchiectasis, chronic fevers and haemoptysis. The principal ingredient in this preparation is kanaka (*Datura stramonium*), which has been a reliable drug for asthma. 10-30 ml of this medicine is to be taken twice a day after meals.
4. Chyavana praasa and Agastya rasaayana: The main ingredient of the former medicine is amla, the richest source of vitamin C in nature. A peculiarity of this fruit is that its vitamin content is not lost by exposure to heat, as is the case with other drugs and fruits. The latter preparation is indicated in cases of asthma where the patient is constipated. However, chyavana praasha is the better remedy. Both the medicines can be taken in one teaspoonful doses thrice a day, preferably before food intake. They are slow acting remedies but are surer in the efficacy. In chronic cases, their effect is evident from the increasing gap between successive attacks.
5. Sitopalaadi choorna: This should be taken three or four times a day in one teaspoonful dose with honey. Since the drug is likely to cause irritation of the throat, it is better when mixed with honey and taken as a linctus. In severe cases, any of the following medicines can be tried with the advice of the physician—Swaasakaasa chintaamanee rasa, Swaasa kuthaara rasa *etc.*

In case a patient has a long history of asthma and other complications are present, the panchakarma therapy of Ayurveda gives satisfactory results.

DIET AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- Avoid foods that can aggravate asthma. Common foods, which trigger asthma are animal foods, milk products, food items which take more than two hours to digest, mucous producing foods such as curd, bananas, sugar, sweets, black gram, *etc.*
- Drink plenty of liquids, 8 to 10 glasses a day, to keep secretions loose.
- Find out what triggers your asthma, and get rid of things that bother you at home and work. Upper respiratory infections, either viral or bacterial often trigger an asthmatic attack. Exposure to smoke, perfumes, paints or other strong chemical odours are common culprits.
- Change in weather, exposure to moulds, animal dander, grass or tree pollen triggers asthmatic attacks. Certain food colourings and preservatives may trigger asthma. Drugs, such as aspirin, non-steroidal antiinflammatory drugs, beta-blockers, ACE inhibitors can precipitate an asthma attack.
- Make a special effort to keep your bedroom allergen-free. Sleep with a foam or cotton pillow, not a feather pillow.
- Use a plastic cover over the mattress. If possible, wash your mattress in hot water every week.
- Dust your room often, but not with a broomstick. Vacuum cleaning is the better option. Wear a dust filter mask when you do so.
- Avoid using perfumes.
- Wear a scarf round your mouth and nose in cold weather. Doing so will warm the air as you breathe in and will prevent cold air from reaching sensitive airways.

- Mild exercise, like swimming, is good for asthmatics. However, some asthmatics are allergic to chlorine, which rules out swimming in a public pool.
- During an asthma attack, sit up straight or bend forward. Do not lie down.
- If you have an air conditioner, change its filter regularly.
- Make a paste of rock-salt and old ghee or mustard oil. Rub it on the chest. Alternately, you can massage Saindhavaadi tailam on the chest.
- Place a hot towel over the chest. This helps to relax muscles and restore normal breathing.
- For an acute asthma attack, try steam inhalation. Add a few drops of eucalyptus oil in a bowl of hot water. Cover your head and the bowl with a towel. Be careful that the water is not so hot that the steam burns your face.
- You should not suppress natural urges like urination, thirst and cough. In addition, you must avoid smoking and moving in the sun.
- It may be useful to assess the alignment of your spine. Often the upper thoracic vertebrae are not in alignment with the spine after an asthmatic attack. This ultimately puts greater pressure on the lungs and possibly precipitates another attack. Getting a professional massage, specifically between the shoulder blades with Chandana bala laakshaadi taila can reduce the frequency of attacks.
- Yoga benefits asthmatics. The integral yoga approach to asthma includes correction of distorted posture and faulty breathing habits, methods for the expectoration of mucous, teaching a system of general muscle relaxation, techniques for the release of suppressed emotion and for reducing anxiety.
- In yoga, the purpose of functional breathing exercise is to learn to engage both abdominal muscles and the diaphragm in breathing. The duration of exhalation should

double the inhalation.

- During the process of breathing, you must learn to relax. Asanas such as suryanamaskaara, shashankaasana, pranamaasana, sarvangaasana, supta vajraasana, ushtraasana, hasta-uttanaasana, uttita-lolaasana, dwikonaasana, matsyaaasana are helpful. Pranaayaamas like naadi-shodhana, bhasrika, kapaala-bhaati are beneficial. If you want to try some higher range of yoga procedures, shat-karmas such as vastradhauti, shankha-prakshaalana, jalaneti are considered therapeutic. Other yoga related aspects like yoga-nidra, antar-mouna, meditation and relaxation techniques are useful to remove the source of nervousness.
- The first and foremost thing is to keep the bowels regular. Constipation should not be allowed to supervene. Exposure to cold should be avoided. Edibles, which are hard to digest, should also be avoided. The supper should contain easily digestible and light food. It is better if the food is taken before sunset. Boiled water should invariably be taken. If milk increases coughing or phlegm, it may be boiled with equal quantity of water and two or three numbers of pippalee (long pepper) crushed and ground.
- Curd, buttermilk, bananas, guavas and fried foods are to be avoided. All sour substances should be banned. Smoking—both active and passive, should be strictly prohibited.
- Allergens and other substances liable to provoke attacks of asthma are to be avoided. For example, pollen may be avoided by not being exposed to flowering vegetation and closing the bedroom windows. Mites in house dust may be prevented by cleaning mattresses and blankets with vacuum cleaners. Animal dander is best avoided if contact with dogs, cats, horses and other animals is avoided. It is better if feather pillows are substituted with cotton pillows. Often, allergens are produced from certain foods such as fish, eggs, milk, yeast and wheat. These should be carefully identified and eliminated from diet. Exposure to chemicals

is to be avoided. If it is not possible, it is better to change the profession. In addition, indiscriminate usage of chemical analgesics should be avoided. Physical and mental stress should be avoided.



DISEASES OF THE HEART & CIRCULATORY SYSTEM

1. HYPERTENSION

Blood pressure is the force of the blood pushing the walls of the arteries that carry blood from the heart to all body tissues and organs. Each time the heart beats (about 60-70 times a minute at rest), it pumps out blood into the arteries creating some pressure. Blood pressure is highest when the heart contracts and blood is pumped. This is called systolic pressure. When the heart is at rest, in between beats, blood pressure persists, but decreases. This is the diastolic pressure. These two figures, systolic and diastolic pressures, usually denote blood pressure.

Different actions may increase or decrease your blood pressure. For example, if you run for a bus, your blood pressure goes up. When you sleep at night, your blood pressure goes down. These changes in blood pressure are common.

However, some people have blood pressure that stays up most of the time. In your case, if it is high, you can take steps to lower it. Just as important, if your blood pressure is normal, you can keep it from going high. If untreated, high blood pressure can lead to serious medical problems, like:

- **Arteriosclerosis (hardening of the arteries):** High blood pressure harms the arteries by making them thick and stiff. This increases cholesterol and fat in the blood vessels, which prevents the blood from flowing through the body, and in due course, can lead to a heart attack.
- **Heart Attack:** When the arteries that transport blood to the heart get blocked, the heart doesn't get sufficient oxygen. Reduced blood flow can cause chest pain (angina). Ultimately, this 'block' may stop the blood flow completely, leading to a heart attack.

- **Heart enlargement:** High blood pressure makes the heart work harder over time. This causes the heart lining to thicken and stretch. Finally, the normal function of the heart fails, causing fluids to flood into the lungs. This manifests in the form of breathlessness.
- **Kidney damage:** The kidney acts as a filter and clears the body of wastes. High blood pressure, over a period, can narrow and thicken the blood vessels in the kidney. The kidney filters less fluid, and waste builds up in the blood. This may lead to a kidney failure.
- **Stroke:** High blood pressure can harm the arteries, causing them to narrow faster. If a blood clot blocks one of the narrowed arteries, a stroke may occur. A stroke can also occur when very high pressure causes a rupture in a weakened blood vessel in the brain.

For most people, there is no known cause of high blood pressure. This type of high blood pressure is called primary or essential hypertension. As the cause is not known, there is no satisfactory “cure” for this type of blood pressure. However, in most cases, it can be controlled.

In a few people, high blood pressure can be traced to a known cause like tumours of the adrenal gland, chronic kidney disease, hormone abnormalities, use of birth control pills, or pregnancy. This is called secondary hypertension. This type is usually cured if its cause is known and corrected.

SELF-HELP GUIDELINES

- **Maintain a healthy weight:** As your body weight increases, your blood pressure rises. In fact, being overweight can make you two to six times more likely to develop high blood pressure than if you are at a desirable weight. Losing weight means changing eating habits and increasing physical activity. Avoid or limit cheese, ghee, hydrogenated (vanaspati) oils, all types of meats and sugars. Prefer cereals, pulses, vegetables, and fruits, which

are rich sources of soluble fibre.

- **Be physically active:** An undesirable characteristic of modern life that distinguishes it from the past is the low level of physical activity. Epidemiological studies have suggested that sedentary lifestyle associated with overweight contribute to atherosclerotic arterial disease. Sweeping, window washing, washing vessels, bathing children, washing clothes, gardening, cutting grass, harvesting, walking up the stairs, plumbing, wood cutting, house building, carpentry, brisk walking, and games such as baseball, golf, volleyball, cycling, table tennis, swimming, horse riding—all these physical activities expend energy, improve blood circulation and tone up the muscles.
- **Restrict foods rich in salt:** Extra salt taken in the diet is retained and is likely to precipitate hypertension. Intake of as little as three grams a day is probably both safe and adequate for healthy adults. Common salt contains sodium chloride. Sodium keeps the body fluids in balance. Since sodium is widely distributed in natural foods, salt itself is not an essential food item. *Charaka Samhita*, the treatise of ayurveda, in vimaanasthaana, provides justification for not using salt in excess. You can blend herbs, spices, and salt-free seasoning blends for cooking, instead of salt. Spice your meat, poultry, fish and vegetables with appropriate items such as nutmeg, garlic, clove, curry powder, ginger, onion, pepper, mustard, lemon juice, tamarind juice, coriander, and pudina.
- **Avoid alcohol, smoking and mental stress:** You may have heard that an adequate quantity of alcohol is good for your heart. However, too much alcohol contributes to a host of other health problems, such as diseases of the liver and pancreas, damage to the brain and heart, and increased risk of many cancers, and foetal alcohol syndrome. Alcohol increases blood pressure and heavy drinking weakens the heart muscle. Avoid smoking. While

smoking is not directly related to high blood pressure, it increases your risk of heart attack and stroke. Avoid a stressful lifestyle. It is a well-established fact that ambitious and aggressive personalities are more prone to cardiovascular diseases and hypertension.

AYURVEDIC REMEDIES

- Recent scientific studies reveal that reasonable doses of onion and garlic are beneficial. They decrease blood lipids and glucose and increase clot dissolution. Garlic lowers blood pressure, by relaxing the smooth muscles of the blood vessels, allowing them to dilate. Both garlic and onions contain adenosine, the smooth muscle relaxant. Additionally, onions contain small amounts of prostaglandin A1 and E, substances with blood-pressure-lowering effect. While using onion, do not discard the outer skin as the fibres from onion skin are proved to possess potent fat-lowering properties. Both raw and cooked garlic and onions can benefit blood pressure, although raw garlic is thought to be more potent. You can make garlic paste and take one to three grams along with buttermilk.
- Sarpagandha is the most common herb that is used by the ayurvedic physicians to treat high blood pressure. The root of this plant is used as medicine. Allopathic system also uses this drug by isolating alkaloids. However, these alkaloids, when taken alone for a long time, may produce some adverse effects. Such undesirable effects are not found when the whole herb is used.
- One teaspoonful of onion juice along with honey taken twice daily is very beneficial for hypertension. Four teaspoonfuls of cow's urine taken early in the morning for 15 days, can cure hypertension, according to anecdotal reference.
- Chandraprabhaa-vati, Chandrakala-ras, Javaharmohra-

pishti are some of the important ayurvedic medicines that are used to treat high blood pressure. Specific ayurvedic therapeutic procedures such as Siro-dhaara, Siro-vasti, abhyanga help reduce anxiety thereby lowering the blood pressure. By the use of these therapies, the patient sleeps soundly at night and the blood pressure gradually comes down.

2. CORONARY HEART DISEASE

Blood cholesterol plays an important part in deciding a person's chance of risk of getting coronary heart disease (CHD). The higher your blood cholesterol level, the greater is your risk. Even if your blood cholesterol level is close to the desirable range, you can lower it and can reduce your risk of getting heart disease.

When you have too much cholesterol in your blood, the excess builds up on the walls of the arteries that carry blood to the heart. This hardening of arteries is called "atherosclerosis." It narrows the arteries and can slow down or block blood flow to the heart. With less blood, the heart gets less oxygen. With not enough oxygen available to the heart, there may be chest pain (angina pectoris), heart attack (myocardial infarction), or even death. Cholesterol build up is the most common cause of heart disease, and it happens so slowly that you are not even aware of it.

A high blood cholesterol level is not the only thing that increases your chance of getting heart disease. There are certain other factors such as your age, sex, family history of early heart disease and your personality can play the role. Other factors include cigarette smoking, high blood pressure, elevated serum cholesterol, diabetes, obesity, physical inactivity and stress. The more risk factors you have, the greater is your chance of heart disease.

Cholesterol is a waxy substance found in all parts of our body. It helps make cell membranes, some hormones, and vitamin D. Cholesterol comes from two sources—our body and the foods we eat. Blood cholesterol is made in our liver. Dietary cholesterol comes from animal foods like meats, whole milk, dairy foods, egg yolks, poultry and fish.

Foods from plants like vegetables, fruits, grams, and cereals do not have any dietary cholesterol.

Just like oil and water, cholesterol and blood do not mix. So, for cholesterol to travel through our blood, it is coated with a layer of protein to make a “lipoprotein.” Two lipoproteins are: low density lipoprotein, (LDL) and high density lipoprotein (HDL). When there is too much LDL-cholesterol in the blood, it can lead to cholesterol build up in the arteries. That is why LDL cholesterol is called the “bad cholesterol”. HDLcholesterol, on the other hand, helps remove cholesterol from the blood and helps prevent the fatty build up. Therefore, HDLcholesterol is called the “good cholesterol”.

Triglycerides are the form in which fat is carried through your blood to the tissues. The bulk of your body’s fat tissue is in the form of triglycerides. It is not clear whether high triglycerides alone increase your risk of heart disease. However, many people with high triglycerides also have high LDL or low HDL levels, which do increase the risk of heart disease.

SELF-HELP GUIDELINES

Whatever your blood cholesterol level, you can make changes to help lower it or keep it low and reduce your risk of heart disease by eating in a heart-healthy way, being physically active, losing weight if you are overweight and taking herbal supplements.

- Eating animal foods containing saturated fat is linked to high serum cholesterol and heart disease. Significant amounts of animal-based saturated fat are found in beef, pork, poultry (particularly in poultry skins and dark meat), cheese, butter, ice cream, and all other forms of dairy products. Avoiding consumption of these foods reduces cholesterol and has been reported to even cure existing heart disease.
- In addition to large amounts of saturated fat from animal-based foods, some people eat saturated fat from coconut and palm oils. Palm oil has been reported to elevate

cholesterol. Research regarding coconut oil is mixed with some trials finding no link to heart disease while other research reports that coconut oil elevates serum cholesterol.

- Curd and other fermented milk products have been reported to lower cholesterol in some. Until more is known, it makes sense for people with elevated cholesterol who consume these foods to select non-fat varieties.
- Eating fish has been reported to increase HDL cholesterol and is linked to a reduced risk of heart disease in most of the studies.
- Vegetarians have lower cholesterol and less heart disease than meat eaters, in part because they avoid animal fat. Vegans (people who eat no meat, dairy and eggs) have the lowest cholesterol levels, and going on such a diet has reversed heart disease.
- Soluble fibre from beans, oats, and fruit pectin has lowered cholesterol levels in most trials. People with elevated cholesterol can eat more of these high soluble fibre foods. However, even grain fibre (which contains insoluble fibre and does not lower cholesterol) has been linked to protection against heart disease, though the reason for the protection remains unclear. It makes sense for people wishing to lower cholesterol levels and reduce their risk of heart disease to consume more of all types of fibre.
- Eating sugar has been reported to reduce protective HDL cholesterol and increase other risk factors linked to heart disease.
- Drinking coffee increases cholesterol levels. The effects of decaffeinated coffee on cholesterol levels remain in doubt.
- Alcohol, on moderate drinking, increases protective HDL cholesterol. Alcohol also acts as a blood thinner, an effect that might lower heart disease. However, alcohol consumption can cause liver disease, cancer, high blood pressure, alcoholism, and, at high intake, an increased risk

of heart disease. As a result, many doctors of ayurvedic medicine never recommend alcohol, even for people with high cholesterol.

- Trans fatty acids (TFAs) are found in many processed foods containing hydrogenated oils such as dalda. Eating TFAs increases the ratio of LDL-to-HDL. Hence, hydrogenated oils should be sparingly used.
- It has been found in some researches that eating garlic helps lower cholesterol. Garlic is known to act as a blood thinner and may reduce other risk factors for heart disease. For these reasons, doctors of ayurvedic medicine typically recommend eating garlic as food, in curries.
- People with elevated cholesterol levels should avoid very large meals and eat more frequent but smaller meals. When people eat smaller meals, serum cholesterol levels fall more compared with the effect of eating the same food in three big meals.
- In a nutshell, eat wheat, rice, raagi, maize, jowar, whole and sprouted pulses, green leafy vegetables, fresh fruits, low fat milk, buttermilk, skimmed milk, egg white, fish, mixed vegetable oils, sugar in moderation, fresh fruit juices without sugar, light tea and food in natural state. Avoid cakes, pastries, butter naan, noodles, fried vegetables, banana chips, canned vegetables, dried fruits, canned fruits in syrup, cheese, butter, khoa, condensed milk, milk cream, egg yolk, prawns, all types of meat, especially with skin, oil dishes, butter, coconut oil, vanaspati, deep fried foods, sweets like chocolates, ice-creams, alcohol, pickles, papads, sauces, salt biscuits, and fried crispies.
- Exercise increases protective HDL cholesterol, an effect that occurs even from walking. Exercises have a relatively low risk of heart disease. However, overdoing it can actually trigger heart attacks.
- Obesity increases the risk of heart disease, in part because weight gain lowers HDL cholesterol. Weight loss increases

HDL and reduces triglycerides, another risk factor for heart disease.

- Smoking is linked to a lowered level of HDL cholesterol and is also known to cause heart disease. Quitting smoking reduces the risk of having a heart attack.
- People with feelings of hostility, stress and time urgency have a high risk of heart disease.

AYURVEDIC REMEDIES

- **Garlic:** Reports on all garlic studies, performed until quite recently, found cholesterol was lowered by an average of 9-12% over a one-to-four months period. Most of these trials used 600-900 mg per day of garlic supplements. Part of the confusion may result due to differing effects from dissimilar garlic products. In most but not all studies, old garlic extracts and garlic oil (both containing no allicin) have not lowered cholesterol levels in humans. Therefore, both of these supplements cannot be recommended at this time for cholesterol lowering. Persons wishing to consume garlic and with no aversion to the odour can chew one whole clove of raw garlic daily. Odour-controlled, enteric-coated tablets standardized for allicin content are also available and in some trials, appear more promising. Doctors, knowledgeable in the use of herbal medicine, typically recommend 900 mg per day (providing 5,000 mcg of allicin), divided into two or three doses. For health maintenance, half of the therapeutic regimen may be adequate.
- **Guggul:** This is a mixture of substances taken from the plant *Commiphora mukul*. This is an approved treatment for elevated cholesterol in our country and has been a mainstay of the Ayurvedic approach in preventing atherosclerosis apart from inflammatory disorders. One trial studying the effects of guggul reported that serum

cholesterol dropped by 17.5%. In another report comparing guggul to the drug clofbrate, average fallin serum cholesterol was slightly greater in the guggul group. Moreover, HDL cholesterol rose in 60% of people responding to guggul, while clofbrate did not elevate HDL. Daily intake of guggul is based on the amount of guggulsterones in the extract. The recommended amount of guggulsterones is 25 mg taken three times per day. Most extracts contain 5-10% guggulsterones, and doctors familiar with its use usually recommend taking guggul for at least twelve weeks before evaluating its effect.

- **Onion:** One trial studying the effects of onion reported that continuous consumption of onion for five months (80 grams daily) decreased serum cholesterol below normal in healthy humans. In another study, Dr. Radhakrishnan, principal of Trivandrum Medical College and Dr Madhavan Kutty have established in 1988 after seven years of research that to get rid of the disorders due to coronary disease or blood pressure, 100 grams of onion should be taken per day. This will assist the functioning of the heart by correcting thrombosis besides reducing cholesterol. While using onion, do not discard the outer skin as the fbres from onion skin are proved to possess potent fat lowering properties.
- **Turmeric:** Its derivative, known as curcumin, besides lowering serum cholesterol and blood sugar level, also acts as anti-oxidant to scavenge serum peroxides to prevent atherosclerotic changes. Traditional Ayurvedic Medicine (TAM) recommends an internal dosage of 10-20 ml infusion and/or 1-3 grams powder. A heaped teaspoonful of powdered turmeric can be mixed with water to slurry and drunk 2 to 3 times a day.
- **Musta** (*Cyperus rotundus*): This is the root of a grass variety. A trial, conducted by Bambhole and Jiddewar, studying the effects of this root in obese patients reported that oral administration of the root powder produced

significant reduction in body weight and lowered abnormal blood pressure. The powder of musta tubers was prepared and filled in capsules, 500 mg in each. Two capsules, two times a day with water were prescribed to the obese patients for two months. All of them lost weight gradually during the trial period. This study confirms the ethnic medical claim about the beneficial effect of musta in reducing fat. The probable mechanism may be by either suppressing an appetite centre in the brain or affecting the carbohydrate metabolism.

- There are certain other ayurvedic botanical cures for cholesterol lowering effect. Among them, *Saussurea leppa*, *Trichosanthes dioica* *etc.* are a few to mention.

3. VARICOSE VEINS

Any condition that puts excessive pressure on the legs or abdomen can lead to varicosity. Hormonal fluctuations during pregnancy and menopause may be responsible for the high proportion of varicosities among women. Dietary deficiencies or the loss of skin elasticity due to aging are the contributory factors. Prolonged standing or sitting, constipation, constructive clothing, lack of exercise, obesity, or repeated heavy lifting can interfere with normal circulation and can worsen existing varicosities.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Prominent dark blue blood vessels, especially in the legs and feet. (Bulging, ropelike, bluish veins indicate superficial varicose veins. Aching and heaviness in a limb, sometimes with swelling, but without any prominent or visible blue vein, after standing for any length of time may signal a deep varicose vein). Discoloured, peeling skin; skin ulcers; and constant rather than intermittent pain, are signs of severe varicose-veins.

SELF-HELP GUIDELINES

Surgery is often used to remove the unsightly damaged veins, by either stripping them out, or by tying or blocking them off, and thus allowing secondary channels of circulation to take over the load. However, this is not a permanent cure as there is a possibility of recurrence.

Herbal treatments, dietary changes and lifestyle modification appear to work by strengthening the walls of veins and other vessels. They primarily relieve symptoms of aching, heaviness, and swelling in the legs and ankles.

- Prefer whole foods diet with fresh fruits, including aamla, and citrus family fruits, making sure to nibble on the inside of the rinds, whole grains, especially, wheat and millet. To disperse build-up of a protein that makes skin near varicose veins hard and lumpy, try eating more garlic, onion, ginger, and pineapple, which contains bromelain, an enzyme that promotes break-up of fibrin. Eat plenty of fish and cut down on red meat as much as possible.
- It is beneficial to alternate between hot and cold baths. This is believed to stimulate circulation in the legs.
- Any programme of regular exercise stimulates circulation, improves muscle tone, and helps prevent varicosities. Walking and swimming are considered excellent therapy, as are gentle leg-muscle stretches and utilising a rocking chair while watching television. Start your morning with a brisk walk or finish your day with a swim or bicycle ride. Certain yogaasanas such as the Sarvangaasana, Halaasana, and Pawanmuktaasana series promote circulation and the drainage of blood from the legs.
- Regular massage can significantly alleviate discomfort associated with varicose veins. Never massage directly on varicose veins. For an additional benefit, you can apply Prasaarini tailam or Chandanabala laakshaadi tailam externally.
- Stop use of any tight clothing, especially if it constricts the waist area, and avoid use of high heel footwear, which stops normal muscle contraction in the lower leg, affecting

circulation.

- Raise the foot of the bed by up to six inches (place wooden block under the feet). This is not uncomfortable and helps gravity to ease backpressure on the veins at night.
- Avoid standing still for lengthy periods. If your job requires you to be on your feet constantly, stretch and exercise your legs as often as possible to increase circulation and reduce pressure build-up. Use elasticized support hose if your job entails excessive standing, or when pregnant, or if you are overweight. This should support not just the calf, but also the entire thigh, and should be put on before getting out of bed. When sitting, do not cross legs as this restricts circulation. Try to have a footstool, which allows the feet to be, at least level with the hips and ideally higher. If you like to sit with your legs crossed, cross them at the ankles rather than the knees for better circulation.
- Quit smoking. It may contribute to high blood pressure, which can aggravate varicosity.
- Stop using contraceptive pills. If you are pregnant, sleep on your left side rather than on your back. This minimises pressure of the uterus on the veins in your pelvic area. It also improves blood flow to the foetus.

AYURVEDIC REMEDIES

Reasonably, well-documented treatment for venous insufficiency is the tropical creeper Brahmi. In practice, four weeks of treatment with Brahmi frequently produces welcomed benefits in the discomfort of chronic venous insufficiency. The usual dosage of Brahmi is 10 to 20 ml, two times a day. Zinc in the form of Jasad bhasma, assists healing and collagen formation and helps maintain proper concentration of vitamin E in blood. Punarnavaadi guggulu, Naagaarjunaabhra ras, Chandra prabhaa vati *etc.* are some of the popular prescribed medicines.



DISEASES OF THE NERVOUS SYSTEM

1. MIGRAINE

A migraine is a terrible headache that tends to recur and is often accompanied by a feeling of nausea. The pain is usually felt on one side of the head. One may experience flashing lights, zigzag lines, bright spots, partial loss of vision, numbness or tingling in the hand, tongue, or face. Moving around makes the headache worse. While no medical tests confirm migraine, the diagnosis is based mainly on the above-mentioned symptoms.

Many scientists think migraine is a vascular disorder caused by a tightening (constriction) and sudden opening (dilation) of the blood vessels in the head, neck, or scalp. Others believe that an abnormal release of neuro-chemicals in the brain, such as serotonin or noradrenaline may cause the throbbing pain of migraine. In Ayurveda, two conditions, known as Ardhaavabheda (meaning literally the unilateral pain) and Anantavaata resemble the classical migraine.

CAUSES

Activities: In most of the individuals the following activities may possibly trigger migraine.

- Stress and time pressure, major hassles, major losses, anger, frustration, depression and conflict.
- Excessive relaxation and positive feelings such as excitement.
- Smells and fumes, tobacco smoke, light glare or dazzle, weather changes and high altitude.
- Onset of puberty in girls, monthly period, birth control

pills, pregnancy, delivery, oestrogen therapy and menopause.

- Motion and travel.
- Too much, too little or interrupted sleep.
- Hunger or fasting.
- Excessive activity (especially if you are not in good health).

Food: The food items that are known to trigger migraine are:

- Beer, wine and ‘hot’ liquor.
- Caffeine in coffee, tea, and cola drinks and some over-the-counter medicines.
- Dairy products such as ice-cream, milk, curd, cheese, butter and milk cream.
- Fermented foods, such as dosa and pickled foods.
- Grapes, lemons, bananas, figs, and raisins.
- Processed meats.
- Chinese food containing monosodium glutamate (MSG).
- Saccharin in diet foods or diet drinks.
- Onions and beans.
- Yeast-containing products, such as fresh breads and doughnuts.
- Nuts and peanuts.

Drugs: Medicines that might trigger migraine are:

- Blood vessel dilating drugs such as nitroglycerine.
- Drugs for high blood pressure such as reserpine, nifedipine; diuretics.
- Anti-asthma medications like aminophylline.
- Oestrogens including birth control pills.
- Painkillers in general—either overuse or withdrawal from

them.

SELF-HELP GUIDELINES

- Spread your workload evenly during the day to avoid highs and lows of stress at work or at home.
- Do not sleep excessively, especially during Sunday mornings and holidays.
- Do not get too tired.
- Eat at regular times, and do not skip meals.
- Do not eat or drink anything, you think brings a headache.
- Limit the amount of tea, coffee and painkillers you use.
- Watch your posture. Try to keep your neck straight.
- Keep your muscles relaxed when you are not physically active. Try not to frown or tighten your jaw.
- Restrict your physical activities in hot weather.
- Avoid bright or flickering lights, loud noises or strong smells if they trigger headaches.
- Remember the classic advice; “Ati sarvatra varjayeth” or moderation in all things.

TREATMENT PLAN

There are three factors which prevent migraine when used in a synergy. The first is to stop rebounding. The second is to reduce your exposure to avoidable migraine triggers. The third is to take preventive medication.

Rebounding occurs when you rely on painkillers and other quick fixes for temporary relief. Each time this type of medication wears off, the underlying problem—migraine— is magnified. Rebounding also blocks your ability to respond to the next two steps in preventing migraine: reducing your exposure to avoidable trigger factors and, if necessary, taking preventive medication.

Reducing exposure to trigger factors is difficult because these factors

from many sources are all mixed together at any given moment. This is the reason why people sometimes notice headaches after eating or drinking certain things, such as chocolate or wine, but sometimes don't get headaches despite exposure to these items. Therefore, it requires observation and patience on the part of the patient to make sure that any addition in the diet does not trigger a headache.

Preventive treatment pays dividends in the end but can seem to be difficult in the beginning, before it starts working. As a preventive treatment, you may be advised to take specific Ayurvedic medicines such as Soota sekharā rasa, Mahaavaata vidhwansana rasa, Dasamoolārishta, Shad bindu taila, Chandanaadi vati, *etc.* Once adequate headache control is maintained for at least several months, preventive treatment can be liberalised.

This may mean experimentally adding dietary items, one at a time, gradually reducing the dosage of preventive medication, or eventually, both. In this way, the level of preventive treatment required to maintain long-term headache control can be determined.

However, in the long run, it's the elimination of dietary triggers which is a crucial step in preventing migraine.

AYURVEDIC REMEDIES

- Hold an ice-pack to your forehead or temples to reduce your pain.
- Lie down in a quiet, dark room.
- You could try keeping a migraine diary. Writing down information about your headaches and what you were doing when they happened can help you find out what triggers your headaches. Then you can avoid those triggers.
- Take the juice of *Tinospora cordifolia* (giloy) in doses of 10 ml with honey.
- Apply a paste made of black pepper and rice with the juice of *bhringaraaja* on the forehead. Alternately, you can apply the paste of sandalwood also.

- Drop some ghee, medicated with saffron flowers (kesar) into each nostril and inhale deeply.
- Take three grams of coriander seeds, five grams of lavender flowers (ustukhudusa), five seeds of black pepper, and five badam. Grind with water, sieve, and take before sunrise. Soak badam overnight in water and remove the skin before preparing the paste.
- Godanti mishran in the dose of 1-2 tablets twice daily with lukewarm water controls migraine. Pathyadi kwatham, an oral liquid in the dose of 15 ml twice daily with equal water is a good remedy. Shirashoolaadi vajra ras is very useful in general migraine headaches.

2. VERTIGO

There is a popular misconception among people about dizziness and vertigo being the same. However, as both symptoms are extremely common, it is the time one knows the exact difference between the two.

Dizziness usually means a sensation of impending loss of consciousness; the patient feels lightheaded, as if he or she is going to fall at any moment. Dizziness is usually caused by problems related to blood circulation. Ayurveda terms this condition as Sanyaasa. Food and drink combined inharmoniously, suppression of the urgings of stools and urine, external injuries, and all acts which lessen the attribute of satva (goodness of mind) and excite the vaata lead to the problem. These penetrating into ducts which are the seat of mind and by which the mind communicates with the senses, increase the attribute of tamas (darkness) and produce loss of consciousness.

On the other hand, people suffering from vertigo will feel themselves or their immediate surrounding spinning around. They cannot stand upright. This condition is called Bhrama in Ayurveda. The vaata and the pitta become excited and combine with the attributes of rajas (passion) and result in the abnormal functioning of the balance mechanism situated in the inner part of the ear. If vertigo comes on very suddenly, it is often accompanied by nausea and vomiting, with profuse sweating. However, if the onset is more gradual, it may be simply described as

‘poor balance’.

In most cases, the common cause of vertigo is a viral illness of an insignificant nature, which leads to an onset of giddiness, nausea and sickness within a few days. On the other hand, any kind of discharge, perforation of the eardrum or infection in the middle-ear cavity can lead to balancing disorders with accompanying vertigo. Apart from this, abnormal heart rhythms, valvular heart disease and low blood pressure can also lead to dizziness, as can anaemia and migraine. The common factor in all these conditions is a decrease of oxygen being delivered through the circulation to the brain.

By far, cervical spondylosis, can lead to giddiness and vertigo. The neck contains two small arteries that run up through the vertebrae to supply blood to the back of the brain or the cerebellum. The cerebellum is essential for maintaining an upright posture and balance. That is the reason why in arthritic conditions of the neck, sufferers often experience vertigo when looking upwards or backwards, over their shoulder.

There is a specific condition called Meniere’s disease associated with recurrent vertigo, resulting in ringing in the ears and progressive loss of hearing. Attacks last a few minutes to several hours.

Anything that affects the normal structure or function of the brain may lead to vertigo or dizziness. Concussion after a knock on the head can lead to the condition, but so can more serious disorders such as brain tumours. However, there are other symptoms and signs to indicate that something more central and deep-seated is causing the dizziness or vertigo.

When a person is anxious or under an emotional shock, the rapid over-breathing can lead to this condition. Vertigo is also commonly seen in depression, in which case, it is often long-standing and constant.

Certain allopathic drugs, such as diuretics, aspirin, chloroquine and some antibiotics may provoke vertigo. Hence, these drugs should be used with caution.

SELF-HELP GUIDELINES & AYURVEDIC REMEDIES

Ayurvedic treatment is generally planned, based on careful evaluation of

the causative factors of vertigo. However, there are certain general remedial measures to bring down the attack.

- For a home remedy for vertigo, soak five grams each of dry amla and coriander seeds in water overnight. Strain in the morning and drink by adding little sugar.
- Mix powdered roots of vacha (sweet-flag), and ashwagandha. Take one gram of this with 250 ml milk, thrice a day.
- Take one to two grams of powdered whole plant of sankhapushpi with 100 to 250 ml milk twice a day.
- If the attack is preceded by headache, take powder of sarvagandha in 1-2 grams dose, twice a day with three grams of triphala powder.
- Muktabhasma and its preparations are very efficacious in treating vertigo. One to two pills of sutasekara rasa taken with amla juice and honey is very beneficial in vertigo.
- Saraswataarishta or ashwagandhaarishta are useful if the patient has nervous breakdown and vertigo.
- Yogendra ras taken in dosage of 120 mg twice daily with milk is another effective remedy.

3. MOTION SICKNESS

Motion sickness is the body's response to conflicting messages about motion (movement) that is sent to the brain. The cause for this is an imbalance between what the eyes see and what the delicate inner ear balance mechanisms feel during the movement.

Information about motion is obtained through the eyes and certain places within the inner ear. This information is then sent to the brain so that the body can respond to it by coordinating muscles and maintaining balance. Information from these parts may indicate that a person is walking, sleeping, or even moving. Other information is about the surface under a person or the area surrounding them. For instance, a person on top of a surfboard may not be moving but the surfboard and the water under the person is moving. Signals about the movement of

the water and the surfboard are directed to the brain. These signals provide information that helps the person to balance on the surfboard.

When the brain receives a message from the eyes and another message from the inner ears, a person may feel the symptoms of motion sickness. Conflicting information regarding motion can be seen when a person is travelling on a ship looking out at the waves in the ocean. The inner ear perceives the up and down motion of the body riding on the ship, while the eyes perceive the random forward movement of the waves. Another type of conflicting message occurs when the inner ear perceives movement while the eyes detect no movement. This can occur while standing or sitting still inside a moving ship or vehicle with no windows to visually explain the movement. It can also happen when a person is trying to read while travelling by a bus. The inner ear perceives the movement of the bus but the eyes perceive no movement.

Different factors, such as speed, may cause motion sickness. Slow movement up and down while moving forward is more likely to stimulate motion sickness rather than fast movement up and down. For instance, more people feel motion sickness while riding a camel than riding a horse. In the same way, motion sickness is often reported while travelling on the ships, but not while windsurfing.

Motion sickness is a normal response to an abnormal situation. Any person with a healthy inner ear system is susceptible to motion sickness. Some things make a person more susceptible and less able to adapt. This is due to the maturity or decline in function of the inner ear system. For instance, children between the ages of 4 and 10 are more susceptible to motion sickness. Women of any age, especially during menstruation or pregnancy seem to be more susceptible as well.

Motion sickness is different for every person. The intensity of symptoms depends on the person, along with the amount of time and the source of stimulus causing the motion sickness. Once the stimulus which causes motion sickness is removed, the actual symptoms usually stop within a few minutes to a couple of hours. However, motion sickness, like that experienced on a ship, usually ends within two to three days of travelling.

SYMPTOMS

The most common symptoms of motion sickness are nausea and vomiting. A person may also turn pale, and break into a cold sweat. An increase in oral secretions, yawning, fast breathing may possibly occur. Headache and drowsiness are not uncommon.

SELF-HELP GUIDELINES

- Eat a light meal not less than three hours before journey.
- Focus on a stable horizon or distant focal point while in motion.
- Limit your head movements.
- Remain in the centrally located place while travelling on a boat or plane.
- Sit up in front or drive when travelling on a motor vehicle.
- Avoid reading or needlework while travelling.
- Regular breaks and fresh air make the condition less likely.
- Do not talk about being sick in the presence of someone who is susceptible to motion sickness—anticipation makes sickness more probable.

AYURVEDIC REMEDIES

Treating motion sickness focuses on easing any nausea and vomiting. These symptoms are usually caused by certain substances that are released in the body and stimulate the vomiting centre in the brain.

- The most common and proven ayurvedic remedy for motion sickness is ginger. It is best used as a powdered rhizome in doses of two to three grams per day. It is preferable to take the ginger as early as possible, since the vomiting of ginger can act as a kind of ‘aversion therapy’.
- In case of children, fried seeds of cardamom can be given

with honey thrice a day.

- Sandalwood paste along with aamla juice is also effective in controlling motion sickness.
- In recurrent cases, the powder made from equal parts of aamla, cumin (jeera), clove (lavang), black-pepper and crystal sugar, should be given regularly with honey.
- The paste of seeds of tulsi is given with milk to control nausea and vomiting.
- Choornadaka is specially useful for vomiting of curdy milk in school going children. Here is how you prepare it. To 120 mg of pure lime, add 60 ml of water in a coloured glass bottle with a stopper. Shake at intervals of two to three hours. Keep bottle properly stoppered. Decant clean supernatant liquid for use. The usual dose is 3 to 5 ml.
- Elaadi-vati, mayurpuccha-bhasma, maadiphala-rasaayana *etc.* are some of the common prescribed classical medicines.
- Sanjeevani vati, ark vati, dev kusum churna, chardi ripu ras, kapur dhaara and ark pudina are other useful medicines.

4. STROKE

Stroke is the term used to describe a sudden loss of function in a portion of the brain. Typically, that loss of function results in difficulty in moving an arm or leg (paralysis). There may be loss of feeling or peculiar sensations in the same areas.

A stroke may also appear with problems relating to speech or vision, or as a convulsion. The loss of brain function is due to a sudden reduction of the blood supply to a portion of the brain. The reduced blood supply may be due to clogging of the blood vessel by thickening and hardening of the vessel wall (atherosclerosis) or rupture of the blood vessel with bleeding (haemorrhage). Once started, a stroke can continue to damage the brain either by clotting around an obstruction or by further haemorrhage.

Pakshaaghaata is the Ayurvedic term for paralytic affliction. The Ayurvedic texts generally attribute such condition to a block in Vaata's movement.

Some strokes, known as transient ischemic attacks (TIA) cause symptoms that last only for a short time. The cause of such attacks is not certain but is generally thought to be due to a spasm of a blood vessel in the brain. A TIA can have many forms, from a momentary change of vision to a brief paralysis of a limb. Sudden lapses of attention or passing out are sometimes the only evidence of a TIA. When brain tissue is damaged by a stroke, it may recover fully, partially or not at all. Recovery may occur in a few hours or days, or may stretch out over many months. The major causes are hardening of the arteries (atherosclerosis), high blood pressure, and diabetes, which often hastens hardening of the arteries and increases blood pressure. People who smoke or are overweight are more prone to it.

While there is little that can be done to stop a stroke while it is occurring, there is much that can be done to treat and diminish the consequences of a stroke.

The majority of people who survive a stroke do well in terms of living at home, moving about independently and carrying out the normal activities of daily living. Thus, having a stroke definitely does not mean that one's life is irreparably damaged.

Anti-vaata drugs such as vaata chintaamani ras, ekaanga veera ras, vaata gajaankush ras etc., are used to treat this condition. In addition, a special regimen, including snehana (medicated oil application), pinda swedana (fomentation), nasya (nasal drops) and basti (special type of enema therapy) strengthens the muscle tissue and restores the neuromuscular function. These therapies expel toxins from different channels. They clear disturbances or blockades, increasing peripheral blood supply.

RECOVERY OF DAMAGED BRAIN TISSUE

A damaged brain can heal. Sometimes the healing is rapid and complete when the damage is minimal, as with a TIA. But recovery can also occur after a regular stroke when the damage is greater. Recovery may be

complete but usually, after a regular stroke, it is partial. However, the recovery of brain function can be quite significant, because other parts of the brain can assume some of the functions of the damaged portion. Thus it is very important to keep the possibility of brain function recovery in mind and do everything that will encourage recovery.

REGAINING MUSCLE FUNCTION

When the brain is damaged by a stroke, the muscles controlled by the portion of the brain are affected. For example, when certain parts of the left-brain are damaged, the right arm or leg may be weakened or paralysed. Initially after the stroke, the muscles are limp and move poorly or not at all. As time passes, whether they begin to function appropriately again or not, the muscles become tense.

Fortunately, muscle function can be recovered, and the brain is able to substitute some new connections for damaged ones. Furthermore, muscles unaffected by the stroke can learn to do new things and thereby substitute for impaired muscles. This recovery process requires panchakarma therapies and rehabilitation measures. However, nothing will work unless the patient himself or herself is actively, persistently and regularly involved in this programme. Only personal effort will make the programme work.

There is another important issue to remember. Unused muscles atrophy; they lose size and strength. In the process of atrophying, they also often scar and become less flexible. The processes of atrophy and scarring can only be prevented by use of the muscles. In ayurveda, 'abhyangana chikitsa' or massage therapy, works on this principle. Massage therapy gives the patient adequate exercise by passive movement of muscles and joints.

RECOVERY OF MENTAL ABILITIES

After a stroke, some people's emotional states change and they become susceptible to what appear to be rapid mood swings. They may laugh or cry suddenly, or become angry or withdrawn. While these mood changes

are not a consequence of altered thinking, to other people they may appear to be a result of thought changes. Mood changes are actually a result of damage to brain tissue and usually cannot be controlled by the patient. It is important for families and caregivers to recognise this and find ways to compensate or minimise the impact of outbursts. It may be that the emotional fragility is also a product of frustration, anger and depression, which are common among people who have had strokes. Difficulty in speaking after a stroke may happen. It is usually caused by loss of ability to understand or by loss of control of speech muscles, or by both. Whatever the cause, many people will not speak at all immediately after the stroke. Then abnormal speech will appear and improve gradually until normal or nearly normal speech returns.

It is important to recognise that sometimes, poor thinking is largely a result of reduced speed of thought. However, just as people with strokes can learn again how to do physical activities such as walking and eating, they can also learn, to some extent, to think and speak again. In all these areas of mental recovery, patience and assurance have a very important role to play.

MANAGING ABNORMAL SENSATIONS

Abnormal sensations because of a stroke, can be quite bothersome. Sometimes there may be simply numbness, but there can also be pain in the affected portion of the body or loss of the normal sensation. Commonly such sensation disappears or subsides significantly. However, sometimes they persist. When they persist, people sometimes gradually lose notice of them. Ayurvedic drugs such as mahaavaata vidhwansan ras can be effective sometimes without causing undesirable effects.

SELF-HELP GUIDELINES & AYURVEDIC REMEDIES

Gunja taila is one of the effective external applications in paralysis. It is prepared by boiling together, the pulp made of equal quantity of Gunja seeds (rattee or ghunghachee) and long pepper, in til oil or mustard oil, (four times of the pulp) and buttermilk, (four times of the oil) on slow

fame. After evaporation of the water content, it is bottled and used as a liniment.

Take the decoction of the bark of the root of drumstick with fried asafoetida and rock salt in doses of 20 ml. This is to be taken for a minimum period of 40 days.

Dashmoolaarishtha is very effective for toning up the nervous system. About four teaspoonfuls of it mixed with equal quantity of water is given twice daily until the symptoms subside. Mahaanarayana taila is good for external massage.

WARNING SIGNALS

- Sudden weakness or numbness in the face, arm or leg.
- Sudden dimness or loss of vision, particularly in one eye.
- Sudden difficulty in speaking or understanding speech.
- Sudden severe headache with no known cause.
- Unexplained dizziness, unsteadiness, or sudden falls, especially in conjunction with the other warning signs.
- Occasionally, strokes cause double vision, drowsiness, nausea or vomiting.

