

Macrobiotic Colon Care

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Of all the topics of conversation, one's intestine and colon are the least people talk about. Yes, irritable bowel syndrome, constipation, gas, diverticulitis and colorectal cancer are simply things we do not like to discuss. And yet, as the old saying goes, death begins in the colon. Ask any coroner, autopsies often reveal colons that are plugged up to 80 percent with waste material.

We are generally too caught up with work, family, chores and coping with stress in our daily life and we are often too busy worrying about our body shapes, the condition of our faces, pimples, dark spots, wrinkles, pigmentation to ever notice how our colon and intestine talk to us. When we do, it is usually because we are experiencing something unpleasant, and it happens to the healthiest of us. Actually, we can protect our colon and intestine by following a few basic Macrobiotic (which literally means, natural or untreated), lifestyle principles. If we develop some problems along the way, some simple and effective natural Macrobiotic remedies can provide relief.

THE INTESTINE AND COLON

Between your mouth and your rectum is a winding 6 meter-long tube, known generally as your digestive track. Its function is quite simple: Food enters the mouth, gets chewed up, torn into shreds by enzyme, acid and bacteria in the stomach, and is then absorbed into the bloodstream in the small intestine. The undigested parts get eliminated toward the end of the system: in the colon, which is also known as the large intestine.

The total time it takes for food to enter the mouth and exit at the rectum is called the transit time. For anyone who follows a healthy diet, free from refined, processed and chemicalized food, the average transit time is about 30 hours. But in this junk-food eating lifestyle, approximately 50 hours and more transit time is common in this modern society. Constipation is what you would get. The problem with this long transit time is that the longer the waste product stays in our colon, the more difficult they are to expel. Finally the colon turns into a waste dump for toxins, bad bacteria and carcinogens, a breeding ground for organ malfunction and cancer.

The guideline for caring for your colon is simple, but people just never get it right. What could be more basic than having enough fibre in your diet, drinking clean water and exercising?

The greatest help to intestinal health is dietary fibre or roughage. Research shows you will develop major infirmities of the colon if you don't eat enough of it. Fibre is readily available in whole grain, vegetables, fruits, beans, seeds, nuts and seaweeds. Fibre is the portion of plant food that human digestive enzymes cannot break down. It absorbs moisture, which increases its size and gives the muscles in the intestinal walls something to grab onto, making the stool softer and helping the whole digestion elimination process more smoothly.

Many vegetarians too who eat too much white rice, white noodles or white bread, sugar, margarine or butter, have constipation distress. A diet low in fibre and high in refined and processed foods can cause diverticular disease. In diverticulitis, the most common ailment of the large intestine, results in small hard stools passing with difficulty. Muscles strain and intestinal pressure increases, producing sac-like herniations in the lower colon. The sacs

fill with fecal matter and over time, develop swelling, inflammation and pain. Consumption of food high in saturate fat and cholesterol increase the risk for this disease. Alcohol and smoking are associated with causing polyps, benign growths in the large intestine that may become malignant. Low intake of whole grains, high in fibre and vegetables, especially those high in folate, are also linked to colon cancer. Vegetables high in folate are those such as cabbage, broccoli and cauliflower.

DIETARY VIEW

From the dietary view, colon cancer is caused primarily by long-term intake of overly yang foods, including meat, eggs, poultry, hard cheese, heavy fish and seafood, and other animal foods. Too much hard-baked food, grilled, roasted and other strongly cooked food and too much refined salt and salted foods also contribute to an overly contracted condition. Though heavy animal foods are the main cause of colorectal malignancies, sugar, refined flour, light dairy products, alcohol and other yin, expansive food and beverages can cause the large intestine to become loose and sluggish.

A sedentary lifestyle and an irregular pattern of eating, especially eating late at night and before going to sleep, burden the intestines and contribute to digestive disorders. Drugs, medications, artificial electromagnetic radiation and other environmental influences may also contribute to its development and accelerate its spread.

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WATER

Water is essential to avoid colon problems. Drink boiled filtered water instead of coffee, tea, soft drinks, soda or alcohol. They are diuretics that increase urination and actually increase water loss in the body. Water separates the sticky feces from the mucous lining of the colon. This also stimulates a hormone that promotes the muscular movement of the intestines that moves food and waste through and out. A lack of water contributes to inflammation, diverticulitis, constipation, hemorrhoids and colon cancer. Drink as and when you feel thirsty and it may not be 8 glasses a day as you are advised. The amount of water a person needs varies from individual to individual. The problem here with most modern people is they normally ignore the thirst feeling that their body signals to them.

