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Akash Tatva chikitsa through fasting

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Abstract

*And he knew that the food was Brahman.
From food all beings are born
By food they live and into food they return
TAITIRIYA UPANISHAD 3.2*

Food, anna, is the first word for Brahman, the supreme Godhead. Everything in the universe is food. The inner self, atman, is the eater of the food which is everything. All that we see is food for the soul. Our development as a soul depends upon our ability to eat and digest the food that is our life. Food is the basis of our life, prana. It carries the life force and sustains it in the body (YOGA AND AYURVEDA-SELF HEALING AND SELF REALIZATION) The researcher takes the readers and the practitioners through the scientific process of fasting and how it helps in maintaining and boosting the Akash tatva (the space element-a key element of panchmahabhut), which plays an important role in balancing body mind and soul.

Keywords: Ayurveda, Panchmahabhut, Fasting, Akash Tatva

Introduction

Fasting is a completely natural process which each one of us does at night while we sleep, and the next morning we break our fast with breakfast. In India, many Hindus especially ladies practice regular fasting a part of their religious customs. Sometimes they fast once a week or on full moon days. If not a complete fast, they may take only fruits and other light foodstuffs. Fasting is also an integral part of the Muslim faith, with daylight fasting during the holy month of Ramadan. In Buddhism and Christianity fasting is also of great importance. Christ and Buddha both fasted for 40 days before reaching enlightenment and starting their missions. Other people have used fasting solely as a practice to improve physical and mental health, while natural therapists have suggested that fasting is at the basis of curing many diseases. Fasting combined with yogic practices has been found to be very useful for digestive problems, helping to eliminate even long-standing conditions such as amoebic dysentery.

What Is Fasting?

The word fasting comes from the old English word 'FASTEN', (Shankardevananda, 1979) [2] meaning to fix or make firm. Under no circumstances does fasting mean starvation. In effect, the point where the body starts to starve because it has depleted its nutritional reserves is the end of the fast. From the outset it is important to realize that the fasting stage only takes place so long as the body can support itself on the stored reserves within the body. Starvation begins when the body's reserves are depleted or are at a dangerously low level.

Fasting like all other natural cures is based on the principle that the body itself contains the most efficient healing agents. These agents are most effective when they are unhampered by the process of digestion and assimilation which tends to drain off much of the body's energies. Fasting gives these systems a much needed rest and releases energy for the elimination of toxins and for restoring the body to health.

Most people continually overtax the body by eating too much, drinking too much and living in a continual state of tension. Instead of an adequate supply of natural nutrients, the body often receives a mixture of denatured and devitalized foodstuffs which tend to clog it up. Bodily

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efficiency is continually impaired by the surplus of food which it is unable to use up or throw off. Fasting gives the body time for thorough cleansing and expulsion of accumulated wastes.

Fasting and Disease

Have you ever wondered what would happen if we did not take drugs for every sneeze, for every headache, for every cut and wound and instead give our body a chance to heal itself??? Most people are not really living, they just exist. They are so full of toxic poisons that life is an effort. Believe – it is only we who can put an end to all our miseries and lead a healthy peaceful life and we will surely achieve this with ‘Fasting Therapy’

Fasting, undoubtedly, is one of the most important and incidentally the cheapest of all natural remedies. It is the quickest, simplest and most efficient method of relieving the body of overloaded food and preventing it from poisoning the system. It is surprising to know that only a small quantity of food is actually required to keep the human system in good condition. The majority of the people are eating food in excess even though they believe they are eating food moderately. It is an established fact that people do not die of fasting, whereas people who eat liberally may die earlier due to one disease or the other caused by eating food the so-called delicious food which is junk and over-indulgence.

There are millions of bacteria present in the food we eat, the water we drink and the air we breathe which maintain themselves in a kind of equilibrium. When conditions are favorable to them, they multiply enormously, which means there must be a fertile soil for bacteria to gain sufficient foothold and dominate. It is Nature’s rule that nearly all diseases are caused directly or indirectly by auto-intoxication or self-poisoning. Nature cure treatment aims at killing these bacteria and curing the disease through cleansing, overhauling or detoxifying the system through fasting drinking lemon water and enema. Fasting should not be confused with starvation. Fasting is constructive; whereas starvation is destructive. Through fasting all important organs like the stomach, intestines, liver and pancreas, besides kidneys and lungs, are given rest. In short, fasting is a real cleansing device – an overhauling and purifying process. Periodical fasting is very essential to keep the both healthy, but fasting for longer periods should be undertaken on under the guidance of an expert/naturopath.

