

The mother of Ayurvedic herbs

One of the most widely used and popular herbs used in the Ayurvedic apothecary is actually made up of three fruits. This gem of a combination is called Triphala. They say in India, if you don't have a mother, take triphala. The reason being, Triphala, when made in different combinations, takes care of what ails you and has been used in all sorts of maladies from digestive problems, constipation, cancer, eye problems and even used as a toothpaste for teeth disorders.

Triphala powder is made of a blend of equal parts Haritaki (*Terminalia chebula*) Amlaki (*Emblia officinalis*) and Bibhitaki (*Terminalia Belerica*). Respectively each fruit pacifies the doshas Vata, Pitta and Kapha. It has the ability to nourish and pacify all three doshas, yet it is a powerful detoxifier as well. It contains five of the six tastes that Ayurveda claims we need to nourish our bodies properly. When taken over time, triphala will remove the excess dosha or doshas from the body, bringing it back to equilibrium. A few of the body systems it helps to support is the digestive, circulatory and genitourinary. It is a wonder herb!

The beauty about this fabulous herb is that it is good for the Vata type, who suffers from constipation, or the Pitta type, who suffers from loose bowels, and the kapha type, who has sluggish intestines. What I do with clients is I start with a base of triphala, and then according to their doshic imbalance or vakruti, I will tweak it a little to meet their needs... For instance, if a pure Vata person comes to me and says they are having trouble with constipation, then I make them a triphala formula, adding more of the Haritaki. Or if someone comes to me and is a Pitta type with indigestion, burning stomach, I will put more Amalaki in it, etc.

My teacher used to say that if you take triphala every night, it is like a mini panchakarma...the poor man's cleansing ritual. And since we are approaching the fall season, we need to start the building blocks to maintain our health and well being. Triphala is a gentle way to help us transition between seasons, as it helps to eliminate toxins in the liver. High in Vitamin C, triphala also helps to fight infections. Let's keep our immune system in tact!

For problems with the eyes, triphala has been known to do great things. I have used it in my practice as an eye wash. I soak one teaspoon in a glass of water over night. Then I strain it with a cheese cloth to remove all particles and put it in an eye cup and use it to cleanse the eye system. This treatment is good for cataracts.

A treatment called netra basti is often given in panchakarma, where a dough ring is made out of certain flours and placed around the eye. After the dough ring is secured, ghee or a medicated triphala ghee is poured in the ring. This treatment has a profound effect on problems in and around the eyes. We are in the era of computers and driving and TV and staring a lot into electronic devices. Netra Basti with Triphala ghee helps to relieve eye strain, tension and dryness and is known to improve vision. Not to mention, it is a really cool treatment.

Although Triphala is an occasional bowel moving stimulant, it is not thrown in the category of other harsh and dependent herbs used as purgatives, like sienna leaves or cascara. On the contrary, Triphala

helps to tone the intestinal wall and heal the villi, the tiny hair-like projections in the intestines.

You can purchase triphala at just about any health food store these days. They sell it in pill form and powder. To really reap the benefits of triphala, I suggest you take it in powder form. One caveat, i'm not going to lie, it tastes pretty bad. (there is always a catch, huh?) So here is a very effective way to do it and not so strong of a taste.

Take a teaspoon of triphala, put it in a glass, pour about 8 ounces of water and let it sit over night. Then in the morning, without disturbing the herb at the bottom, drink all the liquid. Fill the glass up again with water using the same herb, let it sit all day and take it before bed. You can use the same herb twice! If you ingest the herb, all the better. Note: You may notice a laxative effect at first. This is your body getting used to Triphala, and that effect will subside. Bottoms up!

Note: As with any herb, if you are pregnant, it is best to stay away from it. Ayurveda is based on movement and energy in the body. Triphala's energy is downward moving. When in doubt, do without... ommmm, shanti, shanti, shanti....

Upcoming Ayurvedic events: Intro to Ayurveda - September 28th

Eight-Day Group Cleanse - October 11th