

Ayurveda: The Emerging Integrative Healing System in the West

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Ayurveda is an ancient healing art and science and a holistic approach to health and wellness, focusing on improving, maintaining, and balancing mind-body health. The first step in healing the mind and body in ayurvedic medicine is based on meditation. Modern society is fast paced, and more and more stress related disorders, such as anxiety, are very commonly seen in our society. 18% of the population in the United States of America, about 40 million people, suffer each day with anxiety. Anxiety disorders cost the nation more than 42 billion dollars annually. According to National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health, 8% (18 million) use meditation techniques, and 9.1% (21 million) use yoga practice to manage their anxiety. Integrating ayurvedic practices in modern society is the key to bringing balance, health and wellness for optimum health. According to Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the leading causes of death and disability in the United States, chronic diseases -- such as heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes, obesity, and arthritis -- are among the most common, costly, and preventable of all health problems.

Recent scientific studies on various herbs have revealed innumerable healing benefits. For example, ashwagandha (*Withania somnifera*) has shown anti-stress, anti-carcinogenic, anti-aging, anti-inflammatory, and cardio-protective, thyroid stimulating, anti-diabetic, immunomodulatory, and neuroprotective activity as well as nephron-protective effect; vasa (*Adhatoda vasica*) has scientifically shown anti-tubercular, anti-asthmatic, broncho-dilatory, anti-parasitic, anti-allergy, utero-tonic, wound-healing, anti-ulcer, anti-bacterial and insecticidal activity.

Ayurvedic system of healing focuses not only on administering various herbal preparations, but also adopts various modalities such as: daily routine; seasonal routine; yoga; breathing techniques; meditation; relaxation; proper diet according to season and individual mind-body type; seasonal cleansing and physiological purification methods (Panchakarma therapies); and rejuvenative programs into daily practice to alleviate stress and chronic diseases.

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