

Detoxification and aama

Detoxification is very important in Aayurveda. Health or disease is determined by the proper functioning of the metabolism, which includes digestion, absorption, and elimination. When metabolism breaks down at any level food is not properly digested and undigested food particles called aama remain in the body. Aama is a toxic, foul-smelling, sticky substance which obstructs the proper functioning of the tissues and organs it effects and causes dis-ease in the body. It is important for effective treatment to determine not only if which doShas are effected, but also whether aama is present. When aama is present along with doShic imbalance this condition is called saama doSha or specifically saama vaata, saama pitta saama kapha. When there is doShic imbalance but no accumulation of toxins this is known as niraama doSha. There are many herbs used to detoxify the various organs, dhaatus, and srotamsi.

Aama and agni

For reducing aama it is important for the digestion to be balanced. When digestion, absorption, and elimination are normal it is impossible for aama to accumulate. The same herbs which increase digestion for the various doShas may also be used for eliminating aama because they help to process the undigested toxins which allows the body to send the doShas to the proper channels of elimination (most often the anna vaha srotas). It is necessary to have knowledge of digestion and which doShas are effected to prescribe herbs with the proper qualities.

Saama agni

Normal digestion is called sama agni (balanced metabolism). It is indicated by normal appetite and elimination. There is no gas, distention, or pain when food is taken. When there is sama agni (balanced digestion), it is not possible for aama to accumulate in the body. The body will be light, strong, healthy, free from pain and mental disturbance. This is the ideal state of health which is achieved by eating doshic specific foods to balance the doShas.

Vishama agni

When the digestion is disturbed by a vaata imbalance this condition is called vishama agni (irregular digestion).

Signs, Symptoms, and Causes

The appetite will be irregular; sometimes there will be no appetite for long periods and other times the hunger will be unbearable. Gas, bloating, distention, colic, pain, dry skin, low BP, cracking joints, muscle spasms, general pain, fear, insecurity, and anxiety may result. These people often crave meat or other high protein foods, which are heavy to digest and increase the condition of vishama agni. This condition comes from eating too little or eating irregularly and from eating those foods which aggravate vaata doSha.

Food Remedies

It is important to eat warm, nourishing foods regularly, with mild digestive spices. Eating every three to five hours for a total of three or four small meals per day is ideal. Eating regularly at precise times helps balance the irregularity of vaata and trains the body to develop hunger at regular times which helps vaata absorb the nutrients. The best foods for this condition are nourishing grains, root vegetables, squashes, organic dairy, nuts, and oils cooked and served warm with mild digestive spices. Astringent, bitter, and excessively pungent foods should be avoided. Beans and legumes should be avoided (except mung dal, urid dal, adzuki, and tempe. Beans can be made more digestible by cooking very well and adding oil or ghee and digestive spices like, hing, ajawan, cumin, and black salt, lemon juice, and black pepper. Light and gas producing veggies like the members of the cabbage family: cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower etc should be avoided. They may be made more digestible in the same ways as legumes. Most fruits are light and dry and will aggravate this condition. Apple, pears, peaches, plums, in particular can be very agitating due to their light and dry qualities. Fruits are best cooked with some ghee and mild spices like cinnamon, cardamom, fresh ginger, nutmeg, and served warm. Bananas, mangos, papaya, kiwi, and blueberries are slightly less aggravating and may be taken in small quantities raw but still may require some spice like cardamom to assist digestion. Milk is very heavy and can be good for this condition if digested. It should be boiled with spices like tea maasala. Cooked onions are very good for this condition (though pungent garlic and raw onion may increase it).

Spices and Herbal Remedies

Spices like hing, ajawan, black salt, lemon or lime, cumin, turmeric, fennel, cinnamon, cardamom, fresh ginger, black pepper and thyme. Almost all spices are good for this condition with the exception of an excess of very pungent spices like dry ginger, pepper, chili peppers, mustard, or horseradish.

The presence of vaata doSha in the body is most often associated with conditions of deficiency. When there is extreme deficiency, this often causes anxiety which leads to indigestion and saama vaata. A good example of this is when the kidneys are weak. For such conditions rasaayana or tonic therapy is a very important therapy for reducing vaata. Even in the case of saama vaata it is usually very helpful to take some small quantity of rasaayana herbs to help balance the mind and nerves and strengthen the tissues of the body. It is important for vaata to have a combination of strengthening foods and herbs and warm digestive herbs. The best tonic for vaata in general is ashvagandha. It soothes the nerves, mind, and all seven dhaatus. Other warm tonics like can be useful. Cooling tonics like shataavari, musali (white and black), bala, dang quai, solomon's seal, marshmallow, comfrey root, can be helpful if taken with plenty of warm spices like cloves, cinnamon, cardamom, fresh ginger etc. to help balance their cooling properties. Most tonic herbs are nourishing for vaata but heavy too digest. This is why a combination of tonics (rasaayanas) and carminative (dipanas) herbs are proscribed for vaata imbalances. When there is a saama vaata condition it becomes doubly important to