Because warning signs sometimes may last only for a few minutes and disappear, it may be tempting to ignore them. However, these mini-strokes could be your body's warning of a future full-blown stroke. So even if the symptoms go away quickly, seek medical help right away.

RISK FACTORS

- High blood pressure.
- Cigarette smoking.
- Heart disease.
- History of stroke, and
- Diabetes.

5. EPILEPSY

A seizure, commonly referred to as a fit, is caused by sudden, brief changes in the normal electrical activity of the brain. Seizures triggered by a temporary physical problem, such as exceedingly high fever, or a brain infection, or a near drowning condition are not considered related to epilepsy. When seizures continue to occur for unknown reasons or because of an underlying problem that cannot be corrected, the condition is termed as epilepsy.

SELF-HELP GUIDELINES

- A shower rather than a bathtub is considered the safest option for people with epilepsy.
- Both gas and electric cookers can be hazardous in the event of a seizure.
- A microwave oven may be a safer alternative.
- Avoid very hard and irregular surfaces, which may cause injury during a seizure. For those who have frequent and unpredictable seizures, stairs can be a major hazard.
- Accidents caused by broken glass can be avoided by the use of safety glass or by covering ordinary glass with a safety film.
- A bed placed against a wall or with protective cushions around it can help to minimise injury, which could be caused by falling out of bed.
- Sharp objects such as bedside tables or cabinets should be kept away from the bed.

AYURVEDIC REMEDIES

- *Charaka Samhita* recommends mega-doses of Mahaapancha gavya-ghrita, Brahmi ghrita, Vachaadya ghrita for internal use. Cow's ghee is considered extremely beneficial in this

condition. This regimen closely resembles the ketogenic diet that is gaining popularity in the west for treating drug-resistant cases of epilepsy. It is the special type of diet that is very high in fats and low in carbohydrates. It makes the body burn fat for energy instead of glucose.

- For first aid, make the patient recover from the attack; 5 to 10 drops of onion juice are to be dropped in the nose.
- Brahmi (*Baccopa monnieri*) and vacha (*Acorus calamus*) are the important herbs that are of particular use in this condition. Both these herbs grow in marshy lands. You can take a teaspoonful of brahmi juice or the powder of the root of vacha, or both of them together, after mixing with honey, twice or thrice a day.
- Alternately, take one gram of garlic paste with a 5 ml of til oil.
- Powdered root of mulathi (*glycyrrhiza*), 3 to 6 grams with half a cup of fresh kushmaanda (ashgourd) juice is also beneficial in this condition.
- In intractable cases of epilepsy, Jataamansi choorna, apasmaaraantaka ras are recommended.
- Brahatvata kulantak ras is very good in controlling epilepsy. Til oil or Brahmi oil are good for head massage.

6. INSOMNIA (LACK OF SLEEP)

Do you find yourself awake long after your family goes to bed? If insomnia bedevils your nights, you could find solace in the fact that you are not alone. It is estimated that one among four persons, especially those who have a hectic day schedule suffer from insomnia. Sufferers may have trouble falling asleep at night, wake up in the middle of the night or too early and can't go to sleep again.

Look at your child. Few minutes back, he was turning and tossing on the bed. Now, he is fast asleep, reflecting perfect tranquillity on his innocent face. Why have we forgotten to sleep like a child? Because we have learned to worry. We prefer to be more concerned.

On a typical day in our country, most people wake up feeling exhausted. They reach to shut off the alarm clock or window doors with sleepy eyes, to get more sleep.

Researchers have identified insomnia (lack of sleep) as a cause of serious disorders ranging from diabetes to high stress levels. The results show that it is taking a huge toll on the quality of life and the health of sufferers.

One of the reasons that insomnia is on the rise is the high stress levels and time pressures associated with modern living. The people would gladly get more sleep if they could, but the information age, which was supposed to make everything more efficient, has just made everything busier. Many people complain of insomnia, with stress during the day making them too tense or worried to be able to fall asleep at night. Lack of sleep, in turn, creates more stress on the job and at home. However, it is important to know at the outset that not all people require the same amount of sleep. Sleeping cycles vary among people and throughout a person's life. Moreover, while one person may only require four hours of sleep, others may need ten hours.

Ayurveda is against the idea of sleeping during the day, especially during winters. In summer, however, a short nap during the day is okay. People suffering from Sprue syndrome should sleep after intake of food. Patients suffering from chronic diseases and those having fever, require more sleep. Children require more sleep than elders. On the other hand, those who put in hard physical labour, require more sleep.

All factors, that are responsible for aggravation of vaata and pitta in the human body, result from sleeplessness. Environmental and dietary factors also play a prominent role, and studies show that for unknown reasons, insomnia is more common in females than males.

Sleep disturbances may have underlying physiological causes. Hence, treating the cause can solve the problem itself.

SOME RESEARCH FACTS

- In USA alone, sleep deprivation is the reason 60 per cent of road accidents—and drivers who stayed awake over hours,

suffered impaired coordination, reaction time, and judgement worse than drivers who were legally drunk.

- As far as health is concerned those who sleep less than six hours a night, don't live as long as those who sleep seven hours or more. Sleeping only four hours a night can cause weight gain, diabetes, and high blood pressure.
- During sleep, the levels of several immune system helpers increase in your blood. Among these are helpers that protect the body from cancerous tumours. For instance, the level of TNF or tumour necrosis factor, which is one of the body's most powerful cancer fighters, increases tenfold during sleep. On the other hand, lack of sleep reduces the level of natural killer cells, further compromising the immune system.
- If you stay up late, your exposure to electric light interferes with certain hormone cycles, especially the secretion of melatonin. When melatonin levels fall, estrogen levels rise. Too much estrogen has, in turn, been shown to promote the growth of breast cancer. Another indicator of this link is that blind women get breast cancer half as often as sighted women. Some studies indicate that other types of cancer are also less common among blind people.

SELF-HELP GUIDELINES

Fortunately, lifestyle changes and herbal medicines can help treat the problem. You can try these time-tested remedies:

- Do some exercise everyday—but never late in the evening.
- Avoid caffeine in all forms, especially after lunch.
- Avoid long naps during the day.
- Don't choose alcohol as a remedy for sleeplessness. Even though alcohol is a sedative, it can disturb the sleep. Remember that sleep is different from sedation.
- Drink buffalo milk. It contains rich amounts of an amino

acid, L-tryptophan, which induces sleep.

- Eat sweets before going to bed. Sweets contain high amount of carbohydrates, which in help inducing sleep.
- Take a nice, long, warm bath before bedtime. *Charaka Samhita* says that bath is the best remedial measure to counteract exertion.
- Read a book or do some repetitive, calm activity such as chanting a mantra.
- Avoid distractions that may hold your attention and keep you awake, such as watching a suspense movie or a thrilling game.
- Make your bedroom as comfortable as possible. Create a quiet, dark atmosphere. Use clean, fresh sheets and pillow and keep the room temperature comfortable, neither too warm nor too cold.
- Half a tablespoonful of fried cumin seed powder (safed-jeera) stuffed in banana cut length-wise is to be taken in the evenings. Alternately, inhalation of poppy seeds (gasagasaalu/afm) heated and wrapped in a cloth bag works excellently. You can even take glassful of milk with a pinch of nutmeg powder at bedtime.

AYURVEDIC REMEDIES

Most people, unfortunately, are treating insomnia either by going to the medical shop and buying over-the-counter drugs, or by consulting their conventional doctor. Neither solution is working—over-the-counter drugs like Avil contain anti-histamines, which knock you out, but do not induce good sleep or solve the underlying problem. Moreover, they weaken the immune system. Doctors tend to prescribe Calmpose-like drugs that are addictive within even a week of use. Moreover, it is not possible to induce a “natural” state of sleep with unnatural, synthetic, and in many cases, highly addictive drugs.

Ayurveda believes that the body has a deep, underlying integrity that

renews, refills, and take care of the entire human system. The disease takes its root when something interferes with this integrity. Therefore, ayurvedic remedies with plants and herbs are focused on regulating this integrity. These plants and herbs are again blended with their own natural integrity. The healing nutrients in these herbs unblock the shrotas or microcirculatory channels through which our body moves nutrients, hormones, immune cells, and so on. Once the shrotas are clear, you are satiated with ojas or essential energy that governs and connects the body, mind and spirit. The result is a restful sleep. Sleep is one of the three pillars of ayurvedic healing, the other two being diet and lifestyle.

Ayurveda identifies three types of sleep disorders.

Type 1: This is caused by vaata imbalance or mental stress. People, who toss and turn, unable to sleep because their mind is spinning, have this disorder. It results anxiety, worry, and rushed activity during the day. Following remedial measures will help:

- Eat more sweet, sour, and salty foods.
- Eat three warm, cooked meals at the same time everyday.
- Get to bed before 10.00 p.m. and rise by 6.00 a.m.
- Avoid rushed work hurriedly done.
- Include poppy-seed chutney (gasagasaalu) in your dinner.
- Massage your hands and feet with ksheerabala tailam.
- Use a relaxing aroma at bedtime.
- Drink a cup of warm milk before bed.
- Listen to some sweet music before bed.
- Anti-vaata drugs like vaata vidhwansan ras are useful.
Consult your ayurvedic physician before using them.

Type 2: This is caused by pitta imbalance or emotional trauma. This is intermittent awakening. With this disorder, you may fall asleep quickly but wake up frequently with palpitation, body pains, and emotional disturbances such as fear, anger, and sadness. Another pattern is that you wake up before dawn with 'get-up-and-go' mood, and find it difficult

to go back to sleep. Following suggestions will help:

- Avoid spicy foods.
- Eat more foods having sweet, bitter, and astringent tastes.
- Avoid skipping meals.
- Eat enough dinner so that you do not wake up hungry.
- Before bed, massage your feet with mahaa chandanaadi tailam.
- If you wake up in the night, take half-cup warm whole milk and one teaspoonful Gulkand (rose petal jam). Roses have a cooling effect on the mind, body, and emotions.
- If your head feels hot when you wake up in the night, mix three tablespoonfuls of coconut oil with 5 drops of lavender oil or badaam oil and massage it on your forehead.

Type 3: This is caused by kapha imbalance. Sometimes it is an early-morning awakening, sometimes it is characterised by sleeping but in any case, you feel sluggish, tired, and completely exhausted even though you have had a full night's sleep. Here is how you overcome this problem:

- Be sure to rise before 6.00 a.m.
- Do a morning massage with warm sesame oil or mustard oil.
- Exercise everyday.
- Sip warm water throughout the day.
- Avoid eating much heavy, sweet, sour, and salty food.
- Eat a light, warm dinner (ideal) and season the food with fresh ginger and a small amount of black pepper.

Brahmi, jatamansi, valerian and amla are pro-sedative, meaning that they help a person to relax into sleep.

The powder of these drugs are either taken separately or together in a dose of one teaspoonful, three times a day, followed by a cup of milk.

Sesame oil boiled with these powders should be used for massaging the head and body before bathing. Now let us analyse the properties of these herbs:

Valerian root: Indian valerian, also known as tagar in Hindi, works on the nerve channels by clearing out toxins from the blood, joints, tissues, colon and nerves. Its basic role is to rejuvenate. However, valerian should not be taken on its own. For it can have somewhat dulling effect. It is best used as part of some herbal preparation.

Jatamansi: It is called jatamansi because it resembles jata or the tangled hair of the tapasvi or ascetic. It has been found to increase levels of neurotransmitters like serotonin. It is a sedative, anti-depressant, and anti-epileptic cardio-tonic and is regarded as one of the most effective remedies for neurosis. Though it normally has a sedative effect on the central nervous system and is used to tranquillise an anxious or over-stressed person, it has been observed that it can also stimulate someone who is suffering from fatigue. This is because it balances the organs and systems of the body. It can be taken as a powder, about a quarter teaspoonful at a time. Or soak it in warm water for 4-5 hours, strain and drink, preferably at bedtime.

Aswagandha: This is an overall tonic for greater vitality and longevity. It enhances coordination between the mind and senses which, according to Ayurveda, is essential for good sleep. The recommended dose is half to one teaspoonful of powder taken twice a day followed, preferably by warm milk.

Brahmi: It is a powerful brain food, which supports and improves all aspects of mental functioning. It is a calming and tranquillising herb. A cup of brahmi tea or powder or any other preparation with brahmi, taken at bedtime, will induce a peaceful sleep and its regular use will help to cure insomnia.

Attention Please!

Do you

- Have symptoms such as dullness, poor muscle tone and a lack of spontaneity?
- Have a tendency to be bored or depressed?

- Have tension, fear, and anxiety?
- Suffer from decreased cooperativeness, loss of acceptance of constructive criticism. Irritability, temper outbursts, lowered attention span, impaired recent memory, decreased sex drive, physical complaints such as headache or backache, decreased interest in personal care?
- Rely on coffee, cigarettes, and stimulants or even alcohol or drugs?
- Notice a reduction in general health and joy in living?

If your answer is “yes” to a majority of these questions, it might be an indication that your stress levels are too high and you are not sleeping enough, or deeply enough, even if you do not have insomnia.

7. DEPRESSION

Life changes—such as the birth of a baby, divorce, losing a job or the death of loved one—can and do leave people feeling depressed, so can worrying about financial problems or illness. At times you may feel empty and depressed for no apparent reason. Some depression is normal and is a part of almost every person’s life. Whatever the cause, depression can be treated.

Symptoms of depression include—continuous feeling of sadness or blankness, feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, guilt and worthlessness, loss of interest in pleasurable activities, including sex, fatigue, sleep disturbances, loss of energy or enthusiasm, difficulty in concentrating or making decision, ongoing physical symptoms such as headaches or digestive disorders, that don’t respond to conventional treatment, crying and fearfulness, poor appetite with weight loss, overeating and weight gain.

According to Ayurveda, depression may be caused by an imbalance in either vaata or kapha dosha. The kapha type of depression is usually of a less serious nature. This is typical in the winter months when the weather is cold and there is less sunshine. We tend to go out less and are not very active during this season. The lack of activity coupled with the weather will increase the qualities of kapha dosha, due to which the

person might become slower, duller, less sensitive to his environment, and have a tendency to sleep for longer periods.

- Making sure that you exercise on a regular basis, eat lighter foods, avoid heavy foods such as cheese and meat, and increase vegetables in your diet. This will assist you in balancing your kapha dosha. Ayurvedic herbs like guggulu, turmeric, and trikatu may be beneficial for this type of Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD).
- When the depression is caused by an imbalance of vaata, it may become more serious in nature. That too, if praana vaata is aggravated, it can lead to depression, anxiety, overactive mind, and a feeling of stress and tension.
- Many people acquire a praana vaata imbalance due to their lifestyle. A regular schedule is the best to balance vaata—early to bed, early to rise, eating at regular times, regular exercise, regular meditation, and yoga. The daily meditation, praanaayaama and yoga should be included in your health regime.
- Try to substitute a positive thought for every negative thought that pops into your mind. Associate with congenial people, not negative people. To focus your attention away from yourself, do something to help someone else. Ayurveda advocates oil massage (abhyanga) and sirodhaara (warm medicated oils or liquids are streamed on the forehead) to bring down the aggravated vaata dosha. These therapies profoundly relax the nervous system.
- There are several ayurvedic herbs which assist in lessening the state of depression, which include jatamaansi (*Nardostachys jatamansi*) and brahmi (*Bacopa monnieri*). These herbs also calm your mind so that you feel more at ease when you do your meditation and yoga. Preparations such as brahmi vati, brahmi ghritam, saarasvataarishta contain brahmi as main ingredient. Consult your ayurvedic physician before using them.

8. STRESS

Ramesh, a 43-year-old manager of a computer sales company, spends a terrific amount of energy trying to get everything done. Unable to wait in line at the railway reservation counter or movie theatre; he also carries extra weight, has high cholesterol, and smokes three packs a day to relieve the tension.

Sunita, a 36-year-old mother of three, reports a range of physical symptoms relating to stress, including aches and pains in her lower back, neck, wrists, and knees. Restlessness made her rely on six cups of coffee a day just to keep alert and she seemed to catch every kind of cold and flu. She frequently suffers from 'depression blues'.

Ramesh and Sunita are not alone, most of the complaints people report in doctors' clinics today, are related to stress, and include insomnia, fatigue, anxiety, and depression.

Writing prescriptions for sleeping pills or tranquillisers may not solve the problem. On the contrary, it may produce rebound anxiety, rebound insomnia, and debilitating side-effects. Worse still, these drugs are addictive.

Fortunately, for Ramesh, Sunita and other such persons, it is possible to find natural, nonaddictive ways to restore balance to the body, mind and emotions through Ayurveda.

STRESS AND ITS AFTER-EFFECTS

Apart from the physical stressors, such as infectious disease and lack of food or shelter, today's stressors include rushed schedules and emotional pressures such as financial worries, work-related frustrations, and marital conflict. Equally important are spiritual difficulties, such as meta-physical emptiness and lack of fulfillment.

Stress is the excessive wear and tear on the nervous system. In today's stressed-out world, your optimum health and peak performance depend on remaining calm under pressure. Most debilitating types of stress, called negative stress or distress, generally occur when you view change

and pressure as burdens and rising demands as threats. You feel a sense of isolation, frustration and helplessness. This results in disease, disorder, and dissatisfaction.

Repeated or prolonged negative stress can trigger complex physiological reactions involving multiple chemical changes in the body. These lead to an exhaustion of mental, physical and emotional energies, thus increasing your susceptibility to disease. Research shows that stress raises blood cholesterol and blood pressure, and lowers immunity. It destroys brain cells, lowers IQ, and impairs memory and thinking. Cancer, heart disease, immune-deficiency diseases, and even the common cold are related to stress.

Now it is a known fact that free radicals (the reactive oxidising molecules that can destroy the cells internally, causing mutations in the nucleus and destruction of mitochondria) can cause damage to cells when the body attempts to defend against stress. Free radical damage results in less energy, and causes deterioration of the organs and systems of the body. Free radicals are causative factors in most of the degenerative diseases and hasten the aging process.

SELF-HELP GUIDELINES & AYURVEDIC REMEDIES

To be effective in treating stress, it is important to be individualistic. The ayurvedic approach is to target the causative factors and then bring that area into balance.

There are three different manifestations of stress from the perspective of Ayurveda— mental, emotional, and physical. Each requires different solutions and therapies.

Mental stress, according to Ayurveda, is caused by an overuse or misuse of the mind. For instance, if you perform intense mental work many hours a day, or if you work long hours on the computer, it can cause an imbalance in *praana vaata*, the mind-body factor concerned with brain activity, energy and the mind. The first symptom of *praana vaata* imbalance is losing the ability to handle stress. As you become more stressed, it alters mental functions such as *dhi*, *dhriti*, and *smriti*, or acquisition, retention, ability to think positively, to feel keen, and even

to fall asleep at night. To treat mental stress, you begin by managing mental activity. Secondly, you can take measures to pacify praana vaata.

- Favour vaata-balancing foods, such as sweet, sour, and salty tastes.
- Favour warm milk, ghee, and other light dairy products.
- Sleep well, minimum eight hours a day.
- Perform a full-body warm oil massage with ksheerabala tailam or dhanwantari tailam everyday.
- Try meditation.

Emotional stress can be caused by problems in a relationship, the loss of a relative, or any situation that might hurt the heart. Emotional stress shows up as irritability, depression, and emotional instability. It affects sleep in a different way than mental stress—it causes you to wake up in the night and not be able to sleep again.

With emotional stress, the treatment is quite different. Emotional stress disturbs saadhaka pitta, the mind-body factor concerned with the emotions and functioning of the heart. To stabilise emotional stress, always favour pitta-pacifying foods and routine.

- Eat sweet juicy fruits.
- Favour pitta-pacifying foods—ones with sweet, bitter and astringent tastes.
- Drink a cup of warm milk with Gulkand (rose petal preserve) before going to bed.
- Try sweet lassi with gulkand in the noon meal.
- Cook with cooling spices such as cardamom, coriander and mint.
- Massage with coconut oil or chandanaadi taila.
- Go to bed before 10.00 pm.

Physical stress is caused by misuse or overuse of the body, such as exercising too much or working for extended periods at a job that is physically taxing. You may experience physical fatigue along with

mental fogginess, difficulty in concentrating, and dullness of the mind. Excessive physical strain causes three sub-doshas to go out of balance: shleshaka-kapha; the sub-dosha concerned with lubrication of the joints and moisture balance in the skin, vyaana-vaata, that governs the circulation, nerve impulses and the sense of touch; and tarpaka-kapha, which governs the neurological factors. Another cause of physical stress is little exercise, which results in a slow digestion and the formation of aama, the digestive impurities that block the channels. In either type of physical fatigue, the cellular regenerating process slows down, and thus the cells themselves become physically tired. The treatment is to balance vaata and to support kapha to make the body more stable and strong.

- Take vaata-kapha pacifying (invigorating and energetic) diet.
- Perform the full-body warm oil self-massage everyday.
- Certain foods are also natural stress busters. These include almonds, coconuts, sweet and juicy fruits such as apples (cooked if possible), milk, lassi, ghee, and fresh cheese such as paneer.
- Dhaara treatment, an exclusive ayurvedic pre-panchakarma therapy is proved to be beneficial.

The general herbs recommended in stress are brahmi, ashwagandha and arjuna. Different formulations are available in Traditional Ayurvedic Medicine (TAM) with these herbs as main ingredients. In widespread research, brahmi has been found to enhance dhi, dhriti, and smriti. Ashwagandha is an adaptogenic, which means that it combats physical fatigue that converts into mental dullness. Research shows that arjuna supports cardiac health.

Stress, unfortunately, is a part of life for many of us. If you do not find ways to manage stress, it could lead to heart disease, peptic ulcer, or even cancer.

On the other hand, if you build your spirit to stress through natural methods, you can begin to experience stressors more as a challenge or a positive opportunity for growth.

Learn to evoke the 'stay and play' concept rather than the fight or flight response, with which you can truly live a stress-free life of self-actualisation, and become a healthy being.

9. SCIATICA

Sciatica is an inflammation of the supporting tissues of the sciatic nerve in the leg. In Ayurveda, it is known as gridhrasi. The condition is caused by the aggravation of vaayu that has resulted from strain to the back due to poor conditioning, posture, or due to back sprain caused due to structural damages such as ligament tear. Constipation and cold weather often precipitate an attack of this condition.

Sciatica pain usually occurs on one side when your sciatic nerve is stretched or pinched, usually by a herniated disc, although narrowing of the spine or other vertebral abnormalities can also cause this pain. Sufferer may experience mild tingling sensation to severe pain, which could also cause immobility. Many a time, sharp pain in one part of the leg or hip and numbness in other parts are experienced. The pain increases after prolonged standing or sitting. Sneezing, coughing, or laughing will aggravate the condition. If spinal narrowing is causing sciatica, sufferer may experience the pain after bending backwards or walking few steps.

Nobody knows why some people are more prone to sciatica. Most often, pain begins with an injury, after lifting a heavy object, or after making an abrupt movement.

A number of conditions may make people more susceptible to sciatica. A herniated disc, sometimes called a slipped disc, is the most common cause of severe sciatica.

Sciatica can also be caused by other problems, including inflammation, abscesses, blood clots, tumours, and obesity. Arteriosclerosis can also cause chronic low back pain. When it blocks arteries in the legs, it may cause pain that resembles sciatica caused by spinal stenosis.

SELF-HELP GUIDELINES & AYURVEDIC REMEDIES

When sciatica is not caused by a medical condition such as arthritis, osteoporosis— about 90 per cent of people recover within a month. Despite this, sciatica is still the most common reason for surgery, which can cost a lot.

- If you are experiencing acute lower back pain; lie down in a comfortable position.
- Lying on the side or the back with bent knees supported by a pillow relieves the stress on the back.
- Alternating ice packs and heating pads at about 20-minute intervals can also relieve the pain.
- Supportive back belts and braces may help some people temporarily, but they can reduce muscle tone over time. If you feel it is necessary, you can use them for a short period.
- Strict bed-rest for a couple of weeks is certainly helpful in sciatica. However, long-term bed-rest results in loss of muscle tone and bone strength, increases susceptibility of blood clots, and causes depression and lethargy.
- Begin by walking, stationary biking, swimming, and even light jogging within two weeks of having symptoms, but never force yourself to exercise.
- Getting adequate amounts of sleep, however, is very important and the healthy sleep patterns play a vital role in recovery from back pain and sciatica.
- Apply a paste made of gunja seeds on the painful parts. Alternately, you can use the paste made from dhatoora leaves.
- Nirgundi acts excellently in curing sciatica. Take the decoction made from leaves of this plant, in a dose of three to four tea spoonfuls twice or thrice a day.
- To get the symptomatic relief from nerve pain, you can take trayo dasaanga guggulu, two pills, twice a day along with water.

- In extreme cases, special therapeutic procedures such as vasti karma, kati vasti are advised. In such therapies, medicated oils are administered externally and internally to facilitate the mobility. Here is a typical prescription for sciatica:

1. Sinhanada guggul, 2 tablets twice daily with warm milk.
2. Godante mishran along with mahaa raasnaadi kwaatha.
3. Brihat vata chintamani ras, 1 tablet twice daily.
4. Maha a vishagarbha taila, for external application.



DISEASES OF THE URINARY SYSTEM

1. ENLARGED PROSTATE

The prostate gland is walnut-shaped and produces seminal fluid. Located below man's bladder, it actually surrounds a portion of the bladder and the beginning of the urethra.

Benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH) is a prostate problem that is less serious from a survival standpoint, but far more important in terms of the number of men affected. Hyperplasia is an excessive growth of normal cells, unlike cancer, where cells are abnormal. Therefore, benign prostatic hyperplasia means a non-malignant, excessive growth of prostate cells.

Ayurveda describes two conditions known as mootrakruchra and mootraaghaata, which coincide with the symptoms of prostatism. Mootrakruchra or strangury is characterised by severe pain in passing urine whereas in mootraaghaata, there is total suppression or intermittent flow of urine during urination.

Prostatism is often used to refer to the collection of symptoms caused by BPH. BPH symptoms can be divided into two categories—obstructive symptoms and irritative symptoms.

Obstructive symptoms include hesitancy, weak stream, intermittency, incomplete emptying, and terminal dribbling. Irritative symptoms include increased frequency, nocturia (increased urination during nights), urgency, urge incontinence, dysuria (painful urination), haematuria (blood in urine), enuresis (absence of urination), urinary tract infection, and urinary retention.

SELF-HELP GUIDELINES & AYURVEDIC REMEDIES

- Remain sexually active. Take hot baths. Avoid dampness

and cold temperatures. Do not let the bladder get too full. Urinate as soon as the urge arises. Take time to urinate when it is convenient even if there is no urge. Relax when you urinate. When you take long trips, make frequent stops to urinate. Keep a container in the vehicle in which you can urinate. Sit in a hard chair instead of a soft one whenever possible. Limit coffee, tea, alcohol, and spicy foods.

- Drink eight or more glasses of water everyday, but do not drink liquids around bedtime. Reduce stress. Do not smoke.
- You should avoid allopathic medications for colds and allergy that contain decongestants such as pseudoephedrine.
- Certain anti-histamines can also slow urine flow in some men with BPH. Other drugs that may exacerbate symptoms are certain anti-depressants and drugs used to treat spasticity. Diuretics and alcoholic beverages can also make matters worse.
- Pelvic floor muscle exercises are useful to prevent urine leakage. They strengthen the muscles of the pelvic floor that both support the bladder and close the sphincter. The exercises consist of repeatedly tightening and releasing the pelvic muscle. Since the muscle is internal and is sometimes difficult to isolate, it is better to practise while urinating. Contract the muscles until the flow of urine is slowed, or stopped and then release it. Generally, 5 to 15 contractions, attempting to hold each contraction for ten seconds, three to five times a day give good results.
- Some form of light exercises such as swimming, jogging, or walking is preferable, as is avoiding a completely sedentary lifestyle, which allows blood to stagnate in the pelvic area. If you must sit down all day at work, get up every two or three hours and move about; this stimulates blood circulation in the lower extremities. Massage, steam baths, and activities that produce sweating and increased blood

circulation are advised.

- Natural therapies have a long history of use in our country to support optimal prostate health. Gokshura (gokhru), whose botanical name is *Tribulus terrestris*, has been traditionally used in treating urogenital conditions. Take two teaspoonfuls of the fruit, grind coarsely, and bring to a boil in two cups of water until half the water remains. Take a cup of this. You can also take it along with sugar and milk if you prefer. Gokshura may also be boiled in milk. Similarly, two other botanicals deserve mention here. Both varuna (*Crataeva religiosa*) and punarnava (*Boerhaavia diffusa*) have been shown to be effective for symptoms of BPH. In different clinical trials, both these have shown significant antiinflammatory effect, especially pertaining to genito-urinary tract.
- Shilajit, a herbo-mineral compound ejected out of rocks during hot weather in the lower Himalayas is specially used in genito-urinary disease. For the dosage and duration, please consult your Ayurvedic physician.
- Kshaaras are the alkaline salts obtained from the ash of medicinal plants. Yavakshaara is one such substance obtained from dried wheat plant, before blooming. This contains altered form of potassium carbonate, which is indicated in enlargement of the glands with special concern to prostate.
- Long-term insufficient zinc intake is also linked to BPH. Good dietary sources of zinc include meat, eggs, and seafood. Yassada bhasma, obtained by calcinations of zinc is the specific medicine for this purpose. A daily dose of 125 to 250 mg with honey will give relief from the problem.
- Early & mild cases respond well to chandra prabhavati, 2 tablets twice a day with warm milk.

2. URINARY TRACT INFECTION

Everytime Lakshmi went to the toilet; she felt a burning sensation. Though she knows that something was wrong, she was too embarrassed to tell anyone about it. At times, she had an intense urge to go to the toilet, but when she went, she could only urinate a little.

Lakshmi's experience is not unusual—in fact, her problem, urinary tract infection (UTI)—is the most common reason for which women visit a doctor. About one out of five women gets urinary tract infection during her lifetime. That is not to say that men do not have UTIs. However, they are not prone to infection as often as women do.

SYMPTOMS

Many a time, the symptoms are not very obvious. But most often, the symptoms are only too obvious to neglect.

- The person urinates more frequently than usual.
- There is a sharp pain or burning sensation in the urethra while passing urine.
- There could be blood in the urine.
- The person has a feeling as if his or her bladder is full after passing urine.
- The person experiences soreness in the belly, back, or sides, and chills, fever, and nausea.

SELF-HELP GUIDELINES AND AYURVEDIC REMEDIES

Removing the cause of trouble can treat the problem. However, there are ayurvedic remedies that will reduce the burning sensation:

- Wash the genital area and drink a glass of water before intercourse.
- Urinate before and after intercourse.
- Drink at least eight glasses of water a day, preferably hot to dilute the urine and flush bacteria out of the bladder. Barley

water and coconut water can be used to dilute the urine.

- Avoid alcohol, spicy foods, chillies, and coffee. Restrict intake of beans, pulses, spinach, tomatoes, and ladyfngers.
- Go to the toilet as soon as you feel the urge. Empty your bladder completely when you pass urine. Do not give bacteria a chance to grow.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Wipe properly after urinating or having a bowel movement to prevent the bacteria from anus entering and the urethra.
- Wear cotton undergarments. Bacteria thrive in warm and wet conditions. Cotton helps keep you cool and dry because it lets through airflow. Do not wear tight jeans, pants, or undergarments.
- Avoid bath tubs. Take a shower instead of a bath.
- Avoid using strong soaps, feminine hygiene products, and antiseptic creams that may irritate the urethra.
- Eat a cup of curd made with active, live cultures daily. Curd contains *Lactobacillus acidophilus*, which may create an acidic environment and prevent the growth of unwanted bacteria.
- Taking Vitamin C in the form of fruit juices regularly makes urine more acidic and less hospitable to bacteria. Take six grams of equal parts of aamla and jaggery everyday.
- On the other hand, a solution of sodium bicarbonate (baking soda) alkalises the urine, which makes it less hospitable to bacteria.
- Apply hot compresses over the bladder. Do the same, but this time with a cold pack after half an hour. Powder of saltpetre (Shorakshar), applied on the bladder and covered with a wet cloth also gives better results.
- Boil 20 grams of corncob hair (hair of maize) in water and drink the infusion.

- Internally, take half a cup of decoction of equal parts of fruits of Gokshura (gokhru) and coriander (dhania), thrice a day.
- Most of the ayurvedic practitioners prescribe shilajit for this condition. Paashaanabheda (Bergenia ligulata) root powder will also help. Take a teaspoonful of the same.
- You can prepare an effective remedy by mixing the powders of cardamom—one part, root of paashaanabheda—half part, purified shilajit—half part, and long pepper—half part. Take this preparation in doses of three to four grams with half a glass of water in which rice has been washed, twice a day.
- Elaadi-choorna, taarakeswara ras, Chandraprabhavati, Pravaala-bhasma, Chandanaasava etc., are some of the important ayurvedic medicines which can effectively treat this condition. Consult your ayurvedic physician before using these medicines.

3. URINARY STONES

Kidney stones are one of the most common disorders of the urinary tract. People whose diet is rich in animal protein and low in fibre and fluids, are at higher risk of developing kidney stones. People working under high stress levels with a family history of kidney stones, patients who are bedridden, and people with high blood pressure are also prone to develop kidney stones.

The incidence of kidney stones has been increasing over the past 20 years. On an average, men have an incidence of one in 14 and women of one in 30. People between the ages of 20 and 40 are more likely to develop the condition, as are those with persistent heartburn and those who take antacids for long periods.

Crystals that form in urine and build up on the inner surfaces of the kidney can form stones in the kidney, the ureter, or the bladder. These stones contain various combinations of minerals and other chemicals, some of which are derived from your diet.

Normally, urine contains factors that inhibit stone-building substances from forming crystals, like magnesium, citrate, pyrophosphate *etc.* A deficiency in these protective substances can result in the formation of crystals. Changes in the pH of the urine, that causes acid or alkaline imbalances, can also affect stone precipitation.

Other causes of kidney stones are a disorder of uric acid metabolism, gout, excess, intake of vitamin D, and blockage of the urinary tract. Certain diuretics or calcium-based antacids may increase the risk of forming kidney stones by increasing the amount of calcium in the urine.

About 70 to 80 per cent of all kidney stones are composed of calcium generally combined with oxalate. Oxalate or oxalic acid is found in a number of common vegetables, fruits, and grains. About 2 per cent are composed of calcium phosphate. About 10 per cent of stones are made up of uric acid, which is the end product of purine metabolism—a nitrogen compound found in protein. Another 9 of stones to 17 per cent of stones are struvite: they are made of magnesium ammonium phosphate. Struvite stones are usually associated with certain urinary tract infections.

SYMPTOMS

In many cases, kidney stones develop silently. You may not experience symptoms in the beginning.

However, when symptoms occur, they frequently include severe pain and blood in your urine. Remember, the size of the stone does not necessarily predict the severity of the pain. You may notice blood in the urine if the stone becomes large. There may be nausea and vomiting. If fever and chills accompany any of these symptoms, you should suspect a urinary tract infection.

SELF-HELP GUIDELINES

- A good step to prevent any type of stone is to drink plenty of liquids—water is best.
- Minimise the intake of foods like apples, tomatoes,

asparagus, beer, berries, black pepper, cabbage and cauliflower, cheese, chocolate, cocoa, coffee, cola drinks, figs, grapes, ice-cream, milk, oranges, butter, pineapples, spinach, tea, vitamin C, and curd. Avoid food with added vitamin D and certain types of antacids that have a calcium base.

- If you pass acidic urine, you may need to eat less meat, fish, and poultry.
- Avoid sedentary lifestyle. At the same time, do not expose yourself to extreme temperatures and dehydrating conditions.

AYURVEDIC REMEDIES

- The bark of henna plant (Mehendi) is an effective remedy for removing urinary stones. Make a decoction by boiling one part of the bark in 20 parts of water until it boils down to a quarter of its original quantity. Take this decoction in doses of 20 to 30 ml, twice or thrice a day.
- Alternately, take the decoction made from leaves and seeds of radish (mooli) to expel the stones.
- Horse-gram (*Dolichus biflorus*) soup is an excellent food supplement.
- Paashanabheda and varuna are the two important herbs, which have proved to be effective in the treatment of urinary calculus. Either the rhizome of paashanabheda in the form of powder or the bark of varuna in the form of decoction can be taken internally.
- Kshaara parpati, shilajit, ashmari hara kashaaya, chandraprabhaa vati are some of the effective medicines used to treat the condition. Gokshura kada is an oral liquid, promoting easy urination and relieves burning sensation. It should be taken 3-4 times per day in doses of 15 ml with equal quantity of water. Ber patthar bhasma is another effective remedy. You can use them after consulting your

ayurvedic physician.



METABOLIC & JOINT DISEASES

1. DIABETES

Ancient scholars of Ayurveda knew Diabetes Mellitus some 3,000 years ago. The association of frequent urination with a sweet tasting substance in the urine was first reported in *Charaka Samhita*, the ancient Ayurvedic classic.

Allopathic drugs like insulin, sulphonylureas, biguanides have definitely helped in controlling the blood sugar levels and improving the quality of life but none of them has been unequivocally successful in maintaining normal glucose levels and avoiding later stage complications of diabetes. About 15 to 20 per cent of patients with newly diagnosed non-insulin dependent diabetes mellitus have little or no response to sulphonylureas and with each year of treatment, about 3-5 per cent of the patients, who have achieved better acceptable glycaemic control, lose their responsiveness. Biguanides therapy is associated with lactic acid disorders, water retention, and several others.

In spite of all the advances in therapeutics, diabetes still remains a major cause of morbidity and mortality in the world. As per the available data, there are at least 20 million diabetics in India.

Ayurveda recognises this disease right from the Vedic period with the name prameha. The word prameha denotes prabhuta mootrata (excessive urination) and aavila mootrata (turbid urine) and madhumeha means the flow of madhu (sugar) from the body. Depending on the physical constitution or body type (prakriti), or the health status of an individual, ayurvedic classics advocate two different types of therapy schedules for diabetics. They are:

1. Apatarpana (de-nourishment) and Samshodhana (cleansing):

This treatment is prescribed if you are obese and heavily built. In this, along with antidiabetic drugs, maximum stress is given on de-

nourishment of fats and elimination of endotoxins by way of various exercises, fasting and cleansing manoeuvres known as panchakarma (five fold therapies viz. emesis, purgation, enema, blood letting and errhines).

- 2. Santarpana (replenishment) and Brumhana (body bulk promotion):** This is prescribed if you are chronically ill, with low immunity and underweight due to the draining of essential nutrients. This therapy helps in providing the easily acceptable nutrients and micronutrients to rebuild body tissues and help strengthen the defence mechanism without increasing circulating blood sugar, fats and other metabolites. This prevents further damage and ensures enhanced healing and repair.

There are foods and herbs, which have a specific role in the treatment of diabetes. Some of them are:

- **Fenugreek seeds: (methi):** The medicinal qualities of fenugreek seeds are described in ayurvedic literature. In recent studies, it has been reported that the decoction of fenugreek seeds suppresses the urinary excretion of sugar and relieves symptoms of diabetes. It contains trigonelline, and an alkaloid known to reduce blood sugar levels. You can take the seeds after soaking them in water overnight or in powdered form with water or buttermilk 15 minutes before the meal. If you do not like its bitter taste, you can include the seed powder in food preparations such as chapati, rice, dal, or vegetables. The intake depends upon the severity of diabetes. Usually the daily dosage varies from 25 grams to 50 grams in two divided doses.
- **Bitter gourd: (karela):** This has a long history as food and medicine. The fruit and seeds of this plant contain most active blood sugar-lowering components. This contains an active principle called charantin, which is sometimes called plant insulin, as it closely resembles insulin from cows (Bovine insulin). For better therapeutic benefits, extract juice from four to five karelas every morning and take on an empty stomach. You can take the seed powder either

directly or in the form of a decoction. You can even prepare a curry. However, remember not to fry in oil or add sugar to this vegetable to counteract bitter taste; otherwise, the therapeutic benefits may be lost.

- **Jambul fruit: (Jamun):** The jambul fruit is regarded as a specific medicine in traditional Ayurvedic medicine because of its specific action on the pancreas. The fruit, the seeds, and the whole fruit juice are all useful in the treatment of diabetes. The seeds contain jamboline, which controls the excessive conversion of starch to sugar. For internal usage, dry the seeds, powder them, and take 3 grams, twice daily with water or butter milk.
- **Honey:** Since honey consists of velulose, it is not harmful in diabetes. Honey has antibacterial and antimicrobial activity due to enzymatically-liberated hydrogen peroxide. Some diabetics feel that they only need to stop taking sugar and honey to control diabetes. However, it is best for patients to know the daily ratio of sugar or honey. This ratio should not be taken at one time, but should be reasonably distributed throughout the day. One teaspoonful of honey provides 20 K cal of energy. If you can control other forms of food that are equivalent to 20 Kcal of energy, you are allowed to take one teaspoonful of honey per day. After a mixed meal, the stomach empties slowly. Therefore, honey eaten after a meal, will not raise blood sugar as much as when taken on an empty stomach.
- **Bael:** Though this plant is famous for its fruit, here we are interested in its leaves. They are scientifically proven to be antidiabetic. Drink fresh juice of leaves daily along with pinch of black pepper. This will take care of your excess body sugar.
- **Onion:** Researches suggest onion's medicinal value with reference to diabetes. While studying the correlation between Diphenylamine content of the ether extract of onion and its hypoglycemic activity, researchers have proved its antidiabetic nature. *Bhaavaprakasa*, an

Ayurvedic classic, quotes its rasaayana property apart from the aphrodisiac nature and strength promoting property.

- **Garlic:** *The Indian Journal of Experimental Biology*, few years ago published the antidiabetic effects of S-Ally Cysteine Sulphoxide (allicin) isolated from garlic. At the doses of 200 mg/kg body weight it has decreased Serum lipids, blood glucose and activated serum enzymes. Vaagbhata, the ancient scholar of Ayurveda, mentioned garlic as the best drug in treating vaata type of disorders. It is interesting to note that while classifying 20 types of pramehas, Ayurvedic classics have included diabetes under Vaataja pramehas. The Journal of Research in Medicine published another interesting finding about garlic. This has shown significant anti-coagulant and fibrinolytic activities by virtue of increasing whole blood coagulation time, prothrombin time, and fibrinolytic activity. In addition, it also possesses significant cholesterol decreasing properties. It is a well-known fact that major deaths in diabetes occur due to vascular and neurological complications. Eat 2-4 cloves of raw garlic everyday and you can keep the risks at bay. If it is too strong for you to take, there are garlic pills with or without odour.
- **Aloe:** The classic remedy for hyperglycemia is the gelatinous juice from the succulent Aloe-vera plant. This plant is very easy to grow. It does not need direct sunlight or much water. The aloe is inexpensive and can usually be found where plants are sold. To use it as medicine, cut off the top of one of the lower leaves. Either peel the skin off the leaf to get the gel or squeeze out the gel. Take one teaspoonful of this pulp and add to a cup of warm water. Optionally, you can also add one pinch of turmeric to the solution. Drink this regularly. In a study conducted on normal and alloxan induced diabetic mice, results were confirmed about the hypoglycemic action of aloe-vera. It is a well-known liver tonic and regular use tones up the hepato biliary system, and regulates sugar and fat.

- **Custard apple leaves:** A recent study reveals that 2-5 newly emerged leaves with 75 mg of long pepper if taken for 3-6 weeks, lowers blood sugar levels effectively.
- **Neem leaves:** Neem is an age-old remedy and does not require a trip to stores. It is easily available anywhere. Leaves made into juice or paste can be taken internally to lower blood sugar.
- **Cabbage:** A recent study reveals the antidiabetic effects of cabbage in streptozotocin diabetes in rats. The fascinating point is that this is as effective as insulin. As an afternoon snack, eat a cup of cooked cabbage. It is a low calorie, anti-cancer, fibre-filled food that lowers your excess sugar naturally.
- **Turmeric:** Ayurveda recommends turmeric as an exclusive remedy for diabetes. It is more effective if taken with an equal amount of amla powder. 'The Indian journal *Pharmacology* concludes in a study that the fine powder of turmeric has blood sugar lowering effects.

SELF-HELP GUIDELINES & AYURVEDIC REMEDIES

- Prepare decoction by adding Terminalia chebula (harad), Cyperus rotundus (naagarmotha), and Symplocos racemosa (pathaanilodhra) bark in boiling water and take internally, 40 ml twice daily.
- You can also prepare decoction by boiling rakta chandan bark, Terminalia arjuna bark (kakubha), Cedrus deodara bark (devdaar) and Saussurea lappa roots (kooth), and take 40 ml twice daily.
- Fresh juice of the whole plant of Tinospora cordifolia (giloy), along with honey may also be taken.
- One gram of triphala, shilajit, and lohabhasma mixture meet the mineral requirements of diabetics.
- Cold infusion of turmeric, triphala, and Berberis aristata

(daaru haldi) in the daily dose of 30 ml is a proven remedy that you can try.

- You can take powder of dried neem leaves added with turmeric, bitter gourd, and *Tinospora cordifolia* (giloy), two to three grams twice a day.
- During recent years, certain individual herbs are screened extensively for their blood sugar lowering effect. They are: leaves of *Gymnema sylvestre* (gudmar), bark of *Pterocarpus*, *Ficus bengalensis* (vat), leaves of *Cinnamomum tamale* (tej patta), *Foeniculum vulgare* (methi) and fruits of *Momordica charantia* (karela). You can use these herbs alone or in combination, 3 to 5 grams twice daily with water or buttermilk before food.
- The herbo-mineral preparations like shilajitvaadi vati, vasant kusumakar rasa, gokshuraadi guggulu can be taken after consulting a physician.

