The Ginger Compress
From The End of Medicine

Kaare Barsell

If we have established beyond reasonable doubt that we do have Chronic Intestinal Stagnation, then we may want to inquire as to what we can do to aid our intestines in healing themselves. From what has already been written it should be fairly clear we must first begin by changing our way of eating to one based on eating cooked whole grains and vegetables. However, on the physical level, changing our way of eating is not enough. It is often assumed, at least it appears to be the assumption, in macrobiotic literature, we need but change our daily staple foods from meat, eggs, dairy food, refined, chemicalized foods, etc. to cooked whole grains and vegetables and our intestinal function will take care of itself. And, in many instances, when people begin eating whole grain and vegetables according to macrobiotic principles, one of the first changes noticed is a considerable, often dramatic improvement in bowel movement.

However, the consumption of these foods—cooked whole grains and vegetables—on a regular basis as staple foods does not allow for making any real inroads on breaking down the Chronic Intestinal Stagnation, the toxic mucus build-up in the intestinal walls. The Chronic Intestinal Stagnation has, as has already been suggested, been going on over the entire life of the individual living in modern culture, eating the modern diet, and as the years go by the Chronic Intestinal Stagnation becomes extraordinarily impacted and “locked-in” the intestinal walls. Thus we must do something in addition to changing our way of eating if we wish to get rid of the toxic mucus stagnation in the walls of our intestines.

I must avow I am not the first person in the history of humanity to recognize the large intestine as the single most critical organ to address if we wish to affect a true and deep healing of the body. Many, many treatments have been devised over the years in an attempt to remove this impacted mucus material, including enemas, colonics, clay treatments, herbal colon cleansing programs, and fasts of innumerable kinds and varieties. However, none of them actually work in removing the Chronic Intestinal Stagnation, which is lodged in the walls of the intestines. Many are difficult to do, and some actually detrimental. For example, I think, colonics actually weaken the walls of the intestines.

These treatments are effective in sloughing off the mucus build-up in the lumen or cavity of the intestines, but then so is eating a diet based on cooked whole grains and vegetables due to the high fiber content of these foods.

The most effective remedy of which I know is probably several thousand years old, and was probably devised at the beginning of recorded history. I have also heard it was thought up by a physician of a Buddhist persuasion around 500 BC. No matter. To the august and profoundly wise gentleman or gentlewoman who first came up with the idea of the ginger compress, I offer my profound prayer of gratitude.

Kaare Barsell
So, after a long and necessary preliminary discourse, we come to the reason for the writing of this book:

**ITEMS REQUIRED**

1. One gallon of water in a container with a lid (tap water is fine).
2. One quarter of cup finely grated—by hand—fresh, unpeeled ginger root (non-organic is fine) wrapped in the cheesecloth, or other natural fiber cloth, to make a bag of grated ginger. A ginger root, which fits in the palm of your hand, will suffice for the amount of grated ginger needed.
3. Two one foot wide terry cloth towels three feet long. Also good are cotton baby diapers.
4. One cotton bath towel.
5. One pair of thick rubber gloves.

**PRELIMINARIES**

Before proceeding, take the terry cloth towels and, singly, fold each one in three-fold such that it covers the area of your abdomen, which goes from the sternum (breastbone) of the rib cage to the pelvic bone, and from one hip to the other hip. Once you’ve done this, sew each one along the loose edges so they are prevented from falling open once you start doing the treatment.

Also, the treatment has to be done on an empty stomach, either an hour before you eat or two hours after you eat. It can be done at any time of day. However, a practical tip is to do the treatment before you go to bed, and after doing it, leave all the materials where they are in the kitchen, and go to bed. First thing in the morning, before eating breakfast, reheat the ginger water pot, making sure you do not boil the water, and you can do the treatment again. Thus you can use one pot of ginger water for two treatments.

If we use one gallon container for our ginger compress then after it is ready to start doing the treatment, the ginger water will retain its heat long enough to do two, possibly three, treatments before needing to be reheated. If you want to ensure the ginger water remains hot after you have taken it off the stove, obtain a hot plate you can plug into an electrical outlet near the place you choose to do the treatment and place the pot of ginger water on it after you have made it.

**PRELIMINARY INSTRUCTIONS**

Place the container of water on the stove and bring the water to a boil. Meanwhile, grate the unpeeled ginger root using a fine tooth grater (do not use a blender) until you have approximately one quarter cup of grated ginger; the easiest way to assure you do not lose any ginger root is to place the piece of cloth you’re using to wrap the ginger in, in a bowl and grate the ginger onto the cloth in the bowl.

