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Do not scoff that cough

Respiratory problems are the most encountered illness and there may be hardly any person who has not suffered from respiratory problems in his lifetime. Although there is no clear mention of chemicals or gases involved in the act of respiration, Ayurveda has described respiration very poetically and metaphorically. It reiterates the significance of respiration to sustenance of life forms.



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What you see depends on your standpoint

It is difficult to correlate Ayurveda's understanding of the working of the respiratory system with the modern day understanding of the subject. The lung (Kloman) as an organ is well known in Ayurveda. With the aid of modern technology, western biomedicine has evidently gained a superior structural understanding of the respiratory system as compared to the traditional health sciences. However the main difference in the perspectives of the two knowledge systems is not on account of the differences in their structural understanding of the respiratory system but because of their radically differing understanding of the physiology of the respiratory system.

In Ayurveda, the physiological activity of the respiratory system is understood in terms of the functions of, what is technically called, the pranavaha shrotas. In the pranavaha shrotas five kinds of inter-related physiological forces act viz., pranavayu, vyan vayu, udan vayu, saman vayu and apana vayu. The diagnosis of respiratory diseases is therefore understood in terms of investigating the nature of imbalance that has occurred in the working of these forces. Furthermore the Ayurvedic diagnosis of respiratory diseases is rooted in a systemic frame. It diagnoses respiratory disorders not in terms of infections caused by invasions of different kinds of microorganisms but rather in terms of the nature of the systemic imbalance that is affected due to the respiratory disease.

Let me give you an example: as per Ayurvedic physiology, the respiratory system is known to be influenced by the state of mind, the quality of metabolism and also by the excretory functions. Thus mental tensions may give rise to certain

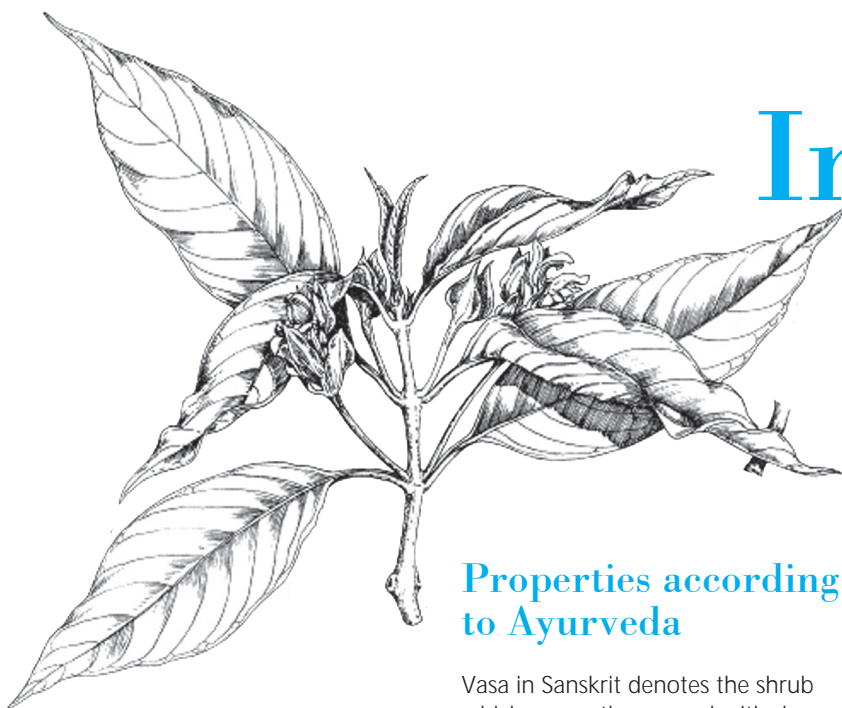
respiratory diseases like asthma because the pranavayu, which is one of the physiological forces acting in the pranavaha shrotas, gets disturbed. The pranavayu is situated in the head region and is responsible for intellect, sense organs functions like exhalation, sneezing, gulping and spitting. Hence in this aetiology of asthma, yoga therapy (pranayama) may be effective in addressing this kind of respiratory disorder. Since the disturbance of the pranavayu also affects the metabolism (samana vayu) and the impaired metabolism in turn causes constipation (apana vayu), along with pranayama, one would also need to take appropriate herbal remedies for improving the metabolism (agni) and getting rid of constipation. To modern medical science this kind of physiological logic that guides Ayurvedic therapeutics of respiratory diseases may appear to be bizarre.

In the context of such differences, it is not necessary to judge whether Ayurvedic or modern physiology is more correct. A balanced understanding would suggest that in different health sciences there are different scientific ways of diagnosing the health of living beings and that all these ways may constitute valid strategies of diagnosis. In the modern physical sciences, for instance, there are huge differences in the Newtonian view, from the quantum view and the viewpoint that informs field theories. They are however all seen to be valid within their own domains.

Indeed Ayurveda does competently and successfully manage respiratory diseases within acceptable limitations. Ayurveda has listed diseases of the respiratory system like kasa (coughs), svasa (asthma), peenasa (rhinitis), rajayakshma (tuberculosis) caused by systemic imbalances and diseases like kshata kshaya (caused by external injury or structural defects). Safe and effective treatments are available for these respiratory diseases.

It would be shortsightedness to ignore the indigenous understanding of the respiratory system merely because it is from a different viewpoint. In one sense the different physiological and aetiological understanding of respiratory disorders should be viewed as 'out of the box' thinking by western physicians and likewise by their Ayurvedic counterparts. Their contemporary relevance should be assessed by their strengths and limitations in management of various respiratory diseases that inflict humankind today including their advice on preventive and promotive health.

Darshan Shankar
Managing Editor



Invincible Vasa

Deepak Kumaraswamy

Properties according to Ayurveda

Vasa in Sanskrit denotes the shrub which covers the ground with dense foliage. The medicinal value of this herb has been mentioned in ancient texts. It is a household remedy for various respiratory disorders. Charaka Samhita has classified the drug under mucolytic and expectorant drugs. Its leaves are used in conditions such as burning sensation of feet, cough and respiratory troubles, fever, hoarse throat and menstrual disorders.

Active Constituents

Alkaloid Vasicine and Volatile oil

Part used

Leaves, Flowers and Roots are generally used.

Root- Essential oil has high activity in inhibiting tuberculosis. Its alcoholic extract acts as a broncho-dilator and respiratory stimulant. The alkaloids Vasicine and Vasicinone combined have more bronchodilatory action and provide protection against induced bronchial obstruction.

Leaf - Ether extract stimulates bronchial glands directly and increases the flow of respiratory tract fluid. Vasicine has Bronchodilator and stimulant action.

Essential oil - Acts as airway smooth muscle relaxant.

Crude extracts are more useful in respiratory ailments than pure alkaloids as they cause bronchoconstriction.

How does it look?

An evergreen, densely branched shrub with unpleasant smell (foetid scent). The older stem is grayish-green, warty and woody. The leaves are large, bright green, and lance like with pointed tip. The leaves are bitter to taste. The flowers are 2-lipped (appears like snake with mouth open), creamish-white with purple streaks on the lower lip of the flowers. They are arranged on a dense leafy spike.

Where is it found?

It occurs in the plains and submontane (lower Himalayan) regions of our country, upto an altitude of 1300 m. The species occurs from the Indian subcontinent to Malaysia, often cultivated as a hedge plant.

How to grow it in your garden?

Due to its evergreen dense foliage, it makes a good house plant that can be grown as hedge or as an individual plant where a mature plant needs about 1.5 sq m space or in pots of 25

“

Let me share with you readers, something about Vasa, the plant popularly known as the “plant exempted by the goats”. As a drug, used quite often in the Ayurveda, Vasa is invincible! The traditional and tribal healers treat cough by exclusively using this plant. In case if you face an episode of respiratory distress, Vasa is there to help you get out of it. This shrub is used as a hedge plant also and it makes a good ornamental plant for your garden and moreover a useful emergency medicine.

”

to 30 cms size. It likes sunlight but can also withstand partial shade and, therefore, can be kept in verandah or under some tree.

Through cuttings: Semi-hard wood and soft wood cuttings, 8 to 10 cm long with 3 to 4 internodes are planted in polythene bags or raised beds in April-June. Cuttings take 15 to 20 days to sprout and 30 days to root. After root initiation and hardening period of 10 days, the rooted cuttings are planted in the field. The success of field establishment is about 80 percent.

Care regime: It is a hardy plant and when planted in the ground, needs only occasional watering. When grown in pots, watering twice a week is adequate. The plant needs periodic pruning to maintain its shape and size.

Vernacular names

Hindi: Adalsa, Arusha, Bansa, Adarsa, Adhiosa, Adulasa, Adulaso, Arusa, Bashing, Rus, Rusa, Vasaka.

Kannada: Adasoge, Adsale, Adumuttada, Adusoge, Atarusha.

Tamil: Adoosa, Arusa, Arusa.

Known as **Adhatoda vasica** of ACANTHACEAE family in botanical terms.



Dr Deepak Kumaraswamy is an Ayurvedic Physician, working with the TSM Department of FRLHT, Bangalore.

Self Help

For Fever

Crush a handful of fresh leaves and extract the juice, mix it with 1tsp honey and sugar each. Consume 20-30 ml early in the morning on empty stomach for 3 days.

Ghee cooked with Vasa juice for one and a half hours is useful in treating chronic fever. One has to consume one tablespoon of the juice early morning on empty stomach for 7 days.

For Cough and Asthma

Fresh juice of Vasa leaves, about 30ml with 1teaspoon of honey, on empty stomach is taken for about 7 days.

Fresh juice of Vasa leaves is boiled continuously with turmeric powder and unskimmed milk for about ½ hour. This is useful in treating dry cough and asthma.

Take about 100 grams of clean Vasa roots, add 400ml of water to it and reduce it to 100ml by boiling. Mix it with honey. Decoction thus prepared checks asthma.

For Skin disease

Juice of Vasa leaves mixed with turmeric is made into a paste. Apply it over the skin and it can cure conditions like allergy and scabies.

For Menstrual disorder

Juice of Vasa leaves is consumed for 7 days on an empty stomach. This is useful in excessive menstrual bleeding.

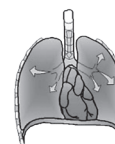
Rasayana: Vasaavalehya is an effective immunomodulator for respiratory tract disorders.

For Piles

Pain can be relieved in hemorrhoids by fomentation using Vasa leaves/ root decoction.

Deodorizer

Juice of Vasa leaves mixed with conch shell powder or bilva leaves juice removes the foul smell from the body.

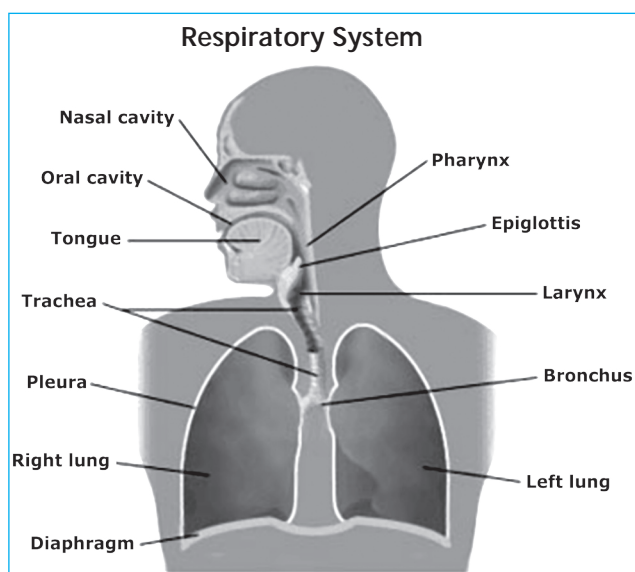


Do not scoff that cough!

Latha Damle

It is hardly disputable that Respiratory system is vital for life. Yet, it is a bitter fact that as we are being increasingly industrialized we are trying harder to breathe! It is also a saddening fact that number of children with respiratory disorders is being increasingly on the rise. Respiratory diseases are responsible for great burden of morbidity and premature deaths and hence major cause for concern. Lung diseases can affect people of all ages, sexes and economic strata.

It is also inevitable that lungs with their combined surface area are directly open to the external environment. Hence, the changes that occur in the lungs be it structural or functional or microbiological is closely related to the external environment, occupation involving personal and social factors.



Overall, respiratory problems are the most encountered illness and there may be hardly any person who has not suffered from respiratory problems in his lifetime. In general, respiratory disorders can be grouped under following heads.

1. Upper and Lower respiratory infections
2. Obstructive Pulmonary disease
3. Interstitial lung disease
4. Pulmonary vascular diseases
5. Tumour of the lungs
6. Diseases of diaphragm, pleura (outer covering of the lungs), trachea etc.

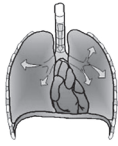
Out of them most commonly seen are the first two classes of disorders.

Respiratory System

Lungs, responsible for respiration are two cone shaped organs filling most of our rib cage. They are covered in an envelope called 'Pleura'. Respiration involves the act of **Inhalation** (Inspiration-nothing to do with 'inspiration' that an artist draws!) where in oxygen is taken in and the act of **Exhalation** (Expiration) where in carbon dioxide is given off to atmosphere.

The respiratory system is divided into **upper and lower**. In fact, upper respiratory system is just a path, which allows air inside and does not participate in the gaseous exchange. Yet, it does a great job by making sure only clean air gets in by filtering out polluted matter. However, while doing so, many a times it creates a mess resulting in nasty allergy!

Lower respiratory organs are attached to the air sacs at the end where gaseous exchange takes place. The carbon dioxide, which is unwanted by the body, passes into this inhaled air. The fresh oxygen that it contains is given to the body to be used for survival. Carrying this unwanted carbon dioxide the air comes out as exhaled air. The respiratory system strives day in and day out to keep this function a smooth going and absolutely unperceived!



With increasing pollution and ingestion of unwanted smoke and chemicals, one may wonder how body is able to cope up at least to the extent of having few infections a year. That is the greatness of Immune system. The immune surveillance is continuously vigilant but sometimes breaks the diligence causing a familiar syndrome called 'Allergy'. Allergy is a word that has become commoner to the extent that one is being allergic to the word itself! Respiratory allergy is almost turning out to be an endemic.

Ayurveda and Respiration

Although there is no clear mention of chemicals or gases involved in the act of respiration, Ayurveda has described respiration very poetically and metaphorically. It reiterates the significance of respiration to sustenance of life forms. It is said that 'Pranavayu' that is present in the 'Nabhi' region (the region around navus) traverses through throat or respiratory pathway and passes out to consume nectar in the air (Ambarapeeyusha) from the atmosphere and comes back quickly back inside to nourish the body to attain longevity.

General signs and symptoms that hint respiratory disorders:

- Cough
- Breathlessness
- Chest pain
- Haemoptysis (blood in the sputum)

In Ayurveda, Respiratory disorders are considered to be derangement of Pranavahasrotas. The symptoms described suit to contemporary needs.

Cough

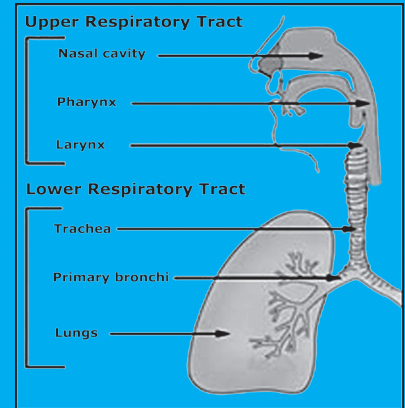
Cough is the most frequent symptom pointing respiratory disorder. Cough is only a symptom and hence one should elicit the possibilities of cough by systematic examination. It can be symptom in simple viral infection to Lung cancer.

Upper respiratory system comprises of:

1. Nasal passage
2. Pharynx and Larynx – seen when you are made to open your mouth wide by the doctor during respiratory infection.
3. Sinuses

Lower Respiratory system comprises of:

1. Trachea
2. Bronchi
3. Lung space containing bronchioles leading to tiny numerous air sacs (alveoli)



Primarily cough is a reflex mechanism, an effort to throw out the sticky sputum or any irritating material from various reasons. Cough usually occurs because of following causes:

1. Upper respiratory tract infection (URTI)
2. Tuberculosis
3. Post nasal drip usually because of Rhinitis or chronic sinusitis
4. Inflammation of the trachea, may be viral or allergic (tracheitis)
5. Bronchitis
6. Asthma
7. Lung cancer
8. Bronchiectasis
9. Pulmonary edema
10. Interstitial fibrosis
11. In some patients of Hypertension taking ACE inhibitors like Enalapril (Envas) Lisinopril, Captopril etc.

In Ayurveda, cough is discussed under 'Kasa' Based on the presence of sputum (productive) or its absence (non-productive) it has been divided into Vathaja, Kaphaja and Pittaja types.

