

## A HEALTH ENHANCEMENT AND LONGEVITY NEWSLETTER

## Lower Back Pain

Lower back pain is an ailment many people know all too well. Statistics show that pains in the lower back increase with age, reaching 50% in people over 60 years of age. People don't have to fall into this statistic if they start alternative therapies now. The Maharishi Vedic Approach to Health<sup>SM</sup> program offers approaches to preventing and treating lower pain now so one does not suffer later in life.

## Causes of back pain

Science today attributes much of lower back pain to poor posture, strain, and psychosocial stress. The Maharishi Ayur-Veda® program regards back pain as a symptom of vata and kapha imbalances and of accumulated ama.

## Vata

Each of the three doshas (vata, pitta and kapha) has five subdivisions called "sub-doshas" which control particular functions of the body.

One of the subdoshas of vata, *apana vata*, is related to lower back pain. It is situated in the lower pelvic area and is responsible for the downward moving aspect of vata which relates to elimination and menstruation. Problems, such as constipation and painful periods may reflect an underlying imbalance which can result in lower back pain.

## Kapha

One of the subdoshas of kapha, *avalambaka kapha*, has a supportive function and is located in the lower back and heart. It lubricates and supports the spine and sacrum. When *avalambaka kapha* loses its lubricating and supportive function the precipitating problem is often a vata aggravation. When vata gets aggravated by stress, overwork, fatigue, or too much cold, dry or rough foods in the diet, the increased vata influence in the body can dry up kapha. When kapha is dried up it does not lubricate properly resulting in dryness in the joints. This creates pain, aches, stiffness, etc. This drying influence may also cause difficulties with elimination and constipation.

## Ama

Ama—toxins and impurities that accumulate in the tis-

sues, giving stiffness in the muscles, tissues and joints—is another factor to be considered with lower back pain. When excess vata and kapha doshas accumulate, ama gets deposited in the joints. When ama blocks joint movement and the production of synovial fluid (fluid lubricating the joints), it can lead to: cracking joints, neck pain, loss of cartilage and overproduced bone growth at the joints resulting in osteoarthritis. To increase back flexibility, as well as to avoid other health problems, we need to remove ama.

## Treatments

Proper treatment for chronic lower back pain includes prevention on the level of regular stretching and Maharishi Yoga<sup>SM</sup> Asanas. In addition, the Maharishi Rejuvenation<sup>SM</sup> treatments offered at The Raj are useful in removing obstructions, or

impurities, that have accumulated in the body over time. In particular the Soothing Herbalized Warm Oil Treatment, the Revitalizing Oil Treatment and the Herbalized Steam Treatment. Also, the Basti Treatment at The Raj is extremely helpful for balancing *apana vata*.

## Diet

If you are prone to lower back pain you many want to avoid excessive vata foods, such as dry foods and raw vegetables. Root foods aggravate vata and have certain properties which affect joints. To reduce ama, avoid: cheese, yogurt, non-vegetarian diet, and heavy foods.

## Learn To Relax

Many people find that their back goes out when they are under stress. Under stress the whole body tightens, tenses, and can easily go into muscle spasm which can push vertebrae out of place. This is the reason that bending to do something simple that you do everyday can suddenly make your back go out. At that particular moment your back is in the grip of vata and there is a lack of looseness or flexibility in that area. The Maharishi Ayur-Veda program recommends daily practice of the Transcendental Meditation technique to help eliminate stress and thereby help prevent lower back problems. ■

## Questions and Answers

**Q: What causes pitta to become out of balance?**

**A:** On the one hand, the pitta dosha may be directly aggravated by mistakes in diet and behavior. For example, eating too much pitta-aggravating food, not following the proper daily routine for pitta season, being under too much pressure, and doing things in a hurry can contribute to imbalance in the physiology.