When you have grated enough ginger, bring the four corners of the cloth in the bowl together to enclosed the grated ginger in the cloth; twirl to make a neck and wrap a rubber band or tie around the neck to hold the four corners together. You now have a bag of ginger. Any ginger juice will be found at the bottom of the bowl.

By now the water in the pot will be near to boiling, if it has not already reached boiling. Then, and this is the most important point, once the water has reached boiling point, switch your heat source off and let the water stop boiling before taking the bag of grated ginger, squeezing the excess juice in the grated ginger into the hot water, place the bag in the pot, and if there is any ginger juice in the bowl you grated the ginger into, pour that in also.

Then place the two folded and sewn up terry cloth towels or cotton diapers in the pot of hot ginger water and let them soak for a minute or two, with the lid of the container on. You are now ready to do the compress.

Place an old blanket or sheet on your couch, carpet or bed, wherever you choose to do the compress and set up the pot of ginger water with the two terry cloth towels (henceforth referred to as the ginger towels) in it, on some newspapers within easy reach of where you lie down on your back (do not use plastic in any shape or form) on the couch, bed or floor, expose the skin of your abdomen, and place the bath towel, also folded so it can cover your abdomen, on your lap.

Then, with the rubber gloves on your hands, remove the lid of the pot, place it on the floor, and take up one of the ginger towels in the pot (if you’re lying on the floor you need to sit up to do this), ring out the excess liquid into the pot, then replace the lid on the pot to keep the heat in.

Taking the wrung-out ginger towel, open it up so it is flat (it will remain folded if you have sewn the loose edges together), lie down if you had to sit up to do the preceding, and raise and lower the ginger towel over the skin of your abdomen, close to but not actually touching the skin to begin with—until you can tolerate the ginger towel laid directly on the skin. After you have placed the hot ginger towel directly on the skin of your abdomen, cover it with the bath towel, which has been lying on your lap, to keep the heat in.

After two to five minutes the ginger towel on your abdomen will start to cool down. Then, lift up the bath towel covering the ginger towel; remove the cooled ginger towel, leav-
The End of Medicine
by Kaare Bursell

Kaare Bursell (pronounced Core-ah Bur-sell) has written a book entitled, *The End of Medicine*, a book in which he details how to help the body heal itself. In particular, the book contains step-by-step instructions of how and why to do a ginger compress over the intestines.

Perhaps you know (or know of) Kaare; perhaps you have heard about laying hundreds of ginger compresses over the intestines, perhaps you have even done them. I have. I have known Kaare for years. I have heard him speak. I have even done ginger compresses, although not the recommended hundreds. But now, after reading the book, I have a renewed understanding of why this method is valuable.

The book’s main tenet is that the body has the wisdom to heal itself, and given the right conditions, the capacity to actualize a deep healing, a healing so profound it affects the spirit. In Kaare’s opinion, this healing comes about due to the combination of proper diet and the catalytic property of the ginger compress. Proper diet provides the needed nutrients. The ginger compress breaks up stagnation in the small intestine, freeing the small intestine from sludge. The body regenerates which, in turn, allows the mind and spirit to renew.

Esoteric studies are not new in macrobiotic circles; the link between body and soul is well established. Yet, this book goes beyond a casual correspondence and explains how the deep seat of the intestines reflects the inner workings of the soul. It is a mind-boggling example that originates with Rudolph Steiner. Rudolph Steiner (instigator of the Waldorf schools) is insightful; his writings are serious, and his teachings cover subjects as vast as education, farming, and philosophy. Kaare is well versed in Steiner’s teachings and in this book, connects some of the dots about the physical and astral bodies.

The End of Medicine presents a fascinating analysis. Even if you don’t agree with the body/soul connection theory, you can’t dispute the scientific discussions of digestion and blood alchemy. Each topic has a respective chapter. And, as if this isn’t enough to make you think, there is a chapter on yin and yang!

This is a book of information intended to help the reader maintain health. The section on home remedies, specifically the ginger compress, is thorough. Highly recommended.

-- Book Review by Julia Ferré

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**TREATMENT INSTRUCTIONS**

I recommend the compress be done 64 times, two to four times a week. This constitutes one round of compresses; this may not be, and is generally not, enough to complete the rehabilitation of our intestines.