Breathlessness (Dyspnoea in doctor's language)

It is defined as unpleasant awareness of breathing. In simple terms, it is gasping. Breathlessness is a common symptom in both respiratory and cardiac problems but is also seen in obesity, anaemia or in high blood sugar. In respiratory disorders breathlessness is experienced in

1. Acute severe asthma
2. Acute exacerbation of COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease)
3. Pneumonia
4. Laryngeal swelling due to any kind of allergy.

Diseases like COPD, Chronic asthma, Lung cancer, interstitial disease, etc. patients will complain of breathlessness of long duration.

Depending on the extent of breathlessness, the amount of effort needed

Cough



Every cause results in typical cough, for eg: in Tracheitis (inflammation of the trachea), cough is painful, in Asthma; it is associated with sputum and worsens at night where as in acute (short onset) bronchitis it is worse in the mornings. In TB, it is associated with blood. Hence, it is not wise to neglect the cough as trivial.

to produce it and associated symptoms like bluishness (cyanosis) physician's assessment of the disease and its severity varies. Grades of dyspnoea depend on the amount of work needed to produce the same. Breathlessness from unusual work to breathlessness at rest point to increase in the severity of the disease as the effort reduces to produce it.

Chest Pain

Usually respiratory disorders give rise to chest pain only when Pleura (covering of the lungs) or chest wall muscles are involved. Central chest pain occurs in severe asthma. In tracheitis there is upper chest wall pain, which is worse on coughing. Other causes of chest pain resulting from heart or food pipe or herpes zoster, arthritis etc. should be ruled out.

Lung cancer. Sometimes a trivial viral infection can result in rusty colored sputum having bloody streaks by violent cough causing panic in the patient.

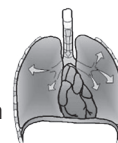
Common Respiratory disorders

Some of the most common respiratory disorders have been discussed briefly here below.

- Upper respiratory infections
- Nasal and Bronchial Allergy
- Sinusitis
- Bronchitis/Asthma

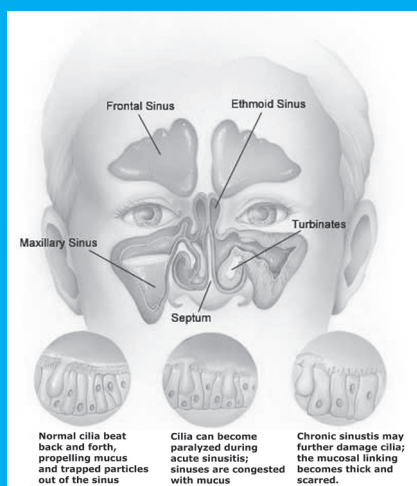
Ayurveda deals respiratory disorders under Swasa (Asthmatic disorders), Kasa (Cough), Rajayakshma (Tuberculosis and allied cachexic disorders), Pratishtya and Peenasa (Cold and Allergic rhinitis).

greater than ever today. Upper respiratory infection usually causes throat pain, running nose associated with fever. Tribhuvana keerthi rasa, Swasananda gulika, Kompanchadi tablets, Chukkumtippalyadi gulika, Shwasakutara tablet, Kaphakethu rasa, Vyaghryadi kashaya, Seethajwarari kashaya, Amritharishta, Vasakadyasava, Dasamularishta, Thalisedi chura, Sitopaladi churna, Karpuradi churna etc, help to tackle the condition well. It is better one avoids curds, buttermilk and fried foods for faster recovery.



In people with decreased immunity or those who get recurrent episodes need immune boosters. Agasthya rasayana, Vasishta rasayana, Thaleesapatradi lehya, etc taken regularly for three to six months help to reduce the frequency of infections.

Sinusitis



Man has major three sets of sinuses around the nose called frontal, ethmoid and maxillary sinuses. These are simply air spaces primarily helping in keeping the head (skull, to be precise) light. This is the reason you get heavy headedness when these sinuses are clogged with phlegm.

Acute sinusitis results mostly due to viral or bacterial infections. It causes headache, heavy headedness, nasal stuffiness, and fever. Tribhuvana keerthi rasa, Maha sudarshana Ghana vati, Kompanchadi gulika, Amrithothara Kashaya, Vyaghryadi kashaya, Dashamula

panchakola kashaya, Amritharishta, Dashamularishta when taken appropriately will alleviate these symptoms.

Sinusitis can also result due to allergy. Instead of running nose, sinuses can be blocked due to excess secretion. Many a times, chronic sinusitis will be misdiagnosed with migraine. In such cases, a type of Panchakarma called 'Nasya Karma' with Rasayana medications like Vyaghryadi lehya, Vardhamana Pippali, Gudardraka prayoga are helpful. These need to be undertaken by a qualified Ayurvedic physician, as there can be untoward effects if done improperly.

Haemoptysis (blood in the sputum)

Blood in the sputum usually makes patient panicky. In fact, coughing of blood, irrespective of the amount is an alarming symptom. At the outset, true haemoptysis has to be established ruling out any blood vomiting (haemetemesis) which occurs due to gastric problem or by nose bleeding.

Haemoptysis usually is seen in Tuberculosis, Lung edema, and diseases of blood vessels of lungs, Pneumonia, Lung abscess, acute bronchitis and

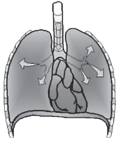
Upper Respiratory infections

"If you take medicine, your cold vanishes in a week but if you do not, it takes 7 long days!" All know this well-known adage.

Today it is not wholly true. With increasing food and water contamination and snowballing pollution, our immunity level passes a decisive test. The trivial throat infection may turn to be acute bronchitis. Escalating stress level poses great threat on the immune system. People falling prey to this infection are

Nasal allergy

Allergy is easier diagnosed than cured! More than a disease it is a nuisance making the person's life miserable being allergic to anything and everything as disease progresses. Initially the allergy will be limited to referable items like cold weather, pollen, or some food allergies etc. but slowly patient may experience the nasty symptoms of running nose, itching, and bouts of violent sneezing almost daily. It has various nomenclatures like Rhinitis, Hay fever, vasomotor rhinitis etc. This condition is dealt under 'Peenasa'



and 'Kshavathu' in Ayurveda. 'Pratishyaya' is another condition, which apart from Rhinitis covers Sinusitis also. Allergy is in fact, an unwanted war inside the body between external elements and immune system.

Of course, the war here is not fought with bombs and missiles but with chemicals, which can turn your nose into a tap or turn it into red by rubbing. Hence, allergy results because of hyperactive immune system. Most of the commonly available medicines like 'anti histamines' help no more but making these hyperactive cells to sleep and yourself too! The relief offered by them is short lived.

Ayurveda has the potential to take up the difficult task of disciplining the immune cells, called scientifically 'Immunomodulation'. The drugs like Pippali (Piper longum), Haridra (Turmeric), Tulasi (Holy basil), Neem, Gudoochi (Tinospora cordifolia) etc. have proved to correct the deranged immune system when given in specific way. It is preferable one takes the advise of a qualified Ayurvedic physician for the same. Market preparations like Agasthya Rasayana, Dashamula harithaki, Haridra khanda, Kooshmanda Rasayana etc. can give beneficial results when taken for long time.



Allergy



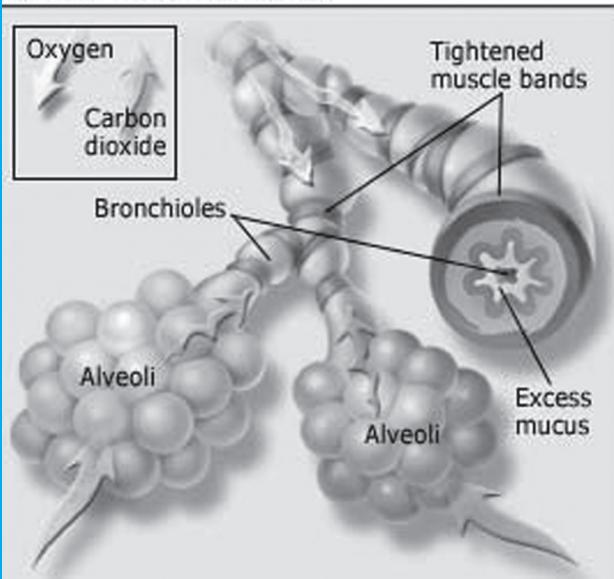
Asthma / Bronchitis

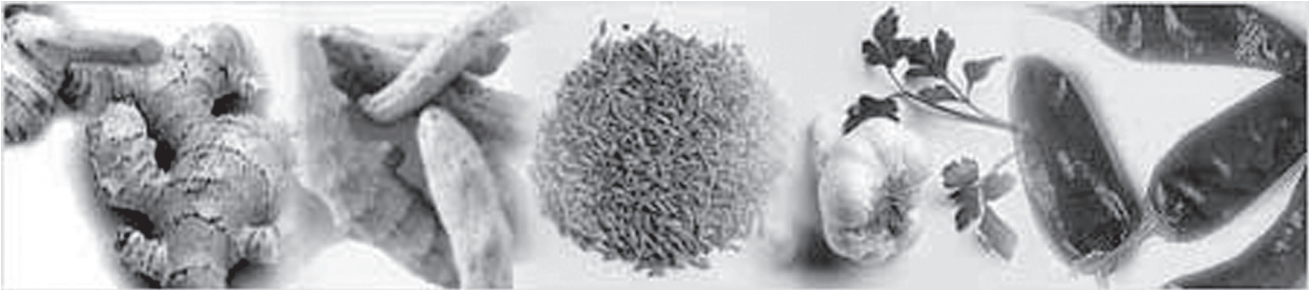
Bronchitis is inflammation or swelling of the airways leading to narrower passage. This in turn impedes airflow and hence causes breathlessness. Acute bronchitis can result from respiratory infections but usually disappear after single attack. In chronic bronchitis or asthma, there will be chronic irritation of the sensitive airways. The patient suffers for months and years. Initially it affects in certain season especially in winter but as the disease worsens it becomes perennial problem. The allergens cause bronchospasm resulting in airway constriction leading to breathlessness. The allergens can be external pollutants or food allergies, Asthmya ahara.

Ayurveda calls it as 'Shwasa'. During acute attack, patient complains of breathlessness, sometimes audible wheezing and tiredness may or may not be associated with fever. Cough may be present with tenacious phlegm. Associated fever points at Lower respiratory tract infection. If not managed well, it can lead to complications like irreversible structural changes in the lung tissues, scarring, and restrictive defect etc. Hence, apt diagnosis and timely referral to better centers are essential to prevent deterioration of lung function.

Aspirin and NSAID group of Painkillers like Ibuprofen are found to trigger asthma attacks. Hence they should be used judiciously in patients of Asthma.

Asthmatic Bronchioles





Home remedies useful in respiratory disorders

Probably every home has a remedy for cold and cough! Ones, which are maximally useful, have been listed here.

1. Decoction prepared with Tulasi (holy basil), Ginger and 2-3 seeds of black pepper helps to relieve fever, cough and cold.
2. Yashti churna (powder of licorice roots) licked with honey reduces throat irritation and cough. It helps to expel phlegm easily.
3. Decoction prepared from the roots of Bharngi, Dashamul and Vasa taken with honey reduces breathing difficulty.
4. Fresh juice prepared out of Karpura valli (Doddapatre in Kannada) leaves (Coleus aromaticus) taken with honey soothes the throat and reduces cough. When taken for long time, it also reduces respiratory allergies.
5. Fresh juice prepared out of onion mixed with jaggery mitigates cough. Garlic cloves can also be used similarly.
6. Steam inhalation with a drop of Eucalyptus oil or Clove oil in the water gives comfort in respiratory ailments.
7. Ginger tea with honey gives immense comfort in cough and stuffy nose.
8. Milk boiled with ginger, turmeric and pepper taken at bedtime relieves cough and nasal allergy.

Vamana in Shwasa (asthma)

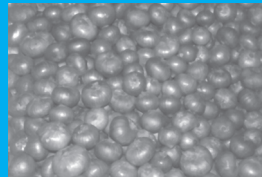
This is a Panchakarma procedure where in the patient of asthma is made to vomit under supervision. Some clinical studies done in K.E.M Hospital Mumbai have shown that this procedure done as per Ayurvedic classics has given statistically significant results in imparting long-term remission from the attacks and also reducing drug count in the asthmatics.



Tulasi



Licorice



Onoin



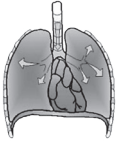
Ananthamula



Doddapatre



Cloves



Drugs like Dashamula (roots of ten trees), Vasa (Adhatoda vasica), Kantakari (Solanum xanthocarpum), Ananthamula (Tylophora asthmatica), Yashti (Glycyrrhiza glabra), etc have shown promising results in imparting long term remission from bronchospasm and improving Lung function in various clinical trials.

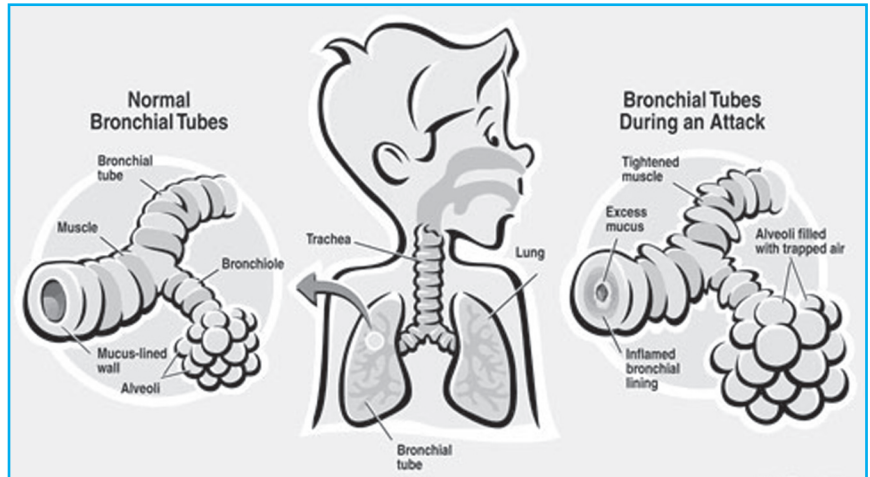
Other regimens like Pranayama (Breathing exercises), avoiding smoke and cold weather can improve lung functions. It is also seen that stomach reflex resulting from full meal can trigger cough and attack of asthma. Hence, it is advisable to eat less especially in the night.

Dietary factors in respiratory disorders

Respiratory disorders gain maximum attention as far as diet and regimen is concerned. It is seen that unhygienic foods, cold substances like ice creams, oil fried items result in either respiratory infection or exacerbation of earlier respiratory disease in sensitive individuals. Hence, one needs to give considerable importance in the diet. Regimens like exposure to cold weather; dusty atmosphere or chemicals like asbestos, smoking etc worsen or cause respiratory discomfort. Ayurveda specifically disallows the consumption of curds at night, which shows beneficial results when practiced. The same is true with cold substances like ice creams etc.

It is discovered that using excess salt can trigger asthma attacks. Hence it is advisable to reduce table salt consumption. Likewise, food additives like Ajinomoto and other colorants and chemicals can increase asthma attacks. It is also found out that Vitamin B6 in the diet can reduce asthma attacks.

A great deal of research is currently ongoing in the field of Ayurveda to offer medicines that can provide consistent results in Respiratory disorders including stubborn allergies, Asthma and allied conditions. It is undoubtedly sure that Ayurveda can manage most of the respiratory disorders ably and single handedly but



COMMON SYMPTOMS OF CHILDHOOD ASTHMA

- COUGHING
- WHEEZING
- CHEST TIGHTNESS
- SHORTNESS OF BREATH
- NIGHT COUGH

COMMON TRIGGERS

- VIRAL INFECTIONS (INCLUDING COLD AND FLU)
- ALLERGENS (INCLUDING ANIMAL DANDER, POLLEN FROM TREES AND GRASSES, DUST MITES, MOLD, AND COCKROACH DROPPINGS)
- EXERCISE
- SMOKE (INCLUDING CIGARETTE AND WOOD SMOKE)

it is equally essential to sort out the ones, which need referral.

Note of caution

Symptoms like loss of appetite, weight loss, anemia, palpable glands in the neck, evening rise of temperature, chronic cough and night sweats should forewarn Tuberculosis in all age groups and Lung cancer in the aged individuals. Hence apt laboratory investigations like AFB in the sputum, chest x-ray, blood

counts should be sought for. It is also worth noting that Ayurvedic treatment for Tuberculosis is still in the stage of experimentation. Hence, it is ideal to refer such cases to modern system of medicine in the best of the interest of the patient.

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Every breath you take!

Shilpa Naveen

We share the air we breathe with all the other living creatures and every breath we take is a confirmation of the essential unity and interconnectedness of life!