EXERCISE

There is a link between lack of exercise and an increase in the risk of colon cancer. Physicians routinely prescribe physical exercise for patients with constipation. A study of lifestyle factors among 75,000 Norwegians showed that those individuals who walked or cycled at least four hours a week had a significantly decreased risk of colon cancer. And a Harvard study indicated that people with the highest level of physical activity had half the incidence of colon cancer than those who exercised the least.

CHEWING

In the Macrobiotic perspective, the need for exercise applies to your mouth as well. Chew your food slowly as many as 50 times a mouthful to avoid the ingestion of gas. Chewing is the first step in digestion which breakdowns food into smaller and more digestible pieces while mixing them with saliva. Salivary enzymes begin the digestive process and lubricate the food for a smooth trip down into the stomach. How you eat, not just what you eat, also affect digestion and intestinal health. From ancient times, the virtues of chewing have been widely recognized. Chewing contributes to a more efficient use of nutrients, gives stronger energy, and makes the food sweeter to the taste. It also makes food go further and hence contribute to increased savings, reduce energy consumption and a healthier planet.

In Alex Jack's book, "Let food be thy medicine", he reported that when AIDS first appeared in 1981,

macrobiotic educator Mr. Michio Kushi began recommending thorough chewing as a key dietary measure to help prevent the development of immune deficiency. He noted that the Yang contractive properties of saliva, which is promoted during chewing, could help neutralize the extreme yin, expansive quality of the AIDS virus.

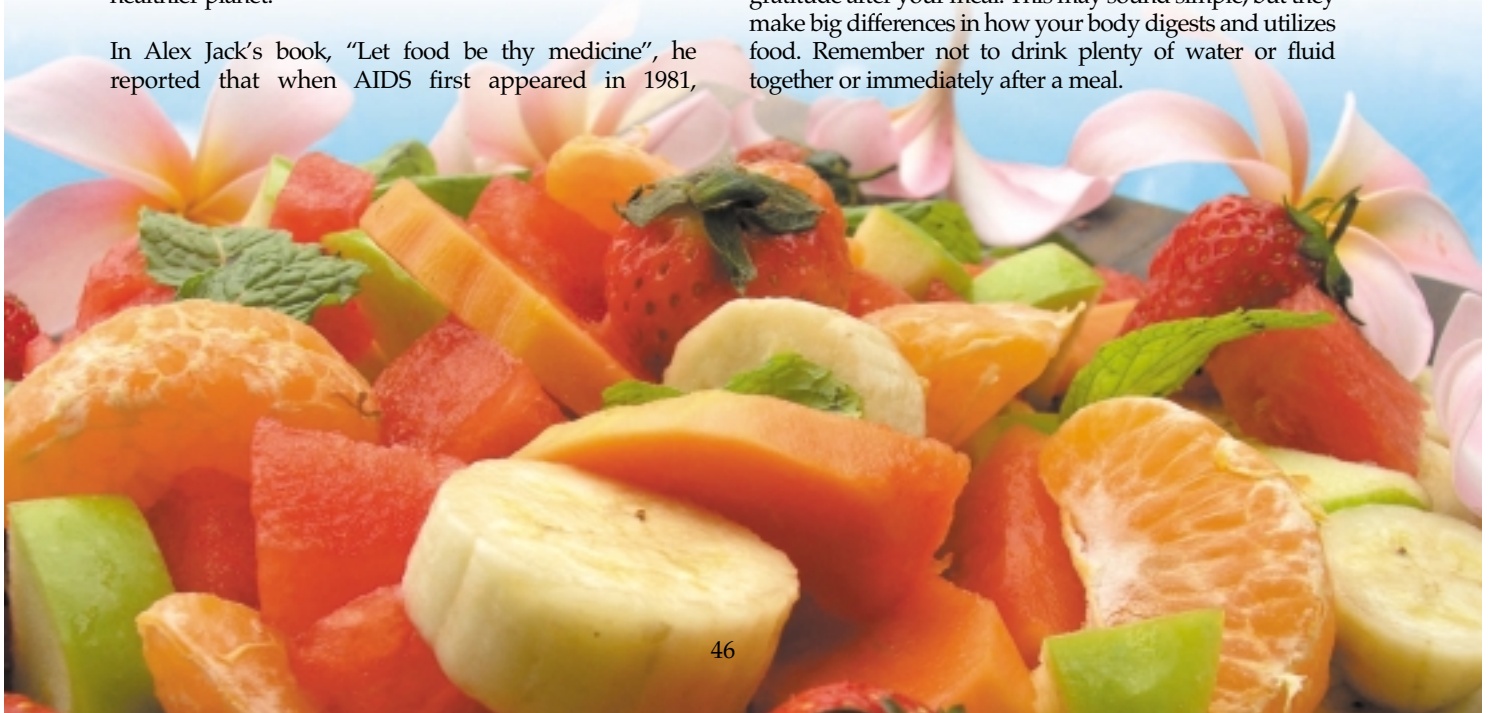
"Saliva inhibits HIV". Saliva contains substances that prevent the AIDS virus from infecting white-blood cells. In a study, dental researchers tested saliva from three healthy men, 30, 40 and 42 years old respectively. Tests indicated the men were not carriers of the AIDS virus and were not known to be at high risk for infection. In laboratory dishes, the men's saliva prevented the AIDS virus from infecting lymphocytes, a type of white blood-cell that is among the immune system cells attacked by the AIDS virus in the body. The researchers said the finding might help explain why no cases have been documented in which the AIDS virus was transmitted from person to person through saliva such as through kissing or sharing toothbrushes. The scientists concluded that saliva is well known to contain substances that kill bacteria and funguses and so might also be able to block the AIDS virus.

