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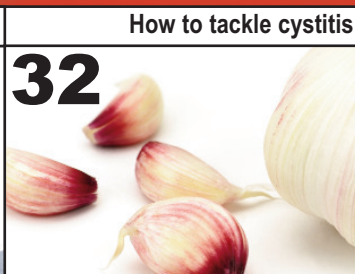
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In this issue:



Your Health and Wellbeing Success Starts Here!

Are you a health-conscious consumer, looking to come into the industry or looking for a suitable treatment? Find out what the experts say and read.

Mantras and mudras

an insight into vedic healing practices



Faith-based healing is a subject that many authors, practitioners and spiritual leaders have written about and sometimes we may not be able to prove its positive results scientifically. Feelings such as love, joy, emotional pain and sorrow are just some human emotions we can't quantifiably measure, but that does not mean that we don't 'feel' it or that it is not true.

Vedic scriptures outline many natural healing modalities to bring health improvements. The two areas of mantas (energetic sound vibrations) and mudras (yogic hand postures) are able to enhance the more non-tangible 'feel good' health benefits through its use in meditation as well as tangible benefits.

'Mantra' seems to be the buzz word when it comes to yoga and ayurveda but what does it really mean? 'Man' is the root of 'manas' meaning the mind or 'to think' and 'tra' is the suffix which means tool or instrument so we could say that 'mantra' quite literally means the tool for the mind.

Mantras are chanting sounds that produce various types of energies for the person who recites them as it bridges us to our 'higher self' or 'god'.

Mantras are considered the main tool for influencing and calming the mind in yoga and ayurveda, in fact most ancient vedic scripture are written in mantras or slokas and is a language in itself. Mantras enable the spread of knowledge, bringing positive changes to the conscious and subconscious mind. This powerful technique of sound channelling can also influence deep-seated emotional patterns, exercise and increase

mental faculties, open the intuition and increase our higher awareness. These sound vibrations can also negate negative karmic influences as well as the possible effects of past lives. By using mantras we can control the five elements (that which the entire universe is composed of) and harmonise with the cosmic forces. In yoga and ayurveda, the sense of sounds relates to the element of ether – the first of the cosmic elements and therefore a very powerful channel.

The power of mantras goes beyond our 'self'

Gayatri Mantra

Om bhūr bhuvaḥ svaḥ,
tāt savitúr váreṇ(i)yaṃ,
bhárgo devásya
dhīmahi, dhíyo yó naḥ
pracodáyāt.

| Mudra | Action on the body |
|---------|--|
| Gyan | Stimulates the root chakra and is grounding. Calms & improves concentration |
| Vayu | Prevents wind in the body, that can lead to conditions of gas, sciatica, gout, rheumatism |
| Akash | Increases the space within the body and mind. Increase intuitive power and alertness. Beneficial for bone diseases, ear pain & toothache |
| Prana | Gives energy, reduces fatigue, & nervousness, calms and brings inner stability and improves vision |
| Prithvi | Increases energy & inner stability. Can stimulate body temperature, the liver & the stomach |
| Agni | To increase heat, energy & strength in the body, dissolves fat, decreases earth and phlegm. |

and since we are a microcosm of the entire universe, the planets also have an influence on us. We can also absorb these planetary energies and they can subconsciously drive our daily activities and decisions. When there is a shortfall or even surplus of various energies, it is thought to impact our health. For example, if there is a shortfall of solar energy this may result in ailments such as headaches, reduced eye sight, heart problems or there could be obstacles in life, in work, with family, in relationships etc, which could indirectly affect our health. When we recite mantras, we are tuning into a specific frequency and we can increase the positive or decrease the negative effects of this energy. Reciting a sun mantra ("Om Hrim Sum Suryaya Namah") for example can help to positively balance the energy in the case above.

The vedic scriptures believe the mantra 'om' to be the primordial sound vibration associated with the element of ether. This symbolic sound consists of 3 root letters: A U M. 'A' represents 'Brahma' the creator and the physical presence, 'U' represents the preserver 'Vishnu' and the mental and astral planes; 'M' represents 'Shiva' the destroyer and the deep sleep state. Sitting and chanting Om can resonate the vibrations and bring a peaceful state to the body and mind. Other powerful mantras focusing on the 'one reality' include 'om shanti' and the 'gayatri mantra'.