Ailments of the respiratory system are very common. Just like the digestive system, the respiratory system has to deal with external substances far more frequently; this is why infections and allergies of the respiratory system are so common. Prevention of airborne infection is not as easy as the management of food and water hygiene. Primary level prevention, that is, better nutrition, housing and health awareness (like anti smoking attitude) is important. An increase in air pollution is another major threat to respiratory health.

Nose and related diseases

Our nose is not only the upper part of the passage through which air enters the lungs; it also lodges the organ, which furnishes the sense of smell. The outer part of the nose is not much of importance except aesthetically; it is the inner organ the main part of the cavity, which is placed above the root of the mouth, which is the real nose.

Common Cold

The main villain of the piece behind diseases relating to the nose is the common cold. **Coryza** or **catarrh of the nose** is a common condition

affecting only the upper part of the respiratory tract, nose, throat and sinuses, found in cold climates, during the change of season in countries like India and affects everybody irrespective of age.

These are minor and very common troubles, which exist all over the world. They are especially more frequent in areas with air pollution. When there is an infection, one suffers from an excretion of mucus generally termed as **cold**. This is an irritating condition, which is not fatal, but if neglected for a long time it can create complications like bronchitis, infected sinuses, middle ear diseases, tuberculosis etc. The common cold is generally treated lightly both by patients and physicians. Unless local resistance and general immunity are increased, the individual is likely to catch colds often. As is true for many ailments, if one reacts in time the suffering from colds and coughs, which usually follow a bad throat, can be avoided.

People who suffer from frequent colds have a lowered vitality and immune response caused, perhaps, by a stressful lifestyle or irregular diet. Herbal remedies can restore deficient vitality if lifestyle and diet are improved.



What Causes Cold?

Change of season often brings cold and this has a natural purpose of draining the extra fluid in the body. Allow it to continue, do not suppress it. Ayurveda believes that suppressing cold leads to lower respiratory tract infections.

Lack of sleep, exposure to cold, lack of exercise and living in poorly ventilated areas can lower the body resistance and thus the individual is likely to catch cold often.

Types of Cold

Ayurveda recognizes 5 types of cold; borne out of vitiations of Vaata, Pitta and Kapha, borne out of disorders of blood and chronic cold borne out of vitiation of the above tridoshas.

Features of Cold

- Sneezing
- Running nose/ Blocked nose
- Teary eyes
- Stuffiness in the head
- Nasal membranes swell, making the individual breathe through the mouth
- Pressure sensation in the ear
- Reduced sense of smell and taste
- Sore throat results if the cold becomes chronic
- Mild fever, headache and body ache

Diet and Other Regimen

Do's

- Should be encouraged to take meat soup, vegetables with bitter or sour taste, garlic, onion.

- Intake of plenty of warm/ lukewarm water, freshly prepared orange juice, hot water with lemon, hot tea

Don'ts

- Intake of excessively rough food, cold water
- Cold bath particularly of the head
- Exposure to chills
- Suppression of urges, grief

Home Remedies

1. In case of running nose, smoke emitting from burning turmeric should be inhaled; it will encourage a copious discharge and provide quick relief. (Water should not be taken for some time after the inhalation)
2. Add a pinch of turmeric powder that has been sauted in a teaspoon of ghee to the soup of black grams. Season with ginger and cumin seeds. Drink the soup before meals at least twice a week. It builds up the resistance to colds.
3. Take 11 leaves of tulasi (*Ocimum sanctum*) or a teaspoon if using dried leaves, 2gms (1/2 tsp) fresh ginger, and 5 black pepper grains. Crush all these together and add to about 200ml of boiling water. This preparation can be taken after filtering and adding some sugar to it. Take this 2-3 times a day.
4. 30 gms of ginger, 1 stick cinnamon, 1 tsp coriander seeds, 3 cloves and 1 of slice are put in 500ml of water, bring to boil, simmer for 15 mins and then strain. Dose: 1 cupful 2-3 times while hot (add honey).
5. Juice of fresh ginger mixed with equal qty of honey. Dose: 1tsp, twice a day.
6. Intake of fresh extract of Tulasi (*Ocimum sanctum*) + Vasa (*Adhatoda vasica*) (1 handful each) for 3 days. Dose: 1-2 tablespoons.



Causes

- Intake of exceedingly hot and cold substances
- Abnormal growth/ foreign material
- Certain infections
- Infection due to tuberculosis
- Allergic factors/ irritant substances (dust/ gases)
- Speaking too loud /reading/excessive singing

Features

- Patient may not be able to speak easily/ difficulty in articulation
- Difficulty in swallowing
- Pain might be there during speech
- Tongue remains coated
- May be associated with fever and cough accompanied by burning sensation in throat

Diet and Other Regimen

Do's

- Intake of ginger, black pepper, garlic, raisins, ghee
- Dry hot fomentation-external
- Saline gargles (3-5 times)

Don'ts

- Curd, sour things, fried stuffs, exceedingly cold things, chillies
- Should not expose to cold wind or cold water
- Avoid taking head bath for a few days

Remedies

- Piece of khadira (*Acacia catechu*) gives great relief if kept in the mouth and the juice slowly swallowed.
- Infusion of black pepper used as a gargle relieves congestion of the throat and clears the voice.
- Powder of Vacha (*Acorus calamus*)+ Yastimadhu (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*) (1 tsp) with honey, 3 times a day.
- To soothe a painful throat, sip honey and lemon juice mixed together in equal proportion.
- To clear phlegm and irritation in the throat, chew 2 clove buds with a pinch of salt.
- Boil a teaspoon of mint leaves in a cup of water and add salt. Filter for a clear solution and gargle with this twice a day.
- After a gargle of warm salt water, a cupful of warm sweet milk with a pinch of turmeric powder does a lot of good.
- Dissolve jaggery in water and strain to remove foreign particles. Boil this on moderate flame till the syrup becomes thready when touched with two fingers. Add this syrup to the turmeric powder sufficient to make small sized pills and spread them evenly on finely powdered sugar candy so that they do not stick to each other. Dry them in shade. Dose: 2 pills, thrice a day for 2-3 days.

Preventive methods

- Add a quarter tsp of black pepper powder and sugar candy to hot milk. Have this till the cold persists.
- At the early stage, a heavy dose of Vitamin C is considered to be a preventive measure.
- Taking bath in hot water with a few drops of Eucalyptus oil added to it (care must be taken, skin allergy is possible with more drops). After bath, external application of a few drops of Eucalyptus oil over forehead, nose and chest.

Hoarseness of voice (Svarabheda)

Quite common among children and adults, hoarseness of voice is a complaint, which accompanies the inflammation of the throat including pharynx and larynx.

Dr Shilpa Naveen is an Ayurvedic physician working with the TSM Department of FRLHT.

Cover your Cough

Suma TS and Ranjani KJ

A new column in Heritage Amruth, a space for the elders from your families or neighbouring localities wherein they can share their traditional wisdom with the readers. The second in this series covers the expertise of 'Hema Aiji', a favourite grandmother from Ashisara, a settlement in Sirsi Taluk, Uttara kannada district, Karnataka.



Hema Aiji

Last August, it was raining heavily, when I went to Ashisara, a settlement in Sirsi Taluk, Uttarakannada district, Karnataka. Since, it was my first visit to this place and not tuned to heavy rains, I had a severe attack of cold and chest congestion. In the same battered condition, I entered Hema Aiji's, a popular grandmother's home, on an academic visit. Seeing my plight, Hema Aiji immediately rushed to her kitchen, and a few minutes later, emerged with a steaming hot decoction of some herbs. It smelt good, and I without thinking anything, I just drank the whole cup. I could sense an immediate soothing relief in my throat. Sensing my curiosity, Hema Aiji revealed to me that the preparation she had offered me was known by the name of Uttarani Kudi Kashaya, which acts as a good remedy for cough, cold and fever. The main herb in the preparation was Uttarani (*Acyranthes aspera*, Apamargaha or prickly chaff flower), a commonly growing weed.

Given below are a few simple and effective recipes from Hema Aiji's kitchen, for common cold and cough conditions. An expert Ayurveda physician has validated all these preparations.

Medicated milk of Uttarani

Ingredients

Achyranthes aspera (Uttarani), shoot cuttings (1-2" - dried or fresh) – 15 pieces
Cumin powder - ½ teaspoon
Jaggery - to taste
Water – one glass (200 ml)
Milk - ¼ glass (50 ml)

Pound the shoot cuttings. Add to water along with cumin powder. Boil and reduce to one-fourth quantity. To this add jaggery and milk and consume as a medicated

drink. Consume thrice a day. You can even consume this medicated milk every day (drink) once as preventive measure for cough and cold, fever. If Uttarani is not available, take kaadu kadalaе beru (*Sida acuta*, Bala roots, 2 pieces or 1 inch long) and proceed with the preparation.

According to Ayurveda, this formulation is an excellent remedy for relief from cough, cold and fever. Uttarani and cumin seeds help to expel phlegm; cumin reduces body temperature due to sweating and improves digestion.

Sambar soppu / Coleus leaves juice

Ingredients

Coleus aromaticus (Doddapatre) - 2 leaves
Jaggery - to taste
Turmeric powder - (a pinch)

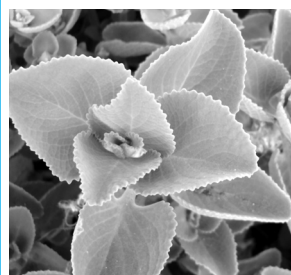
Wash and crush the leaves. Extract the juice. Add a pinch of turmeric and jaggery and consume. Take twice a day (1-0-1). Good to relieve cold and chest congestion especially in children.

As per Ayurveda, this particular home remedy is good to relieve cold, chest congestion and fever. *Coleus* causes dryness, reduces body ache, helps in digestion, and relieves constipation.

Culinary preparation- Tambuli for common cold and cough

Ingredients

Coleus leaves - 3
Cumin - half spoon
Fresh Coconut grated - 1/2 cup
Buttermilk - 2 glasses
Salt - to taste



Finely chop *Coleus* leaves. Fry with little oil, cumin seeds and grind the mixture with coconut gratings. To this add buttermilk and salt to taste. Mix it with rice and consume. This preparation gives relief from cold and cough.

This food is good to consume during cough and cold. Coleus causes dryness, reduces body ache, helps in digestion, and relieves constipation.

Lemon juice linctus for sore throat

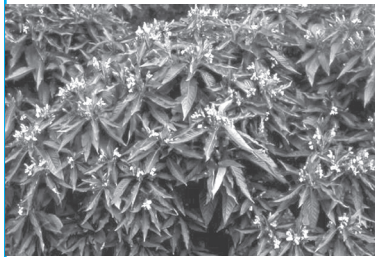
Take half a lime, add plenty of honey or sugar to it and keep licking.

This simple home remedy is good for relieving sore throat and as an expectorant. Lemon improves digestion (pachana) and dissolves phlegm. Honey helps to expel phlegm.

Fresh juice of Adhosogae for cold

Ingredients

Adhusogae (Adhatoda vasica /Vasa) leaves- 2 matured
Honey- equal quantity as the leaf juice



Soften the leaves by immersing them in hot water. Crush and extract the juice. Mix it with equal quantity of honey and consume for three days (once). This helps to relieve cold.

This remedy is good to relieve cold, cough and fever. Vasa has the property to expel phlegm, relieve body temperature and fever. Honey helps to expel phlegm.

Adhasogae decoction

Ingredients

Adhusogae leaves- 2 matured
Water- 1 glass

Wash the leaves, and boil in half a glass of water until it reduces to half the quantity. Consume twice a day (morning and evening) for three days. This will help to relieve cold, cough, fever and running nose.

Vasa has the property to expel phlegm and relieve body temperature. Decoction form is easy for absorption in comparison to the fresh juice of Adhatoda.

Tulasi leaves extract

Ingredients

Tulasi leaves – 20 leaves
Black Pepper grains- 2
Honey -1 teaspoon

Wash the leaves, crush and extract the juice. To this add pepper grain powder. Mix one teaspoon honey.



Give it to children (two months infant to 3 years) thrice a day. This formulation helps to relieve cough, cold and fever. Use double the quantity of ingredients for children above 3 years age.

This home remedy is effective for cough, cold and fever. Tulasi has the property to expel phlegm, and relieve body ache, improves appetite, improves digestion and relieves constipation.

Betel leaf stalk juice

Ingredients

Betel leaves - 7-8 stalk
Cumin powder - one pinch
Milk - 1 teaspoon
Sugar - taste

Extract the betel leaf stalk juice, to this add a pinch of cumin powder and one teaspoonful milk and sugar to taste. Administer twice (1-1-0 or 1-0-1). This helps to relieve cold, cough, for infants (2months) to 3-years old children.



This remedy is effective to relieve from common cold and cough. This remedy is also effective to treat fever. Betel leaves acts as an expectorant and also improve digestion.

Suma TS is an ethnobotanist working on the nomenclature of plants at FRLHT, Bangalore, while Dr Ranjani KJ is an Ayurveda Physician with the TSM division of FRLHT.

Readers can send in their entries for this column wherein they can share the experiences of the elders in their family with the following details:

- **Name and Age of the elder person who share their wisdom**
- **A Recent Photograph**
- **Easy to follow medicinal recipes for a particular health condition.**
- **At least 4-5 different preparations with the exact proportions.**

**Address: Heritage Amruth, The Medplan Conservatory Society, # 74/2, Jarakabande Kaval, Yelahanka, via Attur PO, Bangalore-5600064.
E-mail: amruth@frlht.org.in. Please mention 'Wisdom Page' in your subject line.**

Does your cough syrup really work?



Gauri Sharangpani

Cough and cold go hand in hand just like 'Jack and Jill'. Although the causes may vary, symptoms are more or less the same. During this chill but pleasant weather, almost every other person is coughing or sniffing. But how often do we go running to a doctor for immediate help for a mere cough and cold?

As long as the discomfort is within the tolerable limits, people carry on with their routine activities, and usually do not bother too much about their condition. It is only when that incessant cough, running nose, continuous sneezing and sniffing along with sore throat becomes unmanageable do we head towards the doctor! While treating cough and cold, a tendency of self-medication is predominant. What more, people do not shy away from taking a chemist's suggestion and blindly go ahead with a cough syrup without any doctor's prescription.

Owing to this demand, there are hundreds of different cold and cough products in the market, each with a feast of ingredients- cough suppressants, expectorants, antitussives and decongestants. These medicines come in various forms like: syrups/liquids, tablets and lozenges/chewable tablets. Very often, these medicines are taken on a "trial and error" basis. If at any point, a particular cough syrup has been effective, then people tend to remain loyal to that particular brand/

medicine, without bothering too much about what the medicine contains. It is here, in this context, that the relevance and the effectiveness of these cough medicines is being questioned. Do they really work or is your money only going down the drain, without the issue being tackled? Let us have a look!

Cough Medicines

Coughing is a natural reflex mechanism that protects the respiratory tract against irritant materials. Medicines used for treating cough depend on the nature of the cough and treatment is based mainly on signs and symptoms present, i.e. to achieve symptomatic relief.

In the case of cough, the body secretes excess phlegm in response to external particles and the medicines that encourage the production of phlegm are called expectorants. Commonly used expectorants include iodides, chlorides, bi-carbonates, acetates and volatile oils. Also, Guaifenesin and terpene hydrate are the primary ingredients in most over-the-counter expectorants. However, some studies have shown that in acute infections, merely increasing fluid intake has the same thinning effect as taking expectorants.

The medicines that alter the consistency of the phlegm or mucous secretion

(mucolytics) by making the secretion easily removable are also commonly used. Antitussives are drugs used in case of dry cough (low secretion). They work by depressing the cough center in the brain. Cough center in the brain gets activated at night, hence the cough aggravates at night while the person is sleeping. Generally used antitussive compounds are, Codeine and Dextromethorphan.

However, Codeine may cause some side effects such as dizziness, drowsiness, mental confusion and constipation. Excess use may also cause addiction. Hence one should be extremely cautious and it is advisable to use it under medical supervision only. Dextromethorphan, the primary ingredient in many over-the-counter cough remedies, also depresses the brain's cough center, but without the side effects associated with narcotics.

A decongestant is a drug that decreases nasal and pulmonary congestion. Commonly used, decongestants are: Ephedrine and Phenylephrine. These may also have side effects such as dizziness, mental confusion, hypertension, restlessness, anxiety and drowsiness associated with them.

Coughing can also be reduced by expelling out the irritant and taking something to soothe the irritation. This group of cough medicine is called demulcents. Examples include

What is the solution?