2. HYPOTHYROIDISM

The thyroid gland acts as the body's thermostat, controlling its basic tick-over speed. Undiagnosed thyroid problems can be the underlying cause in many recurring or nonresponsive health problems. Hypothyroidism is a condition in which the thyroid gland fails to function adequately, resulting in reduced levels of thyroid hormone in the body. During childhood, hypothyroidism can cause retardation of normal growth. There are many causes of hypothyroidism. Iodine deficiency is the major possible cause in our country. Some medical treatments, such as surgery or radiation to the thyroid gland, or certain drugs like lithium and phenylbutazone, may also induce the condition.

Failure of the pituitary gland or hypothalamus to stimulate the thyroid gland properly can cause a condition known as secondary hypothyroidism. Some people with goitre (an enlargement of the thyroid gland) also have hypothyroidism. Goitre can be caused by iodine deficiency, foods that contain goitre-causing substances, or other disorders that interfere with thyroid hormone production.

SYMPTOMS

Sluggishness of bodily functions is the criterion for diagnosis. Symptoms include depressed muscular activity, slow pulse, low blood pressure, hoarseness of voice, decreased immune functioning with recurrent infections, constipation, irritability, sensitivity to cold, depression, drooping and swollen eyes, swollen face, increase in allergic reaction, fatigue, weight gain, headaches, hair loss, lustreless hair, dry skin due to lack of perspiration, heavy and painful periods, and premenstrual tension.

SELF-HELP GUIDELINES

Consume foods that are naturally high in iodine such as fish, shell fish, white onions, vegetables and root vegetables such as potatoes, asparagus, *etc.* (Iodine content of vegetables, fruits and cereals depends upon the iodine content of the soil). Avoid foods that naturally slow down the functioning of the thyroid such as cabbage, mustard-greens, cauliflower, maize, sweet potatoes, and spinach. Avoid sulfa drugs and antihistamines, which aggravate this problem. Also, increase daily consumption of foods high in Vitamin B complex such as whole grains, raw nuts, and seeds; and Vitamin A rich foods like dark green and yellow vegetables.

AYURVEDIC REMEDIES

Mild cases respond to herbs such as kaanchanaara or punarnava. The bark of Kaanchanaara or the whole plant Punarnava can be taken in the form of a decoction, in a dose of 30 ml twice daily on an empty stomach. Kaanchanaara guggulu and Punarnawaadi guggulu that contain these herbs are popularly used for the treatment of this disease. Take two pills, twice daily. Associated constipation can be alleviated with intake of triphala choorna at bedtime. Take one teaspoonful of it with warm water.

Weight gain is treated with shilaaajit and calcium deficiency is corrected with Muktapishti or pravaala-panchaamrit. The treatment of thyroid

disease is not a speedy one and there is often a recurrence of symptoms, but these should gradually become less pronounced with proper diet control and appropriate remedies. Sensible exercise, rest and strict adherence to diet and drugs are essential for complete recovery.

3. ARTHRITIS

The rheumatic diseases—rheumatic fever, rheumatism, and rheumatoid arthritis—are acute and chronic conditions as the body is filled with ‘rheum’, a form of aama (residual impurities deposited in the cells as a result of improper digestion). This rheumatic disease provides a good example of an autoimmune condition (a disordered selfprotective mechanism) characterised by inflammation, soreness and stiffness of muscles, and pain in joints and associated structures. This can often be successfully managed by an Ayurvedic approach.

Rheumatoid arthritis is called Aama-vaata in Sanskrit, which means that it occurs when vaata (one of the three constituents that govern physico-chemical and physiological activities of the body) circulates aama in the body. While improper diet is the most important cause, other causes include exhaustion, frequent sex, intense worry, and emotional disturbances.

Improper fat metabolism in the digestive system creates a variety of aama, which shows a special affinity for the bones and joints. Since the membrane lining the colon is intimately connected with the nutrition of cartilage and bone, this aama swiftly reaches its preferred location and deposits itself. The immune system sweeps in to attack, and the disease is created. If allowed to continue unchecked, the inflammation becomes chronic and destroys the joint, which causes nearby muscles to shrink. All this happens because of undigested material in the colon.

The pain and stiffness in the muscles and joints increase gradually over weeks or months, accompanied by unusual tiredness and a general feeling of unease. In one out of every ten victims, however, it develops all of a sudden, followed by fever, severe uneasiness, body ache, indigestion, and tastelessness.

Like other autoimmune diseases, chronic rheumatoid arthritis displays two separate, alternating phases: exacerbation and remission. During the

exacerbation phase, there is acute inflammation of the joints. During remission, the symptoms disappear because the acute accumulation of the doshas (causative forces in the disease process) in the joints is scattered.

Because there is much aama in arthritic joints, any dosha accumulation in the digestive tract always tends to return to the joints and exacerbate the condition again. Health can return to the joint only if aama is treated. Effective management of arthritis involves immediate elimination of doshas during exacerbation, and gradual elimination of deep aama during remission.

SELF-HELP GUIDELINES & AYURVEDIC REMEDIES

The basic philosophy of therapy for rheumatoid arthritis is as follows:

- Food during an exacerbation should be light, little and liquid. Weak ginger tea taken with lemon and honey, if necessary, is best when your tongue is thickly coated. Then take rice, gruel, and green gram soup. Continue it for at least a week before going back to your normal diet.
- You should try to avoid animal fats, fried foods, dairy products, refrigerated food, white sugar, alcohol, chillies, potatoes, tomatoes, peppers, and tobacco. Reduce the use of salt.
- Of the oils, castor oil alone can reduce the inflammation and scrape out the aama. A film of castor oil should be applied on the affected joint, and then dry heat should be applied. Wet heat aggravates obstruction and congestion. Take a mixture of equal parts of sand and powdered rock salt, heat it in a pan and pour the heated powder into a cotton or linen bag, and apply it to the joint. It helps dry out congestion in the joint. Sunbath is also good for arthritic joints.
- The intake of bitter and pungent substances controls vaata and relieves aama. Especially during exacerbation, they

stimulate digestion indirectly and help reduce, inflammation. Bitterness is especially needed when there is severe and generalised body ache, loss of appetite, loss of taste, indigestion, and fever. Some commonly available substances which are wholly or partly bitter include: gudochee (*Tinospora cordifolia*), neem bark, *etc.* Bitter Ayurvedic compounds like mahaasudarshan choorna, *etc.*, actively help eliminate the allergic state from the system if used regularly for at least six weeks.

- Triphala guggulu, a compound preparation, is often useful in such conditions, since triphalas (three myrobalans) in it purify the system and long pepper improves digestion while guggulu, a plant exudate, controls the inflammation in the body. However, simhanaada guggulu is the best medicine during exacerbation. It contains castor oil as one of the important ingredients.
- If the digestive tract is coated with aama, it is wise to take 2 to 4 tablespoonfuls of castor oil plus a cup of strong tea made of dry ginger to thoroughly flush the colon and purify the joints.
- There is one simple recipe for rheumatic complaints. Crush 2-3 cloves of garlic, add it to a glass of diluted milk, then reduce to a quarter and drink it just before bedtime.
- Eating a balanced anti-allergic diet is appropriate when the exacerbation diminishes. Good Ayurvedic oils for rheumatic conditions are dhanwantara tailam, ksheerabalaa tailam, sahacharadi tailam and vishagarbha tailam. All these oils are medicated to purify and lubricate the joints. Intermittent medicated enemas, especially when bowel habits change and the lower tract is full of gas, are important to keep the lining of the colon healthy and clear of aama.
- Guggulu is useful during remission to remove old, adherent aama from the dhaatus (basic body structures which perform some specific actions). The best varieties here are

yogaraaja guggulu and mahaayogaraaja guggulu. Both contain more than two dozen pungent herbs for improving digestion, but mahaayogaraaja guggulu also has minerals in it for a greater rejuvenating effect.

- Simple yoga postures and breathing exercises encourage elimination of aama. As your health improves, supplement the yoga with energetic exercise. A regular exercise programme is especially important for overweight patients since heavy limbs put extra strain on muscles and joints.
- Mahaaraasnadi kaada in the dose of 20 ml with equal quantity of lukewarm water twice a day is beneficial. Brihatvaata chintaamani ras in the dose of 125 to 250 mg twice or thrice daily is the drug of choice.

ANTIINFLAMMATORY HERBS

The **Ayurvedic-materia-medica** lists a wide range of antiinflammatory drugs that can reduce the pain and swelling in case of different arthritic conditions. The treatises like **Charaka Samhita**, **Sushruta Samhita**, **Bhaava Prakaasa** etc, described these drugs. A good number of scientific inquiries have been made for evaluating the antiinflammatory activity of these medicinal plants by several researchers.

- **Ginger:** The Department of Environmental Medicine, Odenes University, Denmark (1989) conducted clinical studies on patients suffering from arthritis by giving dry ginger powder and fresh ginger. Better movement of joints was observed in these studies. Recent studies have shown that ginger is capable of preventing the synthesis of prostaglandins which are responsible for inflammation. These observations were published in the *Chemical and Pharmaceutical Bulletin*, 1992. For stomach ache, just take the infusion of dry ginger with a tablespoonful of castor oil. Dry ginger with sarjakshaara and a pinch of hing (asafoetida) is also a popular remedy. In chronic rheumatism, take the infusion of dry ginger just before

going to bed, and cover your body with blankets to produce copious perspiration. For the relief of arthritic pain, you can apply ginger externally as paint or plaster made by rubbing the tuber with little water.

- **Licorice root:** Gujral and his associates (1956) have claimed that yashtimadhu or licorice is the best herb for treating inflammatory diseases. After this study, Malhotra and Ahuja investigated and came up with the fact that the efficacy of licorice is due to glycyrrhinitic acid and its steroid nature. Licorice is popular today as it was 3,000 years ago and is freely available even at the grocery shops. Chew a piece of licorice or try its extract, which is even more effective. Its decoction taken after meals, aids digestion and acts as an antidote for peptic ulcers, gastritis and gouty arthritis.
- **Asafoetida:** If 2 gm of hing or asafoetida is dissolved in one tablespoonful of coconut oil and applied as an analgesic balm, it gives immediate relief from inflammatory conditions. In addition, the paste of hing mixed with lime juice can be applied over wasp, bee and scorpion stings.
- **Turmeric:** A volatile oil isolated from the fresh rhizomes of turmeric was found to possess marked antiinflammatory activity. So take a pinch of turmeric a day to keep degenerating diseases away. Externally you can even apply a poultice prepared by mixing turmeric powder with a little slaked lime and the white of an egg and give a mild fomentation for relief of pain caused by sprains, myalgia, dislocation of joints, boils, cuts, wounds *etc.*
- **Garlic:** Recent studies established the anti-arthritic nature of garlic. Daily doses can strengthen your immune system; rid you of pain, and even clear up your arthritic conditions.
- **Vitex negundo (Nirgundi):** Leaves of Nirgundi or Vitex negundo are recommended mainly in inflammatory, glandular and rheumatic swellings by Ayurvedic treatises.

- **Marking nut (Bhallataka):** Application of marking nut to ease joint pains is still prevalent in suburban areas of India. Recently, in some of the experimental studies, its use in the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis has shown that the patient's ESR had been reduced and Dxylose absorption had also improved. However, as this drug is a potent irritant, it should be handled very carefully.
- **Nyctanthes arbortristis (Paarijaata):** The alcoholic extract of the leaves of paarijaata has a significant tranquilizing as well as anti-pyretic effect and histamine-antagonistic and purgative activities. In a clinical study, the leafy decoction, 30 ml per day of this drug was administered in 24 cases of sciatica and statistically significant results were observed.

4. MUSCLE CRAMPS

A muscle cramp is an uncontrolled contraction of the muscle and produces intense pain. Muscle cramps most often occur in the calf or foot. They can also develop in other areas of the body. Muscle cramps usually happen while lying in bed or playing sports or exercising. Swimming, more than other sports, causes leg cramps in athletes during exercise. Cramps are the result of a muscle repeating the same motion too many times, and the mechanism for telling a contracted muscle to relax simply cramps out. The cause, in short, is muscle fatigue. Overuse, injury, muscle strain, or staying in the same position for a long time can produce cramping. Pointing the toes sharply can instantly cause cramping.

Night-time calf cramps usually strike a person when in bed. It is possible that the day's activities such as a tough workout, wearing high heels, or taking some drugs (diuretics) will spark the cramp. Diabetes, alcoholism, chronic kidney disease, Buerger's disease, all of which can cause damage of peripheral nerves and thereby cause muscle cramps.

Cramps during exercise can be prompted by a number of factors. Dehydration or sweating too much can create an imbalance in electrolytes (potassium and sodium) in the blood. Inadequate warm-up

before engaging in strenuous physical activity, overexertion, or muscle fatigue are common causes as well.

Ayurvedic term for muscle cramp is khalli vaata. Vyaana vaata, a biological force that regulates the functions of voluntary muscles, is vitiated in this condition. When the pain is confined to calf muscles of the leg, then the condition is called pindikodveshtana. If any metabolic waste, that should be normally eliminated from the body, does not get out, and circulates inside the body, it is likely to get deposited between nerve-endings and the muscle tissue. In Ayurvedic terminology this is known as aama, which is responsible for the causation of cramps.

SELF-HELP GUIDELINES & AYURVEDIC REMEDIES

- For prevention of leg cramps, there is a gentle stretching exercise that is worth trying. Stand facing a wall from a distance of one pace, and place your hands flat against it. Keeping your legs straight and heels on the floor, lean slowly forward until the muscles in your calves feel stretched, but are not painful. Hold the stretch for ten seconds, straighten up and relax for five seconds, then stretch again. Repeat this exercise three times a day. Some people are helped by lying on their backs and raising their feet in the air.
- Stay hydrated—drink plenty of water.
- Drink lemon-water with a pinch of salt, if the cramp attacks during a workout.
- Do stretching exercises before and after workouts. Do not over-fatigue muscles.
- Do not point your toes while stretching or sleeping. Try increasing your intake of minerals, especially, potassium, magnesium, and calcium, in the most absorbable form you can. Eat a banana before bed or potatoes either in cooked or baked form. Drink orange juice.
- Wear loose-fitting warm socks to bed.

- Avoid caffeinated beverages or chocolates after 4 p.m. A cup of warm milk before bed actually supplies you with more nutrients that enhance slumber.
- Establish a restful ritual—a bath, may be incense or candles, soft music, low lights—an hour before bedtime. Massage with ordinary til oil before taking daily bath. Make your mattress and bed coverings as comfortable as possible.
- Get checked for circulatory problems in the legs. Have your pulses examined, and talk to your physician about metabolic and electrolyte disturbance.

If you have a muscle cramp all of a sudden and do not know what to do, then for relief, try any of the following:

- Stretch the muscle by straightening the legs and flex your feet upward.
- Massage the muscle with mahanarayana taila or praharini taila to relax it. In winter season, these oils should be made warm and then applied for massage.
- Apply a cold pack to reduce the blood flow and relax the muscle.
- Take a hot bath or use a heating pad for relief.
- Sinhanaada guggulu is a good drug for the treatment of this condition. This drug has mild laxative effect and thus can be taken in constipated condition that is usually associated with muscle cramps. The dose is two tablets twice a day followed by a glass of warm milk or lukewarm water.
- Prataapa lankeswara rasa, lakshmivilaas rasa are some of the potent Ayurvedic medicines that are usually prescribed in stubborn conditions.

5. CHRONIC FATIGUE SYNDROME

Chronic fatigue and immune dysfunction syndrome (CFIDS) is a complex

illness that affects many people. It is characterised by incapacitating fatigue (experienced as profound exhaustion and poor stamina), neurological problems, and numerous other symptoms. So far, no objective way of diagnosing the illness has been found, such as a particular virus or bacterium.

There is evidence, however, that the disorder may be connected with poor functioning of the body's immune system. There is also an accumulating evidence to support the view that a persisting or re-activated viral infection may be the root cause of many cases.

CFIDS patients exhibit a clear pattern of symptoms, which include mental and physical fatigue, reduced tolerance for exercise, muscular aches, and pains.

Apart from fatigue, some patients also experience mental symptoms, such as memory loss and an inability to concentrate, which can become disabling. Some patients also suffer from sleep disturbances, enlarged glands, recurrent sore throats, alcohol intolerance, and unusual unsteadiness and clumsiness.

When approached, doctors usually look for symptoms of a curable disease that may cause fatigue. The most common medical conditions that can be responsible for low energy are anaemia, diabetes, low thyroid function, chronic liver and kidney ailments. These can be easily ruled out through routine tests.

If the history, physical examination, and laboratory studies do not point to a specific illness, usually anti-depressants are prescribed by the conventional doctors. For many patients, this approach does not address the deeper physical, emotional and spiritual issues underlying their lack of energy, and they continue seeking other, more holistic approaches.

According to Ayurveda, CFIDS or ojo-kshaya is a result of imbalances in vital energy caused by inappropriate diet, stress, and build-up of toxins in the body. Lack of vital energy is a problem that usually challenges allopathic medicine.

According to Ayurveda, fatigue represents a lack of coordination between body, mind, and spirit. Due to accumulated toxins in the mind-body system, the life force is unable to flow freely. For the same task to perform sufferers require double the energy.

From an Ayurvedic perspective, the key to releasing blocked energy is in identifying the patterns of behaviour that are disharmonious with a person's nature. Lifestyle, which suits a particular person, may be inappropriate for another. Learning about one's inherent mind, body nature and making choices to re-establish the balance is key to regaining vitality.

Taking steps to improve the basic functions of life—eating, eliminating, sleeping, loving, working—can gradually, but steadily enable you to recapture the vitality you have lost.

Usually, rasaayanas are used to treat this condition. Literally, rasaayana means the augmentation of rasa, the vital fluid produced by the digestion of food, which sustains the body through the strengthening of tissues. It is the rasa flowing in the body, which sustains life; when it stops flowing, life ends. Rasaayana is, therefore, the medium through which the rasa is maintained, freshened, and augmented. Rasaayana drugs increase body tissues, digestive power and metabolic process at the tissue level, functional capacity of the brain, strength and immunity of the body at functional level. Amla, aswagandha, shilajit, *etc.* are some of the general rasaayanas.

SELF-HELP GUIDELINES & AYURVEDIC REMEDIES

- Some people keep taking medicines and ignore the simplest of all remedies— rest! The principal cause of fatigue is lack of appropriate and timely rest. Make sure you maintain a good balance between rest and exercise.
- Do keep yourself occupied so that you do not feel isolated and more depressed.
- Avoid people with infectious illnesses.
- Take special care with food and drinks. Watch out for signs of allergic reactions and avoid any foods you suspect. Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables, and whole-grain foods. Keep all processed food, sugar, salt, and foods with additives, to the minimum.
- Be sceptical about unusual treatments such as mega-

vitamins and super-foods in tiny capsules. Most of them are without proven benefits.

- Unwanted vaccinations are said to cause setbacks; avoid them unless they are very important. Discuss the matter with your doctor and if you do have to be immunised, choose a time when you feel well.
- There are simple formulations you can prepare and take daily in small doses to get more energy. Take ½ cup of almonds, ½ cup of cashew nuts, ½ cup of crystal sugar, ½ cup of anise seeds, and 20 grains of black pepper. Powder all these items separately. Pass the powdered anise through a thin muslin cloth. Then mix all the ingredients thoroughly. Store this mixture in a clean dry container. Take a tablespoonful with hot milk daily whenever you are tired.
- New research suggests that CFIDS may be partially due to low adrenal function, resulting from different stressors affecting the normal communication among the hypothalamus, pituitary gland, and the adrenal glands. Licorice (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*) root is known to stimulate the adrenal glands and block the breakdown of active cortisol in the body. One report found that taking 2.5 gm of licorice root daily, led to a significant improvement in CFIDS.
- Ashwagandha choorna taken 5 gm twice daily mixed in a glass of milk is an excellent remedy.



DISEASES OF THE SKIN & HAIR

1. ACNE

Acne is not a physically painful or discomforting condition. Though the problem is common among teenagers, adults experience it too. For those adults who have acne, it can be even more embarrassing than for adolescents.

SELF-HELP GUIDELINES

- Acne is aggravated due to the food that you eat. Some people, who have kapha constitution, react to milk products, nuts, fats, fried and oily foods, chocolate, hydrogenated oils and sugar. Iodine rich foods, such as liver, cheese, iodised salt, and crabs have been associated with acne, and should be avoided.
- Apply an ice cube (wrapped in a soft piece of cloth) wherever you spot redness. It not only reduces the redness, it lessens the inflammation and helps the skin heal.
- Expose your body to sun and air, but do not sunburn. Fresh air and daily exercise are very important. Get sufficient sleep. Keep your bowels regular.
- Keep your bed sheets clean, as dead skin, oil, cosmetics, hair and dirt on the sheets will clog your pores further.
- Do not pinch the pimple, as it can lead to inflammation. Worse still, squeezing can leave scars on your face. However, if you are desperate, then use a hot, clean cloth or tissue to soften the pimple. This will allow you to break the pimple open with gentle pressure.

- Wash your face twice or thrice a day. However, avoid using soaps that dry your skin. Avoid oil-based cosmetics, as they tend to clog the pores on your skin.
- Wash your hair every third or fourth day.
- Several prescription drugs, including many types of contraceptive pills and corticosteroids, can cause or aggravate acne.
- Emotional disorder can disturb digestive and endocrinal functions, leading to inefficient digestion of oils and a potential increase in skin oil, which in turn, cause acne.

AYURVEDIC REMEDIES

- Clean your skin thoroughly and apply egg white with a cotton swab. Let it stay for several hours or overnight. Egg white acts as an astringent.
- Make a poultice of sugar with a small amount of water; wash your face and apply on the affected area. Sugar has an anti-bacterial effect.
- To treat affected area, make an infusion of tulasi (basil) leaves. Put two to four tsp of dried basil leaves in a cup of boiling water, steep for 10 minutes, cool, and apply.
- Place turmeric powder or tulasi leaves in a bowl of water, which has just been boiled. Cover your hair with a towel. Create a mini-steam bath for your face. Make sure to wash your face immediately afterwards, as dirt and oil can be removed more easily from open pores.
- Kumkumaadi lepam applied on the face after washing can give good results.
- Saaribaadyaasav taken 15-30 ml with equal quantity of water twice daily acts as a blood purifier and controls acne.

2. PSORIASIS

Psoriasis results in patches of thick, red skin covered with silvery scales, which usually itch and burn. Affected persons suffer from restricted movement in their joints, emotional distress and cracked skin. The disease may also affect the fingernails, the toenails, and the soft tissues inside the mouth and genitalia.

Scaling occurs when cells in the outer layer of the skin reproduce faster than normal and pile up on the skin's surface. In many ways, psoriatic skin is similar to skin which is healing from a wound or reacting to a stimulus such as infection.

Different types of psoriasis display characteristics such as pus-like blisters, severe sloughing of the skin, drop-like dots, and smooth-inflamed lesions. In Ayurveda, these may be correlated with Eka-kushta, Kitibha-kushta and Sidma-kushta.

Psoriasis affects one to two per cent of the population. One in three people reports a family history of psoriasis, but there is no pattern of inheritance. It can strike at any age, but most often between 15 and 35. Psoriasis is not contagious. About 15 per cent have joint inflammation that produces arthritis symptoms referred to as psoriatic arthritis. Psoriasis can be very painful, but the pain is more than skin deep. It causes disfigurement, and daily care always demands too much time. Embarrassment, frustration, fear, and depression are common.

In extreme cases, loss of self-esteem results in a complete withdrawal from society. However, to control it properly, one should take it lightly.

Psoriasis is aggravated by injury or irritation (cuts, burns, rash, insect bites). Medications (beta-blockers, used to treat high blood pressure, and lithium or other drugs used to treat depression), viral or bacterial infections, excessive alcohol consumption, obesity, lack of sunlight, overexposure to sunlight (sunburn), stress, cold climate, and frequent friction on the skin are also associated with flare-ups of psoriasis.

Ayurvedic treatment for psoriasis includes a strict diet regimen and drug therapy. These are often combined with panchakarma procedures that cleanse the body.

SELF-HELP GUIDELINES

- Cutting down of fats, animal protein, sugars, and the quantity of food consumed is recommended.
- Avoid alcohol intake. Ingestion of alcohol appears to be a risk factor for psoriasis.
- Daily, regular, short doses of sunlight that do not produce sunburn clear psoriasis. Vitamin D is converted in the body into a powerful hormone by sunlight.
- A moderate, warm climate, and visits to sulphur springs, are all useful.
- Bathing in water added with oil and applying moisturiser, can soothe the skin. Scales can be removed effectively and itching reduced with salt-water bath.
- A proper exercise programme can improve flexibility and mobility of the joints. For psoriatic arthritis, therapeutic exercise is often targeted at the soft tissues around the joints. Moderate bicycling is good for knees and ankles. Jogging or running can be counter-productive because it puts stress on the knees and hips. One can get the same benefits with a fast walk. In inflamed and immobile joints, the regimen includes simple stretching exercises.
- The warm water of an indoor pool can relax muscles and decrease pain.

AYURVEDIC REMEDIES

- Eat thin slices of onions, fried in ghee.
- Apply diluted lime juice, externally.
- Tie a fresh thin banana leaf on the affected area.
- Powder few almonds and boil thoroughly in water. Apply this paste on affected areas and let it remain overnight. Next morning, wash it off with water.
- Boil one teaspoonful sandalwood powder in three cups of water until it is reduced to one cup. Add a little rose water and sugar and take thrice a day.

- Grind cleaned grass (Doob) without the roots and turmeric in 4:1 ratio into a fine paste and apply on the affected areas.
- Grind a handful of fresh jasmine flowers and apply the paste on the affected areas.
- Boil one teaspoonful of powdered soap pod (shikakai) in one-cup water. Cool and apply on the affected parts.
- Drink fresh cabbage juice (½ cup) everyday, to ensure faster recovery.
- Garjan oil, obtained from the Garjan tree (*Dipterocarpus alatus*), made into an emulsion by adding equal quantity of limewater is applied on the affected skin.
- Capsaicin derived from hot peppers works on redness, scaling and itching. Mahaamarichyadi taila, an ayurvedic oil, contains pepper as one of the ingredients.
- Kushtaraakshasa taila, kitibhaari malahara *etc.* are specific applications for psoriasis. They remove the scaling of the skin and provide soothing effect.
- Pancha tikta ghrita guggul about 5-10 gm with Mahaa Manjistaadi kwaatha are to be used every morning & evening for 6 weeks. Mahaa tikta ghritam can also be used in similar lines.

3. ECZEMA

Eczema or dermatitis, as it is sometimes called, is a group of skin problems which can affect all age groups. The severity of the disease can vary. The general predisposing causes are: age, familial tendency, allergy, debility, climate, and psychological factors. Eczema usually occurs in infancy, at puberty and menopause. There is usually a family history of allergy, such as asthma, eczema, and hay fever. General physical debility predisposes one to eczema by lowering the resistance of the individual. Climatic extremes such as heat, dampness and severe cold, and also, psychological stress, promote the development of eczema. Local factors, for example, dry and greasy skin, excessive sweating, and

varicose veins predispose to eczema. The signs and symptoms of paama and vicharchika, that are described in Ayurveda, may be correlated with eczema or dermatitis.

DIFFERENT TYPES

1. Atopic eczema is the commonest form of eczema and is closely linked with asthma and cold symptoms. It can affect both children and adults, usually running in families. It is proposed that people with atopic eczema are sensitive to allergens in the environment, which are harmless to others. In atopic type, there is excessive reaction by the immune system producing inflamed, irritated and sore skin. One of the most common symptoms of atopic eczema is its itchiness (or pruritus), which can be almost unbearable. Other symptoms include overall dryness of the skin, redness, and inflammation. Constant scratching can also cause the skin to split, leaving it prone to infection. In infected eczema, the skin may crack and weep ('wet' eczema).
2. Allergic contact dermatitis develops when the body's immune system reacts against a substance in contact with the skin. The allergic reaction often develops over a period through repeated contact with the substance. For example, an allergic reaction may occur to nickel, which is often found in earrings, belt buckles and jeans buttons. Reactions can also occur after contact with perfumes, detergents, chemicals, rubber, and such other substances.
3. Infantile seborrhectic eczema is a common condition affecting babies under one year old, the exact cause of which is unknown. It usually starts on the scalp or the nappy area and quickly spreads. Although this type of eczema looks unpleasant, it is not sore or itchy and does not cause the baby to feel uncomfortable or unwell. Normally this type of eczema clears in just a few months, though the use of medicated creams and bath oils can help to speed up the recovery.
4. Adult seborrhectic eczema characteristically affects adults between the ages of 20 and 40. It is usually seen on the scalp as mild

dandruff, but can spread to the face, ears, and chest. The skin becomes red, inflamed and starts to flake. The condition is believed to be caused by the yeast or fungus growth.

This disease is usually constitutional, though as we have seen, it is sometimes due to local influences. No matter where the eczema may appear, it must be remembered that the poisons eliminated through these skin manifestations are carried by the blood. Therefore, eczema is really a blood or constitutional disease, so it must be treated as such. The ordinary methods of treating this trouble, with external applications alone, will be insufficient in most instances.

Such treatment simply heals the surface sores without removing the constitutional cause. One should realise that this is a constitutional difficulty, and should proceed with an Ayurvedic blood purifying process, commencing with snehana (literally, 'to oleate' or 'to make smooth, with oily preparations), swedana (to induce sweating by application of heat) and panchakarma (cleansing procedures—vamana, virechana, vasti, siro-virechana, and antrakata mokshana).

SELF-HELP GUIDELINES

There are a number of ways to manage eczema all of which begin with an effective skin care routine.

- Use a mild soap or no soap on the eczema. Warm starch bath in winter and cold plain water in summer helps a lot. After the bath, blot yourself with a smooth towel and avoid rubbing. If there is dryness of skin, an oil, butter or ghee massage for about an hour before a bath, helps lubricate and soften the skin. Do not take baths too often. Add olive oil to the water. In addition, take quick showers with warm (not hot) water. Washing your body with cold or warm water will help preserve your natural oils. Our skin is supposed to be slightly acidic, and soap removes this very important acid mantle because it is alkaline. The slight acidity of the skin protects us from bacteria, fungi, and

other micro-organisms.

- Avoid extremes of climate. Moderate temperature, with fresh air and the mild sun are usually beneficial.
- Stay away from wool clothes and blankets.
- Try to keep away from excessive sweating. For example, do not wear too many clothes.
- Take light diet. Avoid allergenic foodstuffs like excessive salt, tea, coffee, alcohol, milk, eggs, cheese, fish, sugar, hot spices, and food additives.
- Avoid cutting of vegetables especially garlic, onion, tomatoes, and ladies finger. Also, avoid peeling of oranges. Be cautious about marking nut, cashew nut, mustards, radish etc., as these may cause contact dermatitis. The same is true with hair dyes, kumkum, lipstick, face creams, nail polish and remover, eyebrow pencil, perfumes, depilatories, deodorants and perfumed hair oils.
- The other common offending substances are—rubber footwear, spectacle frames, furs, artificial jewellery, and synthetic clothes. Avoid contact with fluffy toys, grass, flowers and chemicals. Wear rubber gloves when you do housework. Put a little cornstarch inside the gloves. Alternatively, try latex gloves lined with cotton.
- Do not fatigue yourself, either physically or mentally. Learn to live within the limits of your mental and physical strength, knowing your inborn weaknesses. It is a chronic but not a serious disease and, therefore, do not get depressed. Avoid anger, resentment, and frustration. Rest to the affected part is recommended; bed rest becomes necessary in generalised eczemas.

AYURVEDIC REMEDIES

- Apply the juice of the tender leaves of *Terminalia catapa* (Jangali badam) over the affected parts.

- The emulsion made from Karanja tel (oil extracted from *Pongamia pinnata* seeds) and lemon juice is a very useful application.
- Prepare ointment by boiling together one part of til oil (sesame oil), 16 parts of milky juice of *Calotropis gigantea* (Madaara or Arka or Jilledu) and one part of turmeric. Apply it externally.
- One can expect cure by internal usage of tender leaves of *Tephrosia purpurea* (Sarapunkha) in the form of expressed juice for a longer period.
- Pancha Tikta Ghrita Guggul—2 teaspoonfuls mixed in warm milk taken on empty stomach is an effective remedy for eczema.
- Kadirarista mixed with equal quantity of water, should be taken in the dose of 20 ml twice a day after meals.
- Panchanimbaadi choornam half to one teaspoonful taken twice daily after meals, gives good results.
- Mahaamanjistaadi kaada, saaribaadyarishta, gandhaka rasaayana are some of the specific medicines that are used internally. Externally, mahaa-marichyaadi taila, guduchyaadi tailam are advised.

4. AGE SPOTS

Age spots are the yellowish-brown fat spots that look like large freckles and are thought to be caused by aging, too much sun, impaired liver function, and a dietary or nutritional deficiency. Like freckles, it is important to be cautious and aware of any unusual changes.

As we age, our metabolism changes and the liver may become so overloaded with toxins that it cannot get rid of them. Result is age spots. They take years to form and eliminating them takes time too.

SELF-HELP GUIDELINES

- Improve your diet to include fruits and vegetables,

especially in raw form. Drink eight to 10 glasses of water daily.

- Avoid sweets, caffeine, alcohol, tobacco, and junk foods.
- Avoid rancid oils. Refrigerate all after opening; store nuts and seeds in the freezer or refrigerator; store grains in a cool place; avoid all fried foods as the hot cooking oils contain substances that damage the skin.
- Take beta-carotene rich foods such as carrots, spinach, sweet-potatoes, pumpkin, mango, cauliflower, *etc.*
- Take potassium-rich foods such as banana, potato, coconut-water, curd, soybeans, orange, pumpkin, sweet potato, almonds, spinach, ground nuts, *etc.*
- Wheat flour, chicken liver, oysters, sunflower seeds, *etc.* contain reasonable amounts of selenium, which will also help the condition.
- Consume Vitamin E rich foods such as almonds, cashew nuts, groundnuts, soya beans, sunflower oil, sesame oil, groundnut oil *etc.* Vitamin E is an antioxidant that slows aging and aids in tissue repair.
- Zinc is important for your skin's health. Meat and poultry are generally high in zinc. Also include guava, papaya, amla, grapes, oranges, tomatoes, and such vitamin C rich foodstuffs in your diet.

AYURVEDIC REMEDIES

Try a remedy from the following for some months, and if the condition does not improve, try another.

- Rubbing fresh aloe vera juice or gel on the spots will help fade them. Use the gel twice a day for a month or two.
- Dab buttermilk on the spots. The lactic acid and other ingredients in the milk are beneficial to the skin. Buttermilk has been used for generations as a skin cleaner

and as a beauty aid.

- Apply castor oil on the spots in the morning and evening, and rub well into the skin. The spots should disappear within a month.
- Try using the Manjishta root. Add half-a-teaspoonful powder to plain hot water and drink. Used externally as a paste by itself or with honey, it heals inflammation and gives the skin an even tone and smoothness.
- Dab some fresh lemon juice on the spots twice daily. If you are going outdoors, wait for the juice to dry as it increases the skin's sensitivity to sunlight. It may take a few months, but the acidity will make the spots fade.
- Grate an onion and squeeze it through cheese cloth so that you have one teaspoonful of juice. Mix with two teaspoonfuls of vinegar and rub into the spots. Do this two times a day until the spots disappear.

5. HAIR CARE

Ayurvedic herbs have long been associated with hair care. Very often, various herbs are used in making conditioners, shampoos and rinses. If you were to consider your skin as a rolling landscape, the hair is tall grassland needing moisture, nourishment, and a firm root system to flourish. Therefore, the beauty of hair is largely dependent on your health.

Hair fall is the biggest and the most agonising problem of the youth today. Ayurvedic remedies to counter the problem are fast gaining popularity among the masses. In Ayurveda, hair fall is termed as Indralupta. At times, it is also referred to as Khaalitya.

Ayurveda runs on tridosha theory; vaata, pitta and kapha are the tridoshas. These govern the physio-chemical and physiological activities of the body. Coming to the problem of the hair, the vitiation of pitta and kapha leads to graying and falling of the hair. A dry and rough appearance to the hair is usually caused by vaata vitiation. Just as drought and blazing heat quickly destroy a lawn, heat is most

detrimental for the hair. Too much temperature dries the hair and heats the head, weakening the scalp and hair roots.

SELF-HELP GUIDELINES

1. **Cleanliness:** To begin with, everything used for the hair should be spotlessly clean. Brushes should be of good quality. The whalebone-bristle variety is perhaps the best, as it is not so stiff as to damage the hair, but the bristles are long and stiff enough to brush the scalp apart from the hair. Remember, combs should always be blunt-toothed. Both combs and brushes should be washed twice a week, and kept in a bag, which should be washed frequently. Both the brain and scalp should be kept cool, so whenever washing the hair, it is best to use lukewarm water and a cool water rinse. It helps in toning the scalp and refreshing the nervous system.
2. **Massage:** Daily hair care is necessary. Massage of the scalp is perhaps the best method for keeping your hair healthy and preventing hair loss. Though a good massage can be given with blunt-toothed comb, the best way is to massage with hands. The thumbs should be placed at the back of the ears, and the scalp rotated under the fingertips. Ensure that the scalp is also moved, apart from the fingers. Then, deep pressure should be applied with palms pressed firmly against the scalp. This ensures good circulation and an increased blood-supply to the hair roots. A head massage helps relieve tension, improves circulation, and strengthens the hair roots.
3. **3. Oil application:** Massage should be done using either oils or lotions, both of which are useful in different ways. They act as antiseptics or lubricants during massage. There are a variety of medicated oils available in the market with good results like the neelikaadya taila, neelibhrungaadi taila, bhringa raaja taila, to mention a few.

You can also prepare good hair oil at home. Take pure coconut oil and fresh Brahmi (*Centella asiatica*) leaf juice, 16 parts each. To this, add cloves and cardamom, one part each. Heat the ingredients until all the

water evaporates and preserve in clean bottle. If you add fresh aamla (*Emblica officinalis*) juice equal to brahmi leaf juice, the medicinal value of the oil will increase. Regular use of the oil has a cooling effect on the eyes, helps you to sleep well and protects your hair from early fall and premature greying. It also keeps the hair silky soft. These oils enhance the effect of the massage by nourishing and strengthening the hair roots and promoting hair growth. Warm the oil before the massage as it is more relaxing and penetrates better.

1. **Brushing:** Hair should be brushed well for five minutes at night and in the morning, preferably in front of an open window, as air is necessary for healthy hair. Brushing should not be so vigorous as to stretch the hair, as it will weaken the hair. Brushing the hair from back to front ventilates the scalp.
2. **Shampooing:** No hard and fast rule can be laid down about the frequency of washing hair. Traditionally, powdered herbs are used to cleanse the hair, which remove dirt without disturbing the natural functioning of the scalp. You can also prepare your own wet shampoo. Take one tablespoonful of grated or powdered ritha and shikakai. Add a handful of herbs (according to the need) and boil in half pint of water. Alternately, you can pour the boiling water over the mixture also. Allow cooling. Strain and use as you would use your regular shampoo. The foam of the chemical shampoos has little to do with the cleaning effect. They are simple and harsh chemicals which strip the outer protein layer of the hair and dry the scalp, making the use of conditioners necessary.
3. **Conditioning:** Artificial conditioners do little more than provide an oily film that traps dirt and makes the hair look dull. If one feels the use of conditioners that are essential, one can always prepare an effective conditioner at home: mix sugar or honey, lemon juice and water in the ratio of 2:1:5. Prepare the needed quantity depending upon the length of your hair. After washing the hair, rub this mixture over the entire scalp and the hair thoroughly. Rinse it after about a minute. If you have dry scalp or if the skin keeps peeling off, use a decoction of yasthimadhu (*Liquorice/Glycyrrhiza glabra*) roots. After washing the hair, apply this decoction all over the scalp,

rubbing and massaging with the fingers. Leave it on for two-three minutes and then rinse once again with water.

HAIR AILMENTS, SELF-HELP GUIDELINES & AYURVEDIC REMEDIES

Hair ailments, such as dandruff and scurf, brittle and falling hair, grease or dryness, should never be neglected. Cases, which do not yield to simple treatment always indicate an unhealthy condition, and should be treated by a competent Ayurvedic medical practitioner.

Hair loss: Different causes are attributed to hair fall. Apart from a poor diet, hair can be severely damaged by many other factors. It could be due to stress and tension, thyroid imbalance, medications—especially diet pills, hormonal changes in pregnancy and menopause, allergies, shock or long-term worry, over-processed food with colours and dyes, and genetic tendencies.

Baldness in men is a frequently occurring problem. One can act appropriately to prevent it. These precautions should be taken when one feels an acute loss of hair and the loss is not proportionate to the new growth. Actually, hair loss is a normal phenomenon as new hair replaces the old. However, when this balance is disturbed and the lost hair is not replaced, one is heading toward baldness. The loss and growth of hair is variable during different seasons.

From ayurvedic point of view, good hair growth is linked to one's physical and mental health. When one is cheerful, the hair looks lively too and when one is feeling depressed and pessimistic, the hair acquires a fallen and 'lifeless' look. Problem with hair always indicates dosha imbalance as well as a disequilibrium in the activities of your mind. Following are some of the suggestions for hair care and prevention of hair loss:

- Do not let kapha accumulate in your head. There are people who suffer perpetually from cold. These people get grey hair at an early age. Do not take a persistent common cold lightly. Get rid of it.
- Do not neglect sinusitis. It has adverse effect on hair.

- Practise jaladhauti and yoga asanas (especially inverted positions).
- Make sure that the digestive system functions well, that your liver is healthy and that you do not suffer from other gastric troubles. A sluggish liver and other digestive problems promote hair loss and turn the hair grey.
- Regular care and an Ayurvedic massage of the head is essential to revitalise the scalp.
- Bhringaraaja is referred to as keshraja or 'king of the hair' as it promotes the growth of hair on the head and makes it black and lustrous.
- It is the best known herb to effectively stop and reverse balding and premature graying. It cools the brain and helps calm the mind from excessive activity, thus promoting sound sleep. Bhringaraaja is taken internally and used externally as Bhringraj oil. It is an excellent rejuvenator.

Grey hair: As middle age comes on, the natural pigment of the hair tends to disappear, and the hair turns grey, and finally, completely white. Sometimes, the hair begins to turn grey at an early age, which could be due to heredity, nervous shock or diseases. When premature greying occurs, it is always advisable to go for a thorough examination. However, there are certain preventive measures for premature greying of hair.

Take aamla and almond oil, one tablespoon each, mix with few drops of lime juice, and apply externally. Besides this, a tablespoonful of the curry leaves juice with a cup of buttermilk or lassi is the time-tested medicine used for premature greying of hair. Among the vegetable hair dyes, henna is the most widely used one.

Superfuous or unwanted hair: This term refers to hair growth at wrong places, like underarms, on the legs and forearms, and especially on the face of women. Superfuous hair results from the development of the long hairs into hairs of ordinary size.

Preparations for the removal of unwanted hair have been known for thousands of years. A mixture of quicklime and arsenical pyrites in a

ratio of 1:2 was said to be used by the dancing girls and male artistes in ancient times. Sarangadhara Samhita, a treatise on Ayurveda, describes few formulae that act as depilatories. For example, a paste made of conch-shell-lime (sankuvu soaked in the juice of plantain tree) and of yellow-orpiment (haritaala; arsenic trisulphide or harataala) in equal parts can be used externally.

6. DANDRUFF

Dandruff results in itching and flaking of the scalp. Occasionally, it can also affect the ears, eyebrows, and forehead. Though the exact reason is unknown, the primary cause of dandruff is thought to be a yeast called *Pityrosporum ovale*. Overactivity of oil glands is another possible cause.

SELF-HELP GUIDELINES

- Identify and avoid potential allergic foods. Limit intake of milk and other dairy products, seafoods and fatty foods. Reduce or eliminate animal proteins and eat whole grains, fresh vegetables, beans, and fruits. Avoid excess salt. Reduce tomatoes, citrus fruits and such acidic foods, and certain spices.
- Reduce your sugar intake. Diabetes can also cause dandruff. If you have diabetes, high sugar levels result in the dehydration of tissues as the body flushes out fluids in an attempt to rid itself of the sugar.
- Reduce or, if possible, eliminate all foods containing yeast, such as bread and baked foods, cheese, fermented foods, wine and alcoholic beverages.
- Personal hygiene and cleanliness is important. Shampoo the hair once or twice a week. Try lukewarm showers and rinse with cold water.
- Avoid alcohol-based styling products, as they tend to dry out the scalp. In addition, avoid dyeing your hair.
- Brush your hair daily to improve blood circulation and

remove dead cells and flakes. To avoid any further spread, bend forward from the waist with the head down towards the ground, and brush from the nape of the neck towards the top of the head. If you have long hair, two strokes would be best to avoid stretching of the hair. After brushing, massage your scalp to stimulate the circulation, remove dirt and dandruff, as this will encourage hair growth. For a proper massage, spread your fingers fan-like and slip them through the hair. With your thumbs pressed behind ears, press down on scalp with fingertips. Now rotate your fingers so that they move the scalp over the bony structure of the head.

- Meditation or yoga will help relieve stress, which exacerbates dandruff.

AYURVEDIC REMEDIES

- Prepare an emulsion by mixing one part of sandalwood oil with three parts of fresh lemon juice in a glass bottle and apply on the scalp.
- Washing the hair with green gram powder or amla powder in curd is another useful prescription.
- Soak two tablespoonfuls of fenugreek seeds overnight in water. Grind the softened seeds into a fine paste and apply on the scalp. Then wash the hair with soap-nut solution or shikakai.
- Thoroughly rub a thick gel of aloe vera leaves on the scalp; leave overnight; shampoo in the morning.
- Combine olive oil and ginger root and apply on your scalp before shampooing.
- Durdurpatraadi tailam as external medicament and Gandhaka rasaayan as internal medicine are usually prescribed to treat this condition.
- Brihat haridra khand in the dose of one teaspoonful mixed

in a glass of milk twice daily, controls dandruff & improves colour and complexion.