On the other hand, the pitta dosha cannot be considered in isolation, since it is intimately connected with the functioning of vata and kapha throughout the body. For this reason, to keep pitta healthy, we must attend to vata and kapha as well. That is why the preventive measures of the Maharishi Ayur-Veda health program aim to create balance in the entire system—including the mind, body, behavior, and environment—even while focusing on a specific dosha.

Having seasonal Maharishi Rejuvenation Programs at The Raj, Maharishi Ayur-Veda Health Center, following the seasonal and daily routines, and eating the foods recommended for your body type and season all help to prevent disease and create balance. Seasonal check-ups with a physician trained in the Maharishi Ayur-Veda program are also important, because through pulse diagnosis your physician can detect imbalances in the physiology and prescribe appropriate corrective measures to prevent disease.

**Q. I do a lot of work in an office with bright lights and in front of a computer screen. I often have eyestrain. Can Maharishi Ayur-Veda help me improve my eyesight and lessen the strain?**

**A:** The eyes are one of the “seats” of pitta, and are related to the primary element of fire or light. Here are a few recommendations to balance pitta, ease eyestrain, and improve vision.

Avoid work that requires close focus at night. This includes reading, sewing, working on a computer, or watching TV.

Use sunglasses when you're in the bright sunlight. This will protect the eyes and have a cooling effect on the whole physiology during summer.

Avoid eating foods that are highly pungent, such as cayenne and chilies. These aggravate pitta dosha, especially in the summer.

Drink water (not iced) frequently throughout the day to improve digestion, purify the system, and enliven the body's self-repair mechanisms. (see Summer Soothers and Guidelines)

**For more information,  
or to find an Maharishi Ayurvedic  
physician in your area,  
call 1-800-248-9050.**

## Raj Results

**“I** couldn't be a happier client,” said Sue Mandel when we called her four months after her visit to The Raj. “I've never felt so well in my life.” And her insurance company is happy too. After seeing the results of her week long stay at The Raj, Blue Cross has agreed to reimburse Sue for most of her rejuvenation treatments.

A 54 year old fine art dealer from California, Sue Mandel, came to The Raj last fall suffering from chronic asthma, multiple digestive disorders, sinus problems, little-to-no thyroid functioning, migraines, and back pain from a traumatic injury that left her with two crushed discs.

“I had been sent from one specialist to another with little or no success, and no knowledge of how to help myself. I had MRIs and medicines of all kinds. My immune system was shot. I had been given every diagnosis from Hashimoto's syndrome to rheumatoid arthritis and had been advised surgery was the only answer for my back. It was then that I began researching alternative wellness programs that could put me back in charge of my own health. After thoughtful deliberation, I decided to come to The Raj.

“I felt so great at the end of my stay at The Raj that I was determined to continue an Ayurvedic lifestyle at home. Every morning I give myself

an oil massage. I follow my diet recommendations, take my herbs, and go to bed early. I cook for myself now the same way I learned in the kitchen at The Raj. I also follow an exercise program that includes Yoga exercises. The stretching really helps with the back pain. And of course I am regular with my practice of the Transcendental Meditation® technique.

“At the time I came to The Raj I was taking 12 to 14 pills a day—asthma medication,

pain pills, migraine medicine, muscle relaxants, thyroid hormones, and sleeping pills.

Today I'm down to two medications, for thyroid and migraines, and I'm hoping to be off the thyroid medicine very soon. When I went to my doctor recently we discovered my cholesterol had dropped from around 400 to 200 and my thyroid functioning was normal. My asthma has completely disappeared and I feel energetic and happy. And I've lost 35 pounds without even trying. I told Blue Cross that I was saving them thousands of dollars a day and they agreed!

