

## “ORIENTAL MEDICINE FOR DIABETES” © 2016

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The Chinese language includes two terms for diabetes. The traditional name, Xiao-ke, correlates closely with diabetes in most instances. Xiao-ke syndrome means 'wasting and thirsting'. The more modern term, Tang-niao-bing, means “sugar urine illness”.

Reference to diabetes by the traditional term appears in the earliest texts, including the first medical text in Chinese history, Huang Di Nei Jing, or The Yellow Emperor's Inner Classic.<sup>6</sup>

According to TCM, Xiao-ke is attributed to three main factors: improper diet (*consuming large quantities of sweets, fatty or greasy foods, alcohol, and hot drinks such as hot coffee or tea*), emotional disturbances (*stress, anxiety, depression*) and a constitutional Yin deficiency (fatigue, weakness, lethargy, pale complexion). To the Western ear, TCM diagnoses sound esoteric, even poetic. In the case of a person with diabetes presenting with symptoms of excessive thirst, the diagnosis can be described as kidney Yin deficiency along with lung Yin deficiency and “internal heat that consumes fluids, thus bringing wasting and thirsting”.<sup>7</sup>

## II. Chinese Nutrition

System of the Five Flavors has been developed by traditional Chinese healers. We say that the flavors “enter” the internal organs in this way:

- sour flavor enters liver & gallbladder
- bitter flavor enters heart & small intestine
- sweet flavor enters spleen-pancreas & stomach
- pungent flavor enters lungs & large intestine
- salty flavor enters kidneys & bladder

Sweet foods build the *yin* of the body- the tissues and fluids- and therefore tonify the thin and dry person; such foods also act to strengthen the weakness and *deficiency* in general. Sweetness is used to reduce the harsh taste of bitter foods and to retard acute disease symptoms. Sweet foods are suitable for treating *cold* and *deficient* person.

According to Chinese healing arts, too much sweet food damages the kidneys and spleen-pancreas, weakens the bones, and causes head-hair loss. “The Inner Classic warns not to eat too much sweet food when diseases of the flesh are present (including obesity, tumors, and edema)”.<sup>18</sup>



**Foods to Tonify Yin:** millet, barley, wheat germ, wheat, rice, teff, quinoa, amaranth, seaweeds, micro-algae (esp. chlorella and spirulina), tofu, black beans, kidney beans, mung beans, (& their sprouts), beets, string beans, kuzu, persimmon, grapes, blackberry, raspberry, mulberry, banana, and watermelon.

**Foods to Tonify Spleen-Pancreas & Stomach Qi:** well-cooked rice (congee's), oats, spelt, mochi (pounded sweet rice), carbohydrate-rich vegetables: winter squash, carrot, rutabaga, parsnip, turnip, garbanzo beans, black beans, peas, sweet potato, yam, pumpkin. Pungent veggies and spices: onion, leek, black pepper, ginger, cinnamon, fennel, garlic, nutmeg. Small amounts of sweeteners and cooked fruits: rice syrup, barley malt, molasses, cherry and date. If deficiency is severe, small amounts of animal products prepared in a soup or congee may be helpful: mackerel, tuna, halibut, anchovy, beef, beef liver or kidney, chicken, turkey or lamb. Butter is the *only recommended dairy product*. [Note(s): re: Oats- if you follow a “gluten-free” diet, please seek “steel-cut oats” (Bob's Red Mill®, an excellent source) and do not consume spelt. Carrots - very rich in vit. A, but a word of *caution*: they're high on the glycemic index. Upon consuming Vit. D, it's best to consult a Registered Dietitian (RD)/Nutritionist to learn about proper Ratio of Vitamin D, A, K which are important combined for proper absorption into body's cells!

**Aduki Beans; Beans**, in general: excellent for lowering blood glucose levels because they have (*high in fiber which is water soluble = slows down glucose absorption*).

