



Wellbeing Clinic Newsletter

Today's Focus:

DIABETES

Diabetes is a very widespread condition. According to estimates of Diabetes UK charity 4.3 million people in the UK are living with this condition, whilst an additional 850,000 people potentially living with diabetes are yet to be diagnosed. If this account of a specialist diabetes nurse published in The Guardian

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2022/dec/07/so-many-people-need-help-but-we-cant-give-them-the-care-they-deserve-the-diary-of-a-nurse> is a true and accurate reflection of the UK's public healthcare provision for this condition, then we can only say that it is not as ideal as it should and we hope things get better soon. In the meantime, is there anything that TCM can do to help you?

What is Diabetes?

There are 2 main types of diabetes:

- Type 1 diabetes
- Type 2 diabetes

Type 1 diabetes is a long-term disorder in which the immune system attacks its own body's cells responsible for producing insulin.

Type 2 diabetes is attributed to a variety of factors including lifestyle and diet, genetics and/or hormonal problems, due to which the body either does not produce enough insulin or does not react to insulin properly (insulin resistance).

Additionally, the following conditions related to abnormal blood sugar levels should also be mentioned:

Gestational diabetes – a condition causing abnormally high blood sugar levels during pregnancy.

Pre-diabetes (or hyperglycaemia) – a condition in which the blood sugar levels are above the normal range but not high enough to be clinically diagnosed as diabetes.

A hormone produced in the pancreas - insulin, which controls the amounts of sugar in the blood, is a major factor in diabetes. In people suffering from diabetes the body either does not produce enough insulin or does not "use" insulin properly, making it unable to break down sugar (glucose) into energy.

Initial symptoms of diabetes include:

- feeling of thirst,
- frequent urination,
- tiredness,
- unexplained weight loss and loss of muscle mass,

- itching around genital areas, thrush,
- blurred vision.

Untreated diabetes can lead to several very serious health problems, as over time high blood glucose levels damage several body's organs. Long-term effects of diabetes can include:

- damage to blood vessels and an increased risk of developing heart disease and /or stroke;
- damage to kidneys/kidney failure;
- damage to nervous system;
- damage to eyes, gums and feet.

In type 2 diabetes, the most common form of diabetes, high consumption of carbohydrates, prevalent in modern western diet, is understood to initially trigger the pancreas to produce heightened levels of insulin, which over a certain time leads to insulin resistance. Once the body becomes insulin resistant, pancreas compensates for this by producing even higher levels of insulin until it eventually "burns out". When this happens, the pancreas is no longer able to produce sufficient amounts of insulin and leaves the body exposed to abnormally high levels of sugars, which over time causes a widespread damage to the body.

What conventional medical treatments are available for Diabetes?

Generally, conventional medical treatments are limited to managing the blood sugar levels by means of:

- lifestyle changes including healthy diet and exercise;

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- regular insulin supply (by injections or pump);
- variety of other medications used to stimulate the pancreas to produce more insulin, to prevent blood sugars from rising too fast, to help the body use insulin more efficiently or to help the body evacuate excess sugars. Additionally, statins may also be prescribed to some diabetic patients to help control the levels of bad cholesterol.

There are certainly enormous benefits in maintaining a healthy diet and lifestyle whether you are diabetic or not, however many diabetic patients unfortunately require continuous medication such as regular insulin injections in order to manage their condition.

This may help slow down the damage caused to the body by sugars, however it does not address the cause of the problem and severely affects the life of the patients who need to rely on continuous medication over a long term or permanently.

How Diabetes is treated in TCM?

In Traditional Chinese Medicine diabetes is treated by way of **acupuncture and herbal medication**. Depending on the type of the condition and its advancement stage, the said methods can be used separately or in combination, in order to provide the best results. In contrast to conventional medication, a professionally administered TCM treatment is not only focused on managing blood sugar levels. **In a truly holistic manner, TCM acts at multiple levels, to address not only the symptoms of diabetes but also its causes and its long term effects.**

The exact treatment methods will vary depending on the form of diabetes being treated, but in summary the treatment it is expected to:

- naturally lower blood sugar levels;
- support a natural, healthy production of insulin;
- maintain a healthy function of the pancreas and/or heal damage to the pancreas already caused;
- stabilise the body's immune response and enhance a healthy function of the immune system (essential in type 1 diabetes treatment).

As a result, the need of taking conventional medication can be reduced or eliminated.

In addition to the above, TCM treatment can also help with the various long term effects of an advanced diabetes, including:

- maintain cardiovascular health;
- maintain healthy kidneys' functions;
- prevent and/or heal damage to the nervous system.

Based on our experience TCM is effective in all forms and stages of diabetes, and being entirely natural and free of significant side effects it is also perfectly suited as a preventive method in pre-diabetes stages as well as in management of gestational diabetes.

The progress of the treatment is very easy to measure. With the portable blood glucose testing machines now in widespread use, it is possible for any diabetic patient to have an objective verification of their TCM treatment results.

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