(<http://www.naturehomeopathy.com/sugar-and-salt.html>)

It is worth noting that the method of breaking the fast is more important than the fast itself, as wrong methods could lead to damage of the digestive system. We have to resume normal diet slowly and gradually starting with fruit juice and raw food for a few days. Similarly, for a couple of days, go on a fruit and raw vegetable diet before resorting to fasting on water. Clear the bowels daily with enema.

Psychology of Fasting

Fasting must be practiced under the right circumstances and in the right frame of mind. If one is worried about toxins building up in the body or about becoming too fat, then the fast will be ineffectual. There will be tension instead of complete rest and relaxation. Such fasting is not natural; it arises out of desire or fear rather than need and throws the body’s metabolism out of balance. It is better to call this sort of process starvation instead of fasting.

Self-imposed fasting can also be used as a meditative sadhana. If the hunger is great, you can practice antar mouna

and observe everything that goes on in to your body and mind. Through this you will learn many things about yourself and the importance of food in your life. You will see the psychological pull that hunger and taste exert as well as your habitual approach and attitude towards food. This is a method not only to discover the inner workings of the body and mind but also to develop mental strength and willpower. Fasting when approached correctly is very relaxing. As the body slows down the mind also does and this can be felt in the following ways:

- Breathing is freer
- There is greater ease of movement
- That ‘tired’ feeling disappears
- Fullness and discomfort in the abdomen are soon replaced by lightness
- Blood pressure is lowered.

How to Fast

The duration of the fast depends upon the age of the patient, the nature of the disease and amount and type of drugs previously used. It is sometimes advisable to undertake a series of short fasts of two or three days and gradually increase the duration of each succeeding fast by a day or so. No harm will accrue to fasting patient provided they take rest and are under proper professional care.

Methods of fasting are water, juices or raw vegetable juices. The best, safest and most effective method is lime juice fasting. During fasting, the body burns up and excretes huge amounts of accumulated wastes. We can help this cleansing process by drinking alkaline juices. Sugars in juices will strengthen the heart, juice fasting is therefore the best form of fasting. All juices should be prepared from fresh fruit immediately before drinking. Canned or frozen juices should not be used. A precautionary measure, which must be observed in all cases of fasting, is the complete emptying of the bowels at the beginning of the fast by enema so that the patient is not bothered by gas or decomposing matter formed from the excrements remaining in the body. Enemas should be used at least every alternate day during the fasting period. The total liquid intake should be approximately six to eight glasses. A lot of energy is spent during the fast in the process of eliminating accumulated poisons and toxic waste materials. It is therefore, of utmost importance that the patient gets as much physical rest and mental relaxation as possible during the fast.

(<http://ayush.gov.in/about-the-systems/naturopathy/techniques-and-benefits-different-modalities-naturopathy/fasting-therapy>)

Breaking the Fast

The success of the fast depends largely on how it is broken. The main rules for break in the fast are: do not overeat, eat slowly and chew your food thoroughly and take several days for the gradual change to the normal diet. The ideal moment to break the fast when ‘true hunger’ returns with symptoms like clear tongue, breath becomes sweet, clean taste in mouth, clear urine, glowing face with sparkling eyes, freshness with full energy. There are signs that body has completed its cleansing and ready to resume eating. Fasting should be broken gradually. After water fast, start with fruits and vegetable juices, salads, sprouts and then one can switch on to normal cooked diet. Fasting in itself is not a cure but it enables the body organs and recuperative forces to turn their full energies upon the problem to be corrected. This is the great secret power within.

(http://www.indianetzone.com/13/fasting_therapy.htm)

Indication

Obesity, Fever, Constipation, Skin Disorders, Asthma, Headache, Common Cold, Hypertension, Sinusitis, Gastric Ulcer, Stress, Menstrual Disorders, Arthritis, Anemia.

Contra-Indications

Kidney diseases, Diabetes Mellitus, weak patients with low Blood Pressure, Epilepsy, Schizophrenia, Pregnancy, Lactation, Protein-energy malnutrition (PEM) during antibiotic course.

Misconceptions about Fasting

1. Weight loss

Losing weight is only one part of the picture but it can be and certainly important to maintain or restore good health.

2. Starvation

People think food is the only source of energy for our body. If they fast, they will starve their body but fasting and starvation are two completely different concepts. As long as the body supports itself on the stored reserves within its tissue and body functions are running smoothly, it is fasting. When these stored reserves are used up or have dropped to a dangerously low level, it becomes starvation

3. Weakness

We are creatures of habit. If we miss our meal, we feel giddiness, weakness during fasting. The fact is it just appears during cleansing process of body while fasting when cleansing is completed body gains a new vigor and vitality. You pay a dear price every time you make a 'garbage can' of your stomach. Do not be a slave to food. Keep clean inside and fasting is one and only method of cleansing. Nobody can do it for you, it is a personal matter. It costs you nothing but a strong positive will power. There are no short cuts to health. You cannot buy it, you have to built it through your good health habits.