**Bitter Melon** (*vegetable lowers blood glucose*); found in most Asian groceries

**Fenugreek seed** (*used in Indian cuisine; regulates glucose in bloodstream*)

**Hibiscus Flower & Rosebud tea** *Add small amount of Stevia® sweetener (white powder or clear liquid) & fresh-squeezed lime juice to counter the sour flavor and because lime helps regulate glucose in bloodstream.*

**Mineral Water or Sparking Water (Add Yummy-flavored Vinegar of your choice)** – serves as a replacement for Soda or Refined fruit juices which spike your Blood Sugar levels rapidly! Recommend: Bennesere® (*vinegars*) on NE Broadway, Portland, OR.

## **Key Mineral Deficiencies in the 'Land of Excess': the Value of Unrefined Plant Foods**

1. **Magnesium:** This mineral is deficient in many modern people who eat refined foods. Approximately 70% of the U.S. Population suffers magnesium deficiency,



which is considered one of the most under-diagnosed deficiencies”.<sup>8,9</sup> Dosage: “The Linus Pauling Institute supports the latest RDA for **magnesium intake** (400-420 mg/day for men and 310-320 mg/day for women)”.

According to Chinese healing arts, magnesium foods usually help nurture one's liver (and health in numerous ways). **Background Theory:** *Stress in the body a.k.a.* muscle; soothe erratic changes such as migraine, cramps, and spasms anywhere in the body; creates better flow in digestion to help relieve constipation; and overcome the fast-cycling blood sugar imbalances in alcoholism and diabetes.<sup>10,11</sup>

Examples of foods with magnesium: legumes (beans, soy products, peas and lentils), vegetables—esp. the green variety, and most whole grains and seeds. It has been known for some time in East Asian medicine that brown rice consumption has a positive effect on blood sugar and therefore, on diabetes. One study on unrefined brown rice finds, “the rice bran, has rather remarkable effects on lowering high blood sugar levels”.<sup>12</sup>

2. **Manganese:** assists in the synthesis of fatty acids, absolutely necessary for development, metabolism, and the antioxidant system. Dosage: 2.3 mg/d from food for 44 y.o. For women, estimates are generally less. [Dulse- good salt substitute; Chili Powder, Cloves and Saffron; Wheat Germ and Bran; Nuts: (Hazelnuts, Pine Nuts, Pecans); Mussels, Oysters, and Clams, Cocoa Powder and Dark chocolate, Raw or Roasted Pumpkin and Squash Seeds, Flax, Sesame Seeds, and Sesame Butter a.k.a. Tahini].

3. **Alpha Lipoic Acid:** a polyphenol antioxidant that is helpful for neuropathy, converts glucose to energy. Dosage: 600-1,200 mg/day for diabetes and neuropathy; “one review concluded that the evidence is convincing for the use of 600 mgs. (daily) for 3 weeks on symptoms of diabetic neuropathy. Some studies have used intravenous alpha-lipoic acid instead of oral supplements. Food Sources:[organ meats such as heart, liver and kidneys; broccoli and spinach; brewer's yeast, lesser amounts in Brussels sprouts, peas and tomatoes].

4. **Chromium:** known to enhance the action of insulin, a hormone critical to the metabolism and storage of carbohydrate, fat, and protein in the body. “In 1957, a compound in brewer's yeast was found to prevent an age-related decline in the ability of rats to maintain normal levels of sugar (glucose) in their blood.”<sup>13,15</sup> Chromium was identified as the active ingredient in this so-called 'glucose tolerance factor' in 1959”.<sup>14,15</sup>

[broccoli, grape juice, garlic, basil, turkey breast, apple, banana, green beans]

5. **Coenzyme 10:** “burns fat into energy and therefore reduces obesity. It counteracts aging and the effect of diabetes type II by protecting mitochondrial DNA”.<sup>16</sup> CoQ10 is supplemented in patients with heart failure. [broccoli, dark leafy greens, nuts, fish, shellfish, pork, chicken and beef].

6. **Zinc:** involved in numerous aspects of cellular metabolism. Plays role in immunity, protein synthesis, wound healing, and cell division. [oysters, crab, baked beans, chickpeas, cashews, almonds, beef chuck roast or patty, chicken (dark meat), peas.



## **In Japan:**

Wild Yam – lowers blood sugar and cholesterol

Natto (sticky bean)- especially lowers blood pressure and, to some extent, lowers cholesterol.

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