“Everybody notices the change in me and asks, ‘What happened to you?’ Of course I tell everyone about The Raj and about the Maharishi Vedic Approach to Health. It turned my life around and put me back in charge of my wellness. I look forward to returning to The Raj next year and to continuing to feel better and better.” ■



# Seasonal Tips

## Summer Soothers

Summertime and the living is easy—or hot, sticky and uncomfortable. According to the Maharishi Ayur-Veda program, sizzling summer weather can cause pitta dosha—the metabolic principle that governs heat and metabolism—to increase in your body. Tempers can flare. Heat rashes, ulcers, irritability and anger are just a few of the problems that too much pitta can cause. Even the most easy-going people can become overly tired and grumpy. Avert the danger of pitta's fiery temper with the following suggestions:

Even in pitta season, (that season in which pitta dosha is predominant and which lasts from June to October), icy cold drinks are not recommended because ice cold can douse the digestive flame. Instead, keep the digestive fire at a low steady burn by taking cooling, soothing foods that are sweet, bitter or astringent, and cool but not ice cold.

Sweet easy to digest foods, cool foods (not iced) and liquids tend to bring the body back into balance during pitta time. Sweet pacifies pitta because it cools the physiology. Sweet foods include: sugar, rice, milk, cream, butter, ghee and wheat products. Coconut and juicy fruits such as

watermelon or grapes are also highly recommended.

Like sweet tastes, bitter foods cool the physiology and are therefore pitta-pacifying. Bitter foods include: bitter greens (endive, chicory, parsley, sprouts), leafy greens and cucumbers.

Astringent foods are also dry and cooling. Astringent foods include: beans, lentils, pomegranate, spinach, leafy greens, cabbage, broccoli and cauliflower.

The Maharishi Ayur-Veda program advises that everyone should follow a seasonal routine to preserve balance as the seasons change. This routine does not involve major alterations in your life-style, only a shift of emphasis.

### OTHER WAYS TO KEEP COOL

- A cooling atmosphere: Soothing aroma oils and fragrant flowers have a cooling influence on the mind and decrease the tendency toward anger as well as other out of balance pitta symptoms. Small indoor water fountains soothe pitta and cool down the atmosphere.
- Even though those with a predominance of pitta dosha love to compete, summer exercise should be moderate because heavy or excessive exercise increases heat in the body. Exercise early in the morning not in the noonday sun.
- Protect your self from the sun by wearing a hat, sunglasses and sun screen. Although swimming is a good summer exercise don't sunbathe for long periods and especially avoid the harsh noonday sun.
- Walking in the moonlight or next to water is also recommended.

### Pitta Season Guidelines

**FAVOR:** foods that are cool and liquid and tastes that are sweet, bitter or astringent.

**MINIMIZE:** foods that are hot, spicy, salty or sour.

One way to prepare pitta pacifying foods is to add cooling spices and herbs to your foods and drinks: anise, cardamom, coriander, cilantro, fennel, fenugreek, licorice, mint and turmeric. Also remember, don't douse your digestive fire with ice cold drinks. If you do have a cold drink, ask for it without ice.

**The following pitta pacifying recipes are from The Raj cookbook available through our herb department.**

Chutneys are served as a relish to accompany the meal. They each make about 1 1/2 cups.

#### Raisin-Date Chutney

- 1 tsp fennel seeds
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 2 tsp coriander, ground
- 1 cup raisins
- 1/2 cup dates, pitted and chopped
- 1/4 cup orange juice
- 2 Tbl fresh ginger root, minced
- 1/4 tsp nutmeg
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 3 Tbl chopped fresh cilantro

Dry roast seeds and coriander. Combine raisins and dates and soak 20 minutes or until fruits are soft. Combine all in a food processor. Pulse until coarsely ground.

#### Plum Chutney

- 1 1/2 cups red or purple plums
- 1/2 Tbl peeled, fresh ginger root, minced
- 1/4 tsp each cloves, mace, cinnamon, coriander and turmeric
- 1/2 tsp fennel
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1/2 cup grape juice
- 1 1/2 cups granulated sugar grated peel of 1 orange

Dry roast ginger root, spices and fennel seeds. Add plums, salt, juice, sugar and grated orange peel. Raise the heat slightly, and, stirring constantly, bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and cook chutney about 1/2 hour.