

Ayurveda 101

According to Ayurveda , the body is made up of the following which come into existence due to the five elements:

1. **Tissues or dhatus** – physical constituents such as flesh, blood, bones etc.
2. **Waste products or malas** –the polluted part of the body which needs to be thrown away such as urine, excreta, pus, semen etc.
3. **Universal energetic forces or doshas** – defects i.e. when these are in normal balance in the body this helps in growth and sustenance but an imbalance in this causes disease.

Tridoshas are energetic forces in the universe which influence nature and human beings. Our body comprises of these Tridoshas which are responsible for creation of new tissues and removal of waste tissues in the body.

Tridoshas also influence all movements, sensory functions, and almost all other functions of the human body. In a natural state these Tridoshas are responsible for wellness and good health of the body but as an imbalance is created they become defects and hence are called doshas which means defect in Sanskrit.

Tridoshas ie. Three doshas are

1. Vata dosha
2. Pitta dosha
3. Kapha dosha

Vata dosha

Is the most important of the three and is responsible for the movement of the body. Long term imbalance of vata dosha creates imbalance in the other two doshas as well. An imbalance in all the three doshas becomes very difficult to cure . The functions of the vata dosha is

Digestive systems and Excretions of the body: fetus, semen, feces, urine, sweat, pus etc.

- Physical movements and processes inside the body such as respiration.
- Contraction of muscles
- Nervous system such as transportation of sensory input from the five sense organs to the brain.(eyes, tongue, skin, ears and nose)

Pitta dosha

The Pitta dosha is responsible for all transformations in the body such as

- Metabolism and digestion
- Transformation of food to waste material
- Maintaining the body temperature
- Vision
- Appetite and thirst
- Thinking ability , reasoning and judgment
- Skin texture
- Certain emotional factors

Kapha dosha

This is responsible for

- The bone structure of the body.
- Strength to perform physical activities
- Lubrication in the internal body to avoid friction between the various parts.
- Stability and sturdiness of the mind and body.
- Mass and structure
- Fertility and reproduction

Any disease is diagnosed keeping these three doshas in mind. It is important to find out the imbalance created in the body. Once this is known the Ayurvedic treatment is undergone which comprises of intake of certain food products and natural herbs.

The treatment also constitutes of major lifestyle changes, exercise routines,etc.All factors which influence the human body, physical or emotional are considered and each person is prescribed according to his lifestyle and nature to be in complete coordination with himself and the universe.

Ayurveda cures and ailments

According to ayurveda, arthritis is primarily a vata (air) disease which is due to accumulation of toxins in the joints and is known as amavata.If untreated it causes deformity of the limbs and affects the heart. It is caused by both internal and external conditions. Internally it is a condition created due to low agni or poor digestion causing accumulation of toxins (ama) produced in the colon get deposited in the various parts of the body, causing different diseases. For example, if it deposits in the lungs, it causes cough and asthma, in the intestines it causes dysentery. When it deposits in the joints and at the same time there is aggravation

of vata (biological air) which relates to external factors as well such as cold , damp or windy climate, results in a disease called amavata or arthritis . This causes inflammation, swelling and pain of the joint, causing reduced joint movement. Lack of movement further causes stiffness and deformity. Usual complaints of arthritis are loss of appetite, body ache, excessive thirst, constipation, excessive urination and joint stiffness.

Remedies as per ayurveda

Since it is primarily due to imbalance in body fire and air, these are treated. Which can be done by firstly by burning up the toxins by reviving the digestive fire.. Changing of eating habits is beneficial be Persons suffering from rheumatic arthritis are usually constipated and have poor digestive power

Regulation of diet

Treatment starts by total fasting for some time or have extremely light food. Reduce consumption of vegetable oils and increase the intake of oils rich in omega three fatty acids. Except castor oil Castor oil has a purgative effect and is not absorbed by the body Oil of wintergreen and oil of rosemary are useful.

Food items to be avoided:

- 1) Avoid sour things such as tamarind, tomatoes, pickles and curd.
- 2) Avoid Rice, okra and potatoes.
- 3) Avoid eating hot, spicy and fried foods, sweets and honey.
- 4) Avoid wind forming foods like cabbage, cauliflower, spinach, broccoli..
- 5) Avoid too much tea, coffee, alcohol, white sugar, yogurt, chocolate and cocoa, excessive smoking.

Food items to consume

- 1) Consume plenty of garlic, ginger, bitter gourd and drumsticks.
- 2) Bajra rotis Moong dal and green leafy vegetables are useful
- 3) Raw juices made from Alfa, beet root, carrots, celery cucumber and parsley
- 4) Fresh pineapple contains bromelain, an enzyme that has significant anti-inflammatory properties
- 5) Two walnuts should be chewed properly empty stomach in winters for fifteen days
- 6) Juices of carrot, beet root and cucumber mixed together is also beneficial

- 7) Green salad with a dressing of lemon juice and a little salt is also good.
- 8) Fruits like apples, oranges, grapes and papaya can be taken. Cooked vegetables like squash, zucchini and pumpkin are good
- 9) Cooking with spices like cumin, coriander, ginger, asafetida, garlic, fennel and turmeric is also helps a lot.
- 10) Taking 2gm turmeric powder twice a day along with warm water or basil juice. would help One to two garlic cloves swallowed with warm water an hour before breakfast provide heat and lubrication to the joints.
- 11) Baked and Mashed egg plants fried in Castor oil can be taken once daily for three months. Add some spices like cumin, coriander, turmeric and salt and two cloves of garlic while cooking
- 12) Using Hot spicy herbs cayenne, cinnamon, dry ginger and galangal is beneficial
- 13) Vegetable juices and soups are good.

