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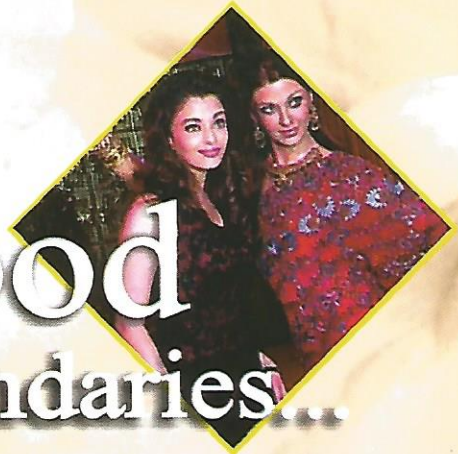
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Treatment of Arthritis - the Ayurvedic way

□ Ravi Bhanot

It is vital to diagnose which type of arthritis you have as Ayurveda distinguishes three categories corresponding to vata, pitta and kapha



Ayurveda suggests that primarily an excess of Ama and lack of Agni cause arthritis. Poor digestion and a weakened colon, resulting in accumulation of undigested food and the build up of waste matter, can cause this. Poor digestion allows toxins to accumulate in the body and problems with the colon allow the toxins to reach the joints. One way, therefore, to treat arthritis is to stimulate the digestive fire (agni) and suppress the Ama. It is vital to diagnose which type of arthritis you have as Ayurveda distinguishes three categories corresponding to vata, pitta and kapha. Depending on a person's lifestyle, diet and emotional constitution, vata, pitta or kapha goes out of balance. Then that particular dosha slows down agni resulting in the toxic, sticky by product of inadequate digestion known as Ama. Arthritis can be different for people depending on their body types.

VATA

Arthritis is the most common type of arthritis and is seen when there is an excess of vata, usually from the colon. This settles in the joints accompanied by ama or toxins. The autoimmune system is triggered off and this attacks the joint surfaces. This results in pain, dryness and stiffness.

Treatment: Take hot baths and massaging oneself or having an Abyhanga Ayurvedic massage with oils such as Sesame oil will help. Putting 20% Mahanarayan oil in will fortify the massaging oil. Herbs, in the form of capsules, such as Boswellia (Indian Frankincense) and Commiphora mukul (guggula) taken three times a day will help as anti-inflammatory, pain killing and to strengthen bones and improve flexibility. A herb Triphala will help in keeping the colon clean. It is recommended that dairy foods and nightshade foods

such as potato and eggplant be avoided and to follow an anti-vata diet.

PITTA

Arthritis is seen when there is heat, swelling or a burning sensation. It starts with excess Pitta or heat in the body and the accumulation of acid by-products of metabolism overflow from the intestine. These have moved through circulation to the joints.

Treatment: Cool compresses and massaging oneself or having an Abyhanga Ayurvedic massage with oils such as coconut oil help reduce symptoms. To strengthen the oil 20% Khsheerbala oil may be added to the coconut oil. A 5-7 day detoxification diet and an anti-pitta diet of cool, slightly dry and heavy foods would help. If cool compresses aggravate the pain the arthritis may be either Vata or Kapha type. Herbs such as Boswellia and Commiphora Mukul, one capsule three times a day would help. Use ice bag for cooling.

KAPHA

Arthritis starts with build up in the lungs and sinuses causing a slow down of digestion and metabolism and blockage of the elimination of ama. Arthritis symptoms witnessed are dull ache, congestion and swelling.

Treatment: Have hot baths, compresses or massage oneself or have an Abyhanga Ayurvedic massage with massage oils such as Almond oil. A 20% solution of Sahacharadi oil can be added for stronger oil. Dry heat such as sauna helps. A one to two week detoxification diet would also help. An anti-kapha diet, foods that are light, dry and warm would be recommended. Hot herbs such as dry ginger, turmeric and cinnamon would be helpful. As with other types of Arthritis herbs such as Boswellia and Commiphora Mukul, one capsule three times a day would help. If heat aggravates the pain then it may well be a Pitta complaint. □

(Ravi Bhanot is an Ayurvedic Researcher, Homoeopath and Nutritionist with The Ayurveda Institute of Europe.)