In case of a troubling cough, before turning towards cough syrups, try these:

- Drink lot of fluids about 8-10 extra glasses per day. This is helpful because fluids or water helps to loosen the mucous and also soothe an irritated throat.
- Cough drops can soothe irritated throats, but most of them are not effective on the cough-producing mechanism. Various medicine-flavored cough drops wrapped in an attractive manner are available. But they do not have any better effect.
- It is observed that dry cough often gets worse at night. You can elevate your head with extra pillows at night to ease a dry cough.
- If you have a habit of smoking it is advisable to stop smoking and also avoid passive smoking.
- Steam inhalation with a few drops of eucalyptus oil and/or an expectorant to clear the sinus and nasal congestion.
- Gargle with salt water for sore throat.
- Drink Lemon tea
- Juice made out of ginger or tulsii leaves, consumed with honey.

sweets to promote salivation and soothe an inflamed throat. Commercially available demulcents in the form of "cough" lozenges may contain honey and peppermint. They have the therapeutic advantages over other forms of sweets except that these "cough" lozenges cost more.

Do not cough up for those cough syrups!

Several research studies carried out suggest that products, which are supposed to offer relief for cold and cough, do not necessarily deliver the goods. Patients may claim that they derived benefit from using these cough medicines and do find that their symptoms are relieved, but there is no evidence suggesting that taking these drugs speed up recovery or cure the cough. The benefits of using expectorants and mucolytics as cough remedies have been over-exaggerated and disputed. Experts agree that there is no rationale for their use and evidence to support their therapeutic efficacy is still lacking.

A cough can be said to be either productive or non-productive. A productive cough is one that effectively expels out the sputum, thereby clearing the breathing passages. In such a situation, suppressing the cough can actually do more harm because the sputum that is retained may block the smaller airways, promoting infection and delaying recovery. Rationally, a productive cough should only be stopped if it is dangerous for the patient (such as someone who has just undergone an eye operation) or when it is causing sleep disturbances and is exhausting to the patient. A non-productive or dry cough which is distressing to the patient, if not suppressed, can further increase the irritation of the air passages. Generally, in most instances, no medicine is required to treat acute cough unless there are other serious underlying causes.

The number of remedies available worldwide, over-the-counter for treating cough and cold are in plenty. Most are syrup-based containing active ingredients, flavouring and colouring agents. Many contain more than one active ingredient, which sometimes is contradictory in their pharmacological actions. For example, a cough remedy may contain both an expectorant (for productive cough) and also a cough suppressant (for dry cough). This irrational type of product will only lead to patients receiving inappropriate drugs.

With alcohol as the base solvent in the cough syrups, the chances of addiction cannot be ruled out. The use of cough suppressants containing codeine and other narcotic analgesics is not generally recommended in children and should be avoided altogether in those less than one year of age.

Keeping all these things in mind, do you still prefer to reach out for a cough medicine at the first sign of cold? Think again!

In general, the cough expectorants are useful only when the choice of medication matches the type of cough you are suffering. Allergic cough can be moved out only when one avoids contact of the allergen or irritant. Infective cough goes when the infection is subdued. Thus sometimes it may be lingering. Every cough medicine does not suit everybody because of these different types or reasons for cough. Hence sometimes, what works on one person may not produce similar result in other. Therefore advice of doctor is essential instead of the chemist or neighbours."

Gauri Sharangpani is working as a software consultant with the Informatics team at FRLHT, Bangalore.

Common Cold

Amina Ather

Almost everyone is familiar with the feeling you get when you catch common cold, such as sore throat, runny nose, sneezing, or tearing. The common cold is one of the most prevalent illnesses, leading to frequent absences from school and work than any other illness every year.



There are at least 200 highly contagious viruses that are known to cause the common cold. These viruses are easily transmitted in the minute airborne droplets sprayed from the coughs or sneezes of infected people. In many cases, the viruses are also spread to the nose and throat by way of person-to-person contact with an infected person or by way of objects that have become contaminated with the virus such as door handles, pens, utensils etc. Colds can occur at any time of the year, although infections are more frequent during autumn and winter. Here are a few Unani remedies for the common cold infections:

Nasal congestion

Nasal congestion is commonly due to nazla-o-zukham (Common cold and rhinitis). Here the balghami khilth (phlegmatic fluid, phlegm) increases in the body.

The common causes are:

- Consumption of extreme cold food, for instance: ice, guava, curd, black berry etc.
- Playing in water for a long duration
- Wearing wet clothes

Treatment

Joshanda Decoction

Ingredients used

Ginger - 10 gms
Cumin seeds - 10 gms
Jaggery - 100 gms
Pepper - 10 gms
Water - 150 ml

Slightly roast all the above ingredients except jaggery, and finely powder

them. Jaggery is then powdered, mixed with water, stirred well in a pan and then the above powder is added to it. The mixture is boiled for 5-10 minutes until it is reduced to half its original quantity. The liquid is then filtered and given to the patient to sip, twice a day.

Lough Semi solid

Ingredients used

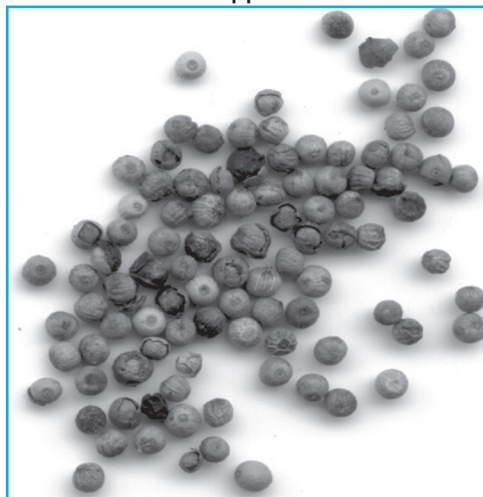
Dry Ginger - 100gms
Asal asoos (Glycyrrhiza glabra) - 100 gms
Asal (Honey) - 150 ml

Dry ginger and Asal asoos are coarsely powdered and mixed with honey. About ½-1 teaspoon is given to the patient thrice a day.

Note: for the diabetes patients, instead of honey, water is added

Wheezing

Pepper



Shaqeeqa is the unani name for -whooping cough. The classical description of this disease is that the occurring cough is continuous and in this condition, the suffering person is unable to breathe due to cough. This infection is contagious and spreads through contact.

Some simple home remedies for wheezing

- A bud of clove is kept under the tongue when there is a wheezing attack. This brings about some relief.
- Black pepper is crushed and given along with mint leaves. This could either be kept under the tongue or chewed.

- Turmeric is mixed with honey and given to the patient to lick.

Cough Expectorant

Ingredients

Unab (*Zizyphus jujuba*) - 1 teaspoon
 Sapistaan (*Cordia latifolia*) - 1 teaspoon
 Aslasoos (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*) - ¼ teaspoon
 Amba haldi (*Curcuma amada*) - ¼ teaspoon
 Maveez munaqa (*Vitis vinifera*) - 2-3 in number

All the above ingredients are mixed and finely powdered, soaked in a glass of water overnight, boiled and given to the patient to sip as the first thing in the morning and before dinnertime.

Cough—Khansi/Sual

The Arabic name for cough is SUAL. According to tibb-e-unani there are two types of khansi /Sual: Sual-e-khushk - Dry Cough
 Sual-r-tar - Wet cough

Some Home remedies

Joshand-e-rubb-us soos

Ingredients

Aslasoos (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*) - 1 tablespoon
 Cumin seeds - 1 tablespoon
 Water - 250ml

Aslasoos and cumin seeds are finely powdered, soaked in water and boiled for 10-15 minutes. This preparation is taken on an empty stomach twice a day.

Note: it is advised by the hakims that it should be taken after NAMAZ-E-FAJAR –morning prayers and NAMAZ-E-ISHAN-night prayer before sleep. It is advisable for the patient to sleep in the method of sunnath (sleeping on one side) especially turning towards the right side.

Joshanda

Wate - 50ml
 Berg-e-rehan (*Ocimum basilicum*) - 1-4 leaves
 Amba haldi (Turmeric) - 1/2 teaspoon
 Jaggery - 50 mg



Curcuma amada



Turmeric



Vitis vinifera



Ginger

Tulsi leaves are crushed, mixed with turmeric, added to water and boiled in a pan. Jaggery is added later. This preparation is given to the patient especially after food as a drink. Milk can also be added. For Diabetes patients the same joshanda is given without jaggery.

Excessive sneezing (due to pollen allergy)

Balm

Ingredients

Menthol - 100 gms
 Thymol - 100 gms
 Camphor - 100 gms

Mix all the three ingredients in a glass bottle and shake well until the solids turn into liquid. Mix the liquid with semi melted wax. Add 100 ml of coconut oil to the mixture and stir well. This will be in the form of a fine paste. Store it in big mouth glass bottle. This preparation is used as a balm.

Usage

Use about 2-3 drops for inhalation. Apply it on the nose before sleep.

Few tips to withstand pollen infection

- Add about a pinch of turmeric powder to milk and consume it before sleep.
- Add dry ginger to your tea.
- Inhale the vapours of eucalyptus oil.
- For infants it is better to add few pinches of turmeric powder with the normal talcum powder and apply in small quantities on the frontal scalp. This will avoid any kind of respiratory disease.
- In case of nasal congestion in infants, boil few seeds of tulasi plant and apply to the child's palm and soles.
- To avoid respiratory distress in women post delivery, add seeds of ajwain in the bathwater.
- A decoction of ginger 1 part, pepper 1 part mixed with honey gives relief in case of itching sensation in the throat (sore throat).

Dr Amina Ather is a Unani Physician in Bangalore and can be contacted at dr_ashan@yahoo.co.in



Raami Shaami play with Indian Borage

"Find me, where am I?", Shaami was yelling from her hiding place. Giggles and laughter could be heard all over, but no one was in sight. Confused Raami was running in all the directions, searching for her friends hiding in the park. She then spotted Soumya, hiding behind the palm tree. "I found you Soumya!" shrieked Raami. Subsequently, she was able to find all her friends except her sister, Shaami. "Where could have Shaami disappeared", Raami was wondering.

After running around the whole park and having searched most of the places, Raami was feeling tired. She slumped down on a rock nearby! Her other friends also had no clue about Shaami's whereabouts. Aimlessly, Raami gazed at the rock garden where there were several cacti, weird looking succulent plants and a patch of evergreen herbs bordering them.

"Am I imagining too much or is there something I can see", Raami squinted and tried to concentrate hard at the green foliage. And, there she could now easily make out her sister's green ribbon, which was camouflaged behind the leaves. She screamed with joy saying, "Yeah, Shaami, I spy you!" Hopping like a rabbit, she ran towards Shaami's hiding place, behind the green herbs. Grinning from her ear to ear, Shaami finally emerged out.

"Hey, I can smell something good", and sniff, sniff Raami went on!

Her olfactory glands had picked up a striking aroma as Shaami approached her. Raami registered this aroma and traced the path from where Shaami popped up. As she neared the border plants, she confirmed the aroma and said, "Wow, Shaami, this plant smells so good." She touched the velvety leaves. They were very thick. "Phatak", the leaf that Raami was holding in her hands had burst into two. The leaves are very brittle and succulent due to more water content in them. Shaami was quietly observing the leaves.

She gently touched them and was amazed to see the round leaves with netted veins. Indeed, the leaves were looking very attractive! And the leaf margin had saw-edged appearance too.

Shaami recalled the similar plant being present in their house too, with mosaic fashioned leaves that had green and white patched too. Quickly, the girls took permission from the gardener present in the park and plucked a few leaves. They were already getting late to home.

At home, Raami showed those leaves to her mother, "Amma, look we collected these leaves from the park. It looks like our coleus plant in our garden with white and green patches. Do you know what plant is this?"

Their mother took those leaves in her palm and said, "Um.... this plant is our doddapatre. We have

it in our ancestral home. Most of us in the village grow it in our kitchen gardens and in cities we grow it as a potherb. It is also called karpooravalli in Tamil because it has camphor like smell. It is a plant for children, as they love playing with it".

Their mother counted the leaves and said, "since there are enough leaves for a dish, I will quickly make something delicious out of these", and the twins yelled out in a chorus of joy.

Soon came a tray full of hot hot bajji's with warm badam milk. They all attacked on them and relished the yummy treat. Shaami asked, Amma, this bajji smells of "Om" seeds. Did you add them in it?" She said, "no, I only added leaves that you got. It smells of "Om". Raami, ran up to kitchen to find a leaf. She crushed them and smelt again. Yes amma, you are right, it smells like our "Gripe Water". Their mother smiled and said, "yes dear, these leaves have similar smell of omam. Hence, in Tamil, it has omavalli, as its name".

Their mother then added, "My grandma used to make several food preparations with these leaves such as chutney and bajji which help in digestion. These leaves are especially good for kids. They help to relieve cold, cough.

Later in the night, Raami and Shaami asked their mother more about this plant.

My Botanical Name
Coleus aromaticus

My botanical family
Tulasi family (Lamiaceae)

My names

Bengali - Patherchur
English - Country Borage, Indian Borage
Hindi - Amroda, Patherchur
Konkani - Carabalo
Kannada - Doddapatre
Malayalam - Pannikurukka
Marathi - Patherchur, Pan-ova
Sanskrit - Asmabhedah, Asmantaka, Himsagar,
Pashanabhedi, Parnayavani
Tamil - Karpuravalli, Omavalli



How do I look?

I am an evergreen herb with pleasant smell. My leaves are very thick, brittle and round shaped. Margins are toothed. My flowers are small and pale purple in colour on a long spike.

Try yourself

Yummy Chutney

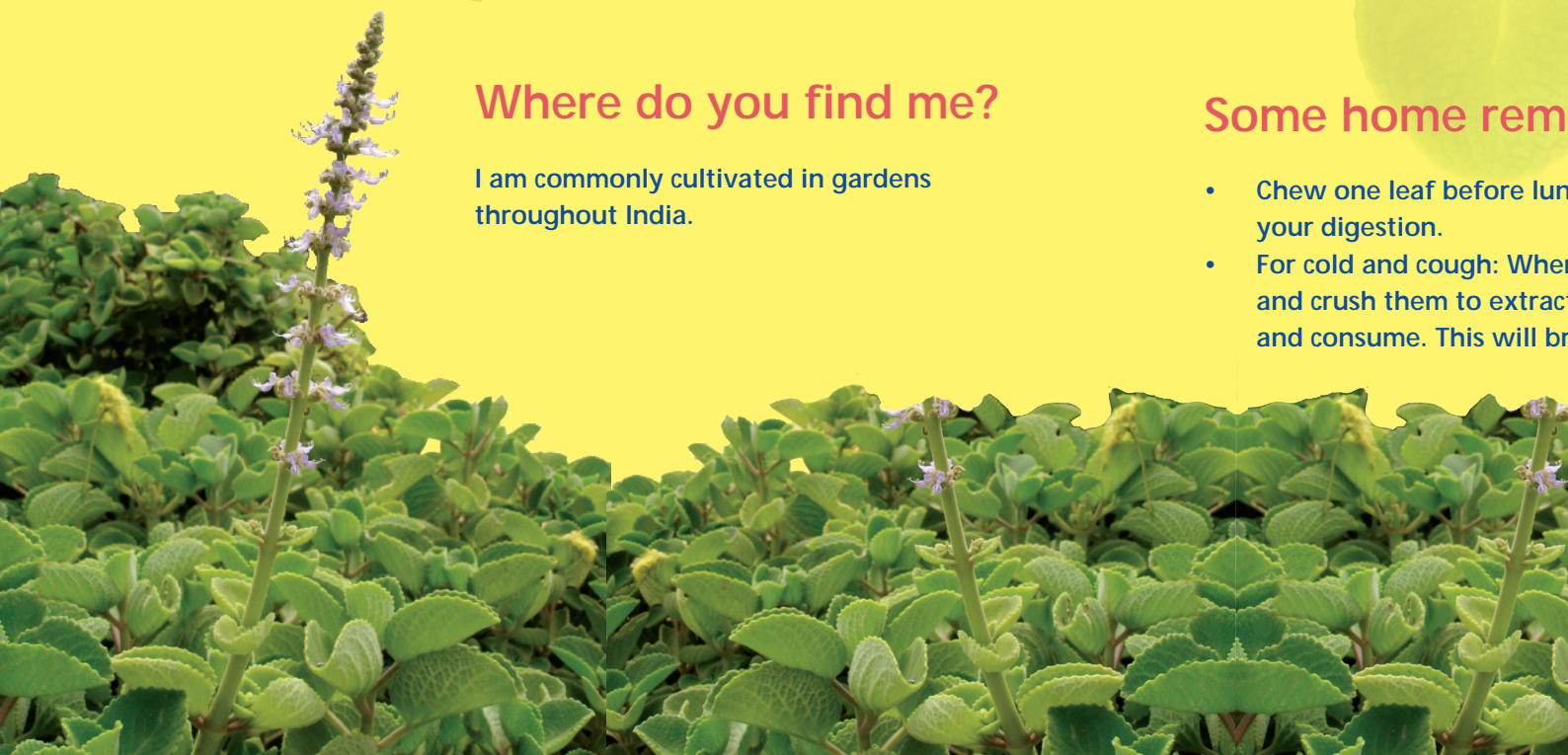
Take two big leaves, wash well in water, add one coconut, one chilly, and 2 tablespoons of oil. Grind the leaves. Add salt to taste. Grind the mixture and consume. This Chutney helps in digestion.

