



# AYURVEDIC MEDICINE

## WHAT IS AYURVEDIC MEDICINE?

The word "Ayurveda" is made up of two Sanskrit words meaning "the knowledge of life."

Ayurvedic medicine originated within the ancient spiritual traditions of India. It treats and nurtures the mind, body, senses and soul. It attempts to strengthen the immune system using personalized routines for meditation, spiritualism and nutrition. Ayurveda employs a system of herbalism similar to traditional Chinese medicine (see fact sheet 704).

Ayurvedic practitioners enhance well-being and prevent disease by nurturing the deeper connections between mind and body. They believe that true health means more than the absence of disease. True health is a state of "total health," where the patient's vital forces are well-energized and in balance.

## WHY DO PEOPLE WITH HIV USE AYURVEDIC MEDICINE?

People with HIV often consult with Ayurvedic practitioners to help improve their overall health and energy level.

According to Ayurveda, HIV relates to issues with loss of energy.

Ayurvedic medicine does not cure HIV infection. Many people, however, believe that it has helped them improve their overall energy levels, improve their immune system, help fight off other infections, or deal with the side effects of antiviral medications.

## HOW IS AYURVEDIC MEDICINE PRACTICED?

Ayurvedics believe that the body uses three *doshas* or types of energy:

- *vata*, the energy of movement
- *pitta*, the energy of digestion and metabolism, and
- *kapha*, the energy of lubrication.

In a typical introductory session, patients are classified by body type into three groups determined by proportions of the three *doshas*.

The practitioner consults with a client and goes through a procedure of questioning, observation, and inference. A practitioner may take a client's pulse, look at their or tongue, or listen to their voice.

The practitioner designs a program of diet, exercise, and spiritual practices appropriate for that person's needs. Sometimes these recommendations include elaborate routines for early-morning practices, purification procedures, prayer or meditation, and exercise.

Ayurvedic medicine also uses its own medicines. Some of the proprietary Ayurvedic medicines used for HIV patients include 'Chyavanprash', and 'Raktavardhak' for immunity building and 'Sookshma triphla tabs' to prevent infection.

## WHAT ARE THE RISKS AND SIDE EFFECTS?

Some people may not tolerate the herbs or treatments well, though treatments intended specifically for patients with HIV are designed to be gentle.

It is unknown if any of the Ayurvedic herbals interfere with HIV medication absorption. Practitioners recommend taking any herbs a few hours before or after HIV medications.

In 2008, the FDA warned that about 20% of Ayurvedic products purchased on the Internet had measurable levels of lead, arsenic or mercury.

## HOW DO WE KNOW IT WORKS?

There is very little formal research on Ayurvedic treatments. However, if it seems like people don't want to answer your questions, be extra careful.

Be wary of practitioners who claim their treatment will "cure" HIV. You may be dealing with health fraud. See [Fact Sheet 206, How To Spot HIV/AIDS Fraud](#), for more information.

To help you evaluate this or any other alternative therapy, consult [Fact Sheet 700](#) on alternative therapies.

## WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

[The Ayurvedic Institute](#) at <http://www.ayurveda.com/>: 505/291-9698

Fundación de Salud Ayurveda Prema  
<http://www.medicinaayurveda.org/quees.htm>

Reviewed October 16, 2011