If you determine your intestines need more work, I suggest waiting for 6-8 weeks and then do another round of 64 compresses. I think it takes three rounds of 64 compresses each, generally speaking, to complete the rehabilitation of our intestines. I also recommend that the three rounds of 64 compresses each be done over a one to two-year period.

It must not to be assumed that doing more ginger compresses more often is better than I recommend here. The intestines undergo their rehabilitation in their own good time, so we must show patience in allowing them to do so. In my experience it takes a minimum of two years for the intestines to rehabilitate themselves and a maximum of seven years. It is also important to point out that the 64 compresses per round doing to 2-4 compresses a week is not mandatory. What I mean is it is important to do the 64 compresses per round. However, it is not always possible to do compresses every week because you may be on vacation, or for work or some other reason you do not have the time in a particular week or two. Therefore it is fine to miss doing it for one or two weeks; just taking up where you left off, keeping track of the amount of compresses you have already done.

The reason it takes so many compresses to complete the rehabilitation of our intestines is the Chronic Intestinal Stagnation has developed over many, many years, even decades. The older we are when we discover our Chronic Intestinal Stagnation, the longer it has been going on. And the longer it has been going on, the more tenaciously hardened and impacted it is in our intestinal walls. Therefore the more ginger compresses we’ll have to do, more consistently and with perseverance, in order for the compresses to have their desired effects.
I also recommend that once you are satisfied your intestines are back in shape again, it is a good idea to do ten to twenty compresses every few years, although this will depend upon you doing your facial diagnosis to determine the condition of your intestines. With regard to children it is better to wait until they are seven years old before doing the ginger compress regimen on them.5

The activity of ginger is amazing. It is a root (downward energy), which also has a very strong dispersing odor when grated (upward energy). This dynamic quality enhances heat and activity. The strong downward presence during the compress penetrates deep into the organs as well as through the walls of the organs. The dispersing effect increases circulation ten fold and assists in breaking up hardened accumulation which could be 50 years old or more. The increased circulation also assists in eliminating these excesses from the body and returning the body’s natural rhythms to normal. Eating well during this time is important, as you do not want to slow down this process. Also discharges may occur during this process and you may want to consult your counselor during these times. Do not use on the brain, on infants, during high fevers or pregnancy, or on any direct inflammation or cancerous area.

**The Activity of the Ginger Compress**

The ginger compress works because of the etheric or chi activities of the heat and the ginger root. From the perspective of yin-yang theory, the ginger root has strong yang activity by virtue of its “rootness.” This more yang activity means the etheric activity of the ginger has a strong, downward, penetrating direction of movement.

On the other hand when we grate the ginger root we notice how the aroma of ginger powerfully fills the room, attesting to the strong dispersing, expansive movement of ginger chi. The reason for this is the ginger root grows horizontally under the ground, which means it is also influenced by more yin activity, than, for example, burdock or carrot roots which grow straight down. It is this additional more yin factor that is responsible for its dispersing (more yin) activity, which is further enhanced by finely grating the ginger.

My feeling is that by doing the ginger compress in this way, laying the towel soaked in the hot ginger water, which is permeated with the etheric activity of the ginger root, thereby harnessing it, on the abdomen while lying on our back, the ginger towel focuses these etheric forces on the abdominal cavity, in which the intestines lie, and they penetrate into the tissues by means of the root (more yang) activity and break up the toxic mucus stagnation encountered in the tissues by means of the strong dispersive activity. Furthermore, the etheric forces of the ginger stimulate the etheric forces of the intestines, thus activating their proper activity.5

The activity of the heat of the compress stimulates the circulation of the blood and tissue fluids in the area being treated, which then facilitates the bearing of the dispersed toxins away to be excreted.

The combination of these three etheric or “chi” activities brought to bear by the compress, means the tissues of the walls of the intestines begin to receive clean, revitalized blood (if we have also changed our way of eating to a daily fare of cooked whole grains and vegetables, and it has to be emphasized the ginger compresses are wasted time if we have not) for the first time in years, or decades. They become revitalized, leading to a regeneration of the tissues and restoration of their proper, harmonious function.

**During the Treatments**

As a result of doing the treatments, toxic mucus deposits are gradually dissolved and flushed into the bloodstream, and what happens overtly as a consequence will depend on many factors.

All I will say here, and more will be said on this subject in the chapter “Macrobiotic Healing,” is that the body may show signs of detoxification or may show no overt signs of it cleansing itself other than passive weight loss, increased urination and bowel movement and some fatigue.

