

SPOTLIGHT ON AYURVEDA

YOGA'S SISTER SCIENCE

BEAT THE BLUES, NATURALLY

Using holistic and Ayurvedic remedies to fight stress and counter ageing

Ayurvedic medicine, often hailed as a sister science to yoga, can play a tremendous role in negating the damaging effects of stress, one of modern society's big killers.

Stress is a known major contributory factor in many disease processes affecting us, from heart disease and cancer to anxiety, depression, addictions, sleep and relationship problems, degeneration and cellular ageing.

And it is all backed up by hard science. Stress appears to influence the rate of telomere shortening, which is now being recognised as an important indicator or marker of the ageing process. Telomeres are microscopic caps that protect the ends of our chromosomes. These little collections of DNA are involved in a vitally important process of cellular division that helps our bodies to function normally.

Each time a cell divides, we lose a portion of this telomere cap, which in turn, becomes shorter. When the telomere shortening reaches a certain critical length, cell division ceases. Whilst the cell remains alive it can't renew itself and the ability to function slows or ends

completely. These effects of shortened telomeres are known to cause diseases normally associated with ageing.

Stress management

As a result, scientists have been looking for ways to prevent telomeres from shrinking. So far, the best results appear to be through lifestyle changes, and at the top of this list, is stress management. More stress means shorter telomeres, which in turn creates less effective cells throughout the body. Simply put, cells become old before their time as a result of repeated bouts of unmanaged stress.

It's a major problem for us all in today's busy world, says Thomas Mueller, a qualified ayurveda practitioner who runs *Ayuwave* (ayuwave.com), a clinic in London's Harley Street.

But the answers can be surprisingly simple, he reckons. "Stress management techniques range from recreation and exercise to meditation, yoga and breathing practices," he says. "Clearly, changing one's perspective via meditation, yoga and breathing practices is an important consideration to reversing the ageing process."