Other remedies

- 1) Medicated oils used for massage are very helpful in relieving stiffness and pain in the joints, whole body massage with sesame or mustard oil helps to reduce the vata and thus reduce the pain.
- 2) Camphor, wintergreen and cinnamon oils are beneficial for external application.
- 3) Some sort of easy exercise and walk is also beneficial as joints should not be immobilized.
- 4) Along with oral medications, local use of a hot bag of sand or rock salt for fomentation is advised. Sauna baths are also helpful in relieving the pain of arthritis.
- 5) Hot gemstones such as ruby or garnet set in gold can be worn .
- 6) Sleeping during day time, staying up late in the night and mental tensions like worry, anxiety, fear, stress and grief etc., should be given up.

Yoga and Ayurveda

Since ages Ayurveda and Yoga have been treated as one complete entity for healing purposes related to mind, body and consciousness. Though Ayurveda is related to treating the body whereas Yoga deals with purifying mind and consciousness hence they are complementary to each other . If health is ignored then it becomes a barrier towards spiritual practice so good health is essential towards self realization. They both are based on same foundation as a lot many similarities can be found in the systems that are related to, diet, nutrition, attitude , exercise, cleansing and hygiene along with spiritual practices.

Ayurveda can help modern yoga practitioners to set up a healthy daily routine and regulate their practice according to the dosha, imbalance, constitution to prevent and promote longevity.

The common similarities are:

- ☒ Both have originated from ancient Vedic teachings. Yoga originated from Yajur Veda where as Ayurveda originated from Atharva veda and Rig veda.
- ☒ Both are familiar with healthy body is essential for the fulfillment of the four aims in life: Dharma (duty), Artha (wealth), Kama (desire), and Moksha(liberation).
- ☒ Both give a lot of importance to the balance of doshas (humors), dhatus (tissues) and Malas(waste products) for leading good life.
- ☒ Both support the usage of herbs, asanas, pranayama, meditation, prayer and rituals for healing purposes.
- ☒ In both systems, Physical health is necessary for mental, spiritual and social well being..
- ☒ Both use cleansing methods for the detoxification of the body through natural routes of elimination. For this purpose Ayurveda uses Panchkarma and Yoga uses Shatkarma

General recommendations of asanas for prominent Doshas:

Persons suffering from Vata:

They should concentrate on exercises for calming grounding, stillness, strengthening, and balancing asanas.

Precautions:

- ☒ Efforts should be made to make asanas more vata pacifying by avoiding quick movements between asanas.
- ☒ Back bends should be done slowly and carefully without exceeding the limits.

Persons suffering from pitta:

They should focus on calm cool and relaxed positions while doing asanas.

It is advisable to practice asanas at cooler time of the day and should pay attention to positions that help release additional heat from the body.

Persons suffering from Kapha:

They should practice asanas that makes them feel energetic, warming, lightening, and stimulating. These asanas are good for kapha as it induces sweating and gets the heart pumping.

Meditation

Meditation is interaction of mind with the subtle body which in turn interacts with the physical body. It is a state where your thoughts disappear and your mind becomes calm and quiet. It is a universal experimental discipline by humans to gain perfection of the mind and the body. Meditation is neither withdrawal nor seclusion but it is total awareness of the surroundings and things going with in.

A healthy mind can reside only in a healthy body so any kind of malfunction in the body can be hindrance to the path. So healing is an important aspect of meditation as assistance of the healing power of the mind is required effectively remove the obstacles in the form of diseases. The additional benefits provided by Meditation are numerous. It helps to reduce blood pressure and stress levels. It also gives you an opportunity to live happy and contented life and gives you the strength to face difficulties and setbacks in life.

Alpha brainwaves are enhanced by meditation. These brainwaves are used in problem solving and in creativity. This will provide you many benefits in professional as well as personal life.

How to meditate

Though meditation cannot be explained it is an experience that can only be felt.

The steps given below are for beginners who wish to learn meditation

- Place yourself in a comfortable posture.
- The hands should be kept loose and open with palms up , one on top of the other and lightly touching thumbs.
- Avoid slouching or drooping position as head should be placed in an upright manner. Eyes may be open or closed. If they are open then focus them on your hands or a nearby spot.
- Beginning mediators should count upwards to ten on each exhale. Breathe in a relaxed and natural way. Then begin again at one and repeat. Continue to breathe normally.
- Continue to breathe in this manner for 15 minutes.

So the benefits of meditation are immense .They include more energy and vitality, better quality of sleep, lessened chronological aging, reduced stress level, increased alertness and heightened immunity.