

SPOTLIGHT ON
AYURVEDA
YOGA'S SISTER SCIENCE

PAIN-FREE, NATURALLY

Aches, pains and inflammation: the ayurvedic approach. By Anne Heigham



Painkillers and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs are kept in handbags, desk draws and kitchen cupboards demonstrating how much as a population we suffer from pain and inflammation. Research experts Mintel reported in 2008 that analgesics were used by 80% of the population, with one in six people keeping a supply with them at all times. According to the same report, the analgesic market was worth £632 million.

An ayurvedic approach to life could help to change the way pain is dealt with. Ayurveda is a well-respected and ancient healthcare system that focuses on prevention in the first instance and then regaining the body's constitutional balance through pacification and detoxification methods.

There are numerous techniques available for dealing with pain, aches and swelling by treating both internally and externally, ultimately restoring the body's constitutional balance.

One of the main issues with regular consumption of painkillers (analgesics/non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) is their effect on the liver and inner lining of the gut, particularly with prolonged usage. Over-riding this is a deeper concern that by simply masking the symptoms and not dealing with the underlying causes we are storing up greater imbalances for the future and therefore, potentially more serious health conditions.

Balancing act

Negating our necessity for analgesics requires from an ayurvedic perspective a multi-pronged approach and relies upon us leading balanced lifestyles fuelling our bodies and souls correctly.

In times when this does not happen as it should, there are many solutions within ayurveda to help cleanse the body and alleviate the causative factors behind the pain and swelling. For example, there are special diets and laxative type preparations that can be used to gently cleanse the body. There are also specialist massage techniques and heat therapies which can be used to similar effect. A balanced diet and lifestyle are at the heart of ayurveda and by making adjustments to these two elements many pain emitting conditions can be relieved.

However, even following a good diet and routine we are exposed to different emotional, environmental and lifestyle factors that can cause a disturbance in our doshic balance (homeostasis), or we may have accumulated/inherited a sizeable imbalance over the course of time.

When we come to realise we are out of balance and we feel ready to try another approach to our health and wellbeing, then we may find ayurvedic routines, herbs, spices and body therapies useful in returning us to a state of balanced health.

Holistic health

Ayurveda offers a more comprehensive healthcare system than other health modalities. I find that when I am treating clients who are presenting with some form of ache, pain and/or inflammation that I have many different tools at my disposal with which to help the client.

The causes of aches, pain and inflammation can be very diverse. The symptoms and modern diagnosis in two different cases can be identical but the underlying causes can be vastly different.

Ayurveda is blessed with having a range of body therapies as well as internal treatments at its disposal meaning that it can provide a very comprehensive approach. In some senses it can be similar to visiting a herbalist, nutritionist, body therapist, healer, counsellor and physiotherapist all in one.

One of the other great benefits of ayurveda is it is a very logical and educational science. This means we can explain through the logic of ayurveda to clients where their ailments are coming from. Once a client understands where problems stem from this can have a very positive impact in their healing process.

CURES FROM THE CUPBOARD

Here are a few ordinary kitchen ingredients that can be used to treat pain and inflammation

Turmeric

Turmeric is known as *haridra* in Sanskrit and translates to mean yellow and is known as 'the one that improves skin complexion'. It is a multi-purpose healing spice that can be used both internally and externally acting as a superb natural anti-inflammatory, analgesic remedy and pacifier for all three doshas; *vata*, *pitta* and *kapha* (three different classifications of human constitution). Internally, turmeric can be used for a wide range of ailments, for example, as a gargle for sore throats or as an infusion for inflammation surrounding joints and tendons. Externally, turmeric can be combined with lemons and used to make poultices, which are then dipped into heated oil and used to massage painful joints to alleviate both pain and swelling.

Ginger

Ginger is another wonderful spice, which can be used for pain relief. Externally, it is superb at reducing swelling particularly in rheumatoid arthritis and painful conditions where sensitivity to cold is apparent. The powdered form can be made into a paste and locally applied. It can also be taken internally; it purifies the blood, acts as an anti-inflammatory, stimulates the nerves and relieves pain.

Coconut water

Coconut water, which is now widely available in supermarkets, is a wonderful antidote to a hangover and the associated pain. Coconut water rebalances electrolytes, re-hydrates and gently cleanses toxins out of the body. From an ayurvedic perspective it brings down excess heat in the body, which alcohol causes a dramatic increase in. This excess heat can, from an ayurvedic perspective, cause headaches and nausea.



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