- Blood purifying liquids khadiraarista and saaribaadyaasavam taken twice daily (20 ml in same quantity of water) are also useful medicines.

If there is no improvement within four to six weeks, then consult an Ayurvedic physician, as it might be due to some problem such as psoriasis or ringworm.

7. HEAD LICE

Head lice are very small wingless insects that live on the human scalp. They are generally tan in colour but since they feed by sucking blood, they may turn to brown or reddish colour after feeding. They crawl and cannot fly or jump like fleas. They are sensitive to light; so if you look for them by parting the hair they will try to keep out of the light in the thicker parts of the hair. An adult female may lay 3-5 nits (egg casings) per day which are glued so strongly to hair shafts that only fingernails or a specially designed 'nit' comb can remove them (normal brushing or washing won't get it!). The nits are laid on hair shafts very close to the scalp (for moisture and warmth) and will hatch out after 7-10 days. After hatching, the new lice mature in about 2-3 weeks and can lay a new generation of nits. Head lice cause a number of minor problems like itching, the possibility of secondary infections, and redness or small bite marks (like mosquito bites) on the scalp. Very rarely, a secondary infection might result in swollen glands in the neck or under the arms. However, the lice have never been established as a primary factor for any disease. The greatest harm associated with head lice results from the misguided use of caustic or toxic substances to eliminate the lice. A few lice on the head should not cause alarm. Head lice are reasonably mobile, and hence, contagious. They are spread by direct head-to-head contact, or by sharing items such as combs, brushes, scarves, caps, headphones, hair-bands, or helmets. They can also be transferred from person to person (or re-infested from the same person!) via furry stuffed animals; theatre, car, or bus seats and bedding.

SELF-HELP GUIDELINES & AYURVEDIC REMEDIES

- Apply the leaf juice of Indian hemp (charas/ganjaayi) or the paste of the leaves to the scalp and hair.
- Application of the paste of bitter almonds is also good if you are unable to procure the Indian hemp.
- The ointment made of the powder of the bark of *Celastrus paniculata* (malakanguni) mixed with mustard oil is another good remedy for head lice.
- Apply the paste made of the finely powdered seeds of custard apple (seetaaphal) with water at bedtime and cover the head with a cloth. The paste should not come in contact with your eyes.
- Soak the hair well with tobacco paste and cover with a cloth for two to three hours. Then rinse thoroughly with the emulsion of soap-nut (rita).
- Alum (phitkari) is the non-herbal ayurvedic remedy for lice. Dissolve three grams of alum in half a litre of water. Apply this paste regularly on the head.

The first application of the delousing agent, if properly done, usually destroys all the live bugs but does not kill all of the eggs (nits). It is usual to see small lice the day after treatment. It means that new ones have hatched out. That is why a second treatment, 7-10 days after the first to destroy all the new lice that have hatched out since the first treatment and to kill them before they grow old enough to lay nits, is necessary.

Even though all the live lice may be killed by the treatment, nits are tougher to destroy. They usually cannot be removed with normal brushing or combing. Some parents just cut out the hair shafts that have nits attached to them. You can also use tweezers to remove them. Specially designed nit-combs made from the bone or ivory (with very closely spaced teeth) are available in the market.

If your child has lice, it is possible his environment, i.e., clothes, furry animal toys, coats, sofas, bedding, carpets, car seats, *etc.* may be

infested. Live lice are not usually that much of a problem. However, they may live away from human host for as long as 72 hours and die after a day or so. They can be vacuumed off from sofas, carpets, *etc.* Bedding, clothing, towels, *etc.*, can be washed in hot soapy water and dried in a hot drier. Brushes and combs can be soaked in hot water or alcohol for 10 minutes. Cover those—which cannot be washed—with plastic and leave for 10 days. This will allow time for any lice to starve, for nits to hatch and the off-spring to starve.

8. BODY ODOUR

It is a well-known fact that perspiration is the prime cause of body odour. While bacteria are the primary cause, there may be underlying causes like excessive sweating, low blood sugar, metabolic dysfunction, menopause, or even emotional stress (anger, fear, excitement). Any imbalances in metabolism or diet, resulting in constipation may also result in stronger odours. Some individuals cannot metabolise foods containing large amounts of choline, such as eggs, fish, liver and legumes. This results in a “fishy” smell. Certain foods and drinks, such as onions, garlic, coffee, and alcohol, are also prime causes of body odour.

SELF-HELP GUIDELINES

- Bathe daily, twice a day to remove the bacteria from your skin.
- Scrub the armpits with a soapy washcloth, as that will work better to remove the bacteria than soap. Homemade bath powder with triphalas and green gram flour is preferable as it helps fight bacteria better than regular soaps.
- If you have a severe problem, soak yourself for 15 minutes in a tub of water after adding about three cups of tomato juice.
- Clothing is an area many people overlook. Loose-fitting clothes allow the body to breathe better than tight clothes.

- Synthetic fabrics for shoes and clothes do not allow the body to breathe, so use cotton fabrics. Wash your clothes often!
- Certain foods, such as meat, onions, garlic, exotic spices, and drinks such as coffee and alcohol can lead to body odour. Try to eliminate these from your diet and see the difference!
- Certain medicines also cause body odour. Check if there are changes when you stop taking medication.
- Tobacco use is also a major cause for body odour. Not only does it come back through your lungs, but also through the skin.

AYURVEDIC REMEDIES

- An excellent astringent, that tightens the skin and closes open pores is made by soaking one tablespoonful of triphala powder in a small glass of water for six to eight hours. Filter and use externally, preferably cold.
- Karpooram also makes for a good astringent. However, karpooram does not dissolve in water easily. To make a mild astringent, keep two teaspoonfuls of the fine karpooram powder mixed in a bottle of water in the sun for about 15 days. Shake well before use.
- Turnip juice reduces underarm odour for up to 10 hours. Grate a turnip; squeeze the juice through cheesecloth, so that you have two teaspoonfuls of juice. Wash your armpits with it.
- Alternately, juice about two-dozen radishes, and $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoonful of glycerine, and store in a squirt or spray-top bottle. Use as an underarm deodorant. It will also help in reducing the foot odour.
- Take 500 mg of wheat grass daily on an empty stomach and wash down with a glass of water. The chlorophyll will

dramatically reduce body odour.

- Apple cider or vinegar eliminates underarm body odour when used in place of deodorant.
- Corn starch can also be used instead or mixed with the baking soda.
- Use baby powder or talc in areas of heavy perspiration.
- Try using Alum (spatikari/phitikari) made from the sulphate of aluminium and potash. It will not keep you dry as an antiperspirant will, but antiperspirants may clog your sweat glands and contain aluminium chlorohydrate, which may lead to future health problems.
- Baking soda can be used instead of a deodorant. Just apply the powder in your dry armpits. It will kill bacteria and help absorb perspiration.

9. ATHLETE'S FOOT (TINEA PEDIS)

Athlete's foot, also known as tinea pedis, is a common fungus infection in which the skin of the feet, especially on the sole and toes, becomes itchy and sore, with scaling, inflammation and blisters. Blisters that break, exposing raw patches of tissue, can cause pain, oozing, swelling and disagreeable smell. Sometimes this disease can spread to the toenails and other body parts. It is also possible to spread the infection through contaminated bed sheets, towels, or clothing. Athlete's foot is more severe and more common in people taking antibiotics, steroids, birth control pills, and drugs to suppress immune function, and in people with obesity, lowered immunity, and diabetes mellitus.

Athlete's foot received its common name because the infection is often found among athletes. This is because the fungi flourish best in and around swimming pools, showers, and moist, damp, dark places with poor ventilation.

Most people carry fungus on their skin. However, it will only flourish to the point of causing athlete's foot if conditions are favourable. Sweaty feet, tight shoes, synthetic socks that do not absorb moisture well, a warm climate, and not drying the feet well after bathing—all contribute

to the overgrowth of the fungus.

SELF-HELP GUIDELINES & AYURVEDIC REMEDIES

- Dry your feet thoroughly especially between your toes after bath, either with a cotton towel, or with a hair dryer. Antiperspirants such as sphatika bhasma (alum) may be used on your feet to keep down the sweating. Wear absorbent socks, preferably cotton, and wash them in hot water with bleach. Keep your shoes well ventilated, and give them ample time to dry before wearing again. If possible, remove the insoles of shoes to allow them to dry out over night and apply vinegar to avoid re-infection. Open-toed sandals are good to wear as they allow the feet to dry. Do not share your shoes.
- Soak the feet in a solution of swarjikaakshaara (baking soda) for about 30 minutes daily. This will maintain the acid-base relation of the skin and keep your feet dry. Alternately add two tablespoonfuls of laundry bleach to 3 or 4 litres of warm water and soak your feet for 10-15 minutes twice a day.
- Wash the feet in a mild solution of tankana bhasma (A compound of boric acid and soda). A mixture of two teaspoonfuls of table salt to half litre of warm water is another good soaking solution. Soak your feet for 10-15 minutes and dry thoroughly. The salt eradicates the fungus and reduces perspiration.
- Another household remedy is cinnamon (Daalchin). Bring 4 cups of water to a boil, add 8-10 broken sticks of cinnamon, reduce heat to low and simmer for five minutes; remove and steep, covered, for 45 minutes. Use it for foot bath.
- Dab alcohol or spirit on the affected area with cotton balls and allow drying. Aloe vera gel, apple cider, vinegar, honey—all are equally effective as external applications.

- The compound known as ajoene, found in garlic, is a powerful anti-fungal agent. One method is to rub a clove of raw garlic on the fungus. A second method is to put some freshly crushed garlic on the affected area and leave it on for half an hour; wash with water. Do this once a day for two weeks to see the result. If the garlic burns, remove, wash with water and try again with diluted garlic juice. Onion juice is also similar and effective in action.
- Mahaa marichyaadi tailam an ayurvedic oil made from black pepper and few other effective ingredients exhibit anti-fungal and anti-itching properties. Rubbing some on the affected area with a cotton ball several times a day for three to five weeks should eliminate the problem.
- A healthy diet should be maintained. Foods with high sugar content should be avoided, including undiluted fruit juice. Eat several servings of curd daily and take a reasonable amount of the B-vitamins in the form of natural food grains to rebuild your flora and help fight infection in case of antibiotic usage.
- Dadrughna lepa (external), gandhaka rasaayana (internal) etc., are some of traditional ayurvedic medicines that are usually prescribed to treat Athlete's foot. This problem usually responds well to ayurvedic treatment, but it is important to complete the recommended treatment, even if the skin appears to be free of fungus; otherwise, the infection could return.

10. CORNS AND CALLUSES

All too often, corns and calluses are the price we pay for neglecting our feet. Corns and calluses are very much alike; they just differ in where they occur.

Corns show up on the bony area on top of the toes and the skin between the toes. Corns feel hard to the touch, are tender, and have a round appearance. Extreme pain can change the way a person stands or walks. Such changes can, in turn, cause pain in the ankle, back, hip, or knee.

Calluses can occur on any part of the body that goes through repeated pressure or irritation. Common places are on the ball or heel of the feet, hands, and on the knees. Calluses are fat, painless thickenings of the skin.

A bunion, on the other hand is an enlargement of the bone on the interior of the big toe, often accompanied by tender, inflamed tissue on top of the bump. The tendency to develop bunions seems to be hereditary, but without added pressure to the big toe, they might never appear.

Women have these types of problems more often than men, probably because women wear high-heeled footwear and other footwear that do not fit properly.

CAUSES

Corns and calluses form to prevent injury to skin that is repeatedly pinched, rubbed, or irritated. The most common causes are: shoes that are too tight or too loose, or have very high heels; tight socks or stockings; deformed toes; walking down a long hill, or standing or walking on a hard surface for a long time; and jobs or hobbies that cause steady or recurring pressure on the same spot can also cause calluses.

SELF-HELP GUIDELINES & AYURVEDIC REMEDIES

- Corns and calluses do not usually require medical attention, unless the person who has them has diabetes mellitus, poor circulation, or other problems that make self-care difficult. It is important to see a doctor if the skin of a corn or callus is cut, because it may become infected. If a corn discharges pus or clear fluid, it is infected.
- Prevention is the most important cure, and this is accomplished by eliminating undue pressure at certain sites of the foot. Horse shoe-shaped rubber pads, wads of cotton, lamb's wool or other kinds of inserts can be used to cushion affected areas.

- Get rid of footwear that fit poorly, especially if they squeeze your toes together. Select good supporting footwear that have a wide toe box and a low heel. Feet should be measured—while standing—whenever buying new footwear. It is best to shop for footwear late in the day, when feet are likely to be swollen.
- An easy method to relieve corns is to soak your feet in plain lukewarm water or Epsom salt bath for 5 to 10 minutes, then use a pumice stone (a volcanic rock) to gently rub off the dead skin a little at a time. After you have rubbed your feet, apply castor oil to keep your feet soft.
- Soak a small piece of cloth in vinegar and bind it on the toe; leave it on for a day and night. The corn will come out by the root. Another variation is to soak the feet in a shallow pan of warm water with half a cup of vinegar. Rub down the corns and calluses with a clean pumice stone or a good quality waterproof sandpaper.
- Soak the feet in warm water for 15 minutes; apply a small piece of the inside of a lemon peel or skin of ripe banana to the corn; tape it and leave it on overnight. In three days the corn should lift off.
- The milky juices of raw papaya and green figs (anjeer), pulp of raw potato, paste of liquorice (mulethi), oil extracted from outer shells of cashew nut (kaaju) etc., are valuable in corns as external applications.
- A recommended Ayurvedic remedy is the application of a paste made by combining one teaspoonful of aloe vera gel with half teaspoonful of turmeric. The corn or callus should be covered with the paste and bandaged overnight. It should be soaked in warm water for 10 minutes every morning, and given a daily massage with mustard oil and an application of kaaseesadi taila.



DISEASES OF THE EYE

1. CONJUNCTIVITIS

Pinkeye is an inflammation of the conjunctiva, the underside of both the upper and lower eyelids and the covering of the white portion of the eye. The general medical term for this is conjunctivitis. Ayurveda calls this condition as netraabhishyandam.

CAUSES AND SYMPTOMS

In conjunctivitis, inflammation causes small blood vessels in the conjunctiva to become more prominent, resulting in a pinkish or reddish cast to your eyes. A virus, similar to the one that causes the common cold, usually causes it.

Due to this reason, it is usual to have the symptoms of cold before, during, and after a bout of conjunctivitis. However, there are instances of conjunctivitis that are bacterial and allergic in origin.

A similar condition can result from an injury or if you rub your eyes too vigorously or it may also result from a foreign body in your eye.

Allergic conjunctivitis is caused by an allergy to pollen, cosmetics, animal skin and hair, skin medicines, air pollution, smoke, or other substances. In all cases of conjunctivitis, the white part of the eye turns red and feels gritty. There may be a mild sensitivity to light and excessive tearing.

There is often a yellowish discharge, which forms a crust overnight. Bacterial infection produces a marked puslike discharge and crusting, whereas viral infection may cause only a slight discharge. Viral conjunctivitis, in contrast to bacterial, may have an associated swelling and tenderness of the lymph node in front of the ear on the affected side.

In allergic conjunctivitis, there is usually a long-standing redness and itching of the white of the eye without any discharge all year round, but more severely in the pollen season. Your eyes may water, or make tears. You may have a running nose and sneeze a lot. Less commonly, there is a sudden white puffiness of the conjunctiva, usually during the pollen season that disappears after a few hours.

With proper care, bacterial conjunctivitis will clear up in two to three days, viral conjunctivitis disappears on its own, usually within a week and allergic conjunctivitis takes one or two months to alleviate.

SELF-HELP GUIDELINES

- Do not touch the eye area with your fingers. If you wish to wipe your eyes, use tissues or clean and fresh handkerchief.
- Avoid rubbing your eyes.
- With your eyes closed, apply a washcloth soaked in warm (not hot) water to the affected eye three to four times a day for at least five minutes at a time. (These soaks also help to dissolve the crusty residue of pink eye).
- Alternately, you can also put a cold compress over your eyes for relief (use a washcloth or small towel soaked in cold water or wrapped around ice-cubes.)
- Avoid wearing eye make-up until the infection has completely cleared up. (And never share make-up items and spectacles with others).
- Do not cover or patch the eye. This can make the infection grow.
- Do not wear contact lenses while your eyes are infected.
- Wash your hands often and use your own towels. Pink eye is very contagious and can spread from one person to another by contaminated fingers, washcloths, or towels. Clean all personal items daily with soap and water.
- Do not touch the infected eye because the infection will spread to the good eye.

- If you can identify the cause of allergic conjunctivitis, it may be possible to prevent its occurrence. Anyhow, avoid airborne pollens, dust, mould spore and animal dander, or direct contact with chlorinated water or cosmetics.
- Wear clothes only once before washing.
- Change pillowcase each night.

AYURVEDIC REMEDIES

- The root of the *Berberis asiatica* (Daaru haldi) is very efficacious in conjunctivitis. Make decoction by boiling two parts by weight of the root in 26 parts of water until the quantity is reduced to about three parts. Use it as an eye-ointment (collyrium) by mixing with honey.
- The decoction of turmeric is a very cooling application in conjunctivitis; you can either wash your eyes with this decoction or apply the compress made with decoction over the eyes.
- Trifala lotion is made by soaking 15 gm of Triphala choorna in 200 ml of water for half an hour, boiling and filtering it. This is used for washing the affected eyes 3-4 times a day.
- Trifala churna orally about 5 gm with water is useful for viral infections.
- The freshly extracted juice of amla in the dose of 2 teaspoonfuls thrice a day is rewarding.
- If these self-help measures do not help, your doctor may prescribe Netrabingu and such eye drops for you. These lubricating eye drops can wash out your eyes, make the swelling go down, soothe irritation, and help relieve itching.
- If these medicines do not give you enough relief, your doctor may suggest desensitisation therapy; your allergic reaction is reduced or stopped when you take small doses

of the allergen. The small doses are slowly increased. This is one way to control long-term (chronic) allergic conjunctivitis. This concept is termed as okasaatmya in Ayurveda. For this purpose, the medicines like Chandrodaya varti are used externally.

- Seek medical help if you have severe eye pain, eye sensitivity to the light, puslike discharge that is yellowish-green in colour, and persisting symptoms or worsened symptoms irrespective of self-care measures after 24 hours.

2. CATARACT

Cataract is a cloudy area in the lens or lens capsule of the eye. Cataract formation can be viewed very similarly to hardening of the arteries, which we all experience to some extent as we age. The human lens, which becomes a cataract, is really a series of membranes, much like those that line our blood vessels. A cataract blocks or distorts light entering the eye. This causes problems with glare from lamps or sun. Vision gradually becomes dull and fuzzy, even in daylight. Most of the time, cataracts occur in both the eyes, but only one eye may be affected. If they form in both eyes, one eye can be worse than the other, because each cataract develops at a different rate. Cataracts account for 42 per cent of all vision losses, making it the leading cause of blindness worldwide and it can be noted that delaying the onset of cataracts by 10 years would eliminate the need for one-half of all cataract surgeries. Although the cataract surgery is relatively quick, safe, easy and painless, it does not result in completely normal vision. Clearly, preventing cataracts, if possible, would be preferable. Timira is the ayurvedic term indicative of various kinds of disturbances of vision. There are various types of timira according to the involvement of various patalas (layers) and vitiation of doshas. If proper care is not taken in this stage, it leads to cataract or linganaasha. According to Ayurveda, aggravated vaata is responsible for this condition. One of the properties of vaata is to make things dry up. When the unctuousness and softness of the lens and its capsule are lost, it becomes opaque thereby forming cataract.

CAUSES

1. Senile cataracts are the most common form. These cataracts result from ageing. This is probably due to changes in the chemical state of lens proteins. Although the chances of developing cataracts clearly increase with age, it can be easily stopped.
2. Traumatic cataracts develop after a foreign body enters the lens capsule with enough force to cause specific damage. Some types of eye surgery probably increase cataract risk for similar reason. Laser surgery for narrow angle treatment, known as peripheral iridotomy, and glaucoma surgery, known as trabeculectomy may increase risk of cataract formation. Welders and glass blowers are exposed to high levels to infrared light at close range. Failure to wear adequate eye protection can cause the lining of the lens to peel back and result in cataract formation.
3. Complicated cataracts occur secondary to other diseases (e.g. diabetes mellitus) or other eye disorders (e.g. detached retinas, glaucoma etc.). Inflammation within the eye probably increases cataract risk. Ionizing radiation or infrared rays can also lead to this type of cataract. In addition, a baby can be born with cataract in one or both eyes if its mother had German measles (rubella) when she was pregnant.
4. Toxic cataracts can result from medicinal or chemical toxicity. Steroid medications, such as prednisone, cortisone—either as pills or eye drops definitely increase cataract risk if taken for prolonged periods. This is especially common in association with chronic respiratory condition such as emphysema or asthma, where prolonged steroid use is often necessary for life. Smokers have an increased risk for developing cataracts.

SYMPTOMS

Painless and gradual blurring of vision • Glare and light sensitivity that can cause problems when driving • Frequent eyeglass prescription changes • Double vision in one eye • Halos which may appear around lights • The need for brighter light to read Poor night vision • The

appearance of fading or yellowing of colours • Pupils which are normally black appearing milky white.

SELF-HELP GUIDELINES

- Accumulation of free radicals in the lens of the eye may lead to oxidative damage of lens proteins, which can result in the proteins to clump together and form large aggregates that scatter light instead of allowing it to pass through. Exposure to sunlight and to oxidants such as cigarette smoke will contribute to free radical formation. Vitamin C, an important antioxidant normally present in high concentrations in the lens, may reduce the risk of cataract because it protects lens proteins against oxidative damage. Eat a lot of food high in vitamin C, which is thought to help prevent or delay cataracts. Carrots, oranges, and amla are examples of such foods.
- Avoid rancid foods and all other sources of free radicals. Use lot of turmeric. Eat foodstuffs high in sulphur; foodstuffs containing amino acids (more grains and legumes) and reduce intake of animal fats. Researchers have found that foodstuffs high in vitamin E (vegetable oils, nuts and seeds) will reduce risk of cataracts.
- Limit exposing your eyes to X-rays, microwaves, and infrared radiation. When indoors, make sure your lighting is not too bright or pointed directly at you. Use soft, white light bulbs instead of clear ones, and arrange to have light reflect off walls and ceilings. Avoid over-exposure to sunlight. Use sunglasses that block ultraviolet rays. Wear a wide brimmed hat to keep direct sunlight from your eyes. Wear glasses or goggles that protect your eyes whenever you use strong chemicals, power tools, or other instruments that could result in eye injury.

AYURVEDIC REMEDIES

- Mahaa triphalaa ghrita is usually prescribed internally in this condition. The main ingredients of this medicine are triphala and cow ghee. Triphala provides nourishment and strengthens the nerves and other tissues of the eyeball whereas ghee is known to balance the aggravated vaata. Moreover, amla is one of the ingredients in triphala that contains lots of vitamin C. This medicine acts very well in the initial stages of cataract.
- Take a tablespoonful Triphala choorna and add to a tumbler of water in the evening. Cover and keep aside for 12 hours. In the morning, strain it through a piece of clean cloth. Use this filtrate for both washing the eyes and taking internally.
- The internal usage of the powders of triphalas, turmeric and yashtimadhu (mulathi), three to six grams in combined form along with honey or ghee, helps a lot to slow down the cataract formation. Chandrodaya varti is the external preparation used in cataract. Over a clean stone, it is rubbed with sterile water and the paste is applied in the form of collyrium. As it has a mild irritating nature, it causes lacrimation in the eyes and promotes blood circulation. This preparation also provides nourishment to the tissues of the eye.
- Alternately, take one litre juice of amla, thicken it, and add 50 grams ghee and 50 grams honey. Apply it externally.



PROBLEMS IN FEMALES

MENSTRUAL CRAMPS (DYSMENORRHOEA)

Also known as dysmenorrhoea, menstrual cramps can affect as many as eight out of ten women at some point in their lives. Though until recently, the medical community has considered this as a ‘minor’ complaint, saying it was ‘all in a woman’s head’, new thinking takes menstrual cramps seriously. And in terms of hormones, medical science proposes that primary dysmenorrhoea is caused by excess production of prostaglandins (hormone-like chemicals that regulate uterine contractions) following a decline in progesterone levels.

Excess estrogen, which boosts fluid and salt retention, can worsen the situation. At least 10 per cent of young women have symptoms that are so severe, that they cannot participate in normal activities. Besides lower abdominal pain, cramp sufferers may also experience backache, pinching, and pain sensations in the inner thighs and mood swings.

SELF-HELP GUIDELINES

- Avoid fried food, pulses, and sour food items; avoid foods that will cause constipation, especially during the last week of the menstrual cycle.
- Avoid potato, yellow pumpkin, and brinjal. Instead you can have white pumpkin, papaya, drumstick, snake gourd, bitter gourd, and cucumber.
- Garlic is specially recommended. Take five to seven garlic pods per day after removing the outer covering. You can reduce the pungent smell, by taking along with buttermilk or lemon juice.
- According to Ayurveda, impairment of apaana vaayu is

responsible for menstrual cramps. Its normal course is downwards and if it does not move because of hormonal imbalance, constipation, or any other factors, then add one teaspoon of asafoetida, in powder form to your food or buttermilk. You have to use it after frying with ghee.

- For spasmodic symptoms, have some fish, but avoid meat, poultry, dairy products, and eggs. It is believed that the Omega-3 fatty acids in fish oil may help relieve dysmenorrhoea by affecting the metabolism of prostaglandins and other factors involved in pain and inflammation. For congestive symptoms, avoid sugar, alcohol, salt, and dairy foods.
- Before the onset of the period, start doing the following mild exercises two to three times a day. However, during the period of menstruation, avoid sleep during daytime and take plenty of bed rest.
 1. Lie face up with legs and knees bent; perform abdominal breathing about 10 times.
 2. Stand holding back of the chair; lift one heel off the floor, then the other; repeat 20 times.
 3. Stand holding back of the chair, then do five deep-knee bends.
 4. While lying on your back, lift and bring your knees to touch your chin 10 times.

AYURVEDIC REMEDIES

- Kumaari or Aloe Vera is a stimulant to the uterus and has long been used as a household remedy to promote menstruation and relieve muscle spasms. Extract juice from its pulp and take one teaspoonful of it internally. Kumaari-aasava is the medicine used to treat this condition. Its usual dose is six teaspoonfuls, taken twice daily after food, with equal quantity of water. Rajah pravartani vati, that contains borax in bhasma form, asafoetida and aloe, is

another effective medicine. Its dose is two pills, taken twice a day for about seven days, just before the due date.

- Ashokarishta, 20 ml with equal quantity of water half an hour after meals for 2 to 3 cycles, gives long-lasting results.

2. WHITE DISCHARGE (LEUCORRHOEA)

Leucorrhoea is commonly known as “white discharge.” Ayurveda refers leucorrhoea to Shwetapradara. This word means excessive white discharge. It is believed to be caused by aggravation or vitiation of kapha dosha. This commonly occurs in patients who are weak, emaciated, and anaemic. Most women experience a certain amount of vaginal secretion, which is the body’s natural way of cleansing, lubrication, and guarding the vagina against infections.

Like the mouth and anus, the mucous membrane of the vagina constantly sheds and replaces its cells, passing them out of the body in the form of mucous secretion. This secretion occurs due to the action of cervical and endometrial glands and also because of the activity of bacteria which live harmlessly in a normal, healthy vagina. On the other hand, an abnormal vaginal discharge may be grey-white, yellow or green, brown or rusty. The consistency may be clumpy and thick or thin and liquid. There is usually a very offensive odour, and it may cause irritation and reddening of the part.

If the discharge is thick and white and there is an itching sensation, it may be due to vaginal thrush, caused by a yeast-like fungus, the commonest cause of leucorrhoea. It may also occur in women suffering from diabetes or those who are being treated with antibiotics for some other condition. If the discharge is greenish-yellow and has an unpleasant smell, it could be due to trichomoniasis, a sexually transmitted disease, but it may also be transmitted via toilet articles from one woman to another, or perhaps you might have forgotten to remove a tampon or diaphragm.

If the discharge is brown, like blood, and usually follows intercourse, it may probably be due to cervical erosion. If the discharge is spotted with blood, either mid-period or following intercourse, it may be due to a cervical polyp. If a low back, or an abdominal pain accompanies the

discharge, and you feel sick, it may be due to an infection of the pelvic organs (pelvic inflammatory disease). Leucorrhoea may also be noticed in females who are suffering from tuberculosis, anaemia as also in those who have a general low resistance power, maintain poor local hygiene and those who use excess of vaginal medications such as strong disinfectants. Women who are constantly under stress and are anxious by nature may also complain of leucorrhoea.

SELF-HELP GUIDELINES

- Maintain good health, take proper rest, and do stress reduction exercises regularly, as these increase your resistance to infection.
- Avoid fried, hot, and spicy foods, pickles, maida, and its products. Cut down on sugar, fermented foods, mushrooms, pastries, sweets, cheese, puddings and alcohol. Take plenty of fresh curds.
- Keep your vaginal area clean by washing it 1-2 times daily with plenty of water. Pat dry afterwards, using your own towels.
- Always wipe your anus after defecation from the front to back, to prevent infection from stools entering your vagina.
- Do not use nylon panties. Wear clean cotton panties and change out of wet clothes promptly.
- During your periods, use a clean cotton cloth or pads instead of tampons, especially at night.
- Both you and your partner should wash hands and genitals before and after intercourse.
- You must ensure that your sexual partner is free of any infection. Use a condom to provide added protection.
- Keep your blood sugar always under control.
- Do not self-medicate and avoid unnecessary medication. Avoid perfumes and chemical products such as deodorant soaps, perfumed powders, perfumed sprays, and coloured

toilet papers.

- Do not scratch, as the fungus may get under your nails and spread.
- Drink at least 10-15 glasses of water daily and include plenty of green-leafy vegetables and salads in your diet.

AYURVEDIC REMEDIES

- Boil horse-gram in water and take the supernatant fluid daily.
- Shelled tamarind seeds, macerated in milk is very efficacious in leucorrhoea.
- Washing and cleaning of the vagina and internal parts with Spatika (alum) water will be very effective.
- Pushyamuga Churna about three grams twice daily with milk, along with 20 ml of Ashokaarishta, gives good results.
- Regular douching of the genital tract with a decoction of the barks of banyan and fig trees is very useful in leucorrhoea. In Ayurvedic terminology, this douche therapy is called as Uttara vasti. Take one tablespoonful of the powder of each of these two barks, boil in one litre of water, and reduce to half. Filter the decoction and discard the remnants. Have an oil massage before douching. Fill the warm decoction in the douche bag and attach a clean, lubricated nozzle to it. Lie down on your back and bend your knees. Insert the nozzle into vagina and take deep breaths. Slowly squeeze the douche bag so that decoction enters vagina. Stay in the same position for 10 to 15 minutes. Please note that you should avoid this treatment during menstruation, pregnancy and immediately after panchakarma. Ayurveda recommends various drugs to treat leucorrhoea. The list of few such herbs are: Amlaki (*Phyllanthus emblica*), Lodhra (*Symplocos racemosa*), Ashoka (*Saraca indica*), Udumbar (*Ficus religiosa*),

Yashtimadhu (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*), Mocha-rasa (*Bombax malabarica*), and Naagakesara (*Mesua ferra*).

If the symptoms persist for three to four days, get worse, or are accompanied by fever, abnormal bleeding, or severe pain, get yourself examined by a doctor.

3. POOR BREAST MILK PRODUCTION

Nowadays, new-age mothers are unable to meet the nutritional needs of their infants through breast-feeding alone. Young women only produce about half to two-thirds as much breast milk compared to the required amount.

In addition, young mothers do not nurse as long or as often as the older Moms do. Ayurvedic texts identify certain causes for cessation of breast milk such as anger, grief, absence of affection for the child, fear, fasting, physical exertion, consumption of dry edibles, emaciation, and another pregnancy.

SELF-HELP GUIDELINES

- Certain food items such as grape juice, vegetables growing wild or on marshy land, water, cereals, fruits, meat, meat soup, milk, ghee, oil, garlic, onion, eatables and drinks that are predominantly liquid, sweet, sour and saline increase breast milk.
- Certain lifestyle changes such as taking rest, good sleep, happiness, and correct way of feeding will help.
- Think baby, think milk. While you are feeding, stroke and calm your baby using a lot of skin-to-skin contact. This will help your milk ejection reflexive.
- Increase feeding frequency. Breastfeed your baby at least every two hours during the day and at least every four hours during the night.
- Do not wait for your breasts to “fill up” to determine when

it is time for another feed.

- Try “switch nursing.” Allow your baby to finish the first breast before switching to the other side.
- Try “double-nursing.” After you feed your baby and it seems finished, hold, or carry him upright and awake for 10 to 20 minutes, allowing any trapped air bubbles to be burped up. This makes room for more milk.

AYURVEDIC REMEDIES

Many ayurvedic herbs are credited with the ability to increase milk production; these are termed as the galatogogues. Some of the popular galactogogues are:

- **Fennel (saunf):** Fennel seeds display mild estrogen-like properties. Try them for a tasty fennel tea. Use two teaspoons of crushed seeds per cup of boiling water, steep it for five minutes, strain, and sip. Have up to three cups each day.
- **Fenugreek seeds (methi daana):** Mix half a tsp of powdered seeds along with dalia (cracked wheat) or rice porridge and eat daily.
- **Wild asparagus (Shataavari):** In Sanskrit, shataavari means ‘one who possesses 100 husbands’. The name is symbolic as it is the main rejuvenating herb for the female. It increases the size and tone of the bust and the quality and quantity of milk in nursing mothers. Take one to two tsp of dried powder with milk, twice daily. A pinch of Pippali choorna may be added to enhance its bio-availability.
- **Jeevanthi (Leptadenia reticulata):** The lactogenic effect of this plant has been clinically assessed by many investigators. A compound herbal preparation, Leptaden comprising extract of the plant is available in the market. The usual dosage is two tabs, three times a day.

4. BREAST SHAPE IMPROVEMENT

From ancient times, women have been concerned about the shape and size of their breasts. Breast development is a vital part of reproduction in the human female. Unlike other mammals, however, human females are the only ones who develop full breasts long before they are needed to nurse their offspring.

Breast development occurs in distinct stages throughout a woman's life, first before birth, and again at puberty and during the childbearing years. Changes also occur to the breasts during menstruation and when a woman reaches menopause. The development and kinds of breast changes that take place are directly related to age. There are three phases of development: lobule development, which takes place between the ages of 10 and 25; glandular development, which is under the influence of menstrual hormones and occurs between the ages of about 13 and 45, and involution, or shrinkage of the milk ducts, which begins from about age 35 on.

The rate at which breasts grow varies greatly and is different for each young woman. Foundational breast tissue growth occurs most efficiently with the balanced presence of estrogen, progesterone, prolactin, prostaglandins, and GF compounds (human growth factor hormones). Factors such as heredity, hormonal imbalance, stress, poor nutrition and medications (in particular the contraceptive pill) and the long-standing effects of puberty prevent the bust from developing to its full potential size. Proper care during the adolescent age will prevent this problem. However, at some point after adolescence, the body on its natural course ceases to produce certain hormones, resulting in the completion of breast tissue growth.

Breasts contain mammary glands which are nothing but modified sweat glands that lie over the pectoralis major (chest) muscles and are attached to them by a layer of connective tissue. These glands are divided into compartments and are separated by fat tissue. The amount of fat tissue determines the size of breasts. Since the female breasts are composed of fat tissue, the only reliable way to increase their size is to gain weight—not something most women want to hear. However there are certain exercises and oil massages, which may correct bust line and supple

breasts by improving the underneath muscle tissue of the breast and elasticity of the superficial skin. Please note that these measures are not intended to increase the actual size of the breasts, but to improve their shape.

SELF-HELP GUIDELINES & AYURVEDIC REMEDIES

- To firm and tone the breasts, stimulate circulation with alternative rinses of hot and cold water.
- Wear a well fitting bra that enhances the shape of your breasts. Avoid using very tight bras that squeeze and pinch all over breast region.
- Swimming is an ideal exercise for improving the shape of the breast especially breaststroke or backstroke. Playing shuttle or badminton is equally good. Lawn mowing or using a hand mill are also fine exercises to improve bust line.
- Hand rotations and arm stretching are also recommended. Stand erect with your fingers on either shoulder. Rotate your elbows in the air at least ten times. Then, stretch your arms at shoulder level in front of you and cross arms in a scissor like fashion and move quickly, the right arm on top of the left and then the left over the right arm.
- Massage the breasts gently but firmly with Yuvatyadi tailam, a classical ayurvedic medicine formulated by the famous sage Vatsyayana. A Regular usage of this oil is claimed to improve firmness and shape of the breasts. While massaging, always work upwards towards your neck using circular movements. Blot out excess oil using a tissue.
- Two other oils are traditionally advised to get a firm youthful quality to your breasts-Pomegranate Toner and Shataavari-ghee. To prepare Pomegranate-toner, mix 1 part powdered pomegranate rind, 4 parts mustard oil and 16 parts water in a container and bring to boil. Gently simmer until water is evaporated. Cool in refrigerator until ready

to use. Shataavari-ghee can be prepared in similar manner for which the ingredients include—1 part shataavari powder, 4 parts ghee and 16 parts water.

- Last but not the least, regarding the size of the breasts, instead of worrying so much about it, I would recommend that you learn to accept and enjoy what you already have. Small breasts are no less its function, because size does not have any bearing on anything. It is like having a small nose—you would not smell any less. It is purely a question of aesthetics, and many individuals prefer the look of smaller breasts.

5. MENOPAUSE NATURALLY

Menopause—while technically refers to the final menstrual period of women—is not an abrupt event, but a gradual process. It is not easy to predict when menopause begins, but it can be assumed that it is complete when a woman has not had a period for a year. The average age of menopause is 51.

According to Ayurveda, menstruation (rajapravrutti) is the natural flow of excess pitta in the form of menses (raja). Raja-nivrutti is the state of gradually diminished rajapravrutti which ends as menopause. Ayurveda looks upon menopause as an imbalance of pitta and vaata doshas. These two doshas accumulate, spread and localize in the vital metabolic tissues manifesting as symptoms and consequences of menopause.

Menopausal age coincides with the woman's transition from the pitta time period of her life in to the vaata time period. Many of the symptoms that are experienced with menopause are a combination of the three doshas—vaata, pitta and kapha. A woman's hormones are governed by pitta and kapha. This is one reason why many women will experience hot flushes (pitta) and weight gain (kapha) when they are menopausal. Nervousness and affected sleep will be part of vaata imbalance.

Sometime in 40's, a woman begins the natural transition through menopause. Over the next three to five years, her ovarian production of oestrogen, progesterone, and androgen slows dramatically. As levels of

these hormones fluctuate, she may experience the irregular periods and mood swings. She may also notice other signs of decreased hormone production, such as hot flashes, sleep problems, vaginal dryness, recurrent vaginal or urinary tract infections, and some loss of bladder control. While some women sail through menopause comfortably, others struggle to deal with its annoying or even debilitating symptoms. This is due to differences in lifestyle, attitude, genetics, weight, and customs. Fortunately, most of these symptoms will taper off eventually in majority of the cases as the body adjusts to new hormone levels. In the meantime, herbs, foods, supplements, or lifestyle changes can help ease the menopausal transition.

SELF-HELP GUIDELINES & AYURVEDIC REMEDIES

Many of the menopausal symptoms will benefit from a change in dietary habits. Incorporating more of the Bitter and Astringent tastes is recommended to assist the body in cooling some of the increased heat. Bitter taste is mostly the dark green leafy vegetables. Astringent taste will include beans, soya beans, poultry, potatoes, cabbage *etc.* You need to avoid the heating tastes of Pungent, Sour and Salt. Pungent includes hot spicy food, onions, garlic, mustard and chilies. Tomatoes, tamarind, citrus, vinegar, sour curds are among the sour tastes. Pickles, soures, papads—all these items contain salts in concentrated form.

You should meditate and do yoga regularly. This will benefit all three doshas—particularly soothing to *vaata* and your nervous system. Calming your nervous system is an important aspect of creating a state of well being during menopause. Oestrogen is not only produced in the ovaries, it is also in the adrenal glands and adipose tissue. If a woman is overcome by stress in her life, then she may have burned out her adrenal glands, therefore affecting her ability to supply a natural source of oestrogen. The transition through menopause will be smoother if a woman is less affected by the stress in her life.

- Hot flashes (hot flushes): Some still-unknown signal to the temperature-regulating portion of the brain sends blood rushing to the surface of the skin. This rush of blood raises

skin temperature as much as seven degrees, bringing a feeling of heat (especially to the upper body), sweating, increased heart rate, and sometimes chills. Hot flashes that occur at night may cause intense “night sweats” that disrupt sleep. Dress in layers to take clothes on and off as needed. Wear clothes made of cotton and other breathable fibers. Identify and avoid personal hot-flash triggers, such as stress, caffeine, alcohol rich drinks, and spicy foods. A hot environment can cause more frequent and intense hot flashes. Keep your cool. Practice deep, slow, and belly breathing. Consume foods rich in phytoestrogens (naturally available selective steroid enzyme modulators that function as pro-estrogens when oestrogen deficiency is present and as anti-estrogens when excess oestrogen is present). Soya bean, tomato, watermelon, berries, legumes, liquorice, and pomegranates are some of the rich source for antioxidants and phyto-oestrogens. Take Ashokarishta along with Useeraasav, the ayurvedic herbal fermentations to get relief from hot flashes and other vasomotor symptoms.

- Changes in vaginal tissues and urinary tract: As oestrogen levels decrease, vaginal tissues become thinner, drier, and more fragile. This can cause itching and burning, as well as painful sex. In addition, the vagina becomes more alkaline and less acidic, making it more susceptible to overgrowth of bacteria or yeast. Oestrogen loss also causes a thinning of the tissues at the base of the bladder and lining the urethra, as well as a loss of tone in the muscles that control the bladder. The result can be urine leakage and recurrent urinary tract infections. Drink eight glasses of water a day and other healthy liquids such as barley water, or coriander tea to keep vaginal tissues moist and to keep the system flushed. Be sure to empty the bladder completely when you urinate, so bacteria cannot multiply in any urine retained in the bladder. Avoid dehydrating antihistamines, cola drinks, coffee, and alcohol rich drinks. Try to stay sexually active, as the saying goes, “Use it or lose it.”

Pelvic floor exercises improve urinary control and sexual function by strengthening the pelvic muscles around the urethra. Here is how you perform these exercises: First identify the muscles that stop the flow when you're urinating. Tighten these muscles without tightening the abdominal or buttock muscles. Three times a day, tighten these muscles for four seconds and release for four seconds, 10 to 15 times. Try to work up to longer periods of contraction and relaxation, and more frequent sets. Douche with Triphala decoction two or three times a week to maintain the pH of the vagina at healthier levels and discourage bacterial or yeast infections. For recurrent urinary tract infections, take Gokshuraadi guggulu, 2 pills, twice a day.

- **Insomnia and mood swings:** Many women lose sleep due to night time hot flashes or the need to urinate, both of which can interfere with sleep. Insomnia can also be caused by stresses or physical and psychological changes due to aging. Practice good sleep routine. Keep the bedroom cool, take a hot bath an hour before bedtime; use a bedside notepad to write down any thoughts that are keeping you awake, and get up and do something if you can't fall asleep within 20 to 30 minutes. Avoid coffee, cola drinks, and other stimulants all day, not just at night. Have a relaxing cup of buffalo milk at bedtime. Get regular daily exercise, which improves sleep quality. But exercising near bedtime can have the opposite effect. Ask a family member for an evening back massage, or massage your own feet before bed. Try massaging with almond or olive oil mixed with a few drops of Chandanaadi tailam (sandal wood oil). Generally, Jataamaansi and Aswagandha, in the power forms, are prescribed to treat insomnia. The usual dosage is quarter and one tsp. respectively.
- **Osteoporosis:** To prevent the brittleness and porosity in bones, consume foods high in magnesium (whole grain cereals, nuts, dairy products, bananas, and chlorophyll-rich

vegetables), calcium (milk and milk products, beans, pulses, potatoes, cauliflowers, and dried fgs), vitamin D (egg yolk, milk and animal liver), vitamin K (green vegetables, cereals and animal foods), and manganese (cereal, bran, nuts, and tea). Weight bearing exercises in morning daylight can also prevent osteoporosis. Prawaala bhasma is an ayurvedic preparation, that contains natural calcium is usually prescribed to treat the bone loss.



MISCELLANEOUS PROBLEMS

1. POOR HEIGHT GAIN

According to the Ayurveda, there are eight types of persons who are treated as condemned—those who are very short or those who are very tall; those who are very thin and those who are very obese; those who are very fair and those who are very dark; those who have no hair at all and those who have abundant hair. These eight conditions have been described as Ashta ninditya. Among these conditions, short stature is the one the most inquired.

A potted plant never attains its maximum height if the natural growth promoting factors like water, sun-light, rooting system are restricted. This is in analogy to human growth, says Ayurveda. Though, genetically, every person has been preprogrammed to attain a certain height, most people never reach this height simply because they do not do everything necessary for their body to maximize growth. Identifying and correcting the inhibiting factors can achieve growth promotion, in most of the cases.

Tallness is a subjective term, what one person might consider being tall may be considered short by someone else. However, there are many people that are not comfortable with their height; in fact, most want to be taller. The reasons may vary but the goal is the same one.