Where do you find me?

I am commonly cultivated in gardens throughout India.

Some home remedies

- Chew one leaf before lunch to improve your digestion.
- For cold and cough: Wash the leaves and crush them to extract the juice and consume. This will bring relief.



BORAGE



What are my uses?

- My leaves have a strong aroma. It has a combination of sour and pungent taste.
- As Ayurveda says, my leaves are extensively used to cure indigestion, cold, cough in children.
- Traditionally, in India, the leaves are used to improve digestion, relieve cold, cough and fever and help in restoring appetite.
- It is useful for urinary diseases, kidney stone, and asthma. Chewing one leaf before lunch helps in proper digestion of food too.
- The leaf juice is applied on the skin to relieve of allergic rashes or spider or insect bite.
- In Samoa, the leaves are claimed to cure colds. In Coro, Venezuela, leaves are used to improve digestion and to relieve kidney troubles, especially for expelling of kidney stones. In Malaysia, crushed leaves are applied to burns.
- It is used as leaf poultice on centipede- and scorpion-bites. The leaf juice heals chapped lips too.
- In Java, it is used to treat cracks at the corners of the mouth.
- My leaves are used to flavour wine and beer too.
- In Indonesia and Philippines the leaves are added while cooking to mask the odour of strong smelling goat meat, fish and shellfish.
- In India, leaves are used to flavour food preparation, as a carminative, used in salads, chutney preparations and fried snacks preparations too.

in cold water. Add one cup of grated fresh
oons of fried gram, little coriander and curry
them together to a fine paste. Your chutney is
in improving your digestion.

Medicines

ch for three days. This helps in restoring

When you have cold, take two leaves, wash
off the sap. Add half a teaspoon of honey
for relief from cold/cough.

How do I grow?

You can grow me by planting
my stem cuttings.



CONTEST: CONTEST: CONTEST: CONTEST



Hello! Hello! It is contest time again! So, get set and go.....

Heritage Amruth invites all the nature loving children to send in a "SHORT POEM", written by them, on any topic related to nature.

The best three entries would be awarded a prize decided by our jury members, and all the entries would receive a token of appreciation.

Rules of the Contest:

- Contest open only to children between 9- 14 years.
- All the entries should be original.
- All entries to be submitted on A 4 size paper.
- The best three entries would be published in our next issue.
- All the entries should reach us latest by 10th March, 2006
- The entries to be addressed to: The Editor, Heritage Amruth, The Medplan Conservatory

Society, # 74/2 Jarakabande Kaval, Yelahanka, Via Attur PO, Bangalore-560064, or Email: amruth@frlht.org.in



Crossword

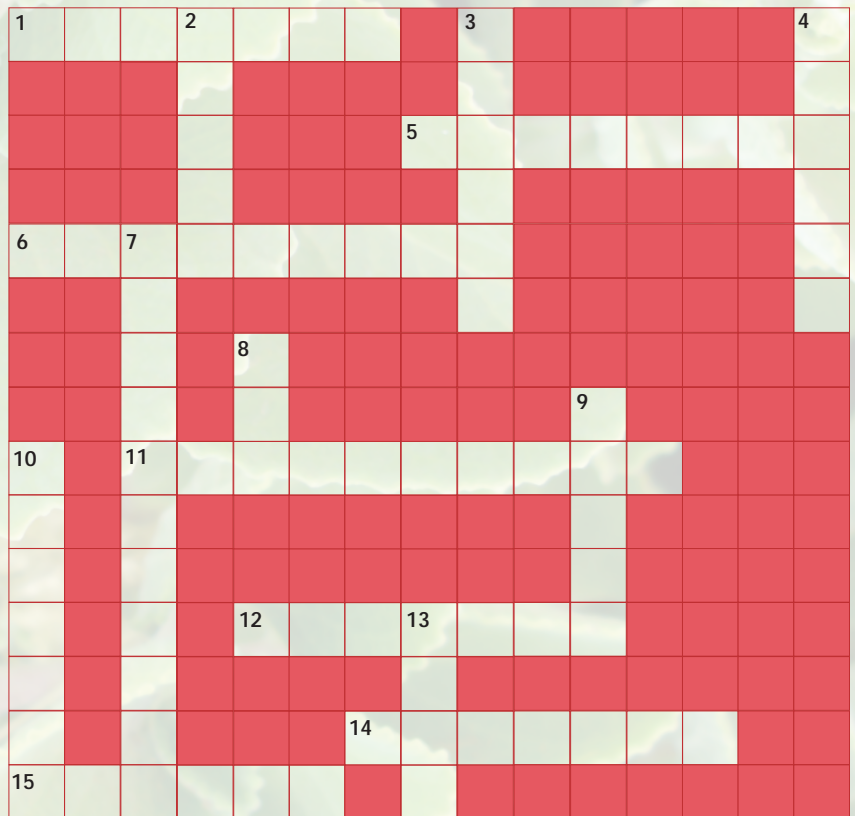
January - February 2006

Across

1. Asthma patients use an (7)
5. Substance that causes allergy is called an (8)
6. You cannot live without (9)
11. Sweet medicine for cold (10)
12. Children usually get pain in their throat due to (7)
14. Sweet chewable tablets your mother gives you when you have a sore throat (7)
15. A respiratory disorder in which people find difficult to breathe (6)

Down

2. Therapy, which makes use of fragrances (5)
3. Sticky substance that is produced when you cough (6)
4. Common home remedy for sore throat (6)
7. Form of cough syrup (11)
8. Common name for viral fever (3)
9. Major organs for respiration (5)
10. A popular mythological plant in Krishna's stories (7)
13. causes Air pollution (4)



Story line:
T.S. Suma

Crossword:
T.S. Suma & Amita Kaushal

Coleus Pictures:
T.S. Suma

Crossword Answers for December 2005

ACROSS

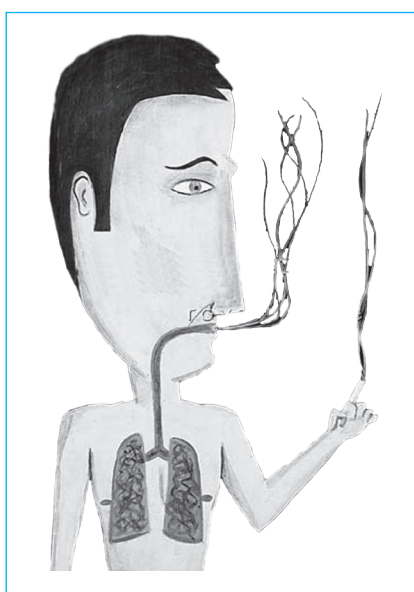
2. Femur
5. Harp
6. Marrow
8. Fluorine
11. Skeleton
13. Banana
14. Tendon
15. Sling
12. Cod

DOWN

1. Cartilage
3. Marie Curie
4. Rickets
7. Limestone
9. Gelatin
10. Coral

Want to quit smoking? Inhale Herbs!

Tabassum Ishrath Fathima



Ayurveda talks about “Dhumapana vidhi”, which is nothing but inhalation of smoke (of drugs). According to Atreya, the ancient Ayurvedacharya, “a person who wishes to take care of his health should inhale the smoke of herbs so as to prevent the onset of certain diseases arising from (increase of) Kapha and Vaata, and for the cure of diseases, which have already arisen.

But today, who likes to smoke herbs when cigarettes are there? Nowadays cigarette smoking has become a trend, more so among the youngsters! Even though cigarette smoking health effects are widely known, yet millions of people continue to smoke. Approximately 5.5 trillion cigarettes are produced globally each year by tobacco industry, smoked by over 1.1 billion people.

Cigarette or Life?

Smoking cigarettes is the major cause of several ailments such as chronic bronchitis, chronic cor pulmonale (heart ailment), and cancers and predisposes one to TB of the lungs. It worsens asthma. It also causes bad breath due to chronic bronchitis, premature wrinkling of the skin, foul smelling clothes and hair, and yellow fingernails. Smoking by pregnant women affects their child’s weight. Passive smoking or tobacco chewing also causes low birth weight in newborn.

Do you know what your cigarette contains?

Tobacco smoke literally contains more than 4,000 chemicals, many of which are toxic, mutagenic and carcinogenic.

The amount of these ingredients widely varies from one brand to another brand of cigarette.

For example Nicotine: is a drug found naturally in tobacco, which is highly addictive - as addictive as heroin and cocaine. Over time, the body becomes physically and psychologically dependent on this. When smoke is inhaled, nicotine is carried deep into the lungs, where it is absorbed quickly into the bloodstream and carried throughout the body. Nicotine causes an increase in the heart rate and blood pressure. The arteries (blood vessels) in your arms and legs tighten and narrow because of the nicotine in cigarette smoke. Cigarette smoke increases blood clotting and may damage the cells that line coronary arteries and other blood vessels.

Carbon monoxide found in cigarette smoke when enters the blood, decreases oxygen going to the heart and the body. Hardening of the arteries happens more often in smokers than in nonsmokers. This may make it more likely for you to have a stroke. The more cigarettes you smoke the greater is the risk of a heart attack! Even though health concerns tops the list of many people, but only few people realize the harmful effects of smoking and make a will power for quitting smoking.

Getting addicted to herbs!

Needless to say, Cigarette is addictive. Once a person gets hooked onto it, it is very difficult to quit. Great will power is needed to free oneself from this habit.

“ Human weakness for many habit-forming substances has been a part of recorded human history! As a proverb goes: “illegal things in life, are either banned, expensive or fattening etc”.

With increasing movement of men and material, more heady products are crossing borders and changing hands. Tobacco has truly become the largest public health problems, affecting and killing more people than wars. Unfortunately many nations plagued by poor economies are entirely dependent on tobacco and other addictive substances. ”

Instead of smoking cigarette, which contain harmful chemical substance like nicotine, Ayurveda recommends inhalation of medicinal herbs, which is good for both body and mind.

Mode of inhalation

Here, inhalation of smoke is carried out through the nostrils; i.e. closing one nostril while inhaling through the other. Smoke should be inhaled through the nose first if the doshas (Vaata, Vaata-Kapha and Kapha) localised in the nose and head are moving from their sites; for instance in the case of cold, if there is phlegm coming through the nose. If they (doshas) are not moving but adhering, then inhalation should be done first through the mouth to make them move. When the doshas are localised in the throat, then inhalation should be done in reverse order (firstly nose and later by mouth). The smoke inhaled should be let out only through the mouth; if let out through the nose, it produces loss of vision.

Snigdha (lubricating), Madhya (medium) and Teekshna (strong) smoke (of drugs) should be administered in case of (the increase of) Vaata, Vaata-Kapha together and Kapha respectively. For mild kind of smoke, some of the useful drugs are **Aguru, guggulu, mushta, usira, Madhuka, madana, yava and tila**. For samana (medium) kind of smoke, drugs used are **Sallaki, laksa, kamala, barks of Asvattha, plaksa and rodhra; sita, yasthimadhu, suvarnatwak, padmaka and tagara**. For teekshna (strong purgative) kind of smoke useful drugs are **jyotismati, nisa, dasamula, ala, laksa, sweta and triphala**.

Benefits of inhalation of medicinal herbs

Cough, dyspnoea, rhinitis, disorder of voice, bad smell (of the nose and mouth), pallor (of the face), hair disorders; discharges, itching, pain and inactivity (diminution or loss of function) of the ears, mouth and ears can be cured by inhaling the smoke of the medicinal herbs.

Tips

- Do not carry a lighter, matches or cigarettes. Keep all of these smoking reminders out of sight.
- If you live with a smoker, ask that person not to smoke in your presence.
- When you get the urge to smoke, take a deep breath. Hold it for 10 seconds and release it slowly. Repeat this several times until the urge to smoke is gone.
- Keep your hands busy. Doodle, play with a pencil or straw, or work on a computer.
- Do not substitute food or sugar-based products for cigarettes. Eat low-calorie, healthful foods (such as carrot or celery sticks, sugar-free hard candies) or chew gum when the urge to smoke strikes so you can avoid weight gain.
- Drink plenty of fluids, but limit alcoholic and caffeinated beverages. They can trigger urges to smoke.
- Exercise, and regular practice of yoga, will help you relax and quit smoking.
- Switch to smoking herbs!

Take help from your doctor who can also help you out to quit smoking.

Benefits of quitting

20 minutes after quitting: Your blood pressure drops to a level close to that before the last cigarette. The temperature of your hands and feet increases to normal.

8 hours after quitting: The carbon monoxide level in your blood drops to normal.

24 hours after quitting: Your chance of a heart attack decreases.

2 weeks to 3 months after quitting: Your circulation improves and your lung function increases up to 30%.

1 to 9 months after quitting: Coughing, sinus congestion, fatigue, and shortness of breath decrease; cilia (tiny hair like structures that move mucus out of the lungs) regain normal function in the lungs, increasing the ability to handle mucus, clean the lungs, and reduce infection.

1 year after quitting: The excess risk of coronary heart disease is half that of a smoker's.

5 years after quitting: Your stroke risk is reduced to that of a nonsmoker 5-15 years after quitting.

10 years after quitting: The lung cancer death rate is about half that of a continuing smoker's. The risk of cancer of the mouth, throat, oesophagus, bladder, kidney, and pancreas decreases.

15 years after quitting: The risk of coronary heart disease is that of a nonsmoker's.

Kick your tobacco!

Kicking tobacco habit offers benefits that you will notice immediately and sometimes that will develop gradually in the first few weeks. These rewards can improve your day-to-day life substantially. If you quit smoking, you will:

- Prolong your life
- Reduce your risk of disease (including heart disease, heart attack, high blood pressure, lung cancer, throat cancer, emphysema, ulcers, gum disease and other conditions)
- Feel healthier. After quitting, you will not cough as much, you will have fewer sore throats and you will increase your stamina.
- Quitting can help you prevent face wrinkles, get rid of stained teeth and improve your skin and sense of taste and smell.
- Food tastes better, Sense of smell returns to normal, ordinary activities no longer leave you out of breath (climbing stairs, light housework, etc)

Setting an Example

There is no one-way to quit smoking that works for everyone. To quit, you must be ready both emotionally and mentally. You must quit smoking for yourself, and not to please your friends or family. After checking out the benefits of quitting cigarette it is left to yourself whether you want to lead a healthy life or not?

AFTERALL, THE PROSPECT OF BETTER HEALTH IS A MAJOR REASON FOR QUITTING!

Tabassum IF is a Research Scholar working in the TSM Department of FRLHT.

Alluring allergies

Prathibha Vinay

Ah.....hh.....chooo....., Ah.....hh.....choo!

Quite a common sight in this season, with people sneezing on and on! Allergic rhinitis commonly known as hay fever is in full swing and you feel the urge to rub your nose, eyes and ears. Throat is constantly sore and itchy. This is all due to immune response to airborne pollens of different plants and flowers. In one word, this uncomfortable condition can be termed as ALLERGY, and allergies (including asthma) are abnormal inflammatory responses of the immune system to dust, pollen, a food or some other substance.

Pollen grains are the structures that house the male gametes of the plants, which have been associated with man throughout his history causing Pollinosis or pollen allergy. A characteristic feature of pollen sensitivity is its seasonal pattern of occurrence usually at the time, when the pollen is most frequent in the atmosphere as environmental agents. The human body under normal circumstances reacts against the invasion of foreign agents or antigens by producing antibodies.

All persons produce protective antibodies called Immunoglobulin G. Allergic persons, in addition to producing Immunoglobulin G, also produce an antibody called Immunoglobulin E, which is chemically different from the first one. Chemically, allergens or antigens or mostly protein substances; in some cases they may be polysaccharides or the combination of both.

Physicians distinguish between two general categories of allergens as immediate and delayed. As the name implies, immediate allergies set in within minutes to several hours after a person is exposed to the allergen causing bronchial asthma, running nose with itching watery eye's or sneezing.

In immediate allergies antibodies circulating in the blood stream team up with the specific allergens such as pollen forming antigen- antibody complexes; when these complexes come in contact with the granular size of mast cells, they trigger the release of a compound termed Histamine, which is considered to be one of the chief mediators of allergy. Histamine is widely circulated throughout the body. High concentration of them is found in the mast cells. The amount

of antibodies varies from one person to another. One may have an inadequate number of antibodies or one may have virtually none at all.

Ayurveda to the rescue

Allergies from which a person suffers could be either hereditary or acquired due to various factors. In the genetic factor, the MOTHER factor is very important. There are Ayurvedic regimen prescribed for a pregnant woman. Homologation factors called as Satmya in Ayurveda, means the basic food and environment, which keeps the individual healthy. Allergies from which a person suffers are inherited, when due care for this factor is not given, leading to various types of allergies, such as upper respiratory disorders etc. The disorders depend upon the quality of RASA, or blood of the mother that is the only source of OJUS, the immune system to protect the foetus from the internal onslaughts and later, after delivery, from external onslaughts as the individual grows up.