take tonic herbs with digestive stimulants. The digestive spices listed above are excellent with hing being one of the best herbs for increasing digestion for vaata. Herbs which soothe the mind and nerves and reduce the anxiety typical for vaata are useful. Many of the herbs help to reduce ungroundedness and to protect from spiritual influences. The best herbs are ashvagandha, shataavari, yaShTi madhu, jaTAmAMsI, shaMkhapuShpi, vaca, brahmi, haritaki, and kuShTha. Herbs with special sedative qualities can be helpful to reduce anxiety and insomnia. The best aayurvedic herb for longterm use, because it is not habit forming and does not lead to dullness of the mind like stronger sedative herbs like tagar / valerian, is jaTAmAMsI. Ashvagnadha is also very useful in this regard. Other herbs with sedative qualities are brahmi, chamomile, linden flowers, lavender, shaMkhapuShpi and JaTi phala (nutmeg). In severe cases when these weaker herbs are not effective stronger sedative herbs like tagar may be used. The use of this herb should be limited though because its has a long term effect of dulling the mind. For a sedative it is usually effective to take some warm boiled milk with nutmeg powder an hour before bedtime. A good general sedative blend can be made from 3 parts brahmi, and 1 part each: ashvagandha, jaTAmAMsI, shaMkhapuShpi, and jaTiphala. Herbs that reduce pain of the body and nerves may also be useful along with herbs that strengthen and hydrate the colon, the seat of vaata. Mild treatments which are taken regularly and strengthen the bodies natural function will lead to the balance needed to restore the bodies proper functions.

Specific Herbal Formulas

The best herb for this condition is hingvaShTak chuurNa which can be taken before meals to increase digestion and / or after meals to increase digestion in the amount of ¼ tsp. When digestion is very weak and variable chitrakaadi bati may be helpful. The many herbal wines are also very useful for vishama agni and the pains and nervous conditions that arise from this condition. Best are abhayaariShTham, jirakaariShTham, dashamuulaariShTham, draakShaariShTham, and pippalyaasavam.

For tonification preparations of ashvagandha like ashvagandha cuurNa, or dhaatupauShTik cuurNa may be taken along with digestive spices like cinnamon or fresh ginger. AshvagandaariShTham, sarasvat cuurNa are even better because they combine tonic herbs with digestive herbs. Other useful formulas for tonification are draakShaariShTham, dashamuulaariShTham, and the herbal jams in particular like chyavana prash or brahmii rasaayanam. For tonification basmas of gold, pearl, red coral, yellow sapphire are extremely potent. For the mind preparations of brahmi and ashvagandha with digestive spices like nutmeg or vaca or kuShTha are useful. Brahmii bati and brahmi rasaayana are useful. For nerve pain and general pain mahaa yogaraaja guggulu is very helpful. For elimination from the colon mild tonic herbs may be used like triphala 1 tsp made into tea taken with ghee and honey or chyavana prash taken with boiled milk. When there is extreme dryness in the colon, sat isobgul (psyllium) may be helpful. Dashamuula is another formula which can be helpful to tonify the colon and to reduce pain.

Lifestyle Remedies

Spiritual Remedies

Aasana

Aasana practice for vaata should be gentle and calming. Active postures like suurya namaskaaram or kriyas should be avoided or practiced lightly, slowly, and carefully with the guidance of a qualified aayurvedic yoga instructor. They should not rush into aasana practice, but take time to calm their minds first. They should practice aasanas slowly, and gently with emphasis on consciously feeling the poses. They should work to slow and deepen the breath by calming the mind. They should avoid quick movements, overextension, and over working the muscles. Sitting poses (like daNDaasana, siddhaasana, padmaasana, sukhaasana, and vajraasana), spinal twists (like matyendraasana, jathara pari vartaasana), forward bends (like pashchimotanaasana, or upaviShTha konaasana) gentle back bends (like bhujangaasana, or), and grounding standing poses are excellent (like tadaasana or vR^ikShaasana). Active and aggressive poses like most of the inverted poses should be avoided or practiced with great care and restraint. All poses should be followed by relaxing laying poses. In general exercise should be mild and easy. Gentle walking is the best exercise (though light swimming, dancing, or biking could be done also), and it should be done just until perspiration begins. For vaata rest is equally (if not) more important than exercise. An exercise routine or yoga practice should be followed by relaxation techniques like shavaasanam or sitting meditation. This practice this should be done for at least 15 minutes for ideal results.

prANAyAma

Ujjayi PraaNaayaama is warming and grounding. It is very good for vaata and vishama agni. This can be preformed in short increments with or without the addition of so ham praaNayaama. Anuloma viloma (alternate nostril breathing) is very balancing and warming and can help reduce vaata and vishama agni. PrANAyAma practice for balancing should be easy, non-forceful, regular and brief. Forceful or excessive prANAyAma practice is one of the easiest ways to aggravate vaata and therefore it should be practice with great caution and only under the direct guidance of a qualified teacher.