Height is a sensitive issue in our society. Many people believe that lack of height is not an important issue. Of course, people can build their happiness and reach their goals regardless of their height, however it is much harder for us who is shorter than most around us. Most people who believe height is not important are of average height or taller.

Most short children do not have a serious growth problem and grow about two inches each year between the ages of three and early adolescence, when sex hormones contribute to an even faster growth

rate. Most of us reach an adult height that is about the same as our parents. A child's rate of growth is an important clue to the presence or absence of a growth problem. Some diseases can cause poor growth. If you do not have any problem that could slow down your growth, as most short people have, you have a great chance to grow taller.

Some children grow very slowly and are considered short amongst their peers but in one season they can gain enough inches to become average height and even taller.

There is a certain age at which people usually stop to grow: men—25, women—21. It occurs shortly after puberty, but these numbers can be changed. Nevertheless, it is possible to continue growing until 25 years old for women and 27-30 years old for men. It is possible because of certain exercises, physical activities, eating the right food with the right nutrients and vitamins, and other things that are important for a human body to grow such as rasaayana and kaaya-kalpa therapies. Of course, the older you are the harder it will be for you to gain height. Rasaayana therapy bestows the strength of all tissues. It helps slowing down the ageing process, enhances memory, improves the functioning of vital organs, and nourishes all the tissues. On the other hand, Kaaya kalpa therapy provides strength to the body as well motor and sensory organs. It provides nourishment to all tissues. These therapies include internal usage of medicines such as Shilajit, Aswagandha, Shataavari, Aamlaki etc, food items such as cow milk, ghee, honey etc, and periodical cleansing procedures such as Panchakarma.

According to ayurveda, there are three supports of life or upastambas—Aahaara (diet), nidra (sleep) and brahmacharya (observance of celibacy). A proper, skillful and optimum use of this triads, leads human body to maintain its integrity, being enriched with physical and immunological strength, complexion and growth, till full length of life, provided the person concerned does not get involved in the regimen detrimental to health.

SELF-HELP GUIDELINES & AYURVEDIC REMEDIES

1. Nutrition: A growing individual needs more calories than an adult

because: basal metabolism is highest during infancy, and then steadily declines throughout life except for a small rise during adolescence and the physical activity of the child far exceeds that of an adult. During your growing age, you require relatively more protein than any adult, because it is needed not only for tissue repair but also for growth. About 14% of the calories should be consumed as protein. The main sources of protein are milk and milk products, meat, fish, fowl, eggs, nuts, cereals and pulses.

Carbohydrates and fats are intended mainly for their calorie value. Care should be taken that sweets are not sucked constantly, as they ferment in the mouth and damage the teeth. Take liberal helpings of raw and cooked vegetables and fruits at each meal. If the diet is well balanced, supplements of vitamins and minerals are not necessary. Fluid intake should be sufficient to ensure a free flow of urine. Children who run about and sweat profusely need extra fluids.

School children usually have a good appetite, but one should carefully select their food. Their liking for sweets makes the diet adequate in calories but deficient in proteins. Milk and milk products, roasted groundnuts, and Bengal-gram are good sources of inexpensive protein enjoyed by children.

Children who are unwilling to go to bed early have difficulty in waking up in the morning, and may rush their breakfast before going to school. School lunch may also be hurried to get more time for play during the lunch interval. In evening when they return from school, children are generally thirsty and may gulp down a lot of liquid, which dulls their appetite. All these habits should be corrected to ensure optimum growth.

Throughout your life, you will constantly generate human growth hormone (HGH). Maintaining your bodies chemical balance and cell rejuvenation are two main reasons your body generates HGH. There are a number of factors that, if manipulated correctly, will substantially increase growth hormone levels in your body. Focus on eating six or seven smaller meals during your day instead of three or four larger ones. Consuming large meals with a high glycemic index forces the body to release a high amount of insulin into the system to aid with digestion. This reaction not only forces your body to store fat, it may also inhibit the flow of the growth hormone being released throughout your

bloodstream. Instead, make a point of consuming other low-sugar foods that will prevent the release of insulin.

One should not eat a large meal within two hours of going to sleep. The body releases the greatest amount of growth hormone during the first two hours of sleep. If a large meal is taken, then excess insulin is released within the system and this suppresses the output of growth hormone, preventing the body from taking advantage of it with rest.

- 2. Sleep:** Sleep is the condition that your mind entrusts to repair, remove, and replenish your body. It also regulates your body's ability to grow. Not getting enough sleep regularly can lower the amount of growth hormone your body produces daily. Even though excess sleep will not necessarily increase the amount of growth hormone but having normal sleeping habits let you tap a certain percentage of growth hormone that your bones never get a chance to utilise when they are sleep-deprived.

During sleep, your spine stretches and lengthens. You can get half an inch taller after a good night sleep. In addition, the quality and quantity of air you breathe can have a significant effect on your growth. The base of your bed should be made of hard surface such as plywood. Spread the bedding evenly on the bed and always use medium sized pillow—it should be neither too thick nor too thin. The bed should be spacious enough so that you can turn both sides freely.

- 3. Posture and exercises:** Over time, gravity will take a toll on the body and cause spinal disc degeneration, muscle loss, and force the body to slump or slouch. However, by maintaining proper postural alignment you can significantly reduce the negative effects of aging as well as promote growth. In whatever condition you may be whether sitting, standing, walking or lying, remain erect.

The spinal column is one of the most important body parts. Without it, you could not support yourself upright and perform many complex functions. A healthy spine will optimize your body's energy transmission and allow you to coast through your daily tasks with ease and comfort. Spinal column is crucial to your growth enhancing success. In order to ensure that the vertebrae and the cushions function properly, the backbone should be massaged daily with medicated oils such as

Aswagandhadi taila. This will not only make the vertebral column healthy, but also lead to its development. Stretching exercises and yoga postures help a lot to strengthen the spine.

Stretching exercises may help squeeze out a little extra growth hormone. By utilizing stretches that include several muscle groups to work collectively, the intensity of the workout subsequently increases as well, forcing the anterior pituitary gland to issue more growth hormone to compensate for the extra effort. Oddly enough, participating in intense aerobic exercise can also cause an increase in growth hormone release.

4. **Clothing and Apparel:** The way you dress can influence, to an extent, how you will be treated by others. It will also influence how tall you will look. By manipulating your clothing styles, you will easily make yourself appear taller, slimmer, and more attractive. If you are in the habit of wearing tight clothes, your body cannot grow properly. People of average stature and physique should put neither on very tight clothes nor on those very loose. There are certain people whose legs are smaller than the upper portion of their bodies. On the contrary, there are people whose legs are taller and the upper portion of their bodies is smaller. In case you want to project the upper portion of your body taller than the lower, you can wear an open shirt or have your shirt outside your pant. Similarly, those people whose legs are smaller, but who want to show their lower portion taller can do so by pushing their shirts inside the pants. Put on clothes having thick and long stripes. You will look taller. Comb your hair in such a fashion that you look tall.
5. **Sunshine and fresh air:** Sunrays are responsible for vitamin D synthesis and in turn for the healthy bones. Take sunbath early in the morning. Suryanamaskaras (Sun Salutes) are advised for this purpose. They ensure flexibility, sun exposure, as well as good amount of oxygen supply.
6. **Mental Exercises:** Your mind is a powerful thing to waste. Scientists say most people use around fifteen percent of their total mental capabilities. Learning how to manipulate your mind is easier than you think. Guided Imagery will allow you to reach your

goals! Meditation, Dhyaanam etc are some of the good mental exercises can help you a lot.

2. POOR WEIGHT GAIN

To most people who are overweight, this would be a dream come true. However, for underweight people who have trouble gaining weight, it can be a real problem.

A person may be underweight due to undernourishment during infancy and adolescence. Nutrition deficiencies of the mother during pregnancy can lead to lower number of fat cells in the baby, which in turn leads to less production of fatty tissue. Genetics and conditioning lead to the condition. In addition, many a time, thinness, like obesity, runs in the family.

Poor eating habits and less intake of food are other causes of a person being underweight. Illness can cause weight loss. Debilitating diseases such as cancer can also lead to loss of weight, which can be hard to regain, especially when those with these problems are not used to high calorie diet. Stress and anxiety often lead to fall in body weight. During periods of extreme emotional stress, a person finds it difficult to eat normally, and this automatically leads to a loss in weight. In addition, people who use stimulants such as caffeine and cigarettes are more commonly underweight.

Several medical problems are associated with weight loss or the inability to gain weight. Hyperthyroidism, for example, is the most common of these. It is also associated with many symptoms such as a rapid heart rate, sweaty palms, and insomnia. Some psychological problems are also associated with a person being underweight.

Bulimia and anorexia nervosa are the two such serious food-oriented maladies. They are, in fact, often symptoms of much deeper emotional and attitudinal problems. The patient normally has fear of being overweight and vomits a lot. Usually, the problem begins between the ages of 14 and 19, especially in young women. There may be surreptitious use of laxatives or deliberate vomiting.

SELF-HELP GUIDELINES & AYURVEDIC REMEDIES

- To cure the disease, remove the cause—says Sushruta samhita. As emaciation is the result of certain disease in most cases, the disease should be treated first.
- Learning to slow down internally can improve the metabolism and assimilation of nutrients.
- Primary focus for gaining weight is a good nutritive diet. Bigger portions, many meals along with extra snacks and more healthy, easily digestible, high calorie foods are to be taken. Gradual increase of high-energy foods is the key.
- Often, underweight people experience symptoms of fatigue and coldness in the body. Fat helps to keep us warm, and low body fat with poor circulation will reduce vitality and warmth. Fatigue may also be related to nutritional deficiencies secondary to limited calorie diets and low intake. In these cases, more nourishing foods such as meat extracts, milk, curd, raw sugar, jaggery, black-gram and ghee can be therapeutic.
- A decrease in the bulky, low-energy foods and a focus on the high-energy foods will help. It is good to eat the main course first, followed by richer foods, and vegetables and salads, if there is room.
- Of the vegetables, eat the starchier ones, such as potatoes, carrots. Also, eat rice, yava, and such starchy grains.
- Fluid intake just before or during meals is not recommended, as it reduces the appetite.
- Intake of freshly prepared wine before a meal is helpful as it relaxes the person and improves appetite.
- Bedtime snacks are appropriate when it comes to gaining weight, as long as it does not interfere with sleep.
- Adequate rest and deep sleep, including a nap during day time are important to help the body slow down and relax the tension that can burn calories.

- Avoid stimulants that increase nervous energy, especially in the evening. Stop smoking.
- All kinds of labour, exertion, anxieties and exhausting mental activities, should be given up and spend time cheerfully in agreeable company.
- As a thumb rule, excessive sexual indulgence should be avoided.
- A regular exercise programme, which is to be oriented more towards toning and conditioning the body, should be followed. Vigorous aerobic activity, however, burns off more calories and may keep weight down. Walks in fresh air may help to stay fit and relaxed enough to be more receptive to food.
- Body massage with nourishing oils such as aswagandhaadi tailam is recommended.
- Aswagandha, Sataavari, Bala, Vidaarigandha are the herbs that are used in emaciation. In addition, there are good compound formulations that can be used internally for emaciation like Amritaprasana ghritam, Chaagalyaadi ghritam to name a few.

3. BED-WETTING

Children who can control their bladders during the day, but who have never been dry at night for at least a six-month period, have what is known medically as primary nocturnal enuresis, the most common form of bed-wetting. In ayurveda, this condition is termed as Sayyaa mootra.

Wetting the bed is not only uncomfortable, but also embarrassing, especially for a child older than three years.

Not only is there a social stigma attached to bed-wetting, it causes great inconvenience due to the extra laundry that must be washed and most importantly, bed-wetting interrupts sleeping patterns and causes scores of problems associated with sleep deprivation.

Three out of four toddlers stay dry all night by age four. By five years, one in five still wets the bed and at six, the numbers drop to one in ten.

Just about all, bed-wetting stops by the time children reach puberty.

Many parents feel that their children's bed-wetting is a result of a defect in their parenting. Previously, it was believed that children, who wet their beds, had psychological problems. Today, it is suspected that bed-wetting is caused by slow development of the nerves that control the bladder.

Children with bed-wetting need to urinate at night. Initially, babies urinate round the clock. Then most make the transition to urinating during the waking hours only.

CAUSES

When an adult's bladder is full at night, there is a signal that goes from the bladder, through the nervous system, up to the brain. This alerts our reticular activating system, which awakens us. We then use the toilet. This signaling mechanism comes into play some time in middle childhood. If this mechanism fails, then the bed-wetting results. The major reasons for bed-wetting are:

- An imbalance of bladder muscles.
- Relatively small bladders to hold the normal quantity of urine.
- If more quantity of urine is produced due to drinking alcohol rich cool drinks, diuretic fluids or due to chronic diseases like diabetes or hormonal imbalance.

Secondary Nocturnal Enuresis is the term used to describe the condition where nighttime bladder control is possible only for the first six months and then bed-wetting begins again. This may be due to some physical problem like urinary tract infection or the onset of a disease such as diabetes, or some emotional stress like starting a new term in school or something as simple as a change in sleeping habits.

If your grown up child slept straight through the night, but now wets the bed, the problem is more likely related to recently increased urine production. It may also be due to difficulty in waking-up from stress, or

low-level sleep deprivation.

SELF-HELP GUIDELINES & AYURVEDIC REMEDIES

- Children do not wet bed intentionally; they have no control over this situation. Do not make them feel guilty, by getting angry or acting disgusted. Try to be supportive and understanding.
- Find out whether the child is getting enough sleep. A correct sleeping schedule will make it easier to wake up when the bladder is full.
- The bowels should be kept clear so that thread worms do not trouble at night. They are one of the important causes of bed-wetting.
- Items like potato, green gram, chocolates, tea, coffee and spicy items that produce gas should be restricted. Liquid food should not be taken for a few hours before bedtime.
- The child should be made to empty the bladder before going to bed. Set an alarm clock two to three hours after he falls asleep so that he or she can be awakened to go to the bathroom.
- Bladder stretching exercises help a lot to combat this situation.
- In grown up children, bed-wetting is due to heightened levels of stress caused due to death of a friend or family member, parental divorce, romantic break-up, *etc.* Stress can be dealt with by exercise, massage, meditation, yoga, relaxation techniques, *etc.*
- The important thing is to learn to be in touch with emotions and take positive actions before the stress expresses itself through bed-wetting.
- Fry one-teaspoonful coriander seeds in a pan until brown. Mix in one teaspoonful each of pomegranate fowers, sesame seeds and babul gum and grind the mixture into a

very fine powder. Add crystal sugar to the powder and give one teaspoonful at bedtime.

- Sarshapa in powder form taken along with half cup of milk before going to bed, gives good results.
- Ayurvedic remedies to treat bed-wetting aim at strengthening the nervous system and the urinary tract. The medicines that are commonly used are Vishatinduka vati, Shilajitwaadi vati, Chandraprabha vati, *etc.*
- Patent medicines like NEO (Charak) & MENTAT (Himalaya) give good results.

EXCESSIVE THIRST

Excessive thirst or trishna, as it is called in Ayurveda, is quite different from normal thirst. Thirst is a desire for drink or indicative of dryness of throat and a demand for water into the system. When this desire or demand for water is abnormal, i.e., more than usual, it is a diseased condition.

We may feel thirsty due to exertion on a hot summer day, where there has been increased fluid loss through sweating. When we have eaten oily and salty food, we can also expect to feel thirsty which is an indication of the need for dilution of these food substances in the digestive tract and the blood. If you have suffered from acute gastroenteritis with vomiting and diarrhoea, you can lose quite large volumes of fluid and consequently may drink increased amounts of fluid. Some people drink water because they enjoy drinking for the sake of it. For most people, it is a common practice to drink plenty of water to dilute the germs within the bladder, to help them lose weight or because they have kidney stones and are attempting to keep the urine as dilute as possible. These are all normal and predictable reasons for feeling thirsty.

With excessive thirst, however, there is no apparent cause for the thirst, and no intentional attempt to drink excessively by the individual.

However, in diabetes insipidus, there is a deficiency of an antidiuretic hormone called vasopressin, (which controls the amount of fluid excreted by the kidney) resulting in the passing of copious amounts of

urine, which in turn, causes excessive thirst.

On the other hand, in diabetes mellitus, which is caused by a relative or complete lack of insulin (the hormone that governs the level of blood sugar in the circulation), patients may experience excessive thirst.

Too little insulin means that blood sugar level has raised dramatically. All this sugar in the blood stream draws fluid out of the cells in the body and makes the sufferer feel thirsty. At the same time, the kidney is unable to restrict water alone so that large amount of sugary urine is passed.

According to Ayurveda, the vaata, excited by fear, excessive physical work, loss of strength, and nervous excitements, while the pitta excited by pungent and foul food, by anger, fasts, and other causes produce thirst. The water-bearing products, vitiated by the excited vaata, may also cause thirst.

SELF-HELP GUIDELINES & AYURVEDIC REMEDIES

The main treatment for excessive thirst is to remove the cause, as thirst is found as a symptom in many diseases. However, there are some general modalities to quench the thirst:

- One to two glasses of freshly milked milk has to be taken without boiling, according to appetite.
- Take half a cup of decoction prepared with equal parts of coriander seeds, amla fruits, dried ginger and dried grapes and pitapaapara, three times a day.
- Two to four grams of powdered fruit rind of amla, has to be taken with five to ten grams honey three times a day.
- Five to ten milliliters of fresh leaf juice of mango, jamun or fg, is to be taken with five to ten grams of raw sugar, three times a day.
- Decoction of turmeric can be taken with sugar and honey.
- The syrup of ripe tamarind makes a very satisfying drink for quenching thirst.

- Coconut water with little sugar and sandalwood powder is a very good drink for insatiable thirst.
- The following preparations are very efficacious to relieve thirst: Jambeera, paanakam, Gudoochi satva, Aamlakee rasaayana, Pravaala pishti, *etc.* These can be taken with advice from an ayurvedic physician.

5. FAMILY PLANNING METHODS

The population in India is growing rapidly. Everyday about 41 children per thousand are born in our country. The statistics show that at this rate there will be about 17,000 babies per day! The above statistics are enough to prove that the present methods of contraception in use have failed in many aspects and there is the need for a new approach to the problem.

Except for pills, intra-uterine devices and surgery, the failure rate of various other contraceptive methods is high. To add to the problem, the methods with lowest rate of failure are the ones with the highest side effects. For example, intra-uterine contraceptive devices like the copper-T can cause vaso-vagal attacks and uterine cramps, spotting, excessive menstrual flow and painful menstruation. Other complications include inflammation of the pelvic parts, implantation outside the uterine cavity (ectopic pregnancy), menorrhagia and dysmenorrhoea.

Oral pills have side-effects that may range from headache, migraine, depression, irritability, increased weight and weakness to much more serious conditions including the formation of blood clots that can threaten circulation in the heart, brain and lungs which may lead to heart attack or stroke or pulmonary embolism. In some cases, intermenstrual bleeding, scanty menstruation, vaginal infections, suppressed milk production in lactating mothers, nausea, vomiting, and loss of libido is also seen. Liver and gall bladder dysfunction, impaired carbohydrate metabolism can also occur, hence they are contraindicated in diabetic women.

Surgical sterilisation in males can sometimes result in formation of haematoma, spontaneous recanalisation, spermatocele or auto immunity through formation of anti-spermal antibodies.

Keeping these disadvantages in view, there is great demand for low cost, userfriendly, reliable, and side-effect-free approach for family planning. Therefore, research on Ayurvedic herbs is on. Even the Government of India has recognised the role of indigenous systems of medicine in population control. The Central Council for Research in Ayurveda and Siddha, New Delhi and the Central Drug Research Institute, Lucknow are undertaking lot of research on indigenous contraceptive methods.

AYURVEDIC INSIGHTS

An incantation in the Rig Veda says: “A man with many children succumbs to miseries.” This is perhaps the oldest statement with a suggestion against a large family. Several natural oral pills, suppositories, and mechanical devices are described in Ayurvedic works. Some local and oral contraceptives described in the ancient classics and treatises like Yoga Ratnaakara, Brihat-yoga-tarangini, Tantra-saara-sangraha, Brihannighanturatnaakara, Rasa-ratna-samuchchaya, *etc.* are listed below. Some claims have been tested scientifically and some are yet to be tested.

SELF-HELP GUIDELINES & AYURVEDIC REMEDIES

- The seed of shireesha (*Albizzia lebbek*) is a potent spermicide. It immobilises the human sperm in one minute. The antioviulatory and anti-fertility effect of this drug was published in the journal *Ethnopharmacology* in 1982. Females can use it as local application.
- In case of females, Neem oil (*Azadirachta indica*) when applied locally, acts as vaginal contraceptive. One ml of the oil when applied by a special applicator makes the sperms immobile within 30 seconds. The Defence Institute of Physiology and Allied Sciences, New Delhi has conducted a study and re-established the antioviulatory and anti-implantation effects of neem oil.
- Pippali (*Piper longum*), Vidanga (*Embelia ribes*) and

Tankana (borax), made into a powder in equal quantities and taken with milk during the fertile phase, is an effective contraceptive. Shah and Rawal (Ahmedabad) have tried this formula as a contraceptive agent, reporting only two failures amongst 458 users. One capsule (500 mg) contains Pippali and Tankan in equal proportions. The dose is two capsules daily throughout the month irrespective of menstruation. It is claimed that there is no adverse effect on lactation or any other side effects. The reversibility of fertility is stated to be immediate after withdrawal of medication.

- The root of Apaamaarga (*Achyranthes aspera*) made into powder and if taken daily for seven days from the fourth day of menses, and abstinence from sex till the next menses, results in permanent sterility. This was also confirmed in an experimental study.
- The root of Chitrakam (*Plumbago zeylanica*) is to be boiled with rice gruel and after filtration, the decoction is to be taken consecutively for three days after the menstrual period. The Journal of Research in Plant Medicine (1981) confirms the effectiveness of this regimen.
- Flowers of Japa (*Hibiscus rosasinensis*), if taken immediately after the delivery of a child, is said to prevent future conception and if at all there is conception, there will be an abortion. The anti-implantation activity of this was tested scientifically.
- A commonly used recipe for contraception is the white variety of Gunja (*Abrus precatorius*). The entire seeds of the cotyledons after removing the epicarp are to be soaked in water for one night. Administration of the potion on the fourth, fifth and sixth day of menstruation is stated to prevent conception for three years. Interesting scientific studies were conducted on this regimen. The journal Ethnopharmacology talks about the absolute infertility effect of the drug and reversibility on withdrawal of the drug.

- Administration of the pulp of one or two castor seeds during the menstrual period is stated to prevent fertilisation. According to the Journal of Pharmaceutical Sciences, castor oil produces pelvic congestion as a result of intestinal irritation which can induce abortion.
- The herb Arka (*Calotropis gigantea*) inhibits spermatogenesis and acts as oral contraceptives for males. Calotropin, a novel compound, is responsible for its fertility control. The April 1990 edition of '*Ancient Science of Life*' published these striking results.

There are also many herbs like Kadamba (*Anthocephalus indicus*), Sarshapa (*Brassica compestris*) Palaasa (*Butea monosperma*) Tanduleeyaka (*Amaranthus spinosus*), Patha (*Cissampelos pareira*), Shalmali (*Salmalia malabarica*), Maricha (*Piper nigrum*), Taala (*Borassus faberlifer*), Agnimantha (*Clerodendrum phlomidis*), Taleesa (*Abies webbiana*), Champaka (*Michelia champaca*), Haridra (*Curcuma longa*), etc., which have been mentioned in the ancient texts and have to be scientifically tested to prove their efficacy.



HOME (KITCHEN) REMEDIES

1. ALMOND

Almond is a middle-sized tree with simple greyish leaves (when mature) and whitetinged red, showy flowers. The fruits are velvety drupes, separating into two halves, exposing stones, which contain the kernel called almond.

There is common belief that vegetarian food contains no protein. Almond removes all such myths as it contains twenty per cent protein—a percentage that is hardly found in the plants. Among all the nuts that are used as food, almonds are highly nutritive. They are packed with all the food components, which are vital to health, strength, and sound body. It has been said, “No man, need starve on a journey who will fill his waist coat pocket with shelled almonds.” Leave alone the quantity; the quality of the protein is such that it is very easily digested. You will also be amazed to know that almonds contain good quantity of copper—the most vital key mineral that synthesises haemoglobin by aiding proper absorption of iron from gastrointestinal tract. The medicinal action of almonds is chiefly due to pharmacodynamic action of copper, calcium, and phosphorus and vitamin-B1, C and E. It is this fact, which led the ancient masters to use almonds in all ages in hope to live strong, healthy, and long.

Almond kernel is described as thermogenic, aphrodisiac, laxative, diuretic, nutritious, demulcent and nerve tonic in Ayurvedic literature. Oil is sweet, cooling, antispasmodic, sedative, laxative, and rejuvenating. Almond, as a whole is popular as brain tonic and body coolant.

MEDICINAL USES

- Almonds form an ideal tonic for your growing child. Soak 3

to 6 shelled almonds in warm water and then remove the thin skin. Grind them into paste, and mix it with milk. Add a teaspoonful of honey. Feed your baby once daily from 2nd month onwards and see how the child grows with strong bones. There is no fear of indigestion-they will suit for all. It is also very much useful in adolescent girls with delayed puberty; crushed almonds, egg yolk, gingelly (til) powder, and a teaspoon of honey in milk will do the trick. This ensures good overall development during adolescence.

- It acts as an excellent food supplement in case of general debility and convalescence. Soak 12 to 15 shelled almonds in hot water and remove the outer covering. Grind them into fine paste, and mix it with the buttermilk and mash a ripe banana in it. Strain it through a muslin cloth, add 4 teaspoons honey, and drink twice daily. Almond forms an ideal food for diabetics also as it contains little carbohydrate. It is valuable in diets for peptic ulcers.
- Almonds increase libido and enhance general sexual performance in cases of frigidity. Cut and boil a few drumstick fruits and collect their pulp. Grind a few almonds and 2-3 pinches of saffron along with this pulp and eat every day for 40 days.
- It is good in case of constipation. Grind separately 5 teaspoons almonds and 5 teaspoons dried dates. Combine them and add 10 teaspoons honey. Take 3 teaspoons of this mixture twice daily.
- In case of head lice, grind 7 to 8 kernels with 1 to 2 teaspoons limejuice and apply on the scalp. To stop the hair fall, apply a little almond oil on scalp regularly and massage.
- In case of tooth ache and gum diseases, burn the shells of almonds, powder, and use as toothpowder.
- To get relief from psoriasis and allied skin troubles, powder a few almonds, boil and apply on affected areas and let it remain overnight.

- To improve skin complexion, mix equal quantities of almond oil and honey and apply on face. To protect your tender skin from sunburn, apply the paste of almonds and milk cream along with the coconut oil on the exposed parts regularly.
- In case of insomnia, grind blanched almonds (8 to 10) along with khuskhus grass powder (1 teaspoon) and milk (half teacup) and smear the paste on palms and soles.
- To get relief from muscular sprains, mix equal parts of almond oil and garlic oil and massage over the affected parts.

PLEASE NOTE

In order to enhance their assimilation, almonds are often taken in combination with other spices like black pepper, khuskhus, turmeric, cardamom *etc.* However, during the summer months and hot climatic conditions, almonds should be consumed after removing their brown outer skin, which has a tendency to produce enormous heat in the body.

2. ASAFOETIDA (HING)

The Ayurvedic herbarium is enriched with many more household food items. Among them Hing or Asafoetida is one.

These plants grow in Kashmir and the Himalayas. They bear massive carrot shape roots that are 5-6 inches in diameter at the top when they are 4-5 years old. The fresh roots are incised at the top and the latex is collected in earthen vessels, dried, and packed in leather bags in the form of hing.

Hing is astringent and bitter in taste and emits a strong odor. It is used as a favoring agent in curries, pickles, and sauces.

MEDICINAL USES

- In the body, hing is absorbed from intestines and excreted

through lungs, skin, and kidneys after leaving a sedative effect. It excites the secretion of ovarian hormones and sex stimulating centers. From ancient times, hing is used as a medicine for hysteria, paralysis, indigestion, impotency, cough *etc.*

- It is source for calcium, iron and phosphorous. Apart from these, it also contains carbohydrates. Proteins and fats are also present in hing but in negligible amounts.
- Hing is used with promising results in female disorders. Fried hing mixed with fresh goat's milk and honey one table spoonful if taken thrice daily for a month excites the secretion of progesterone hormone and is helpful in functional sterility, threatened abortion, premature labor, painful menstruation, irregular cycles, excessive menstrual bleeding and white discharge. A grain of hing taken with a teaspoonful of infusion of cloves after childbirth, thrice daily, increases breast milk. Hing, given after childbirth, helps in contracting and toning of the uterine walls. It has a cleansing effect on the genital tract. Women, who have habitual abortions and miscarriages, should take a small amount of hing daily when the pregnancy is confirmed and continue its intake until delivery. It is a great help in cases of threatened abortions. Sesame oil to which garlic and hing have been added and warmed is beneficial when inserted in the ears of nursing mothers. It can also be used in buzzing sensation of the ears.
- Male sexual disorders like spermatorrhoea, impotency, premature ejaculation of semen etc., are best treated with hing. One grain of fried hing mixed with honey and a teaspoonful of fresh latex of banyan tree are to be taken before sunrise, once daily for 40 days. It promotes sexual virility and prevents the bad effects of excessive sexual indulgence. Hing can be massaged over the shaft of the penis to increase local circulation and improve the hardness during erection.
- It is proven remedy in respiratory disorders. In case of

whooping cough, bronchial asthma, bronchitis etc, one grain of hing, two teaspoonfuls of honey, quarter teaspoon of onion juice and one teaspoonful of betel leaf juice are to be mixed and taken internally.

- From ancient times, hing is used as a preventive medicine for infectious diseases. It was tied in a piece of cloth and left hanging in one of the corners of the house. It was believed that the smell that emitted was responsible for preventing the diseases. Perhaps the volatile oils and the strong smell might have any influence on microorganisms.
- Hing has got analgesic like effect. It alters the pain sensation. Two grains of hing dissolved in one tablespoonful of coconut oil is to be applied on swellings caused by rheumatoid arthritis, muscle pain, trauma *etc.* Paste of hing prepared with water or lemon juice can be applied over bee, and scorpion stings. In addition, hing can be filled in carried tooth after mixing in clove oil with excellent results.
- Attacks of hysteria, acute rhinitis etc., are often controlled by mere smelling the hing.
- Hing is known digestive and carminative. Adding hing to foodstuff helps digestion and prevents intestinal gas. A very popular 1000-year-old digestive formula is Hingvaashtak choorna. Its preparation is very simple. Take equal parts of fried hing, dried ginger, long pepper, jeera, black pepper, ajowan seeds, black cumin and rock salt. Powder these and mix well. Take half teaspoon regularly with first morsel of the food. This can also be taken twice daily with hot water.

PLEASE NOTE

1. Excessive use of hing is not advisable due to its semi-toxic effects. It produces heat and increases pitta. Particularly, the infants and children should never be given hing in any form, because it causes severe vomiting leading to dehydration.

2. Beware of adulterations while using hing. Original hing, if lit should be burnt completely. If dissolved in water, no residue should be left in the bottom. In addition, there should not be any alteration in colour and consistency.

3. BANYAN TREE

The banyan is quite a common sight in the plains of our country, providing muchneeded relief from the hot sun. The British people who found Hindu banias (traders) transacting their business briskly under the shade of this tree began to refer to it as the 'banyan'. In Ayurveda, it is one of the five great kshiravrikshas, i.e., milk-exuding trees, the other four being udumbara (*Ficus glomerata*), Aswattha (*Ficus religiosa*), Paareesha (*Thespesia populnea*) and Plaksha (*Ficus lacor*)

All most all the parts—stem bark, root bark, aerial roots, leaves, vegetative buds, sap (milky exudates), fowers, and fruits are therapeutic. Usual dose will be 50 to 100 ml in case of decoction and 3 to 5 gm in case of powder. Latex can be given in 5 to 10 drops dose.

MEDICINAL USES

- **Bleeding piles:** Take a few drops of the sap with milk regularly.
- **Boils and Abscess:** Warm banyan leaves after coating them with til oil and make a hot poultice to promote suppuration and hasten breaking.
- **Burning sensation in fevers:** Decoction of hanging roots of Banyan tree mixed with ghee alleviates burning sensation in fevers.
- **Corneal opacity:** Finely powdered camphor mixed with latex of Banyan is applied as collyrium (eye ointment).
- **Cracks in the heels:** Fill the cracks with the milk of the banyan tree.
- **Diabetes:** Soak 2 inches bark overnight in a glass of water. In the next morning squeeze the bark and drink the

infusion. This is a proven remedy in most of the recent scientific studies.

- **Diarrhoea:** Pound the hanging roots of Banyan tree and take along with cow's buttermilk to check acute diarrhoea.
- **Conception promotion:** Leaf-bud of Banyan helps conception. It should be collected in bright fortnight and pushya constellation and should be taken with water by the women having menses.
- **Freckles:** Apply the paste of tender leaves of Banyan and coconut pulp. Similarly, leaf-bud of Banyan and masur-kidali removes freckles and enhances the lustre of the face.
- **Hair problems:** Make Powder of equal quantities of the aerial roots of banyan and the lemon peel. Boil the powder in coconut oil and apply. In case of baldness, powder the aerial roots of banyan tree and lotus roots and use the same way.
- **Intrinsic haemorrhage:** Tender leaves of doorva grass and Banyan mixed with honey should be taken.
- **Joint pains:** The milky juice obtained from banyan tree when massaged on the joints relieves swelling and pain.
- **Sex selection (Pumsavana):** Leaf-bud of Banyan dissolved in milk should be instilled in the right nostril, three or four drops of the pregnant woman for attaining male progeny. (Left nostril should be selected for female progeny)
- **Soft chancre:** Burning leaf of Banyan should be put in water and the ash is collected. It is taken in the dose of 1.5 grams twice a day.
- **Tooth care:** Tender aerial roots are chewed and used as toothbrushes. They are known to strengthen the gums and teeth.
- **White discharge:** The paste of lodhra should be taken along with decoction of Banyan bark or a cloth-piece impregnated with the above decoction should be kept in the vagina.

- **Wounds and Ulcers:** The latex of Banyan should be applied. It destroys maggots in wound.

4. BISHOP'S WEED AJWAIN OMUM

Its Botanical name is *Carum copticum*. Deepyaka, and Yavaanee are its Sanskrit names. It is called Ajwain in Hindi.

It is a household herb in India. It is being used as a carminative medicine from the time of Charaka and Susrutha. Ajwain plant belongs to the family of coriander, resembles to dill plant and grows up to 3 feet. It is available in all most all parts of the India.

The name ajwain is derived from the Hindi word Adarjawan that means "one which feeds" (attributed to the carminative properties). The chemicals and volatile oil in the seeds (botanically speaking, they are fruits) stimulate the gastric secretions and movements of the villi in the intestines, destroy the harmful germs and prevent the fermentation in the intestines.

Ajwain seeds contain a volatile oil that is rich in cymene, terpene, thymine and steroptin. There is 25 to 35 per cent fixed oil. Thymol is the chief constituent of ajwain seeds.

The seeds are usually crowned by a ring of calyx. The dry seeds are harvested in the form of ajwain seeds. Seeds are ovate about 2 mm. long and 1 mm broad. There are five ridges over each seed with a depression in the middle. Inside the seed there are nine oil tubes that run vertically in them. Seeds are aromatic, sharp, tingling and slightly bitter. The colour of the seeds is greenish brown.

MEDICINAL USES

- Ajwain is popular mainly for stimulating digestion and correcting digestive disorders. Soak ajwain seeds in fresh ginger juice, and dry in shade. Then, soak them in fresh lime and dry again. Later, soak in mint juice and papaya sap and dry again. Powder the processed dry seeds and preserve in a clean airtight container. Take a pinch of the

powder immediately after food for digestive troubles such as dyspepsia, heartburn, indigestion, fatulent colic, diarrhoea due to indigestion, and gastrointestinal infection. To enhance its carminative properties, you can combine this mixture with black salt or rock salt. A teaspoonful of the ajwain infusion mixed with two grains of soda-bicarb (baking soda) is given as a medicine for indigestion and fatulence in children. Giving it with each feed helps easy digestion and prevents the vomiting of the milk. Eating ajwain seeds with jaggery alleviates urticaria that has resulted due to indigestion.

- As it is having kapha and vaata pacifying nature, it is often used in respiratory troubles and a variety of allergies. Prepare ajwain decoction by boiling a teaspoonful of the seeds and fenugreek in a glass of water for half an hour. Mix half cup of infusion with a tablespoonful of honey and take thrice daily as an effective expectorant during the treatment of tuberculosis, asthma, bronchitis, lung abscess, etc. If you have throat troubles like acute pharyngitis, sore throat, hoarseness of the voice, just infuse ajwain; add common salt and gargle. Chewing a pinch of seeds with a crystal of common salt and a clove is a remedy for cough caused by acute pharyngitis and influenza. Chewing ajwain seeds prevents foul breath. In case of bronchial asthma, roll a fistful of ajwain seeds in cotton cloth, heat it on a frying pan and apply on chest and neck when bearably hot.
- Fumes of the ajwain seeds inhaled carefully thrice daily for a month or two reduces the desire for alcohol and opium. In case of migraine, roll some ajwain seeds in a piece of tissue paper, light it and smoke like a cigarette.
- It acts as an excellent nerve tonic. Fry ajwain seeds in pure cow's ghee with the kernel of tamarind seeds in equal proportion. After the mixture turns golden brown, powder and preserve in an airtight container. Take a teaspoonful of this powder with honey and milk before going to bed.
- Ajwain acts as an anti-inflammatory agent—powder of the

ajwain seeds mixed with white of an egg is applied over umbilical hernia in infants and children and the same mixed with honey and lime juice is applied as a therapy for scorpion sting, acne *etc.* In case of earache and boils inside the ear, heat mustard oil (2 tsp), add ajwain seeds ($\frac{1}{2}$ tsp) and crushed garlic (one or two fakes) and boil till the contents become red, filter and use as ear drops. Apart from this, ajwain seeds are fried in coconut oil and is massaged as a liniment for muscular pains. In case of boils, to prevent the pain and swelling, pound ajwain seeds, onion, turmeric and castor oil—all together, heat the mixture and place on a betel leaf and apply as a poultice over boils. Powder of the seeds mixed with alum and salt is used as a dentifrice.

PLEASE NOTE

excessive use of ajwain seeds may cause dryness of the body fluids, and may reduce the secretion of milk and semen.

5. BLACK PEPPER

Pepper is one of the most popular spices used in a variety of food preparations and is a household remedy for many ailments. Volatile oil of pepper, the alkaloid piperine and the pungent substance chavicin act directly as gastric stimulants by secreting more saliva and gastric juice. It increases gastrointestinal movements and expels the strangulated gas thereby relaxing the intestines. It is therefore, used as an excellent carminative and digestive agent in dyspepsia, indigestion, fatulent colic, diarrhoea, and fermentation of food, if taken along with thin buttermilk.

Pepper has a dilating influence on the renal arteries and superficial vessels of the skin. It causes profuse sweating and urination, creates a feeling of warmth in the beginning and then follows the cool sensation. Due to this diaphoretic and diuretic action, the infusion prepared from a pinch of pounded pepper and two cloves of garlic in half a glass of water is taken thrice daily with honey in malarial fever, scanty urination, *etc.*

The same is also gargled in sore throat, relaxed uvula, tonsillitis, pharyngitis, *etc.*

MEDICINAL USES

Asthma: Take black pepper powder and yavakshaara, (alkali obtained after burning the green spikes of barley) with warm water.

Congestive headache: Prepare paste by pounding two peppers with goat's milk and put in the nostrils.

Convulsions: Mix powders of pepper and acorus calamus (bach) in equal proportions and mix with sour curd. Take internally on empty stomach.

Coryza: Take the pepper mixed with jaggery. Alternately, a pinch of pepper powder, boiled in milk with a pinch of turmeric powder used once daily for three days with good results.

Cough: Take the black pepper powder with honey. Boil jaggery in water and allow it to cool. Add honey, pepper, and take internally. In case of cough with hoarseness of voice, take pepper powder with ghee, honey and sugar or paste of zizyphus (bair) leaves fried in ghee and mixed with rock salt. Sucking three peppercorns with a pinch of ajwain seeds and a crystal, of common salt is an effective remedy for cough.

Eczema: Take pepper powder along with fresh cow ghee; it pacifies eczema and scabies.

Excessive sleep: Rub the pepper with honey and apply as eye ointment. It eliminates excessive sleep.

Obesity: Take one betel leaf with 10 grains of pepper, followed by intake of cold water for two months. This makes you lean and thin.

Oedema in Children: Give butter, topped with pepper powder.

Pimples: Mix pepper powder with ox-bile and apply externally.

Snake bite: Pepper infusion is given in cases of snake bite, opium intoxication and scorpion stings.

6. BUTTER MILK

Ayurvedic wisdom held that one big glass of the frothy, tangy buttermilk would fortify and fuel you through a summer-day's work. While today's techno-dependent toilers are more likely to find their morning boost in cups of espresso, we have not forsaken buttermilk's culinary and therapeutic attributes. Contrary to its name and characteristics, thick, rich buttermilk contains no butter at all. The word reflects buttermilk's cottage-industry beginnings as the milky liquid reserved when heavy cream is churned into butter-hence, "buttermilk." In our country, preparation of buttermilk (takra is its Sanskrit name) and its medicinal values are known from the time of Atreya and Agnivesa, the Ayurvedic sages who learnt the art of healing from Lord Indra. Even the Rumanians, Bulgarians knew the art of making yoghurt and used it as a medicine for gastrointestinal disorders.

Buttermilk is prepared by churning curd and adding appropriate quantity of water. Fat in the form of butter is removed.

MEDICINAL USES

- Buttermilk is cool and light. It is strengthening; increases the appetite and digestive power. It drives away tiredness and thirst. You may add some ginger, cumin or other spices, or sweeteners, depending on the season and your body type. If vaata is aggravated, you can add a little salt or sweeteners, and some cumin; if pitta needs reducing, you can use sugar or misri; if kapha, add ginger, black pepper and a little honey.
- During the process of fermentation, bacteria, yeast and other lactic acid organisms covert milk into curd and predigest milk protein. These bacteria then inhibit the growth of hostile or illness-causing bacteria inside the intestinal tract and promote beneficial bacteria needed for digestion. These friendly bacteria facilitate the absorption of minerals and aid in the synthesis of vitamins of B group and are very much essential for good health because they secrete enzymes similar to those secreted by the digestive organs. Administration of broad-spectrum antibiotics, not

only kill the pathogenic organisms but also wipe out these useful intestinal flora. In such cases, buttermilk can be taken liberally.

- In the disease like sprue, mixing powdered leaves of the fig tree and dry ginger in buttermilk and drinking it is very beneficial.
- It is observed that giving children with a glass of buttermilk sweetened with sugar or honey an hour before the usual feed prevents diarrhoea and vomiting.
- If equal quantities of powders of dry ginger, black pepper, and rock salt are mixed and taken along with buttermilk corrects indigestion.
- The pulp of wood apple, if mixed with the buttermilk, cures diarrhoea, amoebic dysentery, and excessive haemorrhage. Alternately, drinking buttermilk that has been topped with powders of asafoetida, cumin seeds and rock salt, controls diarrhoea and abdominal pains.
- Drinking buttermilk mixed with raw sugar (misri or gur) alleviates urinary disease especially uraemia.
- In hepatitis, coma may be resulted due to excessive liberation of ammonia. Using liberal quantity of thin buttermilk can prevent it. The lactic acid organisms in the buttermilk counteract the formation of ammonia. In jaundice, buttermilk with soft-boiled rice is an ideal diet.
- Some patients complain of severe burning and intense itching in rectum after passing stools. This type of non-pathological pruritus-ani and burning can be successfully controlled with in a few days by taking plenty of buttermilk and lemon juice with bland diet. It is found that normal pH value of the stool (5-6) is altered due to alkalinity of the stool and ammonia content. Taking the buttermilk recipe turns the stool acidic and alleviates the burning and itching.
- Giving buttermilk mixed with vayvidang powder to the children cures them from the worms in their stomach.

- Buttermilk acts as an antidote for copper poisoning. In addition, a glass of buttermilk, mixed with a pinch of pepper taken after cobra-bite acts as a remedy.
- Application of buttermilk compresses along with a pinch of turmeric powder controls eczema, psoriasis, scabies *etc.*
- Buttermilk with rice, jaggery and pepper is a very cooling diet in summer for burning sensation in the body.
- Cooking meat with buttermilk makes it soft and increases the digestibility.

CARDAMOM

Cardamom is called the “Queen of Spices.” It has digestive, antispasmodic, and carminative properties. It helps stop belching, vomiting, and nausea. It induces perspiration and improves circulation. Cardamom is added to tea, coffee, and milk to counteract their bad effects such as caffeine toxicity and phlegm formation.

MEDICINAL USES

- The husk of the cardamom is considered as an inert material rich in fibre, and chewing the whole cardamom along with food is supposed to prevent food putrefaction and constipation. Eating a ripe banana with a cardamom before going to bed cures constipation.
- If you are feeling giddy due to high blood pressure, mix one teaspoonful of cardamom seeds with two tsp of dried ginger, long pepper and licorice. Powder it and add five tablespoonfuls of sugar. Preserve in an airtight container. Take half teaspoonful with hot water twice a day.
- Cardamom is a remedy for delayed and defective absorption of nutrients. Mix cardamom, dried ginger, and nutmeg in equal quantities and powder them finely. Take one teaspoonful of the same with warm water for a month.