There are various sets of mantras that we can use for specific purposes. Some single-syllable mantras include the shakti mantras to balance the planetary influences and also mantras to balance the chakras and the five elements. It is these 'beej' mantras that are commonly used as part of daily meditation and yoga practices.

Mantras are always worthy of consideration when we are seeking planetary or energetic balance. Sure, we can also opt for healing gems and ritualistic cleansing; however, mantras require deep inner stillness, time, motivation, and attention for long periods of time to awaken its

| Mantra | Meaning & influence |
|--------|--|
| Lam | Related to the earth & root chakra. Strengthening Venus & Mars. Bringing groundedness, contentment & stability |
| Vam | Related to water & the 2nd chakra. Strengthen the Moon, Venus & Jupiter, encourages will power |
| Ram | Related to fire & the solar plexus. Influences the Sun & Mars, gives power of movement & direction |
| Yam | Related to air & the heart centre. Strengthens Mercury, gives space & force. |
| Ham | Related to ether & the throat chakra. Strengthening Mercury & Jupiter |
| Ksham | Related to Moon & Mercury and the 3rd eye chakra |
| Om | Related to the Sun & the crown chakra and the centre of consciousness. |



fuller benefits. Mantras are a great technique to incorporate with the practice of yoga, pranayama and meditation, and we should aim to feel the vibration of the sound through every thought and cell in our body.

Mudras are symbolic postures or gestures and although they can involve the whole body, most of them are usually focused to the hands. Mudras are used particularly in worship and rituals in Hindu, Buddhist, Christian and other faiths. In the Hindu tradition, some mudras are used for invoking the energetic presence of various deities.

Mudras are used in many cultures to greet people, in Indian classical dance form or even holding the hands up with open palms to signify surrender and most commonly a tool for meditation and pranayama. In Sanskrit, 'mudra' means 'seal' or a 'gesture' usually in an energetic or spiritual context in order to produce specific results.

Like mantras, mudras are used to influence the flow of prana (vital energy) through the body whilst sitting in padmasadhana, vajasana or sukhāsana postures in yogic practice. The different hand gestures stimulate different parts of the body involved channelling the breath and using the mantra for focus.

Simple gestures like bending, crossing, extending or touching the fingers with one another can positively influence our body and mind when combined with visualisation or affirmations. As mentioned, we are composed of five elements and each finger is characteristic of one of these elements. The thumb represents fire (agni), the index finger represents air (vayu), the

middle finger represents ether (akash), the ring finger represents earth (prithvi) and the little finger represents water (jala). All diseases are due to an imbalance in the body caused by lack or excess of any of these elements, and when balance is maintained in line with one's ayurvedic constitution, the body can naturally heal itself. As a healing modality, our fingers can be understood to contain electrical circuits, channelling the flow of energy (prana) that is present at these release points. As we focus our intention deeper into the body, balance can be achieved within.

A very familiar and commonly used mudra, the 'Gyan' mudra or mudra of 'knowledge' is thought to help sharpen the memory, enhance concentration and capacity to learn. By touching the tips of the forefinger and thumb together, a union of the fire and air elements is created. When used in a lotus pose, this mudra closes the circuit and of energy in the body, preserving prana.

Practising mudras through yoga and meditation together with a healthy diet, appropriate routine, adequate exercise & rest will naturally lead to an optimal health. These mudras can have positive benefit when we have an understanding of the root cause of ill health or negative feelings and having the ability to 'let go' of that which brings us 'disease'. Mudras can be practised from 10 minutes to up to a few hours at a time. You should sit comfortably with back straight and hands relaxed on the thighs, relaxed shoulders and chin pulled back slightly. Keeping the breath even and slow with hands in your selected mudra position, you are ready to begin.

Through the combination of mudras, mantra, asanas and bhavana desired effects can be produced. Mudra represents the expression, mantra is the thought, asana represents the body posture and bhavana is the feeling or sentiment. A mudra or mantra alone will not have optimal effects without the other and support by a deep sentiment. **CHW**

© As a member of the APA, Geeta Vara is a fully qualified Ayurvedic practitioner working in Central London and Kent providing personalised consultations, treatments and corporate and small group workshops. For more information about Ayurvedic home remedies or other health concerns, please visit: www.geetavara.co.uk

