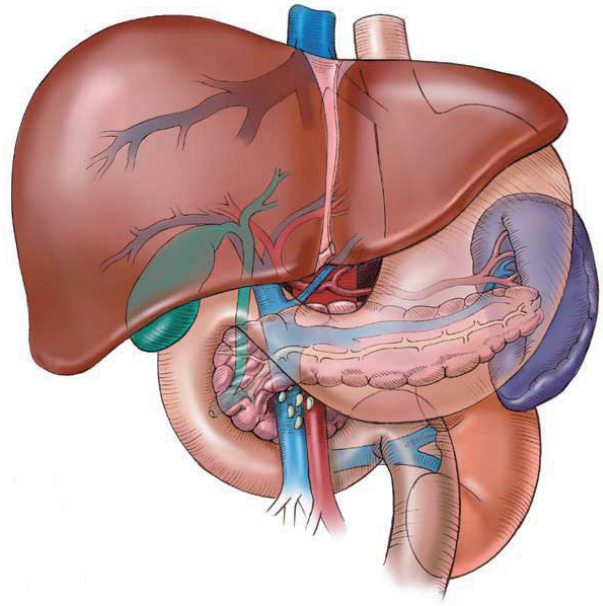


WEAK LIVER & SPLEEN FUNCTIONING

common liver and spleen problems

THE LIVER: Known as "Yakrut" in Ayurveda; the liver is the largest and one of the most important internal organs, which functions as the body's chemical factory and regulates the levels of most of the main chemicals in the blood. It absorbs oxygen and nutrients from the blood and regulates the blood's glucose and amino-acid levels. It helps breakdown drugs and various toxins and produces bile which removes waste products and helps process fats in the small intestine. The liver has many functions vital to the body including producing of important proteins for blood plasma; like albumin (which regulates the exchange of water between blood and tissues), complement (a group of proteins that play a part in the immune system), coagulation factors (which enable blood to clot when a blood vessel wall is damaged) and globin (a constituent of the oxygen carrying pigment haemoglobin). The liver also produces cholesterol and special proteins that help carry fats around the body.

Another function of the liver is to take up glucose that is not required immediately by the body's cells, and store it as glycogen. When the body needs to generate more energy and heat, the liver (under the stimulation of hormones) converts the glycogen back to glucose and releases it into the bloodstream. The liver also regulates the blood level of amino acids. When the blood contains too high a level of amino acids, the liver converts some of them into glucose, some into proteins, some into other amino acids, and some into urea, which is passed to the kidney for excretion as urine. Along with the kidneys, the liver acts to clear the blood of drugs and poisonous substances. According to Ayurveda, "Yakrut" (Liver) is the host or main shelter for "Pitta" {one of the `tridoshas' i.e. the three blemishes, Vatta (Air), Pitta (Bile) and Kapha (Mucous), which are responsible for entire physiological functioning of the body} - the digestive fire of the body and a major balancing



factor for perfect Health. "Pitta" - a greenish-brown liquid secreted by the liver removes waste products from the liver and carries bile salts, necessary for the breakdown and absorption of fat, to the intestines and detoxifies the blood vessels.

SPLEEN: Known as "Pleeha" in Ayurveda, Spleen is an organ that controls the quality of circulating red blood cells by removing and destroying all worn out red cells and helps fight infections by producing some of the antibodies, phagocytes and lymphocytes.

LIVER & SPLEEN DISORDERS AND THEIR TREATMENT

Liver and Spleen have been considered as the most important body organs and their disorders have been extensively described in the original Ayurvedic epics, believed to be more than 5000 years old. Although the causes may vary characteristically with climatic country conditions, their disorders have been described with common aetiologies.

The imbalance of one, two or all the three 'doshas' have individual effects on liver with varied symptoms. The disturbed 'Vatta or Kapha doshas', upon getting in contact with 'Pitta' disturb its secretions and normal functioning, resulting in its failure to perform its normal duties. The decreased secretion of 'Pitta' causes cooling sensations in the body and symptoms like anorexia; dyspepsia; loss of face-lustre; generalised pains; indigestion