- Boil few mint leaves in a cup of water. Take it off the stove, add half teaspoon of powdered cardamom seeds, mix thoroughly, and drink. This cures the loss of taste and nausea.
- Mix and powder equal quantities of cardamom seeds, asafoetida, dried ginger, and rock salt. Take a teaspoonful of this mixture along with warm water if you are suffering from indigestion. Even a combination of cardamom and saunf, in powder form will do the trick.
- Make an infusion of equal parts of cardamom, saunf and ginger. Sip it after adding a pinch of asafoetida in case of indigestion.
- If you are suffering from bad breath and sore throat, prepare an infusion of a teaspoonful each of cardamom, cinnamon, and bay leaves and drink. Also, cleanse the mouth with licorice decoction and chew some saunf frequently.
- If you are having nasal blocks, inhalation of the cardamom smoke, generated by putting it on live coal, acts excellently.
- Sniffing fine powder of equal quantities of cardamom seeds, cinnamon, black pepper and cumin relieves nose blockage due to common cold.

8. CASTOR OIL

Ayurveda, which is often called National Medical Treatment of this country, recognizes castor oil to be a wonderful panacea for several health concerns. Botanically derived from the *Ricinus communis*, castor is an evergreen shrub, which grows wildly in warmer temperatures. In Ayurveda, castor oil is called *Eranda taila* or *Gandharva hasta* (hand of celestial being) taila; in the West, it is known as *Palma Christi* (hand of Christ).

To extract oil, remove the tough outer cover of the seeds and cook the inner seeds in water; dry and powder coarsely. Add this powder to

boiling water. As the water boils, the oil from the seeds slowly separates out. Decant and store this oil in a glass jar.

According to Ayurveda, its actions are purgative, demulcent, analgesic and nervine. Applied externally castor oil is non-irritating, protective, and somewhat emollient. When swallowed it does not irritate the stomach, and the nausea induced is probably due to the odour and the persistence of the unpleasant clinging contact of the oil in the mouth. Upon entering the small intestines, it is split by the pancreatic juice into glycerin and ricinoleic acid, and the latter induces the purgative action. Rubbed into the abdomen castor oil will also cause purgation.

MEDICINAL USES

- **Gastrointestinal Concerns:** Small amounts of pure and warm castor oil-half to one teaspoon for children above one year and one to two teaspoons for adults-with a glass of Luke warm milk act as a mild laxative. It acts just after one or two hours. Lactating mothers can take the oil if their babies are suffering from constipation. Those who find it unpalatable can take it with ginger or peppermint. (However, the following is the best method for administering castor oil: Squeeze into a suitable glass a small quantity of orange juice, and thoroughly rinse the inner surface of the glass with it. Place the dose of oil upon the juice and cover with more juice. Then having moistened the mouth completely with a portion of the orange juice quickly swallow the mixture within the glass. If this is well carried out the oil will not adhere to the mucosa nor will it be tasted.) Having castor oil once in three months cleanses entire digestive system. A light diet or gruel is followed for the rest of the day. Unfortunately, this useful practice is being given a bad name and thought unscientific. However, Castor oil is one of the mildest and most satisfactory cathartics; it has no irritant effect upon the stomach and is probably the best laxative for children to cleanse the intestinal tract of tainted or undigested food,

poorly masticated nuts, and mucoid accumulations. It is very effective in dysentery to prepare the way for more specific medicines, especially when there is evident constipation of the upper bowel. For infants, internal administration of the oil is avoided, but the oil is applied over the navel. A betel leaf stalk dipped in castor oil is used as a suppository for children with constipation. The external application of castor oil provides relief and healing to anal fissures and will reduce the pile mass if applied along with aloe vera juice.

- **Skin & Hair Concerns:** Castor oil prevents fungal infections of the foot and reduces itching due to sweating between the toes. The regular application around the nail bed is beneficial in correcting crooked and cracked nails and making them strong and healthy. The application of castor oil after shaving enhances smooth, soft, lustrous skin; it is very effective in healing minor wounds, burns, bedsores and cuts. It is also beneficial in chilblain. Excessive dryness of the skin (hyperkeratosis) can be remedied with it. The frequent and regular application of castor oil on corns will soften and reduce pain, allowing for healing without surgery. It is a good soothing agent; the regular application on cracked heels and chapped hands and lips restores moisture and softens the skin. The application of castor oil to the scalp with gentle massage helps prevent hair loss and improves hair's lustre. Applying similarly over eyebrows & eye lashes keep them well groomed. Excessive dryness of the skin (hyperkeratosis) can be remedied with it. The external application of castor oil relieves diaper rash in babies. It reduces dark circles under the eyes.
- **Musculoskeletal and Neurological Concerns:** "Lion-like castor oil is an effective destroyer of elephant-like rheumatism, moving in the forest-like body" says Bhaava prakaasa, a classical treatise of Ayurveda. Take castor oil internally along with decoction of dried ginger in case of

rheumatic pains and sciatica. The application of warm castor oil externally twice daily is beneficial in easing joint pains and arthritis pain. The regular and gentle massage of warm oil on the legs is beneficial in reducing varicose veins and is helpful in soothing burning in the soles of the feet. Massaging oil on the head brings relief from headaches and provides a sound night's sleep.

- **Women's Concerns:** Castor oil applied to the navel and lower abdomen relieves premenstrual pain. Lactating mothers can apply castor oil in the breasts to enhance milk secretion. It also tones the breasts and prevents them from sagging. When applied to cracked nipples, it provides soothing relief and softens the nipples. Warm oil applied to stretch marks is proved to be beneficial in women who are trying to loose weight. A word of caution-large doses of castor oil as purgative during early months of pregnancy may cause abortion. Castor oil acts as a cleansing agent for the eyes; it is the main ingredient of kajol, which is traditionally made from lampblack obtained by lighting wicks that have been dipped in castor oil. Karpoor and ghee are added to this. It keeps the eyes healthy and sparkling.

9. COCONUT

The Vedas describe the coconut tree as Kalpa vriksha or the Tree of Heaven and perhaps no other phrase can give a better description of this versatile tree. Almost every part of the tree has some medicinal value. Even the shell of this tough nut has its uses. Let's take a look at what medical benefits each part has to offer.

MEDICINAL USES

- **Kernel:** The jelly-like kernel of the tender coconut is devoid of fbres and can easily be digested. This can be given to children suffering from protein deficiency, rickets,

and abdominal tuberculosis, in the form of mash along with bananas and milk. If you are worried about early aging symptoms like wrinkles, massage with the fresh kernel over the face daily and keep your skin fower-fresh. Tender coconut can also prevent oral cancer caused by eating paan or supari. Researcher P.K Thompson also found that monolaurin and its precursor lauric acid inactivated various bacteria, yeast, fungi and enveloped viruses such as human immuno deficiency virus, measles virus, herpes simplex, vesicular stomatitis virus, visna virus and cytomegalo virus. In case of dry cough and throat irritation, take coconut milk mixed with a tablespoonful of poppy seed milk and a tablespoonful of pure honey, before going to bed. This is even useful in case of diarrhoea and dysentery. Tapeworms are best eradicated with coconut milk. It should be taken preferably at bedtime. Desiccated fresh coconut is extensively used in Ayurvedic medicine. It is fried and fomented on the desired parts to bring back the tone of the faccid muscles, especially in conditions like facial paralysis.

- **Copra:** The dry kernel has valuable micro and macro elements. Due to the considerable amounts of vitamin B, mouth ulcers can be effectively controlled by chewing dry kernel along with sugar candy.
- **Coconut water:** The medicinal importance of the tender (unripe) coconut water is well known. This water has high concentrations of potassium and chlorine and can be used to treat heart, liver, and kidney disorders. This is found to be beneficial in case of general dropsy, scanty urination with high acidic contents, morning sickness during pregnancy, intestinal infections, albuminuria, gonorrhoea, etc. Coconut water along with lime juice can be used in infants and children to cure dehydration. This can be given in doses of one teaspoonful for every 10 minutes to quench the thirst and to restore the electrolyte balance where emergency saline transfusion facilities are not available.

Tender coconut water can be mixed in milk and given to infants to provide relief from vomiting, constipation, and indigestion. Tender coconut water along with a pinch of turmeric powder and an equal quantity of slaked lime water (calcium hydroxide) works as a good soothing ointment for burns.

- **Coconut Oil:** It is a good emollient and can be applied externally along with a few drops of lemon juice and lime water (calcium hydroxide) for treating pimples, wrinkles, chapped skin, cracked nipples, napkin rash, *etc.* If you have a growing child whose growth is not up to the mark, then apply the oil along with cow butter. Massage well and expose the child to the morning sun. For sagging breasts, take equal quantities of fresh jasmine leaf juice and coconut oil; add mustard seeds $\frac{1}{4}$ the weight of coconut oil; heat the mixture on a slow fire until the water content evaporates; filter and bottle. Use this oil externally to increase the blood flow and to make the desired parts firm.
- **Flower:** Bhaavaprakasa, the famous Ayurvedic treatise, advocates the consumption of coconut spike paste along with curd for treating urinary stones.
- **Coir:** Ash of the coir has styptic properties. Therefore, in case of excessive menstrual bleeding and bleeding piles, one can use this ash along with tender coconut water and sugar candy. A cupful decoction of coir, when taken with honey, helps expel intestinal worms.
- **Shell:** Oil extracted from the shell is very effective in treating ringworm infections. The oil can be obtained by burning shells in a copper vessel. Application should be continued for at least 15 days.

10. COMMON SALT

No dish is complete without a dash of salt. Common salt is not a food item, but takes part in all most all food preparations. Apart from the taste enhancing property, it is concerned in the maintenance of fluid

balance in the body, muscle irritability, acid base balance, and osmotic pressure. Salt is necessary for the human body, but in a very restricted amount. Healthy adult individual needs three to eight grams of common salt per day. If you avoid common salt totally from all the food sources, then its deficiency causes weakness, giddiness, loss of appetite, cramps in the muscles which are exercised most (particularly calf muscles), twitching and convulsions, collapsed veins, cold palms and soles, and low blood pressure. Associated water deficiency produces scanty urine, dry mouth, inelastic skin, and disorientation. Acute depletion of sodium by 30% will lead to circulatory collapse and death.

Common salt is used as a preservative since olden days. It removes the water content from the organic substances there by keeping them dry.

MEDICINAL USES

- In case of sore throat, tooth ache etc, dissolve a teaspoonful of common salt in a glass of water and gargle.
- Poisonous substances, in most of the cases can be vomited out safely by drinking concentrated salt solution.
- If you are suffering from nasal congestion, cold etc, and do not want to use the decongesting drops, then salt comes to the rescue. Dissolve a pinch of salt in a teaspoon of water and put few drops in the nose.
- Application of salt stops bleeding caused by leech bite.
- Salt is a simple but effective remedy for dandruff; massaging the hair with weak solution of salt cleans the scalp, checks dandruff and prevents hair fall.
- In case of redness and dryness of the eyes, take half a teaspoonful of powdered common salt (better use rock salt) in a glass of buttermilk once daily. It is also useful in muscle cramps, sunstroke, fatulence, colic, and as an antidote for silver nitrate and quinine.
- Scabies, neuralgia, chapped hands and skin can never be fatal, but irritating. Here is soothing remedy—dissolve a

teaspoon of salt in quarter cup of water and mix it in equal quantity of gingily oil (til tel); heat gently to evaporate the water and apply externally.

- Many a time, you need some expectorant that brings out the mucous plugs in respiratory disorders like bronchitis, asthma, pneumonia *etc.* Sucking a crystal of salt with a clove acts as a safe expectorant in such conditions.
- Taking fomentation with the crystal-salt is a time-tested remedy for painful conditions like lumbago, rheumatoid arthritis, muscle trauma *etc.*

11. CORIANDER

Coriander is the most common household remedy that is available through out year. Whole plant, especially chopped leaves and seeds are medicinal.

MEDICINAL USES

According to Ayurvedic materia-medica, fresh leaves of coriander are pungent and aromatic.

- If you have vitamin deficiency, especially that of vitamin A, B1, B2, C and Iron, a teaspoonful of fresh juice should be taken everyday with an equal quantity of honey. This has proved to be beneficial in curing tuberculosis, bronchial asthma, and allergy.
- For indigestion, fatulent colic, nausea and vomiting, one to two teaspoonfuls of fresh coriander juice mixed with a glassful of fresh buttermilk can be taken two to three times a day. The same will prove to be useful in case of hiccup, excessive salivation, bitterness in the mouth, giddiness, jaundice, piles, dysentery, ulcerative colitis, burning in the arms and pinworm infection.
- Chewing fresh leaves cures stomatitis, bad breath and prevents pyrrhoea and dental caries.

- Externally, the juice of the leaf can be applied over forehead as a medicine for migraine and other types of headaches. Not only this, the juice can also be used as a cosmetic agent.
- Take a teaspoonful of the leaf juice. Mix with a pinch of turmeric powder and apply over the face every night as remedy for pimples, black heads and dryness of the skin. This will bleach the skin and bloom the complexion.
- Many a time, extreme summer heat can cause bleeding of the nose. This can be treated by taking two drops of fresh juice in both nostrils. Do the same if you have nasal polyps and bad smelling in the nose.

Seeds are aromatic, stimulant, carminative, antispasmodic and diuretic. So the decoction of the seeds, sweetened with sugar or honey can be used with excellent results in dyspepsia, fatulence, indigestion, biliousness, giddiness due to nervousness or indigestion *etc.* Cold infusion of seeds or powder of fried seeds with little sugar is very useful in colic of children. In addition, it relieves internal heat and thirst excellently. This is the reason it has been included in thrishna prasamana (thirst pacifying) group by Charaka samhita.

- If you are suffering from vertigo, powder coriander seeds and Chebulic myrobalan fruits in equal parts; roast, make decoction and take for a week.
- In case of conjunctivitis, an eye wash done with the decoction of coriander seeds relieves burning pain and inflammatory swelling.
- Decoction prepared with coriander seeds checks excessive menstrual flow. Boil one teaspoonful of the seeds in a glass of water until only half the water remains. Add sugar to taste and drink when it is still warm. For the desired result, you may have to be on this medication for 3 to 4 days.
- As a gargle, coriander seeds are useful in oral thrush and as a poultice with barley meal added, applied to chronic ulcers and carbuncles.

- Here is an excellent digestive medicine that you can prepare for yourself: Pound the coriander seeds slightly and remove the husk. Add cumin (safed jeera), black pepper, cloves, and common salt. Grind well and soak in limejuice. Later sundry the whole mass and use as and when needed internally.

12. CURRY LEAVES

Curry leaf tree or *Bergeria koenigii* is known to everybody as a simple favouring agent in curries, but its medicinal uses are unfamiliar to most. Let us take a look at some of its striking health benefits.

Known as kaala saakha (because it is dark in colour) and Surabhi nimba (because it resembles the neem tree) in Sanskrit, this inexpensive condiment has excellent medicinal properties.

MEDICINAL USES

- Curry leaves show remarkable blood sugar controlling properties. During the recent past, investigators have successfully tested the hypoglycaemic potential of curry leaves. They have published these results in the *Bulletin on Medical and Ethnobotanical Research* in 1985. If you are a diabetic individual with obesity as a risk factor, then this drug exactly suits you. Eat 10 fresh and fully-grown leaves, every morning for three months. As the weight begins to come down you will be able to appreciate the results for yourself. The Indo-American Hospital of Bangalore has conducted a series of clinical trails on curry leaves and declared that it reduces high blood pressure and blood cholesterol by acting on angiotensin cell enzymes (ACE).
- Cholesterol circulates in the blood in several different combinations of fats and proteins; these are called lipoproteins. Most of the cholesterol occurs in the form of low-density lipoproteins or the 'bad' cholesterol. The more you have in the blood, the greater the risk of developing

coronary artery disease. LDL results in the formation of fatty deposits that can narrow and clog the arteries. Some of the cholesterol in the blood, however, occurs as high-density lipoproteins or the 'good' cholesterol; it protects you against atherosclerosis. The more HDL you have, the less susceptible you are to developing coronary disease. Latest research conducted by the Department of Biochemistry, University of Kerala published that curry leaves resulted in reduction in total serum cholesterol and LDL and increase in HDL.

- Curry leaves are useful in treating emaciation, wasting conditions, skin diseases, worm infections, neurosis, poisons, *etc.* In addition, it improves the voice and stimulates digestion. Not only the leaves of this tree but also the bark, roots and fruits are used in medicine. The important preparations using this are Paamaantaka taila, Jaatyaadi taila, Jaatyaada ghrita, *etc.*
- If you suffer from morning sickness, nausea and vomiting due to indigestion of fats and oils, try this! Extract juice from 15 grams of curry leaves. Mix it with buttermilk and drink it on empty stomach. You can even add limejuice and sugar to it if you like.
- Not only this, tender curry leaves are useful in diarrhoea, dysentery and piles. These can be taken in the form of a paste after mixing with a small amount of honey.
- If you are searching for a good hair tonic, then this serves the purpose. Boil curry leaves in coconut oil until the black residue of the leaves is left. Filter this oil and bottle. This forms an excellent hair tonic to stimulate hair growth and in retaining the natural pigmentation.
- Fruits of this tree are green when raw and becomes purple when ripe. Keep in mind that the juice of these berries mixed with equal quantity of lime juice can be used as an external application for insect stings and bites of venomous animals, scabies urticaria, and eruptions.

- As the leaves contain vitamin A, B-complex, and other useful minerals, these can be a good health supplement to your growing child. Get your child into the habit of eating them.
- If you do not have a tree at home, just think of the benefits you can get from this easy-to-grow tree. If you are already having one in your backyard, protect it. It protects you and your family.

12. CUSTARD APPLE

Custard apple grows wildly in tropical forests and on hillsides all over India. Unripe fruit is nauseating and hard to digest due to its high starch content. On ripening, it emits a pleasant aroma and the pulp becomes creamy.

MEDICINAL USES

- Thirst during fevers can be controlled with a drink made out of the creamy sweet pulp along with water or milk. The pulp is normally used to favour ice creams and puddings. Growing children and lactating mothers can take the pulp along with honey and jaggery as a nutritive tonic.
- For boils, the raw pulp mixed with salt is applied as a poultice to hasten pus formation. For dysentery, the pulp of custard apple can be mixed with tamarind pulp and can be given in a dosage of two teaspoonfuls.
- As seeds are harmful to the teeth, they should not be chewed. To prevent dandruff and head lice, dry powder of the seeds can be applied as powder shampoo.
- Bruised fresh leaves can be used as a smelling agent for unconscious hysterical patients as they emit strong odours. The leaves of custard apple, along with peepal tree leaves, are made into a paste and applied as a poultice over the boils to speed up ripening and formation of pus.

14. FENUGREEK (METHI SEEDS)

Fenugreek, popularly known as methi, has excellent medicinal virtues. Seeds exercise soothing effect on the mucous membranes and skin. They show diuretic action, relieve fatulence, and promote lactation in nursing mothers. Due to the astringent action, they check the bleeding tendency in the body. Like the alkaloids of Cod-liver oil, the alkaloids of fenugreek seeds stimulate the appetite by their action on the nervous system.

Recent research on fenugreek seeds observes that they have exciting possibilities because of their steroidal saponins, which closely resemble the sex hormones. This is no wonder, since for ages, fenugreek seeds have been used as remedy for impotence in men and to tone breast tissue in women. Methi seeds can be taken with benefit at the time of both puberty and menopause.

MEDICINAL USES

- **Diabetes:** Fenugreek seeds are proved to be extremely beneficial in early detected diabetes. The usual dose is two teaspoons of powdered seeds taken daily with buttermilk. Alternatively, seeds may be soaked in a cup of water and swallowed in the morning along with the infusion. However, the most effective way to eat fenugreek seeds is to sprout them a little, then dry the sprouts, powder them and include in the diet daily.
- **Painful body parts and swollen glands:** The powdered seeds can be made into an effective poultice because of their draining and healing properties. This may be used in furuncle, gouty pains, neuralgia, sciatica, sores, tumours and wounds.
- **Cosmetic problems:** As a beauty aid, fenugreek is effective for pimples, wrinkles, black heads and dull complexion. A paste, used as an exfoliating scrub, gently rubbed and applied on the desired areas. It should be mixed with curd or honey and washed away with warm water after fifteen minutes. Fenugreek seeds make the hair silky and lustrous.

They preserve the natural colour of the hair and eliminate dandruff. Two tablespoonfuls of the seeds are soaked overnight in water. In the morning, the softened seeds are ground into fine paste, applied on the scalp, and left on for half an hour. The hair is then washed thoroughly with soapnut (rita) or shikakai.

- **Sore throat and mouth ulcers:** An infusion of the leaves or seeds, gargled five to six times daily for a couple of days is effective. For the gargle, the solution should be much stronger than the tea. One tablespoon of methi seeds are put in half a litre of water and allowed to simmer for twenty minutes over a low flame. It is cooled to lukewarm temperature and strained. This liquid is used as a gargle.
- **White discharge:** Fenugreek decoction used as a douche, is very effective in treating leucorrhoea.
- **Diarrhoea and dysentery:** A mixture of methi (after frying in ghee) and Indian sweet fennel is useful to check diarrhoea and dysentery. The seeds are generally roasted, powdered, and given in infusion or weak decoction, which is a healthy drink useful in dysentery. This medicinal recipe is to be taken with buttermilk.
- **Anaemia:** The seeds and leaves being rich in iron help in blood formation. Two teaspoons fenugreek seeds or a reasonable amount of leaves cooked with rice, eaten with little salt regularly for a fortnight shows marked difference.
- **Bad breath and body odour:** A decoction of fenugreek is useful to stop bad breath. A little honey or lemon juice can be added to improve the flavour.

PLEASE NOTE

Since fenugreek seeds are heat generating; they should be used more during the winter and the monsoon than in the summer months. The seeds are contraindicated for persons with high pitta or a tendency to bleed. Pregnant women are advised to avoid fenugreek in their diet as it

may cause vaginal bleeding.

15. GHEE

Ayurveda has traditionally considered ghee to be one of the most health-promoting of all foodstuffs. Ghee is said to pacify all three of the doshas, strengthen the body, improve memory and mental functions, and promote longevity. It comes with a host of benefits that are listed in the traditional ayurvedic texts. Ghee has been given the cherished title of rasayana in Ayurveda—that helps overall health, longevity and well-being.

Bhaavaprakasa, a major Ayurvedic text says: “Ghee is good for the eyes, stimulant for digestion, supports glow and beauty, enhances memory and stamina, promotes longevity, and protects the body from various diseases.”

Ghee is clarified butter—the butter oil, without the lactose and other milk solids. It is traditionally prepared by gently heating butter until it becomes a clear golden liquid. The lactose and other milk solids coagulate and are thoroughly removed. This process also evaporates most of the natural water content, making ghee light, pure and resistant to spoilage. It has a rich, buttery taste and aroma, and allows you to use half as much oil in cooking as a small amount goes a long way. Ghee imparts the benefits of the best essential fatty acids without the problems of oxidized cholesterol, trans-fatty-acids or hydrogenated fats. It is also resistant to free radical damage and is lactose free. The ability of ghee to support physical and mental renewal has been substantiated by science—ghee contains butyric acid, a fatty acid that has antiviral and anti-cancer properties and 2-3% conjugated linoleic acid, a chemical that may have anticarcinogenic properties.

It is generally recognized that some fat is essential for health. A totally fat-free diet can actually accelerate aging of the skin, nerves and brain cells. Without an adequate quantity of the right kind of fat in the diet, cell regeneration can be adversely impacted. Fats are needed for efficient absorption of crucial lipid-soluble vitamins such as A, E, D and K. The stomach lining, which protects the stomach from the acids it secretes to help break down foods, needs fat to maintain a healthy coating.

Similarly, cholesterol in the body serves functions that are crucial to health, such as building cell membranes, and hormone and bile balance. Cholesterol itself is not harmful but becomes harmful when it is partly broken down or oxidized by unstable chemicals called free radicals that lead to clogged arteries and heart problems. Ghee has no oxidized cholesterol or trans-fatty acids, which are associated with heart disease and is very stable at higher cooking temperatures. Because it is stable and does not become rancid, it can be stored for a long period.

MEDICINAL USES

- Since ghee is oil, it can bond with lipid-soluble nutrients and herbs to penetrate the lipid-based cell walls of the body. It is stated to increase the potency of certain herbs by carrying the active components to the interior of the cells where they impart the most benefit.
- Ghee does not spoil easily, and actually preserves the original freshness and potency of herbs and foods. It does not need refrigeration.
- The ayurvedic texts say that ghee helps balance excess stomach acid, and helps maintain/repair the mucus lining of the stomach.
- Ghee is said to promote all three aspects of mental functioning-learning, memory, and recall.
- *Charaka samhitha*, the well-known treatise of Ayurveda says that the ghee is very effective ointment in healing the chronic ulcers. It actually calls it as a Mahaaghrta for 111 years old ghee.
- Ghee stimulates the digestive fire if taken with a meal. One teaspoon per meal is considered about right; too much ghee will douse the digestive fire (2 tablespoons of ghee per day is considered the maximum; too much ghee increases kapha and can clog the system)
- Ghee (1 tsp) along with the juice of onion (1 tsp) and boiled egg, if taken every morning acts as nervine tonic.

- A tsp of ghee with a cup of milk acts as a laxative tonic for growing children.
- Like butter, it can also be massaged over the body and exposed to the early morning sun.
- Few drop of ghee put in the stuffed nose is a very good remedy for sinusitis and cold.

16. GINGER

Ginger has been used as a spice and medicine for thousands of years. Its use has been recorded in early Ayurvedic treatises and Chinese texts. Ginger has a wide variety of herbal uses, many of which have been scientifically proven. Ginger is called ardrakam in Sanskrit and its anti-emetic, anti-inflammatory and antiplatelet properties have attracted considerable interest among researchers.

MEDICINAL USES

- Ginger can be chewed after meals in conditions like indigestion, gastritis, fatulence, gastrointestinal infection, and parasites. This protective action of ginger is attributable to the excessive secretion of saliva.
- If you feel heavy and bloated after consumption of non-vegetarian and fried fatty food, you can try this remedy—take half-a-teaspoonful of fresh ginger juice, one teaspoonful each of fresh limejuice and fresh mint juice mixed in a teaspoonful of honey. Take a teaspoonful of this thrice daily.
- If you have painful periods, take a small piece of fresh ginger, pound it, and boil in a cup of water for a few minutes, sweetened with sugar and take this thrice daily.
- Ginger acts as a good medicine for throat problems. Chewing a piece of fresh ginger along with clove and a crystal of common salt acts as an excellent remedy for pharyngitis, loss of voice due to shouting or singing;

paralysed muscles of tongue and fauces, colds, rhinitis, enlarged uvula, tonsillitis *etc.*

- If expectoration or bringing out the phlegm is needed in conditions such as bronchitis, asthma, whooping cough, tuberculosis *etc.*, then ginger is the right medicine. Take a teaspoonful of fresh ginger juice mixed with a cupful of fenugreek (methi) decoction and honey.
- If you're suffering from dropsy and scanty urination, take a teaspoonful of ginger juice with a glass of tender coconut water.
- For those who suffer from dental sensitiveness and toothache caused by eating sour fruits, ginger gives good relief. Burn it and mix with common salt. This can be used as toothpowder.
- If you're suffering with diarrhoea and dysentery, fresh ginger fried in ghee can be taken with buttermilk twice or thrice daily.
- Half-a-teaspoonful of ginger juice can be taken with half boiled egg and honey once daily at bedtime for a month. This tones up the sex centres and is very much useful in curing impotency, premature ejaculation, spermatorrhoea *etc.*
- In rheumatic pains, neuralgia, sciatica, myalgia, bursitis *etc.* coconut oil in which a piece of fresh ginger has been fried, is applied as a liniment.

Thus, Ginger can be used...

1. To stimulate digestion, and to enhance the absorption of other treatments.
2. As a diaphoretic and anti-pyretic for fevers and common cold (fresh ginger is good for the common cold).
3. As a diffusive stimulant to reinforce the action of other digestive, diaphoretic and expectorant herbs.
4. To treat and prevent nausea and vomiting in cases of infection,

motion sickness, nausea during pregnancy and post-operative and drug-induced nausea. It has also been found to be effective in the treatment of vertigo. It is preferable to give ginger as early as possible in the disease process since the vomiting back of ginger can act as a kind of 'aversion therapy.'

5. Digestive problems, particularly colic, fatulent dyspepsia, peptic ulcers and gastrointestinal infections and infestations.
6. As an antiplatelet agent for decreasing cardiovascular risk, prophylactic of thrombosis and treatment of thrombocytosis.
7. As an anti-inflammatory treatment in conditions such as osteo and rheumatoid arthritis.
8. Prophylaxis and treatment of migraine headaches, especially in conjunction with other herbal therapies.
9. Topical application for acute inflammatory conditions, like a ginger compress for acute mastitis.

PLEASE NOTE

- Ginger should not be used in conditions such as obstinate skin diseases, anaemia, dysuria, haemorrhage, burning sensation in the body, and during summer season.
- Use of ginger should be matched to the patient's condition and constitution, that is, ginger will be most effective for 'cold' patients with 'cold' conditions as the action of ginger is described as 'vaata kapha haram' in the classical text.
- Ginger should be used cautiously in patients receiving potent anti-coagulant and antiplatelet drugs or in circumstances where prolonged bleeding time might be disadvantageous.

17. GOKSHURA (GOKSHRU)

At times, our eyes mislead us. Gokshru, a repulsive and thorny weed often found in wastelands of our country, controls the sewage disposal system inside our body! It assists in the prompt elimination of toxins,

stones etc., that clog the genito-urinary tract.

Indigenous to India, every part of this small thorny creeper—its small leaflets, yellowcoloured solitary flowers, its five angled spinous fruit, roots is used medicinally—raw, brewed (50-100 ml), dried (3-5 grams) or pounded.

A chemical analysis of the fruit shows the presence of a fixed oil, sterols, resins, tannins, alkaloids, and potassium. It is proved as a diuretic—the action is ascribed to the alkaloid fraction besides the potassium content. In an experiment conducted in the Indian Institution of Panchakarma, Cheruthuruthy, Kerala, the alcoholic extract of the fruits showed antibacterial action against *E. Coli* and antifungal action against several fungal pathogens including *Candida albicans*. In another experiment conducted in the Pharmacological Research Unit, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi, scientists recorded the hypotensive effect of the seed extract.

Gokshura is one of the Ten Great Roots that constitute the popular Ayurvedic preparation, Dasamoola. Other important medicines are Gokshuraadi guggulu, Chyawanaprasha *etc.*

MEDICINAL USES

- **Cough due to debility:** Powder of gokshura and ashwagandha mixed with honey is taken with milk.
- **Urinary Stones:** Ghee cooked with decoction of gokshura, and eight times milk should be taken. Powder of the seeds of gokshura mixed with honey and taken with sheep milk.
- **Internal bleeding:** Milk cooked with gokshura and shataavari (wild asparagus) checks haemorrhage, particularly urethral.
- **Painful urination:** Gruel prepared with gokshura and kantakaari (*Solanum surattense*) and added with liquid jaggery is useful in painful urination. One should take decoction of gokshura seeds mixed with yavakshaara (ash of barley plants) in case of painful urination and urinary calculus. Decoction of gokshura, varuna (*Crataeva nurvala*)

and dried ginger mixed with honey should be taken in urinary stones. Paste of gokshura taken with coconut water alleviates painful urination.

- **To promote hair growth:** Gokshura and sesame (til) fowers are mixed with equal quantity of honey and ghee. This paste applied on head promotes growth of hair.
- **Geriatric tonic:** One taking powder of gokshura, aamla and guduchi (*Tinospora cordifolia*) in equal quantities with ghee and honey becomes potent, stable, happy, black-haired and with full life-span.
- **Rheumatic Pains:** Decoction of dried ginger and gokshura used regularly in morning reduces pain and thus useful in rheumatoid arthritis and sciatica.

PLEASE NOTE

Gokshru should not be used in excess, but only when needed. It can cause dehydration.

18. GRAPES

Grapes and raisins have been a part of Indian diet for ages. White grapes are sweet due to presence of glucose and are superior to black grapes, which are sour and irritate the throat. On the other hand, raw grapes are rich in oxalic, recemic, malic and tartaric acids, due to which they taste sour and tart.

The therapeutic value of grapes lies in the fact that they are rich sources of glucose. We know that glucose is a predigested food and is absorbed in the body soon after its intake. Grapes, by virtue of their easy assimilation, have a restorative effect.

According to traditional ayurvedic medicine, grapes are demulcent (which protect mucous membranes), laxative, refrigerant, stomachic, diuretic and cooling.

Raisins are laxative, demulcent and expectorant. They are also attenuant (which increase fluidity of the blood), nutritious and blood-purifiers.

Juice of unripe grapes, and leaves work as astringents (which produce contraction of organic tissue).

MEDICINAL USES

Different constituents of grapes like cellulose, sugar and organic acids make it a safe laxative in constipation. It is useful not only in evacuating the bowels, but also in toning up the stomach and intestines. Up to 250 grams of grapes can be consumed daily to get the desired effect.

Summer is the season for grapes. However, when fresh grapes are not available, you can use raisins, soaked in water. Strained grape juice in one-teaspoonful doses day and night, is given to children for constipation and also to prevent convulsions due to constipation.

The organic acids present in grapes are strongly antiseptic and their effect on the gums is very effective. However, for them to be effective, eat raw grapes.

Grape juice is a cooling drink in summer and quenches thirst. During fevers, grape juice increases the urinary output and eliminates toxins. Thirst due to diabetes can be quenched immediately by giving the person a cup of un-sugared grape juice.

For acid dyspepsia, Chakradatta, an ayurvedic treatise, advises to take raisins, sugar, honey and powdered amla in equal parts. Grape juice is also good for thrush in children, invaluable in severe colds and fevers. It is an excellent blood-purifier. They stimulate the liver to promote glycogenic functions and bile secretion. They are thus highly beneficial in the treatment of all liver disorders. Thus, grapes are good diet given twice a day during jaundice.

A paste made of grapes, or raisins, dates, pepper, long-pepper and honey in equal parts can be used in doses of one teaspoonful for quick relief from cough. Grapes provide relief from the burning sensation, which follows the scorpion sting. In case of external growths with open sore poultice, by crushing grapes and spread it between layers of cotton cloth. Place this over the affected parts and cover with dry cloth.

Grapes are also extremely useful in the treatment of alcoholism. It is very effective remedy for those craving for alcoholic drinks as it supplies

the purest form of alcohol.

Interestingly, in experimental studies, grapes were found to be deadly against Herpes and Polio viruses. Grape juice is also known to battle against bacteria and studies made on animals confirm that chewing grapes regularly could successfully thwart the tooth decay process. The fruits possess a very concentration of caffeic acid, a compound known to prevent cancer in animals and it could be linked to a low rate of cancer deaths in human beings.

- **Alcoholism:** Cold juice of grapes should be taken as a drink. It also acts as carminative.
- **Bleeding disorders:** The juice of grapes should be used as snuff and put within nostrils. To arrest bleeding and cure associated anaemia, lick the paste of raisins with honey twice a day. Also take decoction of grapes mixed with milk, added with jaggery and ghee regularly in the morning and sprinkle cold water or cold milk on your body.
- **Blood pressure:** Drink 1 cup of fresh grape juice.
- **Burning sensation in body:** Take 1 cup of fresh grape juice every day. It is helpful in prickly heat also.
- **Constipation:** Soak 2 tbsp grapes in $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water for 1 hour and take with water 2 or 3 times a day.
- **Consumption:** Ghee mixed with Dates, grapes, sugar and honey along with long pepper removes hoarseness of voice, cough, dyspnoea, and fever.
- **Diarrhoea caused by indigestion:** Grind 1 tsp leaf juice with 2 pinches each of black pepper and cumin and boil the mixture in a glass of water. Filter and drink.
- **Dry cough:** Fry three tbsp grapes in one tsp ghee and take.
- **Earache:** Breast milk or Cow milk boiled with grapes and Liquorice (Mulhathi) should be used for filling the ear.
- **Fever:** Take juice of grapes and aamla—it acts as laxative and alleviates fever. In case of excessive thirst or burning sensation in fever, take decoction of grapes and

aaragvadha. To combat dryness and get back the normal taste, keep paste of crystal-sugar, grapes and pomegranate in mouth and swallow the juice. To keep the tongue moist and smooth, apply the paste that has been made by pounding grapes, honey and ghee.

- **Giddiness:** Grapes heated on charcoal fire and mixed with the powder of salt and black pepper controls giddiness.
- **Pain during pregnancy:** Grapes taken with honey reduces pain during pregnancy.
- **Palpitations:** Soak a few grapes in 1 cup rose water for 10 minutes and take.
- **Premenstrual Syndrome:** In the days just before or during the menstrual cycle, chew 1 tbsp of grapes along the roasted sesame seeds.
- **Retention of urine:** Milk boiled with grape juice should be taken.
- **To improve complexion:** Extract $\frac{1}{2}$ cup juice from fully ripen neem fruits. Add 1 tbsp each of the following after pounding or powdering: cucumber seeds, almonds, cashew nuts, pista, coriander seeds, tarbooz seeds, saunf, liquorice; mix with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup grapes, 1 cup mishri or sugar and 1 cup ghee. Now simmer the mixture till all traces of moisture evaporates and the mixture reaches a jam like consistency. Cool and bottle. Take 1 tsp twice a day regularly.
- **Vomiting:** Take cold juice of grapes to check vomiting.

19. GUDUCHI *GILOE* GULBEL

Tinospora cordifolia (guduchi or gulbel) is an indigenous medicinal plant with a potent immunostimulant activity. According to the Ayurvedic treatises, Guduchi is referred to as Amrita. The term Amrita is attributed to this plant in recognition of its ability to impart youthfulness, vitality and longevity to its user. Therefore it is categorized in Ayurveda as Rasayana. (Rasa means biologically transformable liquid nutrient of all the tissues in the body and aayana means a pathway. Thus Rasaayana

bestows the strength of all dhaatus of the body! Rasaayana helps slowing down the ageing process, enhances memory, improves the functioning of vital organs, increases the ojus (the immunity factor) and nourishes all the tissues).

The whole plant or roots are used for the medicinal purpose. It is an evergreen, wild, climber, smooth, succulent, shrub often attaining a great height and sending down long thread like aerial roots. The plant seems to be particularly found climbing up the trunks of large neem trees. It is found through out our country, especially in the outskirts of the villages. It is sometimes cultivated for horticultural purposes. The leaves afford a good fodder for cattle. It is perfectly suited to and grows well in almost any type of soil and under varying climatic conditions. It is specially trained to grow on neem and mango trees thereby it is supposed to possess increase in its medicinal virtue.

There is a story in the ancient scriptures which says that during the Ramayana war, when Rama won over the demon Ravana, some of the his monkey warriors were killed. Indra, the lord of the gods, showered nectar from heaven to resurrect them. Some of the nectar drops fell on the earth and from these sprang the guduchi plants.

Guduchi has been used for its medicinal values since folklore. It is widely used in treating various conditions like malarial fever, typhoid fever, tuberculosis, heat sensation in the body, vomiting sensation, anaemia, piles, chronic fever, and different skin diseases. The starch from the stems and roots is a nutrient, used in convalescence, chronic diarrhoea and dysentery. It is a part of almost all decoctions mentioned in classical ayurvedic texts for joint diseases. The aqueous extract of this plant is widely used in traditional system of medicine to treat jaundice, rheumatism, urinary diseases, intermittent fever and eye ailments.

The usual dosage is: Dry extract 250-500 mg/day; Juice – 5 to 10 ml; decoction – 50 to 100 ml.

MEDICINAL USES

Antistress Action: The antistress or anxiolytic (anxiety diminishing) activity of *Tinospora cordifolia* is well documented by researchers and

clinically tested. The ethanolic extract of *Tinospora cordifolia* exhibited significant antistress activity at 100 mg/kg compared with diazepam at 2.5 mg/kg. The alcoholic extract of the roots of *Tinospora cordifolia* was found to possess normalizing activity against stress induced changes in norepinephrine, dopamine, 5-hydroxytryptamine and 5-hydroxyindoleacetic acid levels in experimental rats.

Anti-diabetic Action: The ethyl acetate extract of *Tinospora cordifolia* showed central nervous system depressant and low blood sugar activity in rabbits. Oral administration of *Tinospora cordifolia* root extract to alloxan diabetic rats caused a significant reduction in blood glucose and brain lipids. The water, alcoholic, and chloroform extracts of the leaves of *Tinospora cordifolia* exerted a significant hypo-glycemic effect in normal as well as in alloxan-treated rabbits. From this study, it was concluded that the extracts of the leaves of *Tinospora cordifolia* have an insulin-like action.

Anti-inflammatory Action: The aqueous extract of *Tinospora cordifolia* showed significant anti-inflammatory activity in rats against acute and chronic type of inflammations induced by carrageenin.

Immunomodulation Activity: *Tinospora cordifolia* appears to improve surgical outcome in patients with malignant obstructive jaundice by strengthening the host defences. Researchers have proven the usefulness of the *Tinospora* extract in reducing the chemotoxicity induced by free radical forming chemicals. In one study, oral administration of some indigenous herbal drugs including *Tinospora cordifolia* was found to protect mice from cyclophosphamide induced Leukopenia. In another study, a prospective, randomized, double blind placebo controlled clinical trial was conducted on breast cancer patients. Consenting breast cancer patients, who were receiving adjuvant chemotherapy (CMF regimen), were recruited, and randomized to drug and placebo group. From the results it appeared that the plant *Tinospora cordifolia* provided some protection against the cancer chemotherapy induced leucopenia.

Hypo-lipidaemic (Fat decreasing) Activity: Administration of the extract of *Tinospora cordifolia* roots (2.5 and 5.0 g/kg body weight) for 6 weeks resulted in a significant reduction in serum and tissue cholesterol, phospholipids and free fatty acids in alloxan diabetic rats.

Anticancer Activity: Exposure of HeLa cells to 0, 5, 10, 25, 50 and 100 microg/ml of *Tinospora cordifolia* extracts (methanol, aqueous and methylene chloride) resulted in a dose-dependent but significant increase in cell killing, when compared to non-drug-treated controls.

Hepatoprotective Action: Antihepatotoxic activity of *Tinospora cordifolia* was found in albino rats intoxicated with CCl₄.

Antibacterial Action: Alcoholic extract of the stem of *Tinospora cordifolia* shows activity against *E.coli*. The active constituent in the *Tinospora cordifolia* was also found to inhibit in vitro the growth of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*.

Antispasmodic Action: *Tinospora cordifolia* has been observed to relax smooth muscles of intestine, uterus and inhibit constrictor response of histamine and acetylcholine on smooth muscles.

- Guduchi taken with ghee pacifies vaata, with jaggery removes constipation, with sugar pacifies pitta, with honey pacifies kapha, mixed with castor oil alleviates gouty arthritis and with dried ginger controls rheumatoid arthritis.
- The juice of guduchi, mixed with pippali (long pepper) powder alleviates fever.
- Decoction of guduchi, parpata (pitta-paapadaa) and amla (Indian gooseberry) overcomes fever caused by pitta.
- One suffering from jaundice should take paste of guduchi leaves with buttermilk.
- Cold infusion of guduchi mixed with honey is beneficial in excessive thirst.
- Cold infusion of guduchi mixed with honey checks vomiting.
- Decoction of guduchi, neem leaves and patola (kadva parval or janglee chichodaa) leaves mixed with honey alleviates gastritis and allied disorders.
- Decoction prepared with 30 grams of guduchi, dried ginger, and coriander seeds alleviates gout and skin

disorders.

- Decoction of guduchi and neem controls eruptive boils.
- Intake of the root of guduchi with rice water alleviates splenomegaly (enlargement of spleen)
- Regular use of guduchi mixed with oil controls flarial disorders.
- Guduchi juice 10 grams, honey and rocksalt one gram, should be rubbed together and used as collyrium. It alleviates various eye related problems like dirt, pterygium, defects of vision, cataract, itching *etc.*
- People who take alcohol regularly should take guduchi to vitalise liver tissue and prevent any damage to this vital organ.

20. HONEY

“A spoonful of honey makes the medicine go down because it is yogavaahi (potentiating/synergistic)” says Ayurveda. It claims that even though honey is sweet, if taken in the right dosage with medicine, it does not harm diabetic or obese patients. The ferment and a special protein as well as the vitamins in honey perhaps account for the beneficial action of honey in these conditions. Today’s science say that since honey consists of velulose, it is not harmful in diabetes.

Honey is the oldest sweet and sweetener known to man. Virtually every ancient religious text mentions it. In ancient Babylon, it was a man’s duty to provide his son-in-law with as much mead as he could drink in the first lunar month after the wedding—hence the term ‘honeymoon’.

Honey is made from nectar, a sweet sap produced by special glands in fowers collected from both wild and cultivated plants. No fower contains honey as such but the nectar collected by the honeybees is converted into honey by them and stored in the honeycomb. Nectar contains 50-90 per cent of water, 10-50 per cent sugar (predominantly sucrose) and 1-4 per cent aromatic substances, colouring material and minerals. To transform nectar into honey, honeybees reduce the moisture content so that the fnal honey produced contains between 14 and 19 per cent

water. They also add one enzyme, which inverts the sucrose, a twelve-carbon compound, into two six-carbon sugars namely Levulose and Dextrose. The Levulose, the sweetest of the common sugars makes honey sweeter than cane sugar. Apart from these, it contains small amount of minerals, acids, colouring materials and favouring materials. It also contains vitamin B1, B2, C and nicotinic acid. Its nutritive value is due to presence of high level of sugars, which are directly used in our body as energy giver. Honey contains more nutrients than refined sugar. You can use less honey than sugar in recipes. It contains fewer calories and carbohydrates than sugar, as it contains water. But when substituting honey for sugar in recipes, (due to the high density of honey compared to sugar), substitute it by volume rather than by weight, as that would give you more calories.