Mantra

Gemstones

tikShna agni (Sharp / Pitta Digestion)

When excess pitta effects the digestion the condition is called tikShna agni (sharp digestion). In this case the appetite is always strong. There may be heart burn, acid indigestion, diarrhea, fever, nausea, vomiting, rashes, acne, irritability, hypertension,

aggressiveness, and sharp temper. This condition often leads to hypoglycemia and can make a person feel shaky, dizzy, weak, and anxious if food is not taken regularly. It is caused by eating foods which are too hot, pungent, sour, salty, oily, or fried. It is aggravated by eating too quickly and also by stimulant drugs like caffeine (especially black coffee) and nicotine, and also by alcohol.

Remedies for tikShNa agni

Food remedies

It is cured by eating foods which are cool, cooling in energy and nourishing. In general fruits, grains, legumes, fresh dairy and vegetables are good. Fresh or cooked fruits are cooling and may be taken apart from other foods. Pineapple, citrus fruits, banana, mango (especially when unripe), and papaya (especially unripe) are heating and should be avoided. Most grains are sweet, nourishing and cooling and can be very useful as the basis of the diet. Rice, wheat, barley, and oats are particularly helpful. Certain grains like corn, millet, rye, and buckwheat are heating and should be reduced. Legumes are very helpful due to their astringent qualities. Most legumes are cooling. Heating legumes like urid and fermented bean products like tempe should be taken only in moderation. Fresh milk, cream, cheeses (like paneer, cottage cheese, or fresh mozzarella) are very nourishing and cooling; they are good to help reduce acid and cool tikShNa agni. Aged and fermented dairy products like yogurt, American buttermilk, sour cream, and most cheeses will aggravate this condition. Most vegetables are excellent for this condition. They should be cooked with very mild spices and taken liberally. The nightshade family potato, tomato, eggplant, bell pepper, and chili pepper should be avoided due to their heating qualities as should pungent vegetables like radish, onion, garlic, and horse radish. In general pungent, salty, and sour foods should be reduced. Oils, nuts, red meat, sour foods, fermented foods like yogurt, vinegar, alcohol, chili sauces, and soy sauces. Most herbs and spices are very pungent and will increase this condition in excess. Very spicy spices like mustard, garlic, chilis, black pepper, dry ginger, etc should be strictly limited.

Spices and herbal remedies

Mild digestive herbs which do not increase agni but aid in absorption in the liver and small intestine can be useful like turmeric, cumin, coriander, fennel, cilantro, rose petal or water, mint, poppy seeds, lavender, vanilla, and saffron. Some mildly pungent carminative spices like nutmeg, cardamom, cinnamon, bay leaf, or aniseed may be used in small quantities to help digest heavier foods like dairy, root veggies, etc. Refrigerant herbs like cilantro, cucumber, coconut, coriander, fennel, ushiira, rose may be helpful to soothe the digestive fire. Antacid herbs like cilantro, milk, aamalaki, licorice, shataavari may be used to counter acid. It should be noted that certain cooling foods may reduce acid but increase aama. Milk, coconut, shataavari, and licorice should be used with caution in cases of high aama. Antacids like rose, cilantro, coriander, and aamalaki should be used instead for their power to reduce acid while decreasing aama. Bitter herbs which cleanse the liver (brahmi, neem, bitter greens, dandelion roots and greens,

mahaasudarshana chuurNa, etc) and herbs which strengthen absorption in the small intestine (see the section on grahani roga below) may also be useful.

Specific herbal formulas

The best herbs for this condition are avipattikar chuurNa which is the best digestion blend for pitta and tikShNa agni. For elimination and absorption Triphala is good. For liver metabolism and elimination ghR^ita kumaarii is good. For cleansing the liver mahaasudarshana chuurNa is best or kutajaariShThaa. Also good are herbal ghees like brahmi ghee or tikta ghR^ita or triphalaadi ghR^ita For diarrhea and absorption in the small intestine jaTiphalaadi chuurNa is good as are certain herbal wines like muShTakaariShThaam or kumaaryaasava. For mental factors of over-active mind brahmi can be useful. Brahmi rasaayanam or brahmi bati is good taken with milk or ghee. Herbs that calm and cool the mind like brahmi, madhuka parNi, ginko leaves, skullcap, rose, chandan (or ushiira) lavender, shankhapushpi, yaShTi madhu, shataavari, sveta musali, and jaTAmAMsI are helpful. JaTAmAMsI, shankhapushpi, and brahmi are the best for calming and cooling the mind.

