Holistic Approaches to Diabetes

ACUPUNCTURE, CHINESE MEDICINE & DIABETES

Focusing on Type 2, Adult-Onset Diabetes, the author suggests that Chinese medicine is one ancient system that shows great promise in its ability to not only alleviate symptoms associated with Adult-Onset Diabetes, but helps to explain how the disease arises and how it may be managed.

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Diabetes: A Modern Epidemic
Diabetes is a major worldwide health problem, especially in the United States. Modern medical technology has enabled us to easily monitor blood sugar levels and control blood sugar levels with medication.

The body inherently knows how to regulate insulin and blood sugar levels and in a healthy individual will maintain a healthy balance. When either blood sugar and/or insulin levels become too high, serious health problems can arise. Therefore, taking insulin requires the diabetic to closely monitor his/her own blood sugar levels.

There are three “P’s” that must be addressed when looking to understand the nature of diabetes. The first factor is the predisposing, genetic disposition which we inherit from our parents. This is basically a weakness that lets us know that we need to take preventive measures.

The second factor is the precipitating factor, or the actual onset of the illness. Over time there has been a build-up of metabolic stress and/or exhaustion on the pancreas and other systems of the body. Then something happens that acts as “the straw that breaks the camel’s back,” so to speak. The body simply cannot keep up with the metabolic demands and eventually the onset of diabetes occurs. This is the point in time where a person may be first diagnosed with diabetes.

The third factor is the perpetuating factor of diabetes. This means that there could be something that is not allowing the body to self-heal. When we get a cut or a scrape on our skin, our bodies will usually heal that wound. This process is one of the miracles of life – the ability to
Acupuncture is a common approach for treating diabetes in much of East Asia, especially China. Unlike in the United States where most people receive acupuncture once or twice a week, acupuncture is often administered daily.

Acupuncture works by inserting hair-thin needles into specific “points” on the body. These points are grouped along specific pathways or “meridians,” that network throughout the body. Acupuncture adjusts the flow of energy throughout these meridians, and allows the body to heal itself to the best of its ability.

Research has indicated that acupuncture affects the central and peripheral nervous system by releasing hormones that facilitate the healing response. Other responses have been observed in blood sugar, cholesterol, and triglyceride levels. Finally, acupuncture improves circulation which allows the body to heal itself more quickly and more completely. Most secondary conditions that arise from Type 2 diabetes are the result of poor circulation. Acupuncture can be extremely helpful for people who are suffering with these kinds of circulatory problems.

Chinese Herbs & Diabetes
In East Asia, ongoing research is conducted on the use of acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine for diabetes. Based on extensive lab testing and clinical research, there seems to be twenty or so individual Chinese herbs that are successful at lowering blood sugar levels. These herbs have been used for centuries in Asia to treat diabetes and associated conditions.

Although more clinical research needs to be conducted, the evidence shows that these herbs may be helpful for some. Some of these herbs include Ginseng, Atractylodes, Astragalus, Rehmania, Dioscorea, Phellodendrum, Anemarrhena, Coptis, Alisma, and Lycium bark. Chinese herbs are most often combined into formulas in order to enhance the therapeutic effect. Despite some recent allegations, most Chinese herbs are safe to use, especially under the recommendation of an experienced herbalist.

Additional Helpful Hints
Acupuncture and Chinese medicine can help control diabetes, and seem to work best for those in the early stages of adult-onset diabetes. Those whose condition is more progressed can use methods like traditional acupuncture, Micro Acupuncture, Chinese herbs, and Chinese dietary recommendations to control the progress of the disease pattern.

Eat slower and chew your food thoroughly. Everyone with blood sugar imbalances should eat fewer small meals throughout the day in order to keep the blood sugar stable. It is best not to overeat. Eat until your stomach is about 70 percent full (or less). This will reduce digestive stress on your body and allow your metabolism to work more efficiently.

Regarding drink, there are two basic rules. Do not drink water (or other beverages) below room temperature. This causes a great deal of stress on your digestive system and slows metabolic activity. The second is not to drink a lot before a meal. It is okay to drink between and/or after meals. However, drinking too much before meals can dilute digestive “juices” like hydrochloric acid and pepsin. The end result will be poor digestion absorption.

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