MEDICINAL USES

- **Wound Healer:** The use of honey in ayurveda as a wound dressing material has been rediscovered. The viscosity of honey provides a protective barrier to prevent wounds from becoming infected. Honey will draw moisture from the air, which promotes healing, and even helps prevent scarring. It stimulates the formation of new blood capillaries and the growth of fibroblasts that replace the connective tissue of the deeper layer of the skin and produce the collagen fibers that give strength to the repair. The high sugar content of honey—due to osmosis—draws lymph out of a wound, lifts dirt out of the wound bed and reduces swelling around the wound. Honey does not stick to the underlying wound tissues, as it creates a solution of honey in contact with the wound surface so that there is no tearing away of newly formed tissue, and no pain, when dressings are changed. Honey helps fight germs by converting oxygen in the system to hydrogen peroxide—a very good disinfectant—generated by the action of an enzyme that the bees add to the nectar. Honey also has a low protein content, which essentially starves the bacteria

of the nitrogen it needs to grow. Honey is fully effective even with antibiotic-resistant strains of bacteria. Unlike antiseptics and antibiotics there is no impairment of the healing process through adverse effects on wound tissues. While using honey as a wound dressing material, ensure that there is an even coverage of the wound surface with honey. Honey can be made fluid by stirring or warming. Cavities may be filled by pouring in fluidised honey, or more conveniently by using honey packed in squeeze-tubes. Spread honey on the dressing pad rather than on the ulcer—it is much easier to do and causes less discomfort for the patient. The amount of honey needed depends on the amount of fluid exuding from the wound: typically, 20 ml of honey is used on a 10 cm X 10 cm dressing. Cover with absorbent secondary dressings so that the honey is prevented from leaking out or being exposed to insects. Change the dressings more frequently if the honey is being diluted a lot—otherwise change every day or two. Because the enzyme in honey that produces hydrogen peroxide is destroyed by heating and exposure to light, unpasteurised honey should be used, and it should be stored in a cool place and protected from light. If it is necessary to warm honey to liquefy it, it should be heated to no more than 37 degree C.

- Acne: Mix three tablespoons of honey and one teaspoon of cinnamon powder. Apply this paste on the pimples before sleeping and wash it next morning with warm water. If done daily for two weeks, it removes pimples.
- Arthritis: Take one part honey to two parts of lukewarm water and add a small teaspoon of cinnamon powder, make a paste and slowly massage it on the painful part of the body. The pain recedes within a minute or two. For internal use, take daily— morning and night—one cup of hot water with two spoons of honey and one small teaspoon of cinnamon powder.
- Burns: To heal burns, mix honey with turmeric powder and

apply the paste on the burn area.

- Cold and cough: A mixture of $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. of black pepper powder, $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. of long pepper powder and 1 tsp. of honey helps relieve a painful throat. Dried ginger powder $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp, 2-3 black pepper cones, 2-3 cloves, 2-3 cardamoms, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. cumin seeds added to black tea with a dash of honey gives good relief in case of cold, cough and throat inflammation. It can be taken two to three times in a day.
- Cracked Lips: To treat cracked lips, apply half tsp fresh milk cream with quarter tsp honey and 2 to 3 drops of rose water on your lips.
- Diarrhoea: During diarrhoea nutmeg powder mixed with honey can be taken. Small children can also be administered with it, twice or thrice a day as the case may be.
- Energy booster: To get more energy before exercising, have a spoonful of honey before you start. It gives instant energy that lasts longer.
- Hair Loss: Those suffering from hair loss or baldness, may apply a paste of hot olive oil, one tablespoon of honey, one teaspoon of cinnamon powder before bath and keep it for approx. 15 min. and then wash the hair. In experimental studies, it was found to be effective even if kept on for 5 minutes.
- High Cholesterol: Make a paste of honey and cinnamon powder, apply on bread or chappati instead of jelly and jam and eat it regularly for breakfast. It reduces the cholesterol.
- Indigestion: To cure indigestion, boil a few sticks of cinnamon (dalchini) in a bowl of water. Add a pinch of pepper powder and a little honey. Take a tsp after meals to relieve indigestion.
- Low Immunity: Daily use of honey and cinnamon powder strengthens the immune system and protects the body from bacteria and viral attacks. Constant use of honey

strengthens the white blood corpuscles to fight bacteria and viral diseases.

- Obesity: Daily in the morning $\frac{1}{2}$ an hour before breakfast on an empty stomach and at night before sleeping, drink honey and cinnamon powder boiled in one cup water. If taken regularly it reduces the over-weight. Also drinking of this mixture regularly does not allow the fat to accumulate in the body even though the person may eat a high calorie diet.
- Tooth Ache: Make a paste of one teaspoon of cinnamon powder and five teaspoons of honey and apply on the aching tooth. This may be applied 3 times a day till the tooth stops aching.
- Urinary Tract Infections: Take two tablespoons of cinnamon powder and one teaspoon of honey in a glass of luke warm water and drink it. It checks the germs in the bladder.
- Cleanser: Pour 1 teaspoon of honey into the palm of your hand. Pour a little milk powder into the honey. Mix well and apply on your face as your daily cleanser.
- Scrub: Pour one teaspoon of honey into the palm of your hand. Pour a little almond flour into the honey. Mix well and apply on your face and apply gently as a very gentle facial scrub. Good for all skin types too.
- Bath: Four tablespoons of whole milk powder and two tablespoons of honey in a baby bath make an excellent treat for your kid. Be sure to rinse off thoroughly after that.
- Hair Conditioner: Mix half cup honey and $\frac{1}{4}$ th cup olive oil (use two tablespoons oil for normal hair). Work a small amount at a time through hair until coated. Cover hair with a shower cap; leave on 30 minutes. Remove shower cap; shampoo well and rinse. Dry as normal.
- Hair Rinse: Stir one-teaspoon honey into four cups warm water. Blondes may wish to add a squeeze of lemon. After shampooing, pour mixture through hair. Do not rinse out.

Dry as normal.

- **Moisture Mask:** Mix two tablespoons honey with one-teaspoon milk. Smooth over face and throat. Leave 10 minutes. Rinse off with warm water. Great for dry skins or mature skins.
- **Conditioning Face Pack:** Make face pack with a mixture of one tbsp honey, one egg white, one tsp glycerine and enough flour to make a quarter cup of paste. Apply smoothly over your face and throat. Rinse with warm water after 10 minutes.
- **Smoothing Skin Lotion:** Mix one-teaspoon honey with one-teaspoon vegetable oil and 1/4 teaspoon lemon juice. Rub into hands, elbows, and heels; anywhere that feels dry. Leave on for 10 minutes. Rinse off with water.

21. LIQUORICE ROOT

Liquorice root is an extremely useful herb that enjoys a fair amount of popularity now, in addition to its prominence in Ayurvedic Medicine. It is a tasting herb, which makes it appealing. It makes a good tea—although if it's medicinal strength, it's probably not going to be your favourite beverage because it's outrageously sweet—many times more so than sugar. In some parts of the world, children chew the root as “candy.”

Liquorice is a powerful and diverse tonic in its own right. Conditions of adrenal insufficiency are treated well with liquorice; it contains compounds that resemble the adrenal cortical hormones. It is an immune activity enhancer and liver detoxifier. It has reproductive-enhancing and healing properties. It is lung tonic, good for digestion, and is an energizer despite being cooler than herbs like *Aswagandha*. It reduces muscle spasms (especially in the legs and abdomen), cools accumulated heat and inflammation, and has a laxative effect.

Liquorice can be used for sore throat, dry throat, or laryngitis. It moistens the lungs and liquefies mucus to relieve dry cough. It makes a soothing cold and flu remedy. Because it is an adrenal builder and lung tonic, it is a perfect asthma remedy.

Studies of liquorice have revealed many components believed to be responsible for its wide spectrum of action, especially its immunostimulant properties. These compounds include glycyrrhizin, glycyrrhetic acid, phenols, triterpenoids, and saponins.

Glycyrrhizin can inhibit growth of human viruses and bacteria; glycyrrhetic acid and glycyrrhetic acid can do the same and are also anti-inflammatory. The saponins can increase antibody production and interferon production. Animal studies show liquorice may prevent breast cancer by triggering liver enzymes that reduce tumour promoting estrogens.

For women, liquorice is progesteronal, which means it supports and regulates progesterone production; thus it is useful for menstrual irregularities related to low activity in the progesterone phase of the cycle.

MEDICINAL USES

- In jaundice, make a fine powder of one tsp each of liquorice root, chicory seeds and rock salt and from this mixture, take half teaspoon with water twice daily.
- In peptic ulcers, soak half-teaspoon liquorice root powder in one teacup water and leave overnight. Mix this with rice gruel (cooked broken rice) and take every morning.
- In hoarseness of voice, prepare rice-milk with liquorice, add ghee and take for few days.
- In case of epilepsy, liquorice, pounded with ash-pumpkin juice should be taken for a considerable period.
- Pain caused by accidental wounds can be relieved by applying locally warm ghee mixed with liquorice powder. Paste of liquorice mixed with neem leaves acts as wound cleaning and paste of liquorice and sesame seeds mixed with ghee is wound-healing.
- If hair fall and baldness (not due to hereditary cause) is your problem, then liquorice comes to the rescue. Grind

two tbsp each liquorice root and seeds of dhatura in milk cream along with quarter teaspoon saffron. Heat this paste in two tbsp coconut oil, till well mixed. Apply on bald patches every night at bedtime, continuously. Be cautious—dhatura is poisonous

- In case of sore throat, boil liquorice roots, tailed peppers and a few sugar candy crystals in milk and take one tsp of this mixture thrice a day with honey.
- To increase the milk production in lactating mothers, one tsp of the liquorice powder should be consumed with milk and sugar, twice a day.
- Inflammation and mouth ulcers can be relieved by gargling the decoction of liquorice.
- In case of Myopia, mix half-teaspoon liquorice root powder in equal quantities of ghee and honey and take thrice daily along with milk before meals for a month.
- To remove corns, mix one tbsp liquorice powder with half-teaspoon mustard oil, make a smooth paste and rub it into the hardened skin at bedtime.

PLEASE NOTE

Liquorice should be used with caution by people with existing hypertension (high blood pressure). However, DGL (deglycyrrhizined) liquorice is missing the active ingredient that raises blood pressure, and can be used for liver and ulcer treatment. But DGL will be useless for adrenal building because the glycyrrhizin is what works on the adrenals. In fact, that is why it theoretically could raise blood pressure. Too much of the active ingredient could get adrenal hormones pumping excessively.

22. MANGO

The mango tree enjoys a unique status in our country due to its medicinal, commercial, and ceremonial utilities. It is praised as a

heavenly fruit by the Vedas and the Ayurvedic classics describe it as phalashreshtha (the king of fruits).

Almost every part of the mango tree—from the bark to the kernel—has a medicinal use, according to Ayurveda.

MEDICINAL USES

- **Unripe mangoes:** They contain plenty of starch and acids like citric, oxalic, malic, and succinic. These acids increase the secretion of bile and act as an intestinal antiseptic. Eating one or two small mangoes with honey and pepper controls biliousness and urticarial rash. Tender mango is a rich source of pectin which has an antidiarrhoeal effect. It is used for treating summer diarrhoea, dysentery, piles, morning sickness, indigestion, and constipation. You can prepare a remedial summer drink for heatstroke from an unripe mango by cooking it in hot ashes and mixing the pith with sugar and water. The curative value of green mango may be attributed to its enormous vitamin C content. It is estimated that an unripe mango will supply as much vitamin C as five to six lemons. It is a good cure for scurvy and promotes resistance against various infections. Ayurveda also warns about the undesirable effects of unripe mango such as throat irritation, indigestion, dysentery-like stools and abdominal colic, if used in excess. Also, do not drink cold water immediately after eating the unripe fruit as there is a chance of coagulation of the sap, which is the causative factor for throat irritation. Sap is the milky juice that runs on breaking the stalk of the tender fruit. However, this sap can be used externally with care in treating scabies, psoriasis, ringworm, and scorpion bites.
- **Ripe Mango:** The ripe fruit is sweet, slightly astringent and has a cooling effect. It reduces vaata and increases kapha. Eating a ripe mango supplies energy, increases appetite, digests food, quenches thirst, and prevents constipation. It is a common myth that mangoes cause dysentery and

diarrhoea. Mangoes by themselves are devoid of gastrointestinal irritants. The cause of such incidents may be attributed to bacterial infection, which takes place while handling the fruits. However, as the ripe fruit is heavy to digest, it is advisable to eat this along with a pinch of ajwain. Ripe mangoes are a good source of vitamin A, so it is good for the eyes. It is a well-known fact that most diseases are caused due to bacterial invasion into our body through the epithelium—the surface layer of mucous membranes and other body linings. Mangoes help the formation of healthy epithelium thereby preventing frequent attacks of common infections such as cold, rhinitis, sinusitis, *etc.* Taking a glassful of mango juice daily, along with honey and milk, is the best general tonic for all ages. Taking a glassful of mango juice after mixing it with half the quantity of fresh carrot juice, once daily for two to three months, helps dissolve urinary stones and prevents urinary infections.

- **Kernel:** Mango kernels are rich in gallic acid which has an astringent effect. A paste of mango kernels or dried powder of it, half teaspoonful mixed with buttermilk, can be taken to control diarrhoea, dysentery, intestinal worms and bleeding disorders. Mango kernel is used as one of the ingredients in the famous Ayurvedic formula Pushyaanuga choorna, which is used for treating gynaecological diseases. It is also used in preparations to keep the hair dark and healthy. Try this ancient recipe: Take fresh mango kernel 150 gm; fresh marigold flower petals 150 gm; pure til oil 300 gm; boil all the ingredients over a slow fire until the petals turn soft and begin to dissolve in the oil. Transfer the mass into an iron vessel and cover its mouth with a tight lid. Bury the vessel in the earth for a month before using it. Apply this oil to the hair regularly.
- **Leaves:** Mango leaves are considered to be very sacred in our country. As they are astringent in nature, they also can be used to control diarrhoea and cholera. Diabetics can

take the fresh juice of these leaves along with bitter gourd juice, each 5 ml, twice a day, for at least two months to notice a significant difference in blood sugar levels.

- Flowers: One tablespoonful of dried mango flowers mixed with an equal quantity of honey is used for treating spermatorrhoea. You could also make a natural mosquito repellent by burning the dry flowers on coals.
- Bark: Mango bark is extensively used in Ayurveda both externally in the form of douche and internally in the form of juice for treating menstrual disorders and leucorrhoea.
- Gum: The mango gum is a mixture of tree exudate and mud deposited by white ants. It is fragile and dark brown in colour. You can make a pain-relieving liniment by heating it along with limejuice, aloe and turmeric powder. Apply it over sprains and aching joints.

PLEASE NOTE

Eating mangoes does not cause dysentery or diarrhoea. Mangoes does not have any intestinal irritants, but, the cause of such episodes is due to bacterial infection that takes place while eating mangoes with contaminated hands and eating rotten mangoes infested with maggots. However, eating mangoes in excess causes indigestion which can be checked by eating them with a pinch of ajwain and eating a piece of ripe mango peel after eating the pulp. Drinking cow milk sweetened with honey also prevents the illeffects of excessive use of mangoes. It can be noted that eating country mangoes, which have more fibre, may cause colic, diarrhoea and hyperactivity of the intestines. However, their moderate use is found to be effective for high blood pressure and constipation.

23. MILK OF VARIOUS ANIMALS

It is a well-known fact that milk is the only food item that fairly represents a complete diet. When we talk of milk, it is usually the cow's milk or buffalo's milk that we think of immediately. However, Ayurveda

mentions milks of various animals under the head Dugdha varga.

Rig Veda mentions milk as “Vrishnyam payam” which means strength-giving drink. Milk increases strength, improves memory, reduces exhaustion, maintains strength and promotes long life—says the famous Ayurvedic treatise, Charaka samhita. This is because milk contains all the elements necessary for the growth and nutrition of bones, nerves, muscles and other tissues. Milk contains vitamins, which are nature’s antidotes to rickets, scurvy, and other diseases, which are caused due to defective nutrition.

MEDICINAL USES

- **Human milk:** Human milk, particularly colostrum, is rich in the immunoglobulin IgA which immunises infants. The lymphocytes and macrophages protect the body against intestinal inflammation. The lactobacillus bifidus in milk aids the growth of intestinal lactobacilli. Lactobacilli produce lactic and acetic acids, which lower the intestinal pH and inhibit the growth of harmful bacteria and fungi. Infants absorb iron more efficiently from human milk than any other form of milk. Breast milk is used in Ayurveda for administration in nasal bleeding and in eye diseases as eye drops. It is also used as one of the ingredients while preparing anjanum (collyrium) for eye diseases.
- **Sheep Milk:** It is a very nutritious tonic for the weak and debilitated. It is used along with honey while treating tuberculosis, gonorrhoea, cystitis, obesity, and fatulence. It is also good for rheumatism and hectic cough. However, its excessive use is bad for respiratory disorders and causes eye diseases as it alleviates phlegm and bile.
- **Goat Milk:** Fresh boiled milk sweetened with honey and drunk every night with a banana or handful of roasted groundnuts is a very good tonic for diabetes, asthma, night blindness, neuritis, constipation, sterility, rickets, hair fall, nervousness, headache. Goat’s milk is sweet, cooling,

astrigent, and constipating. It is very invigorating and promotes appetite and digestion. Goat's milk also helps in curing bile disorders (pitta), cough, chronic diarrhoea, and vomiting in children; pitta variety of piles; brings down dyspnoea, bronchitis and chronic cases of enlarged liver and spleen.

- Donkey Milk: The properties of the milk of jenny (ass) are more similar to that of human milk. The milk of jenny can be safely used for infants. Ass milk contains 1.5 gm of fat, 2.1 gm of protein and 46 kcal of energy per 100 gm. As it is saltish and easily digestible, it acts as a stomachic (improves functional activity of stomach), cardiac stimulant and antiphlegmatic (decreases phlegm). It is useful in curing general debility and when you pass highly coloured and scanty urine. It is also extensively used as a remedy against cough and liver complaints among children and old people, and chronic bronchitis and exhaustion.
- Camel Milk: Camel's milk is mainly used when, during long droughts, other animals cease to produce milk. As it is light, slightly saline and laxative, it is easily digestible and acts as a stimulant and stomachic. It's milk has been found useful to cure oedema, dropsy, asthma, tuberculosis, leprosy, cancers, piles, intestinal worms, skin lesions, abdominal tumours and poisonings.
- Elephant Milk: It is sweetish and acts as astrigent and muscle builder. It also helps in increasing the vigour and strength. It is also good for the eyes.
- Cow's Milk: The chemical composition of the milk varies in different cows in different seasons and in different countries. According to Vedas, Charaka samhita and Bhaavaprakasa, the quality of the milk differs from cow to cow. The milk of a healthy black cow, which grazes in the sunny green fields is said to be superior to all the other cows. Charaka emphasises the usage of cow milk for treating tuberculosis, asthma, diabetes, food allergies, chronic cough, protein deficiency diseases, rickets,

premature old age, loss of sexual vigour, hair fall, and weakness in children *etc.* The milk of white cow is supposed to cause indigestion and phlegmatic derangement and is not good to taste. Milk of cows without calves is considered to be bad. Milk of cows calved long ago is a good tonic and checks all the three doshas.

- Buffalo Milk: There is a belief that feeding children on buffalo's milk causes catarrh of the respiratory tract. However, it can be given to babies in the sixth month. Buffalo's milk should be diluted with $\frac{1}{3}$ its volume of water. A teaspoonful of sugar should be added to every ounce of milk given. For older babies, four ounces of milk can be given twice or thrice a day.

24. MORINGA

Moringa Oleifera is a very common tree and can be found in most backyards in Indian homes. In Sanskrit, it is known as Sobhanjana and Munaga chettu in Telugu. Drumstick is the common name.

The fruit and the flowers are commonly cooked and eaten as a vegetable. However, Moringa leaves are not very popular as most of us think that these are not nutritive. In fact, these are storehouses of enormous nutritive wealth. Fresh juice of the leaves contains Vitamin A, Vitamin C, Calcium and almost all the essential amino acids. A fascinating fact is that a glassful of drumstick leaves soup supplies as much protein as one gets by eating 100 grams of chicken or two-and-half cups of milk.

MEDICINAL USES

- Preparing drumstick soup is very easy. Immerse a handful of tender leaves in boiling water for five minutes and cover the vessel with a lid. After boiling this, keep the vessel up to the brim in cold water so as to cool the soup quickly. You can add a pinch of salt, pepper, lime juice, *etc.* for taste and additional benefits. Drink this every morning. This will take care of your malnutrition, anaemia,

tuberculosis, asthma, seasonal attacks of cold and bronchitis, premature ageing, nervousness, functional sterility, *etc.*

- In case of cholera, dysentery, diarrhoea, colitis, jaundice, *etc.*, Moringa leaves are very effective. Take a teaspoonful of fresh Moringa leaf juice, mix with honey and a glassful of tender coconut water. Take this herbal medicine two to three times a day.
- Drumstick leaves are a good substitute for fancy and costly tonics. If you have a young child, then here is an effective tonic for him—take a cupful of the fresh juice of the leaves and heat it gently in a water bath until the liquid coagulates. Filter the clear fluid and mix it with milk. Give it once a day. This aids healthy growth with strong bones and provides resistance against infections and malnutrition.
- If you are an expectant mother, its regular use during pregnancy and lactation helps to get extra calcium, iron, vitamins at no cost. It acts on the uterine contracting mechanism, prevents sluggishness of the uterus, eases childbirth, reduces severe blood loss and postpartum complications. In addition, its regular use increases breast milk.
- For scanty urination, constant burning in the urethra due to high acidity of urine, myxoedema, toxæmia of pregnancy, dropsy due to heart, liver, kidney disorders, hypertension, excessive thirst, diabetes, constipation, *etc.*, fresh leaf juice warmed in a water bath can be taken along with the fresh juice of cucumber or carrot.
- Fresh juice, if taken with honey every night before going to bed, would be highly beneficial in curing night blindness, weak memory, poor hearing, *etc.* Not only this, vertigo, bleeding piles, hiccups, biliousness, indigestion, morning sickness *etc.* can be controlled effectively by using fresh leaf juice mixed with limejuice.
- Bhaavaprakasa, an Ayurvedic treatise, advocates

instillation of a few drops of fresh juice in each nostril to cure syncope. Eye allergies also can be counteracted with the juice of Moringa. Relief from piles can be obtained by locally applying the leaf juice along with radish leaf juice.

- For treating scabies, rheumatism, sprains and contusions, simply mix the juice with sesame oil and heat it until the watery content evaporates. Use this preparation for external use. You can also use these leaves as a remedy for pimples, blackheads, *etc.* Apply the fresh juice mixed with lime juice.
- If you have a severe headache, try using a teaspoonful of the leaf juice mixed with three peppers. Apply this to the temples to get immediate relief.
- The bark of the tree and the roots are extensively used in Ayurveda for various ailments. Researchers confirmed that the amorphous base has a very strong sympathomimetic effect on the sympathetic nerve endings of the entire human nervous system. By its stimulating action, it constricts the blood vessels and elevates the blood pressure, thus accelerating the heartbeat. Its main action on the heart is due to the direct stimulation of the cardiac sympathetic nerves, but the myocardium may be slightly affected. Researchers have also observed that the amorphous base inhibits the tone and the movements of the involuntary muscles of the gastrointestinal tract and bronchioles.
- If the powder of the dry bark is boiled in a glass of water and two tablespoonfuls of this decoction are taken along with honey, regularly for 40 days, it would be highly beneficial in treating impotency, premature ejaculation, thinness of semen, scanty menstruation in young anaemic girls, asthma, bronchitis with severe cough, scurvy, *etc.*
- Here is an interesting remedy for premature ejaculation—make a hole in the trunk of the Moringa tree and insert a full betel nut. Close the hole with wheat flour paste. After

two months, take the nut and preserve it. A piece of it, if placed under the tongue during intercourse, prevents premature ejaculation. The absorption of lignoceric acid in the circulation is said to act on the time-mechanism of semen ejaculation.

- The bark, flowers, fruit, leaves, and even gum of the drumstick tree is very useful. Therefore, having a Moringa tree in your backyard is like having your own doctor with you.

25. NEEM

More than half of all modern drugs—ranging from aspirin to the newest, most beneficial drug for treating breast cancer—are based on ingredients from plants. Medical practitioners on our Indian subcontinent have produced a wealth of plantbased medical knowledge that is unequaled in the world. While modern medicine has largely ignored the Ayurvedic medical tradition, recent reviews of the proven efficacy of ancient natural treatments are finally gaining respect through out the world.

Among the thousands of plants used in Ayurveda, Neem in particular is generating intense scrutiny as it's traditional uses are verified and expanded. Neem is proving to be more than just the “village pharmacy” of our ancient India; it is becoming the “ultimate herb” of today and tomorrow. It has become important in the global context because it offers answers to many number of concerns faced by mankind. One can understand the tremendous international interest in Neem by the number of patents filed on the various properties, active principles and their extraction and stabilizing processes, especially in US and Japan. Over 30 patents have already been granted. Now, the issue is at the center of the world wide debate that who are going to control the Neem's genetic resources—whether the traditional cultures or transnational corporations! While this controversy seems to continue for sometime, a lot of scientific work is being carried on the Neem tree correspondingly.

Bark: Neem bark is cool, bitter, astringent, acrid, and refrigerant. It is useful in tiredness, cough, fever, loss of appetite, and worm infestation.

It heals the wounds and is used in vomiting, skin diseases, and excessive thirst. Nimbidin found in Neem bark is now known to be anti-pyretic and non-irritant, and it has found to be effective in treatment of skin diseases such as eczema, furunculosis, arsenical dermatitis, burn ulcers, Herpes labialis, scabies and seborrhoeic dermatitis. It is also effective in the treatment of skin diseases of unknown origin, such as warts and dandruff. Extracts of bark have potent diuretic and anti-inflammatory properties. Nimbidin and sodium nimbidinate contained in neem bark are reported to possess spermicidal activity. Neem bark has shown antibacterial activity against various gram-positive organisms.

Leaves: According to Ayurveda, Neem leaves help in the treatment of vaata disorders (neuromuscular pains). Neem leaves are also reported to remove toxins, purify blood, and prevent damage caused by free radical in body by neutralising them. Neem leaves are reported to be beneficial in eye disorders and insect bite poisons. Neem leaves contain nimbin, nimbinene, deacetylnimbinase, nimbandial, nimbolide and quercetin. Studies indicate that tender leaves are effective in parasitic infections. A 10% aqueous extract of tender leaves has been found to possess antiviral properties. Studies on plasma clotting time using Russell's viper venom have proved that the leaf extract contains a clotting inhibitor. This justifies its use in the treatment of poisonous bites. A total extract of Neem leaves has shown potential as a potent hepatoprotective agent. Water extract of Neem leaves have shown significant anti-ulcer activity. Essential oil from fresh leaves has a mild fungicide action. Neem leaf extract have shown reduction in the frequency and severity of stress induced gastric mucosal lesions. Intraperitoneal administration of Neem leaf, bark, and seed extracts revealed immunostimulatory properties of Neem, which are responsible for their anti-HIV effect.

Fruits: Neem fruits are bitter, purgative, anti-hemorrhoid and anthelmintic in nature.

Flowers: Neem flowers are used in vitiated conditions of pitta (balancing of the body heat) and kapha (phlegm formation). They are astringent, anthelmintic and non-toxic.

Seeds: Neem seeds are also described as anthelmintic, antileprotic, anti-poisonous and bitter in taste. Azadirachtins from Neem seed kernel, are among more than a 100 compounds found in Neem. So far, twelve

azadiractins have been identified, all the twelve have high level of biological activity. It has been reported that a single low dose of azadirachtin immunized the kissing bug, a transmitter of Chagas disease. Azadirachtins have shown inhibition of larval, pupal and adult moults and of reproduction and fitness of both plant-feeding and aquatic larvae like mosquitoes. Gedunin, contained in whole fruit has been shown to possess anti-malarial activity.

Oil: Neem oil derived from crushing the seeds is antidermatonic, a powerful anthelmintic and is bitter to taste. It has a wide spectrum of action and is highly medicinal in nature.

Mixture: Five parts of Neem tree *i.e.* bark, root, fruit, flower and leaves together are used in diseases of blood. It is also used in vitiated conditions of excess heat, itching, wound, burning sensation in body and skin diseases.

MEDICINAL USES

- **Psoriasis:** Neem seed oil and leaf extracts are excellent for psoriasis. It relieves the itching and pain while reducing the scale and redness of the patchy lesions.
- **Diabetes:** Oral doses of neem leaf extracts reduced insulin requirements by 30 to 50 percent in nonketonic, insulin-fast and insulin-sensitive diabetics.
- **AIDS:** Various studies on AIDS report encouraging results in laboratory tests, both preventative and possible cure using neem extracts.
- **Cancer:** Polysaccharides and limonoids found in neem bark, leaves and seed oil reduce tumors and malignant growths.
- **Heart disease:** Neem delays the coagulation of blood, calms erratic heartbeats and helps reduce elevated heart rates and blood pressure.
- **Herpes:** Recent tests in Germany show that neem extracts act against the herpes virus and can quickly heal cold

sores.

- **Periodontal disease:** German and American researchers have proven neem extracts prevent tooth decay and can prevent and heal periodontal disease.
- **Dermatology:** Neem is highly effective in treating skin disorders like acne, eczema, itching, dandruff, and warts.
- **Allergies:** Neem inhibits allergic reactions when applied externally or consumed as a decoction.
- **Ulcers:** Neem extracts provide significant protection from discomfort and speed up the healing of gastric and duodenal lesions.
- **Encephalitis:** An outbreak of Japanese encephalitis in India was apparently ended when children were dosed twice a day with crushed neem leaves.
- **Birth control (men):** In India and the United States, trials show neem oil extracts reduced fertility in male monkeys without inhibiting libido or sperm production, making it potentially the first male birth control pill.
- **Birth control (women):** Used as a vaginal lubricant, neem oil is up to 100 percent effective in preventing pregnancy.
- **Hepatitis:** Tests in the U.S. show neem adversely affects the virus that causes hepatitis B.
- **Fungi:** Neem is toxic to several fungi, which attack humans, including those that cause athlete's foot and ringworm, and Candida, an organism that causes yeast infections.
- **Malaria:** An active ingredient in neem leaves, called Irocin A, is toxic to resistant strains of malaria.
- **External parasites:** Neem quickly kills external parasites and a neem decoction is highly preferable to the standard highly toxic treatments for head lice and scabies.
- **Insect repellent:** Studies have shown that neem compounds are more effective insect repellents than the widely used synthetic chemicals, which are suspected

carcinogens over long periods of use.

- **Insecticide:** Neem extracts have been approved by the scientific community for use on food crops as insecticides. It is non-toxic to birds, animals, beneficial insects, or man and protects crops.

PLEASE NOTE

Taking neem leaf or bark powder every other day or drinking a mild neem tea will enhance antibody production and the body's cell-mediated immune response, helping to prevent infections. However, never to take neem for more than three weeks without at least a one-week break.)

While neem should be taken internally for diseases of the organs, the immune system, the circulatory system, and other problems inside the body, neem can be used externally and supplemented, if necessary, with oral administration, for diseases affecting the skin. However, neem should not be taken internally for more than two weeks. In severe cases, oral administration may be resumed after one week in a continuing cycle, preferably under the direction of an Ayurvedic physician.

Extensive research has been conducted on neem oil extracts and it has been found to be safe in limited dosage for short periods. Some people taking neem oil internally have experienced nausea and general discomfort, which happens to be the case with many oils containing sulphur compounds. Excessive consumption of raw neem oil has resulted in reduced liver functioning and problems concerning the central nervous system. However, the adverse effects of neem oil consumption in small quantities has been disputed by some researchers. One researcher even showed that small amounts of pure neem oil actually protect the liver from damage.

Neem oil, taken orally or vaginally after intercourse, has been found to possess antiimplantation effects and may also lead to abortion. As the oil is extremely bitter, it is doubtful if anyone would choose to ingest it. However, pregnant women or those trying to conceive should never ingest neem oil and should avoid using it intra-vaginally.

There is no definitive answer regarding the toxicity of ingested neem oil,

but caution should be exercised whenever it is taken internally. Darker oil has been found to be more toxic than lighter oil in recent studies. The darker oil is usually made from older seeds that have been contaminated with fungi, and usually produce aflatoxin.

However, the leaves are more or less safe when consumed in small quantities. But neem has many powerful compounds and should not be categorised with milder herbs.

Many Indians, especially from the rural pockets, have grown up with neem in their food, as medicine and for hygiene. Some people eat large amounts of neem leaves and frequently drink neem oil without any apparent ill effect. However, for those who are not familiar with neem, it should be used judiciously until a determination can be made about an individual level of tolerance or intolerance. Whenever any herb or food product produces undesirable effects, it should be avoided or the dosage reduced. This holds true for neem, as with any other substance.

PIPER BETEL

Piper betel is called Paan in Hindi and Taamboolam in Sanskrit, and is highly linked to Indian traditions and culture. More than seven varieties of betel leaf have been identified in ancient ayurvedic texts. The Sanskrit words to describe paan are vasya and Kaamajanani—it draws people to you. Because of these qualities and since it is stimulating, making the juices flow, it is also an aphrodisiac and is recommended before and during sex. Arakene, the alkaloid constituent in the leaves, which is akin to cocaine, may be the cause of their stimulant effect.

The betel leaf combines well with a pinch of slaked lime (choonam) and a few pieces of areca nut. A study showed that this habit was responsible for preventing osteoporosis in a group of economically, and socially disadvantaged people. It inferred that the calcium in the choonam was easily assimilated in the presence of betel juice. Tobacco has polluted the chew, the chewer and his surroundings and spoiled an otherwise laudable tradition.

Betel leaf has many medicinal uses and has been recommended in the ancient scriptures of Ayurveda. The betel leaf is known for its acrid,

antiseptic, aphrodisiac, aromatic, astringent, bitter, carminative, hot and stimulant properties. In combination with lime, areca nut and one's own saliva, the emerging concoction helps in the clearance of the throat, improving voice, the digestion, and expelling worms and intestinal gas. Sometimes, other aromatic herbs such as cloves, cardamoms, nutmeg, sounf, karpur and gulkand are added for additional benefit. A chemical analysis of betel leaves reveals the presence of several goodies—calcium, carotene, thiamine, ribofavin, niacin and vitamin C. A phenolic constituent, called chavicol, found in its essential oil is reported to have shown antibacterial activity.

MEDICINAL USES

- Warm leaves (lightly heated on a tavva) and smeared with mustard oil are applied to the chest in cases of coughing and difficulty in breathing during infancy and childhood.
- Warm leaves, smeared with castor oil can be applied on inflammatory conditions like scrotal swelling, breast abscess, boils, burns, wounds *etc.*
- A teaspoon each of the juices of betel leaf, ginger and tulsi, in 1 tsp honey, helps not only in cough and chest congestion, but also aids in lessening the weakness on the nerves.
- In case of headache, put 2 or 3 drops of leaf juice into the nostrils and take rest.
- Betel leaf reduces pain due to insect stings—fold in 2-3 peppercorns and take with 1 tsp honey.
- To prevent dandruff and to lengthen the hair, apply the paste of betel leaves and coconut oil to scalp.
- Betel leaf is credited with diuretic properties. Its juice, mixed with dilute milk and sweetened slightly, helps in easing urination.
- According to Vaidyamanorama, a classical treatise of Ayurveda, one betel leaf mixed with 10 gm. black pepper

and taken with cold water for two months makes one lean and thin.

- In case of flarial conditions, regular intake of the paste of betel leaves mixed with salt along with hot water is useful.

PLEASE NOTE

It is estimated that about 50 crores of people indulge in chewing betel leaves. Since most of them are ignorant of personal and social hygiene, they spit the tainted saliva anywhere they like. This bad habit plays a major part in spreading a number of infections. If the betel leaf is taken for first time, there is a possibility of giddiness and sharp stabbing pain due to calcium ions in it. This can be remedied by sucking a crystal of common salt or some sugar. Persons suffering from congestive heart failure, hypertension, etc., should use betel leaf, especially in combination with choonam cautiously. The stem of the betel leaf and the roots are said to produce sterility in women and that would perhaps account for the fact that the stem is always removed before chewing the leaf. The leaves are said to be invigorating and an aphrodisiac and, therefore, not to be used by celibates and ascetics. Chewing betel leaves 4 to 10 times daily for more than 2 years regularly, develops addiction like alcohol or opium. There is threat of sub-mucous fbrosis, a pre-cancerous condition in such abusers.

27. POMEGRANATE

Its name—*Punica granatum*—derives from the Latin word “granatum” meaning “precious.” This is a valuable plant, both medicinally and economically. The ‘Pomegranate’ has traditionally been regarded as a symbol of fertility. In India, the pomegranate is upheld for its sacred value. The leaves or fowers are offered to Lord Ganapati, Lord Satyanarayana and Lord Samba on Shree sankastha vrata and Nitya somavara vrata respectively. Some suggest that this “many-seeded apple” was the serpent’s gift to Eve in the Garden of Eden. It is often mentioned in the Bible, the most references occurring in the Song of Solomon, and it is still used in certain Jewish ceremonies. Mohammed

refers to it in the Koran, suggesting that it suppresses envious thoughts. It is a Turkish custom for a newly wed bride to cast a pomegranate on the ground; the number of seeds falling out indicating the number of children she will bear.

MEDICINAL USES

All most all the parts of the tree the roots, the reddish brown bark, leaves, fowers, rind and the seeds have medicinal importance. According to ayurveda, the fruit is agni deepaka (appetiser), ruchī janaka (taste promoter), Pitta kaaraka (enhances pitta), hridya (strengthens heart), graahi (antidiarrhoeal), sheetala (cooling), rakta shodaka (blood purifier). Bark is graahi, and krimghna (wormicidal especially for tapeworm). Fruit peel is graahi (antidiarrhoeal).

The juice of the sweet fruit contains glucose, fructose, tannins, and oxalic acid. It acts on the liver, heart, kidneys, and tone up their functions. It acts as diuretic in fevers. It supplies the required minerals and helps the liver to preserve vitamin A from the food that we take. It increases the body resistance against infections, particularly tuberculosis. It binds the stools and tones up the intestines, hence can be used in digestive disorders. The main value of the pomegranate is its astringent property, which causes cells to shrink-and it is a valuable food medicine for diarrhoea and dysentery. The alkaloid iso-pellatrine acts on the mucous surface of the inflamed internal organs of the abdominal viscera and reduces the excessive secretions, which cause diarrhoea. The sour fruit has more medicinal properties than sweet variety. The bark of both root and stem is famous for its anthelmintic property. The alkaloid, pelliterine that is present in these parts is highly toxic to tapeworms.

- Charaka samhita recommends the internal usage decoction prepared from the bark in bleeding piles.
- Chakradutta advocates the intake of pomegranate bark decoction and Holarrhena antidysenterica (Karchi) along with honey in blood motions.
- Haareeta samhita recommends the usage of pomegranate leaves, sandalwood, curd, and honey in threatened

abortions.

- According to Vangasena, the powder of the dry fruit rind mixed with pepper and common salt can be used as a good tooth powder. Its regular application strengthens the gums, stops bleeding, prevents pyorrhoea, cleans the teeth, and preserves them for a long time.
- To eradicate intestinal worms, especially tapeworms, boil fresh pomegranate bark in a glass of water until half of the decoction remains. Take half cup of the infusion thrice a day. At bed time take some purgative such as castor oil.
- To dissolve urinary calculus, grind a teaspoonful of the seeds and take with a cupful of horse gram soup.
- Make the powder from dried rind of the fruit. Prepare decoction with it and drink in case of diarrhoea, dysentery, and bleeding from rectum, lungs or from the nose. The same decoction mixed with a cupful of fenugreek infusion, sweetened with honey is taken as a medicine in bacillary dysentery, prolapsed rectum, burning in the anus, leucorrhoea *etc.*
- In case of excessive white discharge per vagina, one can take a douche with the decoction of the fresh rind mixed with a pinch of turmeric powder.
- Sagging breasts can be reshaped with the application of paste of the rind.
- Cough can be remedied by sucking dried rind with salt and a clove.
- Decoction or dried powder of flower buds can be used as a snuff in case of excessive bleeds from the nose. It is good medicine for senile vaginitis.
- The leaves of the pomegranate is made in to paste and applied for red eye. (Conjunctivitis.) It can be applied over the body to stop the bad smell due to excessive perspiration, itching of the skin, scabies, eczema, ringworm *etc.*

PLEASE NOTE

Eat the fruit immediately after you cut open as the seeds lose their colour quickly. Do not swallow the pips while eating the fruit. This is said to have bad effect on the intestines and may cause appendicitis.

28. RAAGI

Raagi is a very popular grain that is grown as a dry crop. Finger millet is the common English name for this reddish mustard like grain. Raagi-ball is the staple food of those who are involved in exhaustive physical work. You can even have this food if you desire to work longer without feeling tired and hungry. Put four in boiling water and evenly mix to get a thick paste. Roll this paste in to balls into convenient size. Mix this pudding with buttermilk and drink as gruel. You can even take it along with soup or curry by dipping and swallowing.

MEDICINAL USES

- Raagi is the richest source of calcium and iron among other cereals. Therefore, this can be given as ideal food supplement to growing children.
- Raagi is slow to digest and due to this, the carbohydrates take longer time to get absorbed. If you are diabetic and obese individual, then you can choose Ragi meal as your ideal meal keeping in view of the above property.
- Weight conscious individuals can use it. By eating raagi preparations, the constant desire to eat will be limited reducing the daily calorie intake.
- The interesting feature of this food is that it provides calcium, phosphorus, iron, vitamin B1, and B2 in abundance thereby preventing malnutrition in spite of restricted food.
- If constipation is your major health concern, then this Raagi meal best suits you as it contains plenty of cellulose.

- Here is an excellent health tonic for you and your family. Take a handful of Raagi with an equal quantity of paddy, a tablespoonful of cotton seeds, a tablespoonful of cucumber seeds, pumpkin seeds, watermelon seeds and handful of shelled almonds and soak in an earthen pot with sufficient water for a night. Next morning grind all these ingredients into fine paste and strain through a fine cloth and put aside. In the meanwhile, heat a tablespoonful of ghee and put few seeds of cardamom, two cloves and inch long piece of cinnamon and fry gently. Pour the milky extract and bring to boil by adding some milk and sugar. When it begins to thicken, serve them as a breakfast. With this, your children grow healthy and look rosy due to increased haemoglobin content. This drink can be taken during pregnancy to counteract anemia, delayed labour due to uterine inertia and other postpartum complications. It is a boon to young anaemic girls having menstrual disorders.
- Its regular use protects from malnutrition, infection, degenerative diseases, and premature old age.

PLEASE NOTE

Excessive use of raagi, increases oxalic acid, hence, it is not advised in persons suffering from urinary calculi.

29. SANDALWOOD

Sandalwood or Chandan is one of the most prized natural products that is believed to be indigenous to India.

Sandalwood and the essential oil obtained after fractional distillation of fragrant heartwood and roots—both have been used in Ayurveda since long time. It is an effective anti-pitta herb, used internally and externally as paste, powder, or oil. Sandalwood is a natural deodorizing agent. With regular use, body secretions like urine and perspiration do not have a foul odour.

Though sandalwood is expensive, one small piece lasts for years. It is the

most durable wood, as white ants and other termites do not destroy it. To get the paste from it, rub the piece with a little water on a rough fat stone and collect the paste in small container. Sandalwood oil is powerful astringent oil. Therefore, always mix with at least five times the quantity of any bland oil while using.

MEDICINAL USES

- **Allergic rash:** Rub the sandalwood piece with the juice of giloy (*Tinospora cordifolia*) and take the paste internally.
- **Bleeding disorders:** Take the decoction that has been prepared from sandalwood, madhuka (*Bassia latifolia*), and lodhra (*Symplocos recemosa*) along with sugar and honey. Snuffing the fine powder of sandalwood checks nosebleeds.
- **Bleeding piles:** Decoction of the fruit bark of pomegranate or the extract of sandalwood along with dried ginger powder checks bleeding from the piles.
- **Burning sensation in the body:** Pure Sandalwood powder along with sugar, honey, and rice water taken internally relieves burning sensation in the body.
- **Burning urination:** Internally take sandalwood paste mixed with sugar and rice water. Restrict your diet to boiled and cooled milk and cereals only.
- **Conjunctivitis:** Wash the eye with the decoction of licorice or milk processed with sandalwood.
- **Hiccough:** To check the hiccough, take sandalwood paste, mixed with breast milk or cow milk in the form of nasal drops.
- **Menstrual disorders:** Sandal wood decoction alone, if taken internally counteracts menstrual disorders. For palatability, this decoction can be mixed with milk, ghee, sugar, or honey.
- **Poisoning:** In case of poisoning, application of the paste of sandalwood on the chest region gives relief and provides

comfort.

- **Spermatorrhoea:** Decoction of bark of arjuna (*Terminalia arjuna*) and sandalwood is useful in those who complaint semen in their urine.
- **Vomiting:** A teaspoonful of sandalwood paste, taken with juice of amla checks vomiting.

30. TAMARIND

Most people know about the tamarind tree. It is the most common tree that is found in the back yards of our houses and as an avenue plant, mostly grown for sheltering purposes. Apart from the commercial and household purposes, tamarind can be used as medicine also.