According to Ayurveda the entire activities of the body are regulated by Tridoshas, that is Vaata, Pitta, and Kapha. As long as they are in their physiological limits and are in equilibrium, the homeostasis of the body is maintained contributing to the sole vital factor towards health. If the equilibrium is disturbed, it results in the disturbance of the body homeostasis causing disorder and diseases. All the physiological changes occurring in the body vary at different stages of age and at different stages of digestion, absorption and metabolism at different times of day and night and during certain seasons.



Kapha dosha is at its peak at the beginning of the day and night, Pitta dosha at the mid of the day and night, and Vaata dosha is aggravated at the end of the day and night. Due to Kapha dosha the person is likely to suffer from disorders such as Bronchial asthma, Bronchitis, Chorrhiza, Cold, Cough, etc, particularly during the spring season when Kapha affects its natural sites including the stomach. Therefore one should avoid eating heavy sweet and sour foods consisting of barley and wheat.

Some Simple Home Remedies

Any one of the following remedies may be tried.

- Grind pure turmeric rhizome to a fine powder and fry well with little ghee and preserve in an airtight container. Take one teaspoon of this powder three times a day with little water to prevent the asthmatic attack. Turmeric is known to possess antiviral and antiallergic properties and is also an antioxidant.
- Chew and swallow a betel leaf with 10 drops of Neem oil for seven days. This remedy is recommended for adults above 15 years of age for relief from asthma.



Betel leaf

- Ksheerapaka (medicated milk) of Long Pepper**
Boil together 200ml of milk, 50ml of water, 4 to 6 pieces of long pepper for about 15 to 20 minutes. Add 10 drops of pure ghee and ¼ teaspoon of powdered sugar candy and take three times a day. This remedy relieves cough with sputum and chest congestion. Dosage for adults above 15 years – 60ml for 15 to 20 days. Children above 3 years – 25 to 30ml with 5 drops of Ghee and ½ a teaspoon of sugar candy.



Long pepper

- Milk decoction with turmeric, black pepper and sugar candy**
Boil together 200ml of milk, ¼ teaspoon of turmeric powder, 4 – 6 grains of crushed pepper for about 15 – 20 minutes and add ¼ teaspoon of sugar candy. Take the medicated milk once or twice a day for the relief from cold, cough and running nose. Dosage for Adults - 200 ml For Children - 50 ml twice a day.
- Steam cook about 10 to 12 medium sized yellow leaves of Vasa (Adhatoda vasica). Crush and extract the juice and strain. Add ½ teaspoon of sugar candy and 3 – 5 drops of honey. Dosage for adults above 15 years 1 – 1 ½ tablespoons 3 times a day for 4 – 5 days. Children above 3 years - 1-2 teaspoons 3 times a day for 4 – 5 days.

This remedy relieves chest congestion and cough with yellowish phlegm.

- Crush about 10 – 12 leaves of Krishna Tulsi (Ocimum tenuifolium) to extract the juice. Add 4 – 5 drops of honey and 4 – 5 drops of fresh ginger juice. Dosage for adults - 1 teapoon 3 times a day for 4 – 5 days. Children above 3 years- 1 teaspoon without ginger juice 3 times a day

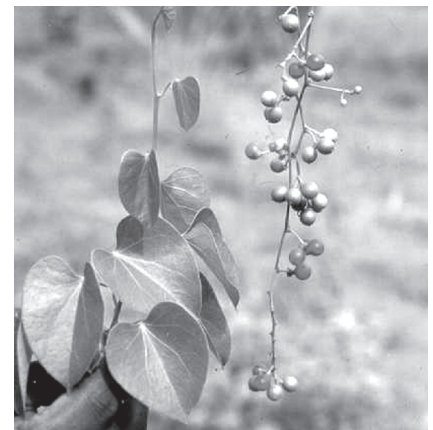
This mixture gives relief from chronic cough with phlegm.

- Crush about 4 –mature leaves of Doddapatre (Coleus aromaticus) and extract the juice. Take about 1 teaspoon of this juice to relieve mild wheezing associated with chest congestion. Dosage: 1 teaspoon, 2 – 3 times a day for 4 – 5 days.

Children above 3 years 1 – 1½ teaspoons, 2 to 3 times a day for 4 – 5 days.

For Improving and Increasing Body Immunity

- Guduchi or Amruthaballi (Tinospora cordifolia) stem of the plant are recommended by Ayurveda for clearing the channels of the body (Shrotas) and for removing the toxins. They are also recommended as a general tonic to improve immunity.



Guduchi

- Hima preparation of Guduchi**
Add one part of finely powdered dried shoot of Guduchi to 10 parts of water in a clean vessel (preferably in an earthen vessel). Keep it overnight. Strain the liquid next morning. Dosage – Adults – Mix 1½ - 2 tablespoons of the liquid 1 teaspoon of honey and take once a day for 6 – 9 months. Children above 3 years, ½ - 1 tablespoon with ½ teaspoon of honey once a day for 6-9 months.
- Use the leaves and tender shoot tips of Sauropus androgynus as leafy vegetable.
- Similarly, cook the leaves of drumstick to extract the juice. Mix about 1 – 2 teaspoons of the juice with a little milk and give to children twice a day for three months, for their healthy growth. Drumstick leaves are known to contain Vitamins A, C and iron.

Dr Prathibha Vinay is the Founder President of 'TULSI' a voluntary non-profit social welfare organisation. Contact No. 9845052211

“How I learnt to manage my asthma”



G S Goraya

Prone to recurrent bouts of bronchial asthma, every now and then, I had to land at my physician's table till I heard those harsh words, 'learn to manage it on your own'. This led me to find my own ways and means to manage the condition and today, ten years later, I have been able to manage my asthma fairly well. Based on my experience, I would put asthma management as a three step skill involving:

- i) Identification of the likely triggers – the stimuli initiating the asthmatic bouts,
- ii) Sensitivity to general and specific body responses to these triggers,
- iii) Switching over to food and life style that would strengthen the innate capacity of the body to fight the condition.

Identification of the likely Triggers

Seemingly, it is quite a difficult proposition to find out the likely triggers for a person from amongst thousands of potential factors. Careful observation of body's responses on exposure to these factors and a little hit and trial, however, would help us in identification of the likely triggers causing asthmatic attacks in our body.

After experimentation with exposure to dust, vehicular exhaust, smoke, cold, pollen grains, etc., I found that the settled dust and fungal spores in rooms not opened for long time, acted as the major trigger in my case. Handling of the books and papers not opened for a long time and clothes taken out from long storage had a similar effect on me. It may not always be possible to pinpoint the exact trigger causing asthma

but with a little bit of effort, it definitely is possible to identify a cluster of closely related factors responsible for initiating asthma attacks.

Recognising the Body's Responses

Exposure to a trigger usually results in general as well as specific responses in the body. Immediate response to first exposure to the trigger in my case always results in itching on the edges of eyelids and nose. If I fail to take notice of this response and continue to be exposed to the trigger my body responds through a feeling of itching on the back just below the shoulder blades. This is the alarm bell that warns me to get away from the triggers and start immediate management measures. Following the similar lines, we all can train our faculties to recognise these general and specific body responses towards management of asthma.

Precautions

The whole idea of learning to manage asthma on our own is not to let the attack set in. In case the general symptoms of asthma are noticed, the following steps can help in effective management:

- Get away from the triggers or the situations having the triggers at the earliest.
- Start your medication without waiting for the condition to aggravate.
- Manage the conditions likely to have triggers. My job takes me to far off government rest houses that are laid open only when somebody visits that area. This is a condition I

have identified as the one triggering asthma in me. I have now learnt to manage this condition. I now usually send a person beforehand to that rest house with instructions to open all the doors and windows of the room, put the bedspreads in the sun and clean the room. During such visits I also use my own bedspreads.

- Do not feel shy of explaining your condition. It is very relevant while visiting our friends and relatives. Normally, as is usually done in Indian households, the guest is provided with fresh bed linen from the storage box. This is a definite asthma-causing trigger for many of us but we silently suffer for fear of causing embarrassment to the host. I no longer feel shy of explaining my condition to the hosts and in making request for the bed linen under use.
- Management of asthma is best achieved by switching over to the food and life style that has been positively known to be suitable to the body under all conditions. It would mean a shift from the usual 'I don't take this' to 'I take only this'. Mind you, health is your personal asset and it should remain under your control.
- Take a walk. I have noticed that walk for about thirty minutes helps in reducing the effect of triggers.
- Follow a disciplined life. Effective management flows from discipline. If alcohol acts as trigger say no to it!

A little care and sensitivity towards body's responses to the asthma triggers can help many of the sufferers to well manage their condition

Dr GS Goraya is a Joint Director at FRLHT

Organic food—is it all hype and no health?

Mithi Chinoy



Enter into any supermarket or a grocery store today, and your eyes will not fail you in spotting the banners screaming Organic, and the number of health conscious people hovering around those corners. The products displayed on these counters disappear as fast as they can! Today, Health food manufacturers have moved to traditional when mainstream firms bought them up, making organic food more accessible to everyone. Now you get variety in the same food category, for instance, you can find a range of breads to choose from. Also, organic food stores are more willing to source and obtain the products the customers request and serve them with unusual goods. But be wary of advice from health food store employees.

Are these growing trends aiming towards health of the consumer or are they just the marketing gimmicks employed by the manufacturers?

Here's the lowdown on natural foods!

What exactly is organic?

The word organic has a broad reference to store-bought food, or food grown in a home patch without the use of synthetics, or food gathered or hunted in forests. These days, however, this term is increasingly being associated with organic foods, produced and labelled to strict food purity regulations.

Organic farming is that system of agriculture that does not use synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, growth hormones, genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and antibiotics, instead environmentally sound techniques for raising crops and livestock are employed. Farmers also use specially designed techniques to increase soil fertility, balance insect populations and decrease air, soil and water pollution. Today, this is a small but fast growing sector of agriculture.

Need for organic farming

Organic farming has its own benefits that can be listed as:

- Organic farming is beneficial for the land as it reduces water contamination, improves soil quality and protects wildlife habitats.
- Organic produce is good for the body as it prevents hydrogenated oils that contribute to the clogging of the arteries.
- A regular diet of organic groceries helps avoid consuming artificial ingredients, due to the absence of synthetic colours and flavours.
- It also limits one's exposure to pesticides. Studies reveal that organic foods contain one-third of residues that are usually present on conventional produce.

Organic farming in India

In India, however, most of the farms are “organic by default”. Small farmers in the eastern and northeastern regions have no choice but to grow crops without chemical fertilizers or pesticides. These farmers have chosen to do what their forefathers did naturally for thousands of years-organic farming.

With this, the cycle of knowledge and experience is complete as these farmers moved away from organic farming and experienced the ill-effects of chemical farming-soil erosion and loss of soil nutrients, loss of nutrition in food, and the rise of human diseases resulting from the presence of chemicals that seep into the water table willy-nilly.

In 2002, India's total food production was over 200 million tonnes, of which 14,000 tonnes were of organic food products. Today, it has only 1,426 certified organic farms. If this is a small number, put it down to certification. Under Indian government policy, a farm can be certified only after four years of operation at a cost of Rs. 5000. For a small farmer, this could be an entire year's income, but manageable for new industrial organic greenhouses.

Internationally, our exports cannot hold ground if uncertified, despite which uncertified food products within the country are meeting with a measure of success. Way back in 1999, it all began with Kavita Mukhi's (an entrepreneur's) sole desire to feed her family safe, pure food. She would source food grain from small farmers and bought from them purely on faith. Initially, she bought enough to feed her family for the month and a little over to sell. The idea with her was never to certify as her company Conscious Food's sole intention was to support small and marginal farmers.

These days, with an awareness of organic farming and its long term benefits, consumers now look out for the bright colour-coded labeling on food products-green for spice, mustard for cereals and pulses, and red for snacks.

The retail market of this industry is booming today with 2-3 million potential consumers stepping into markets and looking for organic produce. However, they may buy a few products as these cost more than conventional products. Apart from the price, other deterrents are an inadequate retail presence, low awareness, little or no certified branded goods, an incomplete range, and government policies that have an eye on exports.

However, organic farming in India is still way behind the western countries where every supermarket has a green line comprising an entire range of certified organic products is available.

At this stage, however, the industry is faced with many challenges-of quality, consistency, transport, storage, and shelf life. Large exporters too are trying to get into this market now with tea and other food products. Despite all these developments, the small farmer still does not have a platform to retail from. Marketing still takes place by word of mouth, making selling difficult. Trade fairs are rare and so do not have too much of an impact.



Is organic farming health or hype?

The basis of organic farming is the fact that it does not involve the use of preservatives, pesticides, or additives, but just pure whole and nutritious food. In reality, however, this is more an ideal situation than practical and not as easily available as traditionally farmed produce. Besides, though many people advocate the benefits of organic farming, these benefits lack strong evidence.

In addition, the fact that you choose organic produce won't automatically make you healthier than you would otherwise be. This is because you simply cannot assume that anything you buy at a dedicated health food store is vastly superior and healthful than what you get at a supermarket. In India, there is no definition that separates the two, while in countries like the US, there is no federal definition for these words and state regulations vary.

Then, both organic and conventional food products have their distinct advantages and disadvantages-which one you choose depends on your dietary goal. Perhaps you wish to lose weight, cut down on your salt intake, or do away with artificial additives and pesticides.

All you need to do is to read the fine print on the food label and see just how the ingredients stack up. For instance, you may or may not know that health or natural foods may not be processed but could easily contain as much fat, sugar, or contaminants as conventional food products. If that is so, what's the benefit of choosing organic food?

Until recently in India, if you wanted to buy health or natural food, you would have to go to a specialty food store but due to awareness in this area, many food marts all over the country have now begun to stock it.

A word of caution, however: sometimes it is difficult to distinguish the more processed, additive-laden foods, besides which, they cost more than conventional food. Therefore, the point to be noted here is that it is more important to know what you buy rather than trust it because you bought it from a reputed store. Then, go on to figure out just what to buy.

Conventional food and organic food

Brown eggs or white?

Health food freaks insist that brown eggs are healthier than white, though the colour of the shell varies with the species

and poultry breed and has no bearing on nutritional value.

Natural food or processed?

Just because a food item bears the word "Natural" in full blaze on its container doesn't mean that it is a healthy choice of food. These "natural" foods may also contain additives and be high in sugar and fat as conventional food products are. For instance, natural frozen desserts do not contain artificial ingredients but are high in fat.

"Natural" foods should contain no artificial additives or preservatives and should be minimally processed. This will help keep at bay the extra fat, sodium, sugar, and additives generally used in processing. From all these ingredients, only additives have health-promoting properties. Usually, whole grain or enriched products are more nutritious than their refined counterparts and are of comparable prices. For a protein-rich diet, it is more meaningful to go in for plant proteins such as grains, beans, nuts, and peas rather than meat. They can help you cut the fat in your diet and so add to your protein requirements.

Gorging on grains

If you prefer to eat grains include legumes such as beans or peas in your daily menu. They contribute varying ratios of amino acids (the building blocks of protein) needed by the entire body. Legumes usually give the body enough iron, zinc, and B vitamins. From Tofu, you can derive protein, unsaturated fat and a whole lot of health without the fear of building up cholesterol.

Going hoarse over herbs

Though some herbs are safe, others may not be. So, don't go by the hype that all herbs are powerhouses of health and take them as a remedy to your problems. If you take herbs in the wrong combination, it may bring in disastrous and dangerous effects. For instance, there are certain herbal teas that can cause liver disease since they contain pyrrolizidine alkaloids or toxins that lead to an inflammation of the veins that take blood away from the liver, causing scarring and obstruction.

The herb chaparral, touted as an antioxidant, has been known to cause acute hepatitis. Germander, groundsel, skullcap, mistletoe, and senna are said to



What to be beware of:

•Remember, there is no real difference between white sugar, brown sugar, honey, corn syrup, and concentrated apple or pear juices. While honey contains traces of B vitamins, iron, and calcium, blackstrap molasses are a powerhouse of calcium and iron.

•If you read a label that says, "No Salt Added" it doesn't mean just that. In fact, it means that the food item contains a lot of sodium and is therefore unfit for someone attempting a low-salt diet. If you read "low sodium" it means the product contains 140 mg per serving, and "reduced sodium" contains 75 percent less sodium than a similar conventional food.

•If you snack on items found in health food stores, remember they contain heart-healthy non-hydrogenated oils while their conventional counterparts contain partially hydrogenated soybean, cottonseed, or canola oils that can damage the heart.

•If your food contains MSG (monosodium glutamate or ajinomoto) you may react to it with a throbbing headache, aching joints, nausea, dizziness, and shortness of breath, numbness, weakness, and heart palpitations. To avoid this, eat fresh foods rather than processed ones.