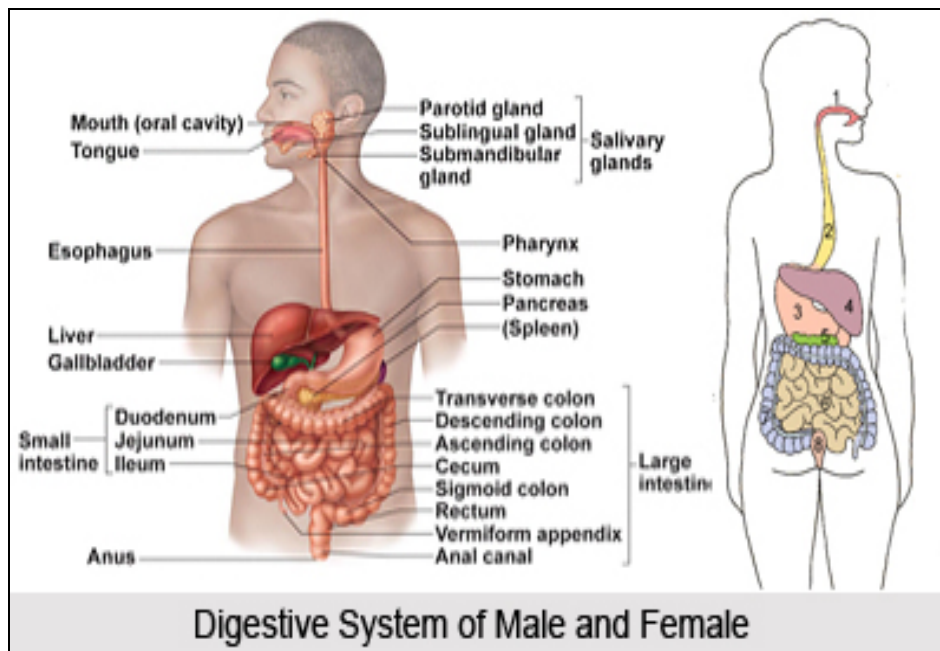
Fasting is a royal road to internal purity. So what are you waiting for? Make it a habit to take a complete juice fast for 24-36 hours. Eat natural, unpoisoned food, use your common sense. Eat with intelligence and enjoy the glorious health with fasting therapy.

Benefits of Fasting

Fasting is one of the most effective and natural treatments covering a wide range of disorders. It works as preventive and healing/curing measure, enables quick and safe weight loss, reduces high blood pressure, and lessens fat content of the blood (cholesterol), adjusts the sugar level of the blood and improves the condition of stomach and intestinal passage. The resulting loss of weight alleviates pain in the spine and joints of the body, particularly of overweight people having orthopedic disorders.

(<http://www.naturehomeopathy.com/sugar-and-salt.html>)

There are several benefits of fasting. During a long fast, the body feeds upon its reserves. Being deprived of needed nutrients, particularly of protein and fats, it will burn and digest its own tissues by the process of autolysis or self-digestion. But it will not do so indiscriminately. The body will first decompose and burn those cells and tissues which are diseased, damaged, aged or dead. The essential tissues and vital organs, the glands, the nervous system and the brain are not damaged or digested in fasting. Here lies the secret of the effectiveness of fasting as a curative and rejuvenating method. During fasting, the building of new and healthy cells is speeded up by the amino acids released from the diseased cells. The capacity of the eliminative organs, that is, lungs, liver, kidneys and the skin is greatly increased as they are relieved of the usual burden of digesting food and eliminating the resultant wastes. They are, therefore, able to quickly expel old accumulated wastes and toxins. Fasting affords a physiological rest to the digestive, assimilative and protective organs. As a result, the digestion of food and the utilization of nutrients are greatly improved after fasting.



Conclusions

- According to Naturopathy, the root cause of most of the

diseases is the accumulation of toxic matter in the digestive system. Fasting is considered as one of the most

important methods of nature cure. In Naturopathy, fasting is practiced to enable nature to perform its cleansing process in the body, without any hindrance, and without any additional load of food to digest. The digestive organs are given a rest, to enable them to regain their health and work efficiently. Fasting helps to excrete accumulated poisons, toxins and waste materials. Dead cells are removed, and new cell formation is sped up.

- Fasting provides rest to the different organs of the body, especially the digestive and assimilative ones.
- Fasting is good in treating of disorders like indigestion, gas formation, obesity, asthma, high blood pressure, and other digestive disorders.

(<http://www.natural-cure.org/naturopathy/fasting-therapy/>)

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