More active signs of cleansing include nasal mucus discharges, sore throat, coughing and sneezing, fever, and flu-like symptoms, temporary constipation and/or diarrhea, various aches and pains, skin eruptions in various parts of body and headaches. If accompanied with healthy appetite, normal sleep patterns, general vitality and no nausea, these signs indicate the healing process is going very well.

**Contra-Indications**

The ginger compress on the abdomen should not be done in the following instances:

During pregnancy and breastfeeding. It can be done when menstruating.

If there is abdominal inflammation, peritonitis, pneumonia. On the brain.
On infant babies.
In cases where a high fever is running.
If there is presence of overt cancers in the abdominal region, although they may safely be done if cancer is present in other parts of the body.

In macrobiotic literature, which discuss the ginger compress, you will come across writings on “special considerations for cancer patients…” and there is mention of the Taro Potato Plaster. The reason it is mentioned that cancer patients should not do the ginger compress for more than five minutes on the cancer is because it is thought the stimulation of the blood supply caused by the compress means that, if there is a cancerous tumor in the region being treated, the increased blood circulation will cause the cancer to grow.

However, this is only true if the blood is still toxic. When a person starts a macrobiotic dietary regimen, in ten days the blood plasma (the fluid in which the blood circulates) is renewed; in 30-60 days all the white blood cells will be newly created, and in 120 days all the red blood cells will be newly created.

Thus, theoretically, if we begin the ginger compresses four months after starting the dietary practice, then the increasing blood flow means clean, revitalized, fresh blood will be circulating more vigorously. The cancer consequently will then be receiving this fresh clean blood, which in turn means the cancer will dissolve faster. However, to act on the side of caution, if a person has cancer of the colon or some other cancer of the abdominal region, it is perhaps wiser to wait until the macrobiotic practice has been done for one year before embarking on the regimen of ginger compresses.

I have also heard comments the regimen of two to four compresses a week applies too much heat to the organs being treated. However, doing it the maximum four times to the abdominal region is a total of two hours of the 168 hours of the week, which comes to 1.19 percent of the week, hardly excessive.

Furthermore if we classify all illnesses of the human organism into two groups; whether they are illnesses from too much heat, or illnesses from too much cold, in the body, then it turns out of all the degenerative illnesses are illnesses of too much cold in the body.

Two problems may become evident during the course of the treatments. One is that the skin of the abdomen takes on a darkened, brownish/red/yellow hue; this will clear up after regimen has been completed. The other is the possibility of detoxifying too rapidly; meaning the symptoms of discharge may become overwhelming. In this case, simply adjust the rhythm of the compresses by temporarily stopping them for a few days or a week or two. The key point, as I pointed out before, about the regimen of 64 compresses is to do them; whether this takes 16, 20, 32 or 40 weeks is immaterial; what is required is to get the compresses done on a relatively consistent basis and to complete the 64.

**Notes**

1. This subject is addressed in more detail in the chapter on General Dietary Recommendations.
2. The reason for placing the grated ginger in a bag is to avoid having pieces of ginger floating about in the water or getting on the towels. Also, if ginger is boiled, the treatments will not work.
3. If you place the ginger towel immediately on the skin you will scald the skin, a very painful experience!
4. You can check the facial features described in the chapter on diagnosis to see what changes occur. To make this easy, I recommend you have a photograph taken of your face before starting the regimen of ginger compresses, and another one after you’ve completed the 64 treatments. If you do this, you will get a much clearer impression of the changes by comparing the “before” and “after” photographs side by side.
5. Children today are being born with Chronic Intestinal Stagnation, due to the “modern diets” of their mothers during pregnancy.
6. When we cover the abdomen from the sternum to the pubic bone, we are also treating the stomach and spleen/pancreas, and the liver/gallbladder, and because the lungs are the paired complimentary organs of the large intestine, and heart of the small intestine, these organs are also being treated.

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**Kaare Bursell** was born in Kenya and moved to England at age 14. He graduated from the University of Liverpool, School of Veterinary Medicine and Science with a Degree of Bachelor of Veterinary Science (B.V.Sc.) in 1971. Kaare found macrobiotics in 1975 and helped start Oakland’s Organic Cafe and Macrobiotic Center in 1983. He has counseled over three thousand people with many and varied degenerative conditions. Kaare has given seminars, workshops, cooking classes around the world. He has written for many publications and is Secretary of The Pacific Macrobiotic Conference, held bi-annually since 1982 to the present. Kaare aspires to change the current self-destructive course of the world to a positive, constructive, and healthy one. He can be reached at: kaareb@mac.com.
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