•Sulfites are chemicals used as preservatives in dried fruits, and dried potato products. If you are asthmatic, you will find it difficult to breathe within five minutes of eating a food containing sulfites. It could also be fatal and you may also require immediate treatment at an emergency room.

cause liver damage and death whereas woodruff and Tonka beans contain blood thinners. If you take anticoagulant medications such as coumarin and warfarin, don't take any products that contain these herbs or their extracts.

You could also get diarrhoea from teas prepared from the herbs senna and buckthorn. You can also suffer a dry mouth, blurred vision, dilated pupils, and delirium if you unknowingly drink a preparation of either of these herbs—mandrake, lobelia, burdock root, and jimson weed. Sometimes, dangerous plants may contaminate herbs. Take the case of Sassafras tea that causes cancer or ginseng that causes high blood pressure.

How real is the danger?

Conventional food products contain only one-tenth of one percent of pesticide levels that can be got rid of by washing and peeling fruits and vegetables. Organic farming helps in further reducing this trace element though not to an appreciable level as shifting winds and water run-off carry chemicals from field to field. Therefore, the levels of pesticide residues on both kinds of foods are similar. But despite organic fertilizers being chemical-free, they could well be carriers of disease-causing bacteria.

The role of additives

Organic food stores are likelier to have prepackaged, easy-to-make, additive-free products than supermarkets. However, some additives are good such as vitamin fortifiers that serve to enrich foods, prevent food spoilage, and produce uniform colour, texture, and appearance, besides safe long-distance shipping and storage, among other benefits.

These are some salient features of organic food that give this food genre the status it occupies today. If you are a careful and health-conscious person, you will naturally read a lot, ask a lot of questions and then make an informed decision about the food you want to eat. If you continue to do this, you will be on the right track and will reap the full benefits of organic food and enjoy a healthy life.

Mithi Chinoy is a free lance writer, copy editor and loves writing short stories for children. She can be contacted on mithichinoy@rediffmail.com Mobile No. 9848691638

Myriads of migraine

-A hint to migraine sufferers



Lalitha BR

It can feel like gross confusion, or it can feel like you have got a railroad spike pounded through the side of your head. Their exact cause is unknown, but one thing is for certain, a migraine headache can significantly affect the quality of your life, and interrupt your daily activities! Even after suffering from grotesque pain, often migraine is neglected and analgesics are gulped so as to find temporary relief from the headache. Should migraine sufferers continue to suffer when Ayurveda has the answer for its effective management? Let us have a look.

Migraine and Ayurveda

A migraine is a type of headache that is characterized by sharp, long-lasting pain on one side of the head. Typically, a migraine is felt directly behind the eyes. In addition, a serious migraine headache may cause dizziness, nausea, or even vomiting. Some people have regular migraine attacks that can be extremely debilitating in their everyday lives. Termed as Ardhavabhedaka in Ayurveda, migraine is one among the 11 shiro rogas dealt in shalaky tantra wherein diseases, prevention and management of head, neck and eye is dealt in detail.

Ardhavabhedaka is a paroxysmal disorder and frequent prevalent

enigma. Some people only get them once or twice a year; others get them weekly or monthly. Three times more women suffer from migraines as compared to the men in numbers. Severe migraines at times result in photo phobia and phono phobia (fear towards light and sound) which when neglected can lead to grievous complications like loss of vision, hearing and ischaemic stroke.

Causative and triggering factors of Migraine

DIETARY (ahara)- Some people experience their migraines when they consume certain food products such as cheese, chocolate, citrus fruits, food heavy for digestion, fried food, dry, stale food, refrigerated food, peas, bananas, sugar substitutes (aspartames etc) or have irregular meals, or during fasting.

PERSONAL HABITS (vihara)- Exposure to sun, fog, cold wind, swimming, excessive sleep, sleeping during the day time, crying, stress, strain, staying awake in the night or excessive work on the computer may lead to migraine attacks in some.

MISCELLANEOUS (anya)- Hereditary factors, injury to head, controlling natural urges like urine, stools, sneezing etc, excessive carnal desires, hypertension, exposure to bright light, intake of oral contraceptives, food

additives etc can be some miscellaneous causes for migraines.

General symptoms (lakshana) of migraine

The salient features have been explained by ancient Ayurvedacharyas, like Charaka, Sushruta and Vagbhata in detail through site of pain, periodicity of pain, type of headache, biological variation and associated features.

Site of pain- Algesia (pain) is experienced in frontal region of the head, supra orbital (above orbit of eyes), temporal, posterior auricular (behind ears), occipital (posterior region of head), neck etc.

Periodicity of pain- Usually pain occurs/recurs once in a day, 3days, 5days, 7days, 15 days, 30 days, 90days or occasionally.

Type of head ache- Pain can be of different types like pulsatile, hammering, dull, nagging, diffuse, pricking and bursting.

Biological variation- Pain can be in early morning, later in the day, or during menstruation/pregnancy.

Associated features- Giddiness, nausea, vomiting, facial flushing and intolerance towards noise and light. Sometimes pain is relieved by sleeping in dark room or vomiting but in chronic conditions vomiting and sleep aggravates pain.



Stars and whorls

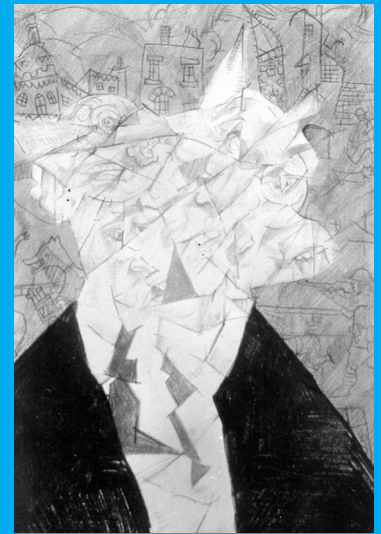


Geometrical vision



Phantom vision

Classical Migraine



Mosaic vision

Types of Migraine

Common migraine- Here, the pain lasts from 4-72 hours associated with nausea, vomiting, photophobia and phonophobia.

Classical migraine- The most important feature here is aura which is nothing but visual hallucination wherein patient sees stars, whorls, mosaic vision etc.

Symptomatic migraine- Migraine caused by intra cranial lesions (due to any growth or clotting in the brain).

Complicated migraine/ Hemiplegics migraine- It is associated with ischaemic stroke and classical migraine.

Abdominal migraine- It usually occurs in children with vomiting and loose stools.

How migraine occurs?

From Ayurvedic perspective, migraine headaches are due to a disorder in tridosha - the mind-body constitution. Although

it is possible to get headaches from disorders in vata, pitta, or kapha, migraines frequently occur when systemic pitta moves into the cardiovascular system, circulates, and affects the blood vessels around the brain. The blood vessels dilate due to the hot, sharp quality of pitta. This, in turn, creates pressure on the nerves, resulting in migraines.

Indulging in food habits which aggravate Kapha, Vaata and Pitta dosha causes impairment in digestion (agnimandaya) leading to production of ama (incompletely formed intermediate product of digestion), blocks the channels of circulation and results in impairment of blood flow in cerebral blood vessels. Initially there will be vaso spasm, leading on to vaso dilatation of blood vessels (due to release of certain substances like kinins and chemicals p, 5HT-hydroxy tryptamine).

Ayurvedic Management of Migraines

Ayurvedic approach is unique, specific line of management has been explained with due consideration and examination of constitution (prakruti), naadi (pulse examination), mental

faculties etc. Treatment depends on nidana parivarjana (to be away from causes), shodana(purificatory measures),and shamana (pacificatory measures).Vitiated doshas are Vaata- Kapha in association with Pitta, hence the measures alleviating them are sought.

Strategies include

Nasya (transnasal medication)- Here medicated oil is used

Anuvasana basti- Medicated enema with oil /ghee

Shamana aushadhi- palliative measures

Shirobasti- restoring the medicated oil over head through head cap

Lepa- Application of medicated paste over forehead

Home Remedies

1. Decoction of Ginger- About 5-10 gms of ginger powder is boiled in 80 ml of water and reduced to ¼th, further mixed with little quantity of jaggery. This is helpful in initial stages of migraine. One tablespoon of this decoction is taken thrice daily.
2. Decoction of Mint leaves is also beneficial when taken with little salt. It is also beneficial in tension headache. Dosage, 1 tablespoon twice a day.
3. Decoction of Mundi weed (Sphaeranthus indicus) is an ideal remedy. To prevent the recurrence of migraine, 3 tablespoons in divided dose to be taken.
4. Concoction of shirisha beeja (Albizzia lebeck), Apamarga (Achyranthes aspera) and long pepper is useful in common migraine.
5. When headache is associated with vomiting, cardamom powder 3-5 gms with sugar can be used.
6. First thing in the morning, take 1 ripe banana. Peel it, chop it into pieces, and add 1-teaspoon warm ghee, 1-teaspoon date sugar, and a pinch of cardamom on top. This is delicious, and it will help to reduce Pitta and prevent a headache from arising.
7. Take Shatavari roots (5 parts), brahmi leaves (4 parts), Jatamamsi rhizome (3 parts) and Musta rhizome (3 parts). Grind these into a powder and take 1/2 teaspoon twice a day, after breakfast and dinner, with a little lukewarm water.
8. Sandalwood paste mixed with Sariva (Hemidesmus indicus) can be applied on the forehead.

A Healing Yawn

When you have a migraine, gently squeeze your earlobes, pulling the ear down, and do the act of yawning. This will relieve the pressure on the blood vessels and help to pacify the headache.

Nasal Instillation (Nasya)

Saffron (few strands) soaked in 1-teaspoon ghee is used as trans nasal medication for 7 days. This has shown very good results in clinical trial carried out.

Madhu yashti taila nasya is sure to give relief from pain when used timely.

Harita manjari taila (4 drops in each nostril) as trans nasal medication for 7 days is useful.

External Applications

Fine powder prepared from Vidanga -3gms, sesame - 2gms, Sariva -10 gms mixed with milk/water is applied over forehead and this usually gives good results.

Powder of Jatamansi mixed with milk and applied over forehead is helpful in relieving migraine.

Ayurvedic medicines for migraine

1. Pathyaksha dhatrayadi Kadha, 2 tablespoons thrice daily.
2. Shira Shuladi Vajra rasa, 2 tablets with warm milk, twice a day.
3. Godanti Bhasma, (calcium preparation) 250 mg thrice daily with milk

Note: Before taking any marketed preparation, consult your doctor without fail.

Non-pharmacological approaches

It includes usage of heat, cold massage, stretching exercises, stress management, relaxation, etc, which are useful in giving temporary relief.

Oxygen inhalation- Inhaling oxygen (100%) for 15 mts at the rate of 7lts /mt has been found to be useful in patients with headache attack without any adverse effects.

Diet and regimen

In Ayurveda, when appropriate diet is followed, migraine can be prevented to some extent. The food stuff known to alleviate Vaata and Kapha such as raisins, warm ghee, bitter gourd, green gram powder with jaggery and milk, ginger, drum stick, long pepper, sweets, fenugreek, Asparagus, wheat grass etc can be taken.

Food and habits to be avoided-Citrus fruits, baking soda, coffee (initially it reduces head ache but later on it aggravates), fluoride tooth paste, Strong scents, hair spray perfumes, colognes, chocolates, pickles, dry food stuffs, excess exercise, stress, strain, tension and controlling natural urges.

MIGRAINE is not a mystery it can be managed well if care is taken on time.

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Rice: to polish or not to polish

Sujata Patnaik

Think about this—almost half the world’s population consumes rice for sustenance. Rice is either the main staple or is an essential accompaniment. It’s a known fact that 90 percent of Rice production and consumption is in Asia and India particularly is home to various varieties including the Basmati. Our rice dishes are innumerable and the very word Annam used for food also means rice—this is one indication of how central rice is to the diet of the average Indian. For us rice is food.



Oryza sativa or rice as we know it popularly, is a great source of Vitamin B, especially thiamin and niacin, and a source of iron, phosphorus, and magnesium. The protein that it provides comes in the form of amino acid lysine. However, to what extent have we explored that the rice we eat everyday is actually healthy for us? Considering the myriad options we have in terms of varieties as in aromatic rice, long-grain and short-grain, as well as price differences, how can we be sure that the rice we eat is the healthiest?

All about Rice

Lets first start with the colour-there is the white rice and the brown rice. White rice is what is most likely to be on your plate. The difference does not just stop at the colour-it is about nutritional values that are directly related to whether a rice is polished or unpolished. Brown rice is the unpolished whole grain rice, produced by removing only the inedible hull or husk using rubber roll mills. The removal of the hull, which is actually just the outermost layer, does not affect the nutritional value of the rice.

White rice is a derivative of brown rice. It is produced by milling and polishing the brown rice. This milling

process involves the removal of the bran layer and a considerable part of the germ area while the polishing process removes the healthiest part of rice called the aleurone area. This area, that is removed to finally produce white rice and increase its shelf life, is full of healthy oils; vitamins, minerals and carbohydrates that are of a lot of nutritional value to the human body.

Add to that the socio-cultural aspects of rice - while the brown rice is seen as cheap and fit for the masses, the white rice is indicative of refined taste. What’s unfortunate is that even though brown rice is cheaper to produce, more and more people in India are opting for white rice as they improve their economic status because white rice is associated with the better of classes. As a result, what society has ended up with is very good-looking white rice that has snob value, is zero in nutritional benefits and high on starch.

Health Hazards of Polished Rice

Christiaan Eijkman who received the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 1929 made pioneering studies on vitamins and based on his work many studies were conducted on

the vitamins in food and the role they play in human health. One such study was to find out whether Beriberi (a consequence of Vitamin B deficiency) was connected with the nature of the rice humans consumed. Research work unearthed that in some prisons where the inmates were fed on polished rice, beriberi was about 300 times as prevalent as compared to the prisons where unpolished rice was used.

White polished rice might be smooth, easy to cook, and appetizing to look at-but what you need to know is that it might be in the least nourishing form. As the brown rice is milled and polished into white rice, 67% of the vitamin B3, 80% of the vitamin B1, 90% of the vitamin B6, 50% of the manganese and phosphorus, 60% of the iron, and the entire dietary fiber and essential fatty acids are drained away.

In Western countries like the United States of America, law requires that white rice is enriched with thiamin, niacin and iron but even then the nutrients that are lost originally cannot be replaced in their original natural form. In India, it’s difficult to gauge whether or not white rice has been enriched, as it is not the general practice and not required by law.

The Goodness of Brown Rice

Brown rice is stated to be one of the world's healthiest whole grains. It might be cheaper and a less popular option but public opinion is bound to change once the goodness of brown rice is realized. Brown rice has a considerable edge over white rice in that it is full of micronutrients, vitamins and minerals. Here's a list of the benefits that brown rice will give you:

- More fiber that prevents both gastrointestinal and heart diseases.
- Essential oils that lowers cholesterol.
- More iron and vitamin B content.
- High levels of phytin that acts as an antioxidant.
- Increased manganese supplies that help to regulate the nervous system by encouraging energy production from protein and carbohydrates as well as the processing of fatty acids.
- More magnesium that helps to deal with the asthma, migraine headaches and lowers high blood pressure by regulating the balance of calcium that affects the nerve and muscles.
- A good supply of the mineral selenium that combats cancer,

rheumatism and encourages DNA repair and damaged cells.

- Raised blood levels of nitric oxide that improves the dilation of blood vessel and prevents the white cells from sticking to the vascular wall—which is one of the initial stages of plaque formation.

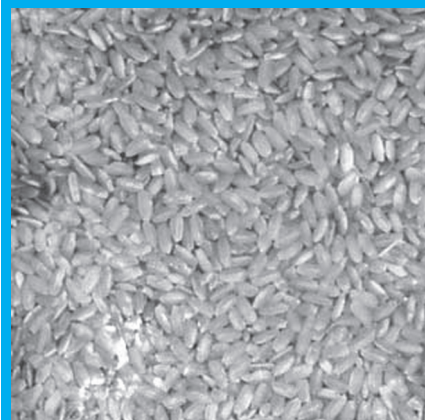
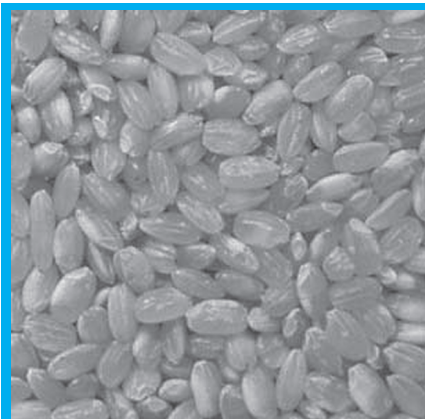
Research has it that the fiber in brown rice is three times more than the fiber in white rice. The fiber content also makes unpolished rice a good source of maintaining and reducing weight.