CHEWING AND CANCER RISK

An Indian cancer researcher concluded that thorough chewing lowered the risk of cancer. "The proper chewing of meals ensures that mucous-rich saliva mixed with the food seem to be protective factors." Cancer also appeared to more prevalent in south India where white rice and considerable more fat, oil and spices are used in cooking than in north India where whole grain chapattis and thick dahl made with lentils are the staple.

Chewing prolongs life in a concentration camp. In his book on the powers of food, especially the power of chewing, Lino Stanchich, a leading macrobiotic teacher, describes how his father survived a concentration camp in Serbia during World War II by very thorough chewing.

Eat in a relaxed atmosphere, never eat when you are upset, always sit down to eat and sit quietly for a few minutes of gratitude after your meal. This may sound simple, but they make big differences in how your body digests and utilizes food. Remember not to drink plenty of water or fluid together or immediately after a meal.



DETOXIFY YOURSELF

The following remedy is recommended:

Remedy 1: Macrobiotic 10-day colon detoxification therapy

Recipe for First and second day:

First thing in the morning:

Take 1 glass of warm water mixed with 1 teaspoon Macrobiotic nigari salt. Sip slowly so as to move the bowel and reduce intestinal gas. You may chew your water to help in the bowel movement too. (Nigari salt is derived from the ocean, and is basically a type of sea salt which is rich in trace minerals minus the sodium content).

Third day to eighth day:

Take 2 times a day for 10 days, one in the morning and one in the evening:

1 tablespoon Macrobiotic organic Japanese ume plum vinegar

1 glass of water of warm filtered water

1 sachet of kanten seaweed powder (3g) *(Note: kanten seaweed has the highest content of fibre among all food).*

After the 10 day-programme, you may also get the side positive effect of weight loss as you know, waste products plugged in the colon could be as much as 2kg.

Beverage during the 10-day detoxification period:

Take only Macrobiotic bancha twig tea or barley tea. Avoid all mineral or carbonated waters, soft drinks, iced beverages and coffee or tea.

Remedy 2 : Sesame seed tea

Use black organic sesame seeds as much as possible. Otherwise, brown organic sesame seeds.

Ingredients:

2 tablespoons slightly crushed sesame seeds

1 cup boiling water

Method:

In a stainless steel pan, mix the sesame seeds and water, bring to a boil and simmer for 15 minutes. Drink the seeds as well as the liquid. If you desire a sweet taste, it is recommended that organic rice malt be added. Take daily for 2 to 3 weeks.

Remedy 3 : Sautéed konnyaku:

Chop a block of konnyaku, a jelly-like cake, into shapes like noodles or matchsticks. Sautee it with a little sesame oil. Season with organic soy sauce to taste. Take everyday as a side dish for 2 weeks.

Remedy 4 : Fasting

Fasting is practiced by most native tribes and organized religions. This is another method of detoxification. In the macrobiotic view, a 7-day or 1-day fasting is recommended with sprouted brown rice drink and water.

People on prescription drugs should be aware of possible gastrointestinal side effects. Antibiotics are notorious to the intestine. Besides zapping the bad bacteria in the intestine, they wipe out the good bacteria as well, opening the door to yeast overgrowth, infections, diarrhea, constipation and a host of other problems. After a course of antibiotics, it is advisable to take an intestine flora supplement, I find the best quality among all, is the Natren brand of friendly bacteria for the stomach, small intestine and colon.

There are many other things you could do to come out with your own strategy for maintaining your intestinal health. If you think of health, think of your colon first. **YL**

Sources:

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