MEDICINAL USES

- **Loss of Appetite:** Mix jaggery water with tamarind pulp and spice with cinnamon bark (daalcheeni), cardamom (ilaaychee). Keep this in your mouth and suck the juice in case of anorexia.
- **Diarrhoea:** Collect the outer shells of tamarind seeds. Grind them and mix together with dried ginger powder, rock salt, and Bishop's weed (ajwaayan). Take with fresh butter milk. It checks diarrhoea quickly.
- **Bleeding Piles:** Fry tamarind leaves in oil and ghee and cook in sufficient quantity of curd. Add powder of dried pomegranate, coriander seeds, and dried ginger to it and take internally. Liquid gruel soured with tamarind pulp is also useful in bleeding piles.
- **Rectal Prolapse:** Fry the tamarind seeds and rub with water. Paste on anus after setting the tract in position. It will not prolapse again.
- **Cough:** Take the following: epicarp of tamarind fruit one part, turmeric two parts, sarjarasa three parts, spreading hog weed (punarnava) one part, and jasmine leaves

(chamelee) nine parts. Grind and make into a wick. Fumigate as and when needed to get relief from cough.

- **Swelling Caused due to Hurt and Wounds:** Prepare bolus by boiling wheat four with a pinch of salt, tamarind leaves and tamarind juice. Apply this as poultice in warm condition over the swelling. This relieves pain and swelling. Alternately, you can apply the paste prepared from fruit pulp of tamarind and lime to the site of injury followed by fomentation.
- **Freckles:** Application of paste of the root bark of tamarind removes freckles.
- **White Discharge:** Soak the tamarind seeds in water for a day and pound with milk. Take this paste regularly.
- **Common Cold:** In acute cold, soup made from tamarind fruit is beneficial. When the phlegm is thickened, it should be eliminated by head-evacuation procedures such as nasya karma.
- **Oedema:** The affected part should be bathed with hot decoction of tamarind leaves.
- **Eye Diseases:** Extract juice from tamarind leaves and mix with milk. Apply to the eyes in case of redness, secretion, pain, and congestion. To get relief from eye itching, you can apply the paste of black pepper, tamarind juice, and ghee.
- **Ear Diseases:** In case of earache, oil processed with juice of tamarind fruit is efficacious.

32. TULSI

Tulsi is perhaps the most sacred plant that is native to India and is mentioned in the Atharvaveda and Ayurveda for its healing and health-giving properties. It has the property of destroying bacteria and insects and even the air around it is purified. It has been scientifically proven that tulsi absorbs positive ions, energises negative ions, and liberates ozone from the atmosphere.

In the olden days, temples served as rest houses for travelers. The Tulsi plant was grown outside the temples because of its unique property of curbing thirst.

Every part of the tulsi plant, from roots to leaves, possesses health-giving properties. Whole plant acts as a demulcent (soothing agent), expectorant, and febrifuge (lessens fever).

MEDICINAL USES

- **Fever:** Take the decoction of the leaves boiled with cardamom. Mix decoction with milk, if you want to give it to your child. Tender leaves, boiled with tea, acts as a preventive against monsoon maladies, especially, malaria.
- **Headaches:** Pound the leaves to paste, mix with sandalwood paste and apply on the forehead. For severe migraine, inhale the essential oil of basil dropped in boiling water, or drink basil tea.
- **Insect bites:** Take a teaspoonful juice of the leaves internally and apply the paste externally to the affected parts. This as a safe mosquito repellent. Tulsi mitigates the effect of the poisons of snake or scorpion bites on the body, for which it is to be taken internally as well as applied externally.
- **Labour pains:** A decoction of tulsi, to which honey has been added, is given to reduce labour pains. It is also recommended after childbirth.
- **Nausea and vomiting:** Tulsi juice helps to combat vomiting. To combat a general feeling of nausea or queasiness, try simmering a pinch of freshly grated ginger with a few leaves of basil in a mug of hot water for 10 minutes and drink it.
- **Respiratory disorders:** Tulsi is heat generating in action and is an effective remedy for bronchitis, asthma, influenza, cough, and cold. Drink the decoction, prepared with tulsi leaves, cloves, ginger, and common salt in case of these

disorders. Add one long pepper and two black peppers and few adulsa leaves and honey or sugar to this tea to get relief from cough.

- **Skin disorders:** A mix of tulsi juice and lime helps control ringworm and other itching skin problems.
- **Sore throat:** Gargle with the warm decoction, twice or thrice a day.
- **Stress:** Recent studies have shown that tulsi leaves provide protection against stress. Chew ten to twelve leaves daily to prevent stress.

32. TURMERIC

The rhizome of *Curcuma longa* (turmeric) has been used as a medicine, spice, and colouring agent for thousands of years. Traditionally, medical practitioners of both East and West have used turmeric for its healing properties and recent scientific studies have further established its effectiveness. Its anti-oxidant, digestive, anti-inflammatory, antiplatelet, cholesterol lowering and its potential anti-cancer properties, make turmeric a potential drug in the treatment and prevention of diseases.

However, modern interest in turmeric was aroused way back in 1971 when our Indian researchers found evidence that whole turmeric possesses anti-inflammatory properties. Turmeric contains curcumin, which is the disease-fighting agent.

Traditional Ayurvedic Medicine (TAM) recommends an internal dosage of 10-20 ml infusion and/or 1-3 gm powder. A heaped teaspoonful of powdered turmeric can be mixed with water to a slurry and drunk two to three times a day.

MEDICINAL USES

- The following are the recommended therapeutic uses for internal doses of turmeric:
 1. As an anti-inflammatory agent for arthritis and other inflammatory conditions such as dysmenorrhoea

(painful menstruation), asthma, infections, eczema, psoriasis, and injuries. However, for arthritis and injuries, it is advisable to use turmeric in combination with more analgesic herbs for relief.

2. For patients suffering from cardiovascular disease, or those with increased risk, like smokers and patients with high plasma cholesterol.
3. As a preventive for individuals exposed to higher than normal levels of carcinogens or those considered to be at a risk of developing cancer, like workers in the chemical industry, smokers *etc.*
4. To improve stomach and liver digestive functions.
5. Externally, turmeric is recommended for relief from inflammation due to skin infections, arthritis, eczema, psoriasis, injuries and conjunctivitis.
6. In respiratory allergies, asthma, and other allergic conditions, turmeric and honey, mixed together, can be taken twice daily for three to four months.
7. To bring down the spasm in asthma and cold, the fumes of turmeric, tealeaves, black-gram and Bengal-gram powder can be inhaled for relief.
8. Paste of turmeric when applied over the skin, acts as an excellent medicine for ringworm, scabies, indolent ulcers *etc.*
9. Prepare poultice by mixing turmeric powder with a little slaked lime, white of an egg, and scrapings of a soap. Apply this externally, and expose to heat to get relief from pains caused by sprains, myalgia, dislocation of joints, boils, cuts, wounds, *etc.*
10. Here is an excellent cosmetic preparation to keep your face fresh and velvet-soft: Take a teaspoonful of turmeric paste. Mix with milk cream, sandalwood paste and Bengal-gram flour. Apply as a face pack daily.

11. Turmeric, when mixed with neem oil, acts as an excellent anti-infective agent in chronic ulcers, bed sores, scabies, psoriasis, eczema *etc.* Turmeric is to be heated in neem oil before application. Alternately, you can apply paste of turmeric mixed with onion juice and ajwain seeds.
12. In one study, turmeric was found to be an effective contraceptive. Regular application of turmeric paste over the body and taking a bit of turmeric with three cloves orally in the morning during menstruating period and three days after the menstrual period, is said to be effective.
13. To prevent eye infection, dye a clean cloth with turmeric. Dry it and wipe eyes regularly with this. This is extremely useful in viral conjunctivitis.
14. There are some people who search for remedies to counteract drowsiness and excessive sleepiness. Especially students and automobile drivers look for this kind of remedy. Taking equal quantity of turmeric powder, pepper and rock salt along with glassful of orange juice during night prevents excessive sleepiness without causing any tiredness. However, this will not prevent the natural sleep.

33. WATERMELON

Watermelon, as the name suggests, contains the highest quantity of water amongst all fruits. It is a common fruit, grown on sandy soils during the summer months.

MEDICINAL USES

- One of the striking features of the watermelon is that it is a rich source of potassium. So, it can be used as a safe diuretic for conditions such as urinary stones, scanty urination, metabolic acidosis, an extreme situation in

diabetes, starvation *etc.*

- It is usually given as a supplement, with excellent effects, in cardiovascular and renal disorders associated with sodium and water retention. However, in kidney failure with severe uraemia, it does not help much.
- Watermelon quenches morbid thirst, provides the mineral lost due to excessive perspiration, gives a 'cooling' effect to the body and protects from the bad effects of heat radiation.
- You can either eat the melon directly or drink its juice along with glucose, honey, or limejuice. It also acts as a dehydrating agent in gastro-enteritis, cholera, diarrhoea, dysentery, nausea, and vomiting.
- If you have a burning sensation, especially in conditions like jaundice, biliousness, headaches, dryness of the mouth, urinary tract infections, a glassful of juice mixed with equal quantities of buttermilk and a pinch of common salt, is an excellent remedy.
- Some *hakeems* treat insanity, hysteria, insomnia, and other psychological conditions with watermelon. A ripe fruit is cut into two halves and the pulp is scooped out, to make it hollow. It is then put as a cap on the shaved head of the patient for three hours and replaced with another one. The process is repeated three to four times a day for four days.
- Its mild bleaching property makes the skin fairer. Take a fresh watermelon and make a hole. Push three handfuls of raw rice, a handful of dry peas, a pinch of camphor and two teaspoonfuls of limejuice through this opening. Keep it aside for a week. Dry them in shade and powder. Take a tablespoonful of this powder, mix with milk, and apply as face pack before going to bed.
- Melon seeds have cooling, soothing, diuretic, vermifuge, and nutritive effects. For high blood pressure, scanty urination with burning sensation, loss of weight, blood vomiting in tuberculosis, intake of milky juice of

watermelon seeds along with poppy seeds, almonds, sugar and honey, acts as a good medicine.

34. WOOD APPLE (BEL) TREE

Wood apple with other names being *Aegle marmelos*, bilva or bel is a very common tree that is found through out in our country. This tree is native to India. The Yajur Veda makes a reference to bel fruit. Almost all the ancient ayurvedic treatises like Charaka samhitha, Susrutha samhitha etc., recognised its medicinal potential. Hindus worship the wood apple tree before they attempt any new venture as it is considered to be a tree auspicious to Lord Shiva and Lakshmi, the Goddess of Wealth. It is believed that success in the venture will be assured by doing so. It is one of the important items in the Ganesh pooja.

It is thorny tree with edible ripe fruits. Leaves are trifoliolate (arranged in set of three). Flowers are greenish-white, sweet-scented and in small bunches. Fruit looks large and round with greenish-grey woody shell. Pulp inside is orange in colour, aromatic and with many seeds covered with fibrous hairs. It grows wild throughout the low hills. The fruits of the wild trees are, however, considerably smaller than those of the cultivated types grown in the plains. People usually eat the fruits. These protein-rich fruits are also used in making a very good drink. They also can make a good jam. The fruits are also used in making paints in Burma. They are also used as a substitute for soap, as source of essential oils and perfumes. The mucilage of the seed is a good cementing material. The wood of the bel-tree takes a fine polish and is used in building houses, constructing carts, agricultural implements, in oil-mills and sugar-mills, in making pestles, handles of tools, in making combs, etc., and for carving but the tree is too valuable to be felled for its timber. A yellow dye is obtained from the rind of the unripe fruits and is used in calico-printing. An essential oil is distilled from the rind. The dried fruits, after their pulp separated from the rind, are used as pill-boxes for keeping valuable medicines, sacred ashes and snuff.

It acts as a potent anthelmintic, hypoglycaemic, cardiac stimulant, antidiarrhoeal and antiviral agent. Its bark and roots, leaves, unripe and ripe fruits are used for various medicinal purposes. In experimental

studies, wood-apple tree was found to possess significant antihookworm property. The alcoholic extract of fruit exhibited antidiarrhoeal property. The water extract of leaves and fruits exhibited reduction of blood sugar levels in experimental animals. It takes part as one of the ingredients in the preparation of

Ayurvedic medicines such as: Bilva taila, Dasamoolarishta, Gangaadhara choorna, Amritaarishta, Mahaanaaraayana taila, Chyavana praasa, Pushyaanuga choorna.

Its bark and roots, leaves, unripe and ripe fruits are used for various medicinal purposes.

MEDICINAL USES

- **Diarrhoea:** Soak the fruit in fresh water for a couple of hours; mash, and drink along with the pulp. Alternately, steam both wood-apple fruits, and jujube fruits, and take along with jaggery and ghee.
- **Dysentery (bloody stools):** Take tender fruits of bel tree together with liquid jaggery, honey, and oil. The dietary preparation made of tender wood apple fruits, equal quantity of sessamum paste, supernatant layer of curd and little quantity of ghee checks dysentery.
- **Vomiting and Diarroea:** Drink half cup of the decoction made of bilva and mango seeds, along with honey and sugar. Dried ginger powder (sonth) can also be used instead of mango seeds.
- **Jaundice:** Juice the tender leaves of wood-apple, add trikatu powder (combination of dried ginger, black pepper and long pepper) and drink. (Charaka samhitha)
- **Inflammatory bowel disease:** Eat the pulp of tender fruit with sonth (dried ginger powder) and jaggery. Remember to stay on bland diet and butter milk.
- **Bleeding piles:** Eat tender fruits of wood apple on regular basis.

- **Oedema (swelling):** Juice the tender leaves of wood-apple, add trikatu powder (combination of dried ginger, black pepper and long pepper) and drink.
- **Body odour in obesity:** Juice the tender leaves of wood apple and take them with honey. Alternately, fruit pulp of wood apple and Chebulic myrobylan (harad), in equal quantities can be used for similar purpose
- **Appetite loss:** A sweet preparation made of tender wood apple, cardamom, sugar and parched paddy can be used.
- **Skin pigmentation:** Pound fist full of coriander seeds and leaves of wood apple and apply to skin patches.

PLEASE NOTE

Excess intake of wood-apple pulp produces faccidity of the intestines causing fatulence and a sensation of heaviness. Wood-apple pulp should be chewed thoroughly and it should not be gulped down. If taken hurriedly, it may cause a sensation of heaviness and dryness.

35. ZIZYPHUS

Zizyphus jujuba or regu, or bare, as it is commonly called, is found in the wilds and cultivated in many parts of India. The fruits, leaves, and roots of Zizyphus help in curing various disorders such as fever, diarrhoea, hiccups, urticarial rash, leucorrhoea and obesity.

There are two varieties of this fruit—the wild variety that is smaller and rounded. Bigger one is sweeter in taste and fleshy when compared to the smaller kind. Both the varieties of the fruit contain Zizyphic acid, tannins, sugar, and other minerals, which are effective in the treatment of diarrhoea, dysentery, gout, rheumatism and other ailments.

MEDICINAL USES

- Regular intake of the fruit prevents the formation of gravel in the bladder, obstruction of urine, constipation,

leucorrhoea and controls spermatorrhoea.

- The paste of the seeds taken along with water counteracts excessive hunger.
- To stop excessive menstruation and leucorrhoea (white discharge in women), take a teaspoonful of the powder of the dry fruit along with jaggery.
- This fruit can also be given in the form of decoction, along with sugar or honey to counteract mental-retardness and stubbornness in children. This increases the brain functioning by releasing more glutamic acid in the blood.
- To prevent frequent attacks of cold and influenza, take a teaspoonful of the fresh juice extracted from the fruit pulp with a pinch of pepper, once a day.
- If you have pimples, external application of the ash obtained from the burnt fruit will cure them in no time. This is to be applied with limejuice and seed paste.
- For excessive perspiration under the arms, hands and soles, fresh leaf juice can be applied. It stops the bad smell caused by growth of bacteria.
- Applying of the paste of the leaves over the scalp and hair, prevents scalp diseases and cleans the hair apart from lengthening and darkening them.
- Leaves act as an excellent remedy for piles. Take some water in a vessel. Cover the mouth with a cloth. Put a handful of leaves over this cloth. Boil the water until the leaves are cooked. While cooking, do not forget to cover the leaves with a plate. This is to prevent the steam from escaping. Pound the boiled leaves with castor oil and apply as a warm poultice over the piles. Repeat this process twice daily for a week to get relief.
- For sore-throat, stomatitis, bleeding gums, and cracked tongue, gargle the fresh infusion of the leaves after adding a pinch of salt.
- The same infusion can also be used to wash wounds and

ulcers.

- The infusion of the inner layers of the bark of the Zizyphus tree is used as a purgative in constipation, rheumatism and gout.
- The paste of the bark is applied for relief from animal bites and venomous stings of bees, scorpion and wasps.



ANSWERS TO YOUR QUERIES

1. DISEASES OF THE SKIN & HAIR

1. Can psoriasis be cured completely by Ayurveda? If so, I would like to know the details of the medicine to be taken. Are there any restrictions on diet? Please also inform the kind of soap to be used?

DN Arya, Secunderabad

As the cause is unknown, the cure is yet not known clearly. Treatment is palliative and can often be managed successfully by an Ayurvedic approach. Internally Arogyavardhini vati, Panchatikta Guggulu Ghrita etc are advocated while externally Doorvadi tailam can be applied. The general health should be well maintained and excitement causes should be studied and eliminated. As far as the diet is concerned a cut down on fats, animal proteins and the quantity of food consumed is advisable.

Generally soaps with harsh chemicals are discouraged as many are alkaline based. But, however, glycerine based soaps and baby soaps are recommended.

2. I am 22 years old. Ever since I was 16, I have psoriasis and hyperpigmentation all over the body. I have consulted many dermatologists but with no positive result. Because of this, I undergo severe mental anxiety. As my entire body is afflicted with this, I wear full sleeved shirts. I heard that Ayurveda has some kind of *bhasmam* which cures psoriasis and hyperpigmentation.

Mahesh Yadav, Alwal

The most important thing is not to get depressed because it has been observed that anxiety, mental trauma, physical injuries, digestive upsets

etc will aggravate the disease. It is assumed that immune-pathological factors play an important role in the inflammatory reactions of the disease. In all such types of conditions, Ayurveda offers a promising result because it puts the doshas, dhatus and malas in a dynamic state of equilibrium to maintain positive health. In your case Panchakarma therapies may be needed to bring down the relapse rate.

3. I am suffering from Herpes Simplex for the last few years. I am taking Acyclovir tablets, but there is no relief. Recently, the frequency of infection has increased. Kindly prescribe an Ayurvedic medicine.

C R K, Hyderabad

As of now there is no proven cure for herpes. The Central Drug Research Institute, Lucknow, has confirmed the anti-viral properties of the following plants—Cassia fistula (Rela chettu) Azadirachta indica (Neem) Glycyrrhiza glabra (licorice) Pongamia glabra (Indian beet or karanj), Psorelia corylaifolia (Babchi seeds or bavanchalu). Apart from these you can try Sanjeevani Vati, Chopchinyadi churna, Vyadhiharanarasayana, etc., with medical advice.

4. I have been suffering from eczema for three to four years. The eruptions cause me a lot of discomfort as they are oozing and itching. I had consulted all the top skin specialists in the city, but without a permanent cure. When I take medicines, the itching and oozing subsides, but once I stop taking medication, the symptoms reappear all over again. Is there a permanent cure for my problem? I had earlier suffered from this problem in my childhood but it got cured at that time. Is this a chronic disease? Also please tell me if this problem can be cured through any alternative system of medicine?

Bharadwaj K, Hyderguda

In Ayurveda, there are many different treatments for eczema, depending on what is causing it, how serious it is, where it is located and what form it takes. As for the various forms of contact dermatitis, the most effective treatment obviously, is to avoid the cause. Take warm water baths in winter and cold water bath in summer. Instead of soap, use

Bengal gram powder for cleaning the body. After bath, just blot the skin with a smooth towel. Never rub the skin surface. Apply Jaatyaadi ghrita to the skin and massage well to prevent dryness. Avoid extremes of climate. Eczema causes itching and scratching the skin causes secondary infection. So keep your nails short. Take a light diet. Maintain a diet diary, it will help you detect the foods you are allergic to. Avoid contact with grass, flowers and chemicals. Also, avoid anger, resentment and frustration. This speeds up your recovery. As the therapy varies according to the individual, a personal examination is needed to understand your idiosyncrasies.

5. I am a 45-year-old male suffering from eczema on the neck for the last 15 years. It is generally confined to the back collar portion of the neck with frequent dry itching. I have tried various medicines but to no avail. The dry patches are now spreading to the face. Please suggest a suitable remedy.

Vijay Kumar, Kharkhana

Eczema may be due to a number of unrelated causes. If you suspect an allergy, you will have to find out for yourself as to what is causing the allergy, example: soaps, perfumes, bedding material and food. To counter the dryness and itching you can use an emulsion made out of equal quantities of lemon juice and oil of Pongamia Pinnata (Telugu: Gaanuga: Hindi: Karanji). Alternately, you can use Mahamarichyadi taila externally and take internally 20ml of Mahamanjistadikwatha twice daily, diluted with equal quantities of water.

6. Is there any Ayurvedic remedy for glowing skin as my skin complexion is wheatish and somewhat dark around the nose?

Sham Sunder, Hyderabad

You can use Baidyanath's Raktashodhak tablets twice daily and Mahamanjistadikada internally. Apply Kumkumadilepam externally. Use this prescription for one month after which your case has to be reviewed. Avoid too much exposure to sun.

7. I am a 14-year-old girl studying in Class VIII. My complexion is wheatish and I would like to become fair. Please tell me if

there is any Ayurvedic cream or medicine that can make me fair?

Kamala, Mahbubnagar

Externally, you can apply Kumkumadi tailam daily and internally, you will have to take a decoction prepared by adding two teaspoonfuls of Manjistadikwad churna powder to a glass of water and boiling it till it reduces to one-fourth of its previous volume. You should take this decoction on an empty stomach.

8. I am a 20-year-old girl and for the past five years I have been suffering from a chronic inflammatory skin condition. My complexion, which was once fair and bright, is now red and dark. Please suggest an Ayurvedic remedy for my problem.

Fatima Ghouse, Bhel, Hyderabad

For all inflammatory conditions, the drug of choice is Kaishoreguggulu, take two pills twice daily along with 20ml of Saribadhyasav diluted with equal quantity of water. Do not use harsh soaps, it is advisable to use gram four or baby soap instead.

9. Ever since I was 16, I have been suffering from hyperpigmentation (black). I tried many medicines but they proved to be of no use to me. I just want to get rid of it. Is there any permanent solution for the skin problem I have. Please suggest some Ayurvedic medicine.

Yamini, Kukatpally

Take two parts of chandan (sandalwood) powder and one part of haldi (turmeric). Mix them with cucumber juice and apply over the hyperpigmented spots.

Internally take arogyavardhini vati, one pill twice a day with 20ml of diluted chandanaasav.

10. I am a 17-year-old boy suffering from asthmatic allergy and white patches since childhood. I want to know if there is complete treatment and cure for the problem I have in

Ayurveda?

Zaheeruddin, Malakpet

Hypopigmented patches are due to many more reasons. As far as vitiligo is concerned, there is an effective remedy in Ayurveda. It is Babchi (*Psoraleum corylifolia*). The oil extracted from the seeds are photosensitive. The oil is to be applied over the affected area. These affected parts are to be exposed to the sun, slowly. The underactive melanocytes get activated and melanin will be produced which is lacking in leukoderma.

11. I am 25 years old and married. My problem is that I have dark circles under my eyes. I have them since I was 16. Can you suggest an ayurvedic remedy for this problem.

Nabeela Ayub, Malakpet

Exhaustive anxiety is the main cause for dark circles under the eyes. Take at least eight hours of sleep and a good nutritive diet. Lubricate the area every morning and night with a few drops of almond, sesame or coconut oil. The effect of the oil will be enhanced with the addition of the herb shatavari (wild asparagus). Massage it with gentle movements using your finger tips. Once in a while, a night treatment of cotton wool pads soaked in this oil, is highly beneficial.

12. I am an 18-year-old girl suffering from dry skin and hair. Even if I go out in the sun for 10 to 15 minutes my skin undergoes a marked change. I even have dark circles around my eyes. I wear thick spectacles as my sight is -6 for both the eyes. My friends tease me that I look like a 30-year-old woman. I am very depressed. Please help me by prescribing good Ayurvedic medicine for all the afore-mentioned problems.

Saritha, Hyderabad

Lack of sleep, anxiety and a faulty diet are responsible for the dark circles under your eyes. Dip cotton wool in a fresh infusion made of triphala powder or rose water or til oil or almond oil or coconut oil. Lie down in a preferably dark room, place the cotton wool on your eyes and

relax. Do this regularly.

Chandana (sandalwood) and Kumari (aloe vera) are good natural sunscreens. Use them separately or together as a face pack. For dry skin, apply kumkumadithailam and for dry hair, apply bringamalakadithailam. Regarding your eyesight, you seem to be suffering from degenerative or progressive myopia. In Ayurveda there are procedures like netravasthi, aschyotana, tarpana, etc., which have to be done under the supervision of a qualified Ayurvedic physician. These procedures help strengthen the eye muscles.

13. I am 21 years old. My height is 5 feet 2 inches and I weigh 65kg. I have an oily skin and suffer from severe acne, blackheads and open pores. I am on an Ayurvedic medicine containing spirulina, which has to be taken with milk before going to bed. Now, there has been a sudden increase in my weight. I walk one kilometre daily and I generally do not overeat. I have also cut down heavily on fats and sugar, with no positive effect. Please prescribe a corrective medicine.

Sanjana, Hyderabad

Milk and spirulina may not be the cause for your weight gain. You will have to check on endocrinal factors such as hypothyroidism, heredity, use of drugs (such as oral contraceptives) and steroids. For your blackheads, you could use dashangalepa externally and take internally Mahamanjisthadikwath one teaspoonful twice a day after food. For stretch marks, apart from taking up regular stretching exercise, you will have to go in for a body massage with Prasarini Thailam.

14. I am a 21-year-old girl and have a white spot in my mouth. The skin on my face is dry. My nails also do not grow in a healthy manner.

Radha, Malakpet

It seems that you are suffering from stomatitis. It is mainly due to pathogenic organisms like bacteria and viruses, mechanical trauma, irritants such as hot foods, spices, sensitisation to chemical substances in toothpastes or mouthwashes; nutritional deficiencies and emotional

disturbances. Fungal causes for stomatitis are not uncommon. Maintain oral hygiene. Take care of your digestive disorders. Gargling with triphala (three myrobalans) decoction and two pills of khadiraadi vati twice a day is beneficial.

As for your dry skin, take the fine powders of asvagandha (withania somnifera), mulathi (glycyrrhiza glabra), rose petal powder and almonds in equal quantities. Mix enough til (sesame) oil to it. Finally, add raw milk or cream of milk. Make a fine paste and apply. Gently massage to increase blood circulation and promote cleansing action. Do this regularly for 40 days at least and see the difference for yourself.

15. Kindly suggest an Ayurvedic treatment to get rid of chicken pox marks?

Linsa Varghese, Hyderabad

Once the scarring has occurred, it is very hard to get rid of pock marks.

To lighten the scars you could try this exfoliator—Mix 100gm of Ashwagandha Churna, 10gm of Jasadbhasma, 10gm of Kashisbhasma and a little butter.

Apply it to the face and rub it gently for 10 minutes.

16. I am a 17-year-old girl suffering from pimples on my face. Please suggest a herbal remedy.

Shanti Supriya, Hyderabad

Pimples are common during teens due to hormonal changes. To lessen scarring and prevent secondary infection, use Kumkumadilepam with saffron as its main ingredient. Since this preparation has an oil base, it is good for those with dry skins. If the skin is oily, use Dashangalepam powder (it contains herbs) mixed with water and apply it to the face. Once it dries, wash it off with tepid water. Also take internally Kaishoreguggulu, two pills in the morning and evening daily.

17. I am a 23-year-old girl. I have lots of pimples on my face. The pimples are black in colour and are filled with pus and blood. Kindly suggest an ayurvedic remedy.

XY, Hyderabad

The pimples have to be treated both internally and externally. You have to take Kaishoriguggulu, two pills twice and Mahamangistaadi kaada, four teaspoonfuls twice after diluting it with equal amounts of water daily. Externally, you can apply Kumkumadilepam.

18. I am a girl of 20. My skin has become oily since a year. Before menstruation, pimples get formed on my face and after some days they turn into blackheads. It takes about two to three weeks to become normal again. I wash my face regularly and do not use any cream on my face. Is there any lotion to reduce these blackheads?

K V S Uma, Hyderabad

Apply Kukumadi taila to face or Chandanadi taila.

Alternately, mix raw milk with Bengal gram flour to a paste. Steam your face to open the pores. Then apply the paste over the entire face and massage. Wash with lukewarm water to get rid of the paste. Make this a daily routine and the pimples will disappear slowly over a period of one or two years.

19. I am a 45-year-old man. For the past four months my hair has been rapidly falling. Now I have very little hair left on my head. I have undergone all possible tests related to this problem and there was no abnormality detected. Is there any Ayurvedic medicine for this problem of mine?

Ramesh Kumar, Secunderabad

Patchy hair loss may be the result of fungal infection, especially if the scalp is inflamed or itchy or due to alopecia areata, a condition that may be related to emotional stress. This condition is called as Indralupta in Ayurveda. Simple remedies for it are: black pepper seeds and gunja (abrus precatorius). You can make any one of the above into a paste and briskly rub on the affected part of the scalp. If these measures fail then a higher range of drugs like elephant tusk powder are to be chosen.

Apart from these remedies your general health should improve with good diet and sleep.

20. I have been losing a lot of hair for the last one year. I have dandruff, too. I am using Nizrol tablets. I read in the paper that Minoxidil is the best remedy. Where can I get it? Also please suggest a good Ayurvedic oil to re-grow the lost hair.

B K C, Vishakhapatnam

Minoxidil is available under the brand name Minitop. However, it is useful only in cases of male pattern alopecia. You need to be evaluated by a dermatologist to determine what type of baldness you are suffering from.

Before you can think of applying any oil for re-growing lost hair it is first important to get the dandruff treated. You could try an emulsion made of one part sandalwood oil and three parts lemon juice. Put this in a glass bottle and shake it well before use. This treatment is being suggested keeping in view that the main cause for hair loss is dandruff as you have not mentioned your age and I'm not aware if baldness is a hereditary trait in your family.

21. I want a herbal remedy to remove unwanted hair on my body. Is there any Ayurvedic cure that can remove unwanted hair permanently?

Laxmi Kala, Mandapeta

There are no proven herbal remedies for permanent removal of unwanted hair. However, there are some herbo-mineral preparations like Talakam which contain arsenic trisulphide and have to be applied only under medical supervision.

However, you can try a traditional recipe called Nalugu Podi which may help remove unwanted hair. Take equal quantities of turmeric, gokshura (Telugu: palerukaya), mustard seeds, saffron, thungamusthalu (roots of thunga grass), dried ginger and camphor. To this add two parts of red sandalwood powder and five parts each of cloves and sarapappu.

Powder all the above mentioned ingredients and mix it with til oil before applying it to your skin. Apply this paste daily before taking bath.

22. I am a 20-year-old girl having thick hair on the chest. The hair is now slowly spreading downward. I thought of going for electrolysis, but then the surface area of the hair is very very large and I was told that it would cost a lot. I request you to suggest me if there is a permanent cure without side-effects for my problem in Ayurveda?

Snigdha, Hyderabad

Excessive hair growth is caused mainly due to hereditary factors with hormone activity acting as a major trigger factor. Occasionally, hirsutism or excessive hair growth is the result of systemic disorders, such as menstrual irregularity and steroidal abuse. According to Ayurveda, there are eight conditions called Ashtanindhitya which have no cure, and hirsutism is one of them. The removal of unwanted hair (romasatahanyoga) is through the use of compounds that contain turmeric, arsenic sulphate and iron sulphate as the main ingredients. Before starting such a therapy, you need to undergo medical and laboratory examinations to determine the cause of excessive hair growth.

23. I am an 18-year-old girl and my hair is becoming white and my lips black. Please suggest an Ayurvedic remedy for my problem.

Suma, Warangal

Other than genetic reasons, it is the overall health of the person that decides the colour of the lips and the hair. Any condition that results in decreased oxygen supply to the body causes the lips to turn blue or black and faulty nutrition can cause premature greying.

However, there is a natural lip gloss called ratanjyothi (used as food colouring) which is available at any grocery shop. When you put a piece of it in warm almond oil, it imparts a lovely deep pink or red colour to the oil.

You can use this oil or you could add it to an equal quantity of beeswax

and use it as a lipstick. For greying hair you could try Nilibringadithailam which darkens the colour of the hair.

24. I am 17 years old with wheatish complexion. Whenever I go out into the sun, my complexion becomes dark. Please suggest a natural remedy for my problem. I have heard that honey also makes a person lose weight. Is this true.

XYZ, Hyderabad

Your problem could be due to sunburn. Use a hat or scarf when going out in the sun. Use an aloe vera gel and in the evenings use a sandalwood facepack or apply sandalwood oil before going to bed. You can also use externally kumkumadilepam and take internally Mahamanjistadikada. 1 tsp diluted with equal quantities of water in the morning and evening. With regard to your question on honey, I'd like to clarify that it does have properties to make a person lose weights, but remember, it does not work in isolation.

25. It is said that lime/lemon has skin-whitening properties. Is it true? It is also said that turmeric (haldi), if used with lemon juice, is good for the skin. Can I use it to improve my complexion?

Nisha, Hyderabad

Lime juice has a bleaching effect as it contains citric acid. Always use lemon juice diluted with water as it may cause rash on a tender skin. Turmeric has a healing effect and does not whiten them in as such.

26. I am 23 years old and a ft man otherwise. But I suffer from premature greying of hair and my beard also. I have tried many treatments and consulted doctors also. Is there any way to get rid of this problem?

Madav, Vizag

In Ayurveda, premature greying is attributed to excessive pitta. So, in such a case, all the pitta aggravating factors, like anger, anxiety, distress, high spicy diet, oil rich foods should be avoided. Bhrungaragia and Neeli are some herbs for premature greying. They can be processed in the

form of oil and applied followed by a light massage.

27. I am 16 years old and my facial skin is darker when compared to my body. Is it due to exposure to the sun? Please suggest an Ayurvedic cream for my problem.

Arun Kumar, Hyderabad

External application of Mahachandanadi tailam will improve your complexion. Also take internally three spoonfuls each of Sarivadyasav and Mahamanjisthadi kada and mix them with equal quantities of water. Take it twice a day. Sarivadyasav is a blood purifier, while Mahamanisthadi kada improves your complexion. Avoid overexposure to the sun. After all, prevention is better than cure.

28. I am a 20-year-old boy and my hair is falling pretty fast. I have been using Keratex herbal hair oil but it has been of no help. Is there any treatment in Ayurveda?

G Srinivas, Gachi Bowli

A regular conditioning treatment with Bhrungaamalakaadi taila will be helpful. Gently heat it till it feels pleasantly warm. Rub it into your scalp and cover it with a warm towel for 20 minutes. Then wash your hair with shikakai and rinse well. Try scalp massages and inversion yoga postures to increase blood flow.

2. DISEASES OF THE NERVOUS SYSTEM

1. I am a 25-year-old man and I lack concentration and grasping power. As a result, I am poor in studies. Please suggest an Ayurvedic medicine that can improve memory power permanently.

N Shashi Kumar, Hyderabad

Treating problem related to the mind and memory is known as medharasayana chikitsa in Ayurveda. Apart from drugs the Ayurvedic treatise Sushruta Samhita quotes five ways for improving memory 1) Continuous study, 2) Regular discussion, 3) Knowledge of different sciences, 4) Attending discourses and 5) Associating with the teacher.

Commercial preparations available in the market are Brento tablets (Zandu), Braintab (Baidyanath) and Mentat (Himalaya). Take these pills on the advice of a qualified physician.

- 2. My 13-year-old son suffers from lack of normal memory power and concentration which he inherited paternally. Otherwise, he is intelligent. I gave him Shankapushpi for three months about two years ago but there was no improvement in the child's condition. Recently, I read that Memory Plus capsules are effective and do not have side-effects. Is it true? Can you please clarify and suggest a suitable remedy for my problem?**

Sarada, Nallakunta

Before giving your child any medication it is better to consult a clinical psychologist and get IQ test done. It might be that your child may benefit from counselling, so why go in for medication? If, for example, your child remembers all the names of the TV serials but does not remember things from his textbooks, it means that your child will respond to counselling and not medication.

- 3. I am a 35-year-old man having peripheral vascular neuropathy. I suffer from numbness and a burning sensation in my feet and palms. This gets aggravated if I walk in the sun and the burning becomes severe during the night. I have been taking allopathic medicines for the last one year but with no relief. Kindly let me know if it can be cured by any other treatment other than allopathy.**

NZ Hameed, Tarnaka

Take Nagarjunabhararas and Mahavatavidhvanshan ras one tablet each along with 20ml of Arjunarishta after diluting with equal quantities of water, twice a day. Also apply Mahachandanaditaila locally. This will help improve your blood circulation and lessen the pain.

- 4. I am suffering from constant headache. Please suggest an Ayurvedic remedy?**

Lata, Hyderabad

You can try Sirasuladivajra ras, two pills a day, one in the morning and other in the evening. Also take along with it 4 tsp of Pathyadikada. This will reduce pitta (acidity). Also avoid food that triggers headaches, such as cheese and chocolates. You have to take a careful note of things that aggravate your headache.

- 5. I am a 54-year-old woman suffering from pain all over the back, shoulder, collar bone region, neck, hips and ankles. Sometimes there is also numbness in the hands. The painful feeling is more towards the right region. I do not eat spicy food and I exercise regularly. My appetite is also normal. I even underwent tests to detect spondylitic changes in the lumbar spine. The report was normal. Please suggest an Ayurvedic treatment for my problem.**

Ramani, Saflguda

In Ayurveda, all neuro-muscular pains are attributed to the aggravation of vata. Suppression of natural urges, taking food before the digestive process of previous meal, sleeping late at night, speaking with a loud voice, physical exertion, taking pungent, bitter and astringent foods, dry fruits, cold climate and old age are factors that aggravate vata. You can take Mahavatavidhvanshanras, one pill twice daily along with Dashamoolarishta 20ml after diluting with equal quantities of water. Use Mahanarayana taila for massaging the body. Take bath with warm water and eat warm food that's sweet, salty or sour.

- 6. Dr Ch. Murali Manohar's answer to Geetanjali in the Health Queries column is misleading. Karpasthyadi Thailam is an effective medicine for facial paralysis and is commonly prescribed by the Ayurvedic physicians of Kerala. I can quote several references from authentic Ayurvedic books which confirm the use of this thailam in ardhista (facial paralysis) and pakshaghata (paralysis). Since your Health Page is widely read by people interested in Ayurveda, please correct the mistake.**

Dr P Viswanathan, Hyderabad

I re-affirm that Karpasthyadi thailam alone is not the effective treatment

for facial paralysis. The Charaka Samhita has an elaborate line of treatment for this. Apart from oil application there are other measures like nasya (administration of nasal drops), dhoomrapana (inhalation of medicated smoke), upanaha (application of poultice with meat of aquatic animals) and nadi sweda. In addition, there is a need to take anti-vata drugs internally.

3. MISCELLANEOUS PROBLEMS

- 1. I am suffering from cold, running nose and nose blockage since nine years. I have used anti-histamine tablets and antibiotics now and then. Lately, I have gone to an ENT specialist and my case was diagnosed as one of allergic sinusitis. I used Rhinocort spray and also had one sinus punctured. However, after I stopped using the spray, the problem has returned. I request you to tell me if there is a permanent treatment without side-effects for my problem in Ayurvedic medicine.**

Lata M, Sanathnagar

All allergic conditions can be treated with Haridrakhandyog (brihat). Take a spoonful of powder. Mix it in a cup of warm milk and drink it once in the morning on an empty stomach and at night before dinner.

You will also have to take one pill each of Laghusudhasekhararas and Mahalakshmvilasras (shiro) twice a day. Avoid curd, sweet and sour foods and exposure to cold atmosphere. Identify the allergens such as dust, pollen, etc, and avoid contact with them.

- 2. I am suffering from pain in the hips. The X-ray report shows narrowing joint space in both hips. Am I suffering from ankylosing spondylitis or rheumatoid arthritis? Please suggest a suitable Ayurvedic medicine for my problem.**

Krishna, Tarnaka

Both the diseases, you have mentioned, require lifetime management to maintain flexibility and to minimise structural deformity. Your disease seems to be still in the early stages. So regular exercise, swimming and

massage with medicated oils like Mahavishagarbhataila should benefit you. Avoid poor bed and chair posture. A possible trigger for these ailments is bowel infection, so cleansing procedures like Amadoshapachana and Nirharana are advocated. You also need to take Simhanadaguggulu two pills twice daily for maintaining the flexibility and mobility of the hip joints.

3. I am a 14-year-old girl, five feet and six inches tall. My weight is increasing day by day. At present I am 80 kg. I exercise everyday for about 20 to 25 minutes but with no result. Please tell me if there is any treatment in alternative medicine for my problem.

Pooja, Hyderabad

Weight reduction takes a lot of time and effort. For best results, you will have to come for a personal counselling session. You will also have to maintain a food diary and alterations in your daily diet will have to be made according to the kind of exercise you do daily. You will also have to take Medhoharavidangadiloha pills, twice daily and Navakaguggulu, two pills twice a day before meals.

4. I am a young girl of 21 and my height is four feet nine inches and my weight is 50kg. Is my weight in accordance with my height? Can I use Bio-slim herbal tablets which is widely believed to have no side effects?

Deepthi, Secunderabad

Do not imagine that herbal products have no side effects. If the herbal tablets are effective, they should also have side effects. There are many factors like your metabolism and genetic inclination that should be kept in mind before deciding your obesity. It is better if you consult a professional doctor before starting a self medication.

5. I am a 42-year-old married woman with one issue. I suffered from endometriosis and had been operated upon. I am now on Hormone Replacement Therapy. I am 5 feet 1 inch tall and I weigh 66kg. I want to reduce my weight and also get relief from knee pain and fatulence. Kindly suggest an Ayurvedic

remedy and also tell me the shop from where I can procure it.

A Gupta, Trimulgherry

Check out if your weight gain is due to HRT. In your case, Nuvakaguggulu is the appropriate treatment for your obesity and knee pain. Take two pills twice a day after food. For fatulence take Hingwashtakachurna, three grams after mixing with 50ml warm water, twice a day after food. Do not suppress natural urges. Avoid gulping food and gas-producing foods such as cabbage, cauliflower, cucumber, beans, peas, onions, nuts and apples. Get a complete stool examination done to rule out amoebic infection. You can get the above medicines at any Ayurvedic medical store.

6. Both my kidneys are affected and were diagnosed as having stones in them. How can I get rid of them without surgery. Please suggest an Ayurvedic solution.

Suresh, Narayanaguda

Treatment generally has three purposes. Preventing new stones from developing; keeping existing stones from growing larger and dissolving stones that threaten to damage the kidneys. A blood test may reveal the chemical make-up of the stones. If calcium is the culprit, you have to cut down calcium or mineral supplements or foods with high calcium contents such as dairy products. If excess uric acid is the problem, you have to modify your diet to reduce protein foods. Barks of henna, varuna, the leaves and seeds of radish, decoction of horsegram are described as lithotriptic drugs in Ayurveda.

7. I am a 27-year-old man. I eat about two to three bananas a day as I like them a lot. Some of my friends say that eating them daily causes vata. Is it true?

PS Reddy, Ashoknagar

According to the Bhavaprakasa, banana brings down aggravated pitta and vata. It increases the alkalinity of the blood and hence can cure acidosis which is caused by acidic diets. The ripe fruit is also a good laxative. A fruit per day is sufficient. Taking anything in excess is bad.

8. I am a 65-year-old man. I am active mentally and physically enjoying good health. Every morning I have a brisk walk for 70 minutes. I want to be active for the next 25 years. I heard that there are nutrient supplements and herbs in Ayurveda for aged men to ward off age-related ailments and keep them healthy. Please advise.

PN Rao, Naryanaguda

The Sushruta Samhita classifies old age under the category of diseases of physiological origin.

Vayasthapana (literally, stabilisation of age) is the specific mode of therapy for problems related to old age and for preventing early aging. It includes Ayurvedic rasayana therapy, purification therapies like panchakarma and drugs like amalakirasayana and ashwagandhalehya. Also, take plenty of water, milk, honey and ghee which have anti-aging properties.

9. I am a 27-year-old woman and though I am underweight, I feel perfectly healthy. My height is 156 cm and my weight is around 43.5kg. The problem is my breast size is very small. I have come across a few health columns in magazines, wherein it was stated that the breast size can be increased by Ayurvedic medicine. Please prescribe suitable Ayurvedic medicine for breast development.

Meghna, Hyderabad

Hormonal imbalance, congenital defect, deficient diet or wearing tight brassiers during the growing stage can result in small-sized breasts. Since there are no muscles in the breast and they are held up by the pectoral muscles of the chest, swimming is an ideal exercise for developing these muscles. If you cannot swim, just mimicking the strokes while standing, will suffice.

You can also bathe the breasts in hot and cold water alternatively for four to five times daily, to increase the blood circulation in the breasts.

Since you are underweight, an increase in body weight may also increase

the size of the breasts as the breast is made up of fatty tissues. For this, Amruthaprashagritham and Ashwagandhadigritham are ideal.

Nourishing oils prepared from ashwagandha, balamoola, cow's milk and til oil can be used to massage the breasts.

The strokes should be in the upward direction towards the neck. Gentle but firm circular motions are essential for good results.

10. I am an 18-year-old boy suffering from *swapnadosh* for the last two years. Can you suggest an Ayurvedic medicine for my problem?

Vimal, Hyderabad

It is not clear what you mean by *swapnadosh*. Is it nocturnal emissions or bad dreams? In both cases, the problem is due to *vataprakopa*. The treatment varies from individual to individual.