Like all high fiber items, unpolished rice is least likely to add to weight gain.

A regular intake of whole grains like a serving of brown rice every day is also great for postmenopausal women as it is seen to regulate cholesterol and blood pressure levels thus benefiting the cardiovascular system. The high fiber in brown rice is seen to prevent gallbladder stones in women. Also the carbohydrates from whole grains like brown rice are much healthier than polished refined grains like white rice. Brown rice is of especial nutritional value to nursing mothers as it supplies the much-needed extra calories full of healthy carbohydrates, oils, B vitamins and minerals. Thanks to its high fiber content brown rice aids constipation.

How to get the maximum benefit of the rice that you eat:

- Always check the expiry dates on the packet of brown rice that you are buying. Brown rice can store up to six months and white rice up to a year.
- Rinse the rice both brown and white to remove the dirt from it but do not wash it more than two times.
- Pre-soak the rice at least 20 minutes before you cook to enable it to cook faster.
- Cook the rice in the water you soaked it in.
- Get the water proportion right—for brown rice use one-cup rice to two cups water.
- Try not to cook the rice in a large amount of water and drain it later on—you are literally draining out all the vitamin B of the rice that has dissolved in the water.
- Avoid adding cold water to rice that is already cooking.
- Rice being a versatile food you can add vegetables to it to make a wholesome khichdi, or nuts or milk, nuts and sugar to have a healthy kheer or just enjoy it with a dash of ghee.



Why isn't Brown Rice Popular?

The very first reason is that it doesn't look as clean as white rice and it takes twice as much time to cook. In the fast paced world of quick bites, we are ready to sacrifice the nutrients. White rice is easy to eat and digest and much easier to cook. Another draw back of brown rice is that it cannot be stored as long as white rice. The natural oils present in the aleurone layer in the brown rice turns it rancid if stored over a period of time. White rice however, can be kept in store as the aleurone layer is removed in the polishing process.

Not all white rice is bad-try and find:

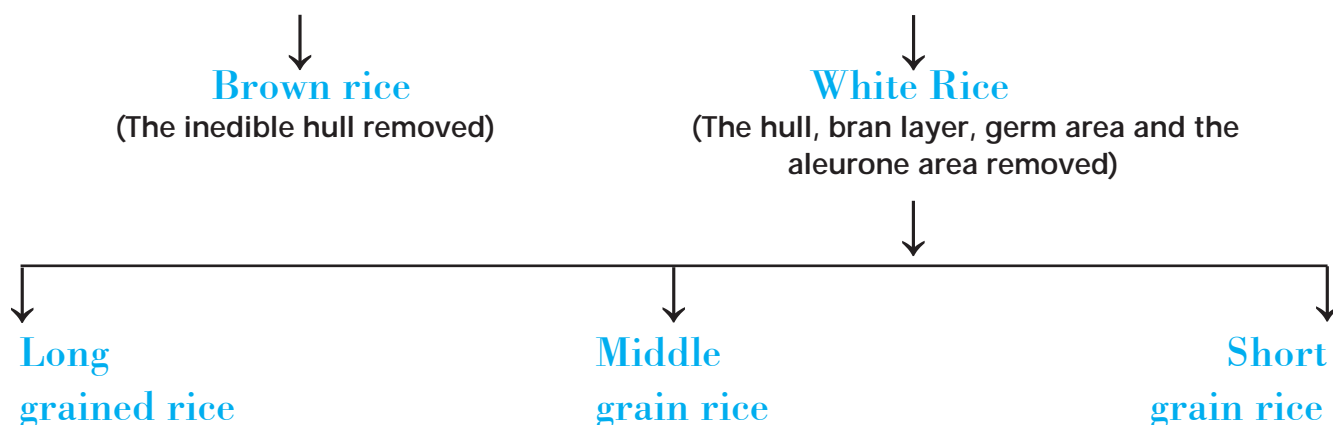
- Enriched white rice, which has been infused with thiamin, niacin, and iron that polishing robs it of.

- Converted rice like parboiled rice that has been soaked and steamed under pressure before it undergoes the milling process so that it retains some of the nutrients.

If you feel you need time to get used to eating brown rice, aim to use the rice that has been milled but not yet polished and has the aleurone layer intact. Opt for brown Basmati rice that is long-grain rice with more fiber and a very good flavor, even though it takes longer to cook. Ayurveda holds Basmati rice to be a pure food or saatvic and one that nourishes the body tissues and easily digestible. This is a fast-paced world indeed and we do need to minimize the cooking time—but at what cost? Bring in the wholeness of unpolished rice and enjoy the health benefits it brings to you.

Raw Rice

(Taken from the rice plant and completely covered with a solid, inedible hull)



- Long grained rice is expensive, aromatic, takes 130 days to cultivate and the grains stay separate after cooking like Basmati.
- Middle grain rice is the most common form of rice cultivated and is of average price.
- Short grain rice has the highest starch content, takes 160 days to cultivate and includes the sticky rice of the Orient.

Sujata Patnaik is a Consulting Editor at ICAFI University Press and coordinates the special project series at ICAFI Books. She can be contacted on sujata.patnaik@gmail.com

Nutrition Chart

Brown Rice/1 cup cooked	
Calories	217
Total fat (g)	1.8
Saturated fat (g)	0.4
Monounsaturated fat (g)	0.6
Polyunsaturated fat (g)	0.6
Dietary fiber (g)	3.5
Protein (g)	5
Carbohydrate (g)	45
Cholesterol (mg)	0
Sodium (mg)	10
Niacin (mg)	3
Vitamin B6 (mg)	0.3
Manganese (mg)	1.8
Magnesium (mg)	84
Phosphorus (mg)	162
Selenium (mcg)	19

White Rice/1 cup cooked	
Calories	205
Total fat (g)	0.4
Saturated fat (g)	0.1
Monounsaturated fat (g)	0.1
Polyunsaturated fat (g)	0.1
Dietary fiber (g)	0.6
Protein (g)	4
Carbohydrate (g)	45
Cholesterol (mg)	0
Sodium (mg)	2
Thiamin (mg)	0.3
Folate (mcg)	92
Manganese (mg)	0.8
Magnesium (mg)	-
Phosphorus (mg)	-
Selenium (mcg)	12

Haridra khandam

-a boon to respiratory disorders



G N Lakshman

Last week, on a cold winter morning Murali (name changed) approached me in my clinic. He kept on complaining about bad weather that was responsible for creating many problems for him. Blame it on weather, but he indeed was suffering from severe cold and cough and his allergy to dust had also increased. He was visibly looking uncomfortable and in bad shape! He also told me about his itching problem all over his body that was aggravating on his exposure to cold weather. Thus, his condition could easily be diagnosed as Sitapittam, which is quite common now days in a dry cold weather like Bangalore.

In this, people suffer from cold and cough with mild skin allergies. Here, I would like to share with the readers of Heritage Amruth, the Ayurvedic medicine that I recommend to all the patients who have a similar health problem like Murali! His condition had improved after taking this preparation.

Why does this happen?

Basically all kinds of respiratory disorders occur due poor digestive fire which leads to a kapha pittik condition causing allergies. Therefore, it is necessary that the digestive fire should always be maintained properly.

Haridra Khandam, an excellent Ayurvedic Remedy To treat this condition, there is an excellent Ayurvedic preparation that has been a boon to the people suffering. The preparation, Haridra Khandam, available in the Ayurvedic drug stores, is prepared from raw turmeric, Cow's ghee, sugar candy, dry ginger, Long pepper, black pepper, cardamom, cinnamon leaves and bark and cow's milk. The other ingredients in this preparation are: Vidanga, Turpetham, nutmeg, myrobalans, Vibhitaka, coco grass or nut grass, Amla and purified loha bhasman.

Is Turmeric good for cold and cough?

Raw turmeric being a major drug in this formulation is pungent and bitter in taste. Since it is dry in nature, it acts against this Kapha pittik condition. The other ingredients such as black pepper, long pepper, dried ginger, triphala etc are responsible for maintaining the digestive fire properly.

How it can be taken?

6gms once or twice daily after food with hot water or with milk.

For which conditions should it be taken?

In Allergies, skin disorders, respiratory disorders, Haridra Khandam can be taken.

Is there any Diet one should follow during medication?

As all the allergies are predominant of kapha and pitta, it is good to avoid curd, deep fried foods, junk foods, oily foods, cold beverages and brinjal during the time of medication.

Is this available in readymade form?

Haridra Khandam is a readily available drug preparation in Ayurvedic drugstores as the trade name Haridra Khandam (Arya Vaidya Pharmacy, Coimbatore), or Aller kand (Sitaram Ayurveda Pharmacy).

Dr G N Lakshman is an Ayurvedic Physician working with the Amruth Clinic, FRLHT, Bangalore.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Effective recipe for the treatment of arthritis

I am a regular reader of Heritage Amruth and an ardent follower of Ayurvedic and natural principles suggested very often in its issues. The tip suggested by the author of the Cover story for the treatment of Arthritis in the October 2005 issue (methi + jeera +pepper) was found to be very effective. We thank you for the same.

Dr Bharati V Chimmad
Associate Professor, Food Science and Nutrition
University of Agricultural Sciences,
Dharwad, Karnataka

Absorbing issue

The December 2005 issue of Heritage Amruth, dedicated to the matters related to bones was truly an absorbing read. I am over whelmed by the content and the presentation of some of the earlier issues also, especially the August 2005 issue on the Heart. Its use to the common man is what appealed to me the most. I congratulate your team members for putting in their best efforts and bringing out an issue worth preserving for our generations to come. May I please suggest you to dedicate an entire issue on Yoga and Naturopathy?

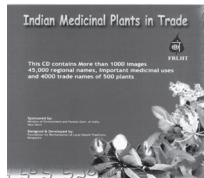
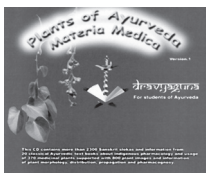
Bhuvan Prakash M,
A Heritage Amruth fan from Indore, Madhya Pradesh
email: prakashb_2003@yahoo.co.in

Medplan Conservatory Society

The Medplan Conservatory Society is a registered Society, engaged in activities for enhancing the public awareness about conservation and sustainable utilization of Medicinal Plants. It directs its efforts to educate the rural and urban communities about this issue and while doing so it has transformed the concerns into a range of educational material in English, Kannada, Tamil and Malayalam. In the last 10 years these have been a huge success, prompting it to go for many reprints and revised editions.

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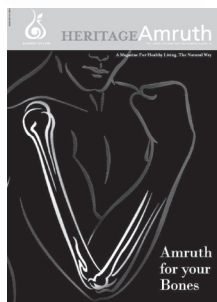
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Get answers to your health related queries straight from our renowned Vaidya GG Gangadharan, Joint Director at FRLHT, Bangalore.



Migraine

My friend is 24 years old; she has been suffering from migraine since 15 years. Earlier she used to take Saridon or some pain killer tablets to get rid of her headache but now days these painkillers are not affecting on her any more. Symptoms are severe pain on the back of the eyes along with nausea, vomiting, drowsiness, dizziness and difficulty in looking at bright light. She gets migraine attacks once in a month. Apart from this, she does not get proper sleep at nights. Please advise some ayurvedic treatment for this disease. And also let me know where can we get these medicines in Delhi.

Deepak Chamola, via email

Migraine is always chronic and troubles the people for years together. In Ayurvedic method, it needs at least 14 days of in house rigorous treatment including purificatory measures like Panchakarmas. A good Ayurvedic doctor can help you in this. You may start with Varanadi Ghritam, warm, 1 tablespoon at bedtime followed by a cup of warm milk or water and take Pathyaksha- Dathryadi Kashayam, 15 ml with 45 ml of water, morning and evening, empty stomach.

Also massage her head with Balahadi Thailam half hour before head bath. Apply a paste of sandalwood made in rose water whenever the migraine



occurs. Take lots of fruits, cooked vegetables and milk. Avoid curd, deep fried items and pickles. Reduce salt and sour items. Always sleep in a highly cross-ventilated room. Practise meditation and Pranayama under an experienced teacher.

Normally this will be helpful; otherwise you may please contact Padmashree Vaidya Balendu Prakash who has come out with a successful treatment protocol for migraine. His address and email id is: Vaidya Balendu Prakash, Mandir Marg, Clement Town, Turner Road, Dehradun, # no: 0135-640792 or 640405. Email: vcpcrf@nde.vsnl.net.in.

Ayurvedic treatment for Diabetes

Is there an ayurvedic preparation to treat diabetes? What is your esteemed opinion on the plant called Madhu nashini? Amarnath, Bangalore

Diabetes is of two types, Insulin dependent type 2 is very difficult to cure. Known as Madhumeha in Ayurveda, it comes under Maharogas (great diseases which are incurable). But in the case of diabetes type 1 (Diabetes mellitus) which is not insulin dependent and where the beta cells are still active and can produce insulin and the problem is with its action on glucose conversion, then Ayurveda has excellent remedies. It may differ from person to person according to the condition.

But as first step, any one with diabetes can try a combination of fresh turmeric, fresh gooseberry and methi in equal quantity (a total of 5 gm in morning and evening) followed by diluted buttermilk. This generally helps but people with high sugar levels should seek help from experienced doctors.

The plant Madhunashini is described in Siddha system and not explained in Ayurveda classics. In some types of diabetes, Madhunashini is said to be useful. The Japanese have taken 6 patents on its diabetic activity. It can be tried in certain kinds of Diabetes.

Excess Phlegm

I have a 7-year-old daughter with a productive cough. The problem is she is not able to get the phlegm out. The cough is very "loose". Are there any other ways to remove phlegm other than coughing? Tia Spruill via email



Give her regularly 2 times a day (morning and evening) 1 teaspoon of Agasthya Rasayanam followed by warm water for 1 month. Give her Karpooradi Chooranam 1 pinch mixed with honey. This will bring out the phlegm. Stop giving her anything cold including cold water. Do not give her fresh fruits for 1 month or till the phlegm subsides.

Cold and Cough

My one year 2 month old girl is suffering from cold and cough. Can you suggest home remedies for her? Moreover we have a tough time feeding her. I have started giving her normal food that we have (without chilli). She prefers fruits like banana, apple, orange, and papaya but with cough is it advisable to give these fruits. She also has a sweet tooth, though sweet is not a regular feature in her diet. Please advise.

Mrs M Maulik

Is your child being breast-fed now? If so, then mother should be careful with her food and should take light food, which is easily digestible. For your daughter, take one leaf of Coleus aromaticus, apply castor oil on both its sides, put on hot tava and put the warm leaf on the centre part of child's head. Put a pinch of turmeric powder in diluted hot milk and give her. Give her warm water to drink. Sweets and fruits are not

advisable at this stage. But still, since she is too small, do not stop giving her fruits completely. You can give her banana (steam cooked) dressed with ghee. Apply half a pinch of Rasnadi choornam on her head at night and rub it slightly for three days only.

Remedies for Wheezing and Indigestion

My son is 14 years old. During winter season he has cold, running nose and sneezing and sometimes he gets wheezing also. Please tell us a remedy. And generally I find his breathing is little fast compared to us. Please advise as to what sort of food to be given and what home made medicine to be given and cause of this.

My daughter is 10 years old and once in 5 - 6 months she suffers from indigestion problem. She has loose motion, vomiting and fever. Please advise the remedy and cause of this.

S Amudha, Trichy

For your son, give him Chyavanprasha of a good brand and if he is in the habit of applying oil on his head before bath, make an oil at home as follows: Heat 25 ml of coconut oil in a small vessel, add a few grains of pepper (broken), few petals of chopped small onion, one small piece of dry ginger (1 gm)

and 1 pinch of jeera. When the jeera becomes reddish, remove the oil from stove and apply warm. Ideally, you can prepare it for 3 days at a time. After bath, let him apply 1 pinch of Rasnadi choornam on his head and rub it. Give him lot of cooked vegetables to eat, no fruits for sometime, no curds and deep fried items. His breathing is faster that affects his lungs through congestion. This shows that his lung is congested, so give him everyday 5 buds of Pippali powder mixed with honey, for 14 days.

For your daughter, give her regularly 1 teaspoon of Ashta choornam with buttermilk twice a day before food. The cause of this can be weak agni (digestive juice). Ashta choornam with buttermilk will improve this and also she should take everyday one gooseberry size of curry leaf ground into paste with one cardamom.

Itching rashes all over the body

My mother who is 55 years of age has suddenly developed some rashes all over her body, which continue to itch. We have observed that these rashes seem to increase whenever she goes out in the sun or during summer season. Is there any Ayurvedic remedy for her condition?

Amala, Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh

It is not very clear whether she has some problem other than rashes. However, let her take Saribadyasavam 30 ml after food for 40 days. Do not give her reheated food.

Vaidya G.G. Gangadharan

Readers can send in their queries addressed to:
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