Lifestyle Remedies

Spiritual Remedies

Manda agni

When kapha vitiation effects the digestion the resulting condition is known as mada agni (or slow digestion). It is characterized by slow / weak digestion but constant appetite. This condition may cause extra weight or obesity and abdominal heaviness. It is also possible for there to be colds, congestion, cough, nausea, vomit (with mucus), edema, weakness hyperglycemia, allergies, hypertension, attachment, greed, lethargy, boredom, depression. This condition is caused by eating too much, too frequently, too slowly, and by eating the heavy and cooling foods that aggravate kapha doSha. Lighter meals of fruits, fresh vegetables and legumes and whole grains should be taken cooked well with pungent carminative herbs to help stimulate digestion. Meat and dairy in particular should be avoided. It is too heavy to digestion and dairy is very cold and mucous-forming. Goat's milk may be substituted for cow's milk because it is warm and slightly sour. Or soy milk or rice milk may be used; though they are cold and heavy, they can be less aggravating than cow's milk. Any of these milks should be boiled with digestive spices like ginger, thyme, mustard, pippali, black pepper, cardamom, cinnamon, cloves, turmeric, hing, or bay leaf. Heavy, oil, sweet foods like sugar, butter, dairy, and sweets in particular should be avoided. Ice cream, cakes, pastries, cookies, brownies, pies, laddus, candy bars, and other confections should be avoided. Foods should be taken warm in small but nourishing quantities. Meals should be reduced to two times per day and snacking should be avoided. Aerobic exercise is very good for getting the digestions, body, and mind moving. The best herbs for manda agni are trikaTu the three pungent herbs which are the best blend for stimulating agni. hingvaShTaka chuurNa and chitrakaadi bati may also be used for stimulating digestion. Herbal wines can be taken

very warm like jirakaariShTham, draakShariShTham, vidangaariShTham, or pippalyaasva. Herbs for clearing accumulated toxins like guggulu are excellent due to the excess of aama. Triphala guggulu may be used for reducing aama and excess weight. For high blood sugar and diabetes gokShuraadi guggulu or amR^itaadi guggulu may be used along with specific herbs for sugar like neem, turmeric, gurmar, cinnamon and shilajeet. Herbs that stimulate the mind while maintaining sattva are excellent like brahmi, madhuka parNi, skull cap, (these three are somewhat cooling and should be balanced with warmer herbs like) jyotishmati, vaca, kuShTha, st john's wort, pippali, bibhetaki, and ginger. Herbs that clear the lungs like puShkarmuul, pippali, vaca, vaasa, and thyme are helpful chavana prasha or vaasaavaleha can be taken with tea made from betel leaves or fresh ginger. Or ½ tsp sitopalaadi chuurNa or taliisaadi chuurNa may be taken with honey. For high blood pressure and heart conditions arjun is the best herb. ArjunaariShTham can be taken warm before meals (triphalaadi guggulu is also good). For toxins and congestion in the liver and gallbladder and excess of mucus and oil, mahaasudarshana chuurNa may be taken with honey or very warm water with lemon juice.

Food's and aama

Dairy and aama

Grahani roga

triphala (tea with one teaspoon taken in the morning). For kapha where deep detoxification is needed to reduce ama and meda dhaatu triphalaadi guggulu is good. For vaata chyavana prasha may be better because it has more tonic action but contains aamalaki which is one of the three fruits in triphala.

GhR^ita kumaarii (aloe) gel (1 tsp gel mixed with 1/8 tsp of shunti and haridraa) This is good for the liver and cleanses the GI tract. It is also very good for cleanses the artava vaha srotas. It is one of the best cleansers for pitta.

For liver detoxification mahaasudarshana (1/4 – ½ tsp before meals with cool water) is good or kutaj arishtha (1 tsp before meals). Brahmi detoxifies the liver on a subtle level releasing repressed emotions, spiritual conditions, and deep seated toxins. Brahmi is very good for releasing repressed emotions and especially calming the fiery pitta emotions. For this purpose brahmi bati is excellent. Or a mixture of 4 p brahmi, and 1 part each: ashvagandha, shankha pushpi, vaca, and jatAmAMsI could be used. Or brahmi Rasaayana listed bellow.

For detoxification from narcotics or the allopathic drugs used to treat mental illness brahmi rasaayana is good because tonification of the damaged nerves is needed. Many times anxiety is caused by high vaata and deficiency in the body. It is important in these cases to not overdo reduction therapies. These conditions often lead to dryness and

constipation. Laxative and other reducing therapies will actually aggravate these conditions. Gentle tonification will often help in this case. It is very important in cases of mental illness and addiction (because the mind is subtle like vaata) to avoid strong cleansing actions which will aggravate the doShas.