

AYURVEDA

History

- Ayurveda originated in India several thousand years ago.
- The term "Ayurveda" means "the science of life" when translated from Sanskrit.
- Many practices within Ayurveda predate written records. These practices were handed down by ancestors via word of mouth.
- Two ancient books written over 2,000 years ago are considered the Ayurvedic texts. These books are the Caraka Samhita and Sushruta.
- According to the 2007 National Health Interview Survey, which included a comprehensive survey of alternative health practices used by Americans, more than 200,000 U.S. adults had used Ayurvedic medicine in the previous year.

Geography

- The practice of Ayurveda originated in India, but is used around the world as a form of Complementary Alternative Medicine.



Foods, Food Management Practices

- Ayurveda is based on three life forces or energies that are called doshas. A person is said to have a disease as a result of the doshas not being balanced.
- Each person has a unique combination of the three doshas, with one dosha being prominent. Diet is determined based on the prominent dosha.
- The three doshas are vata, pitta and kapha.
- An imbalance of a dosha will produce symptoms that are unique to that dosha. Imbalances may be caused by a person's age, unhealthy lifestyle, or diet; too much or too little mental and physical exertion; the seasons; or inadequate protection from the weather, chemicals, or germs.
- Each dosha has a list of foods that are thought to be healing. Foods come from the categories of vegetables, fruits, grains, legumes/nuts, dairy, and herbs/spices. These are easily available online with a search using tri dosha diet.
- In India, the Ayurvedic diet is lacto-ovo vegetarian. However, the Ayurvedic diet has been molded in other parts of the world to incorporate the tastes of other nations.
- Foods are categorized as 'balancing' or 'imbancing'.

Communication

- Ayurveda is written in Sanskrit, the ancient language of Hinduism and Buddhism.

Culture

- Ayurvedic medicine is practiced in India, where nearly 80 percent of the population uses it exclusively or combined with conventional medicine. It is also practiced in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, The United States, Europe and Pakistan. Ayurveda is practiced by many different cultures and therefore there is not one particular cultural group that will follow an Ayurvedic diet. Deepak Chopra, a physician in the US, has publicized the Ayurvedic beliefs for the mass market.
- Health professionals should be prepared to ask questions about the individual's cultural background and if there are any specific food ways that they practice that might be related to their religion or culture.

Health Beliefs

- Ayurvedic medicine is practiced to integrate and maintain balance in the mind, body and spirit. It is believed that once balance is achieved, the individual is happy and healthy and able to ward off illness.
- It is considered by some to be "holistic" medicine. In the United States it is recognized also as complementary and alternative medicine.
- Ayurvedic medicine also aims to cleanse the body of substances that can cause disease, leading to harmony and balance in the individual.
- Ayurvedic medicine also treats specific physical and mental health problems. Meditation is a central component of the practice.

Effects on Health

- Research has shown that Ayurvedic diets may help individuals maintain a healthy weight and even promote weight loss. This can be attributed to common recommendations to avoid sweets, alcohol, fried food, fatty food, excessive amounts of bread and to increase water consumption.
- For some individuals, having a holistic approach to health may motivate them to adhere to a healthier diet.

Health Concerns

- Some Ayurvedic supplements and remedies are known to have toxins in them. In three years, the Center for Disease Control has reported 12 cases of lead poisoning that were traced back to Ayurvedic supplements.
- If a food or food group is not recommended for a certain *dosha*, the client may be eliminating healthy foods such as dairy, whole grains and some fruits and vegetables in their diet. Approach this issue with caution. It is best to respect the client's choices and counsel using foods within the guidelines of the recommendations for their *dosha*. Remember that all doshas are encouraged to eat fresh fruits and vegetables, and at least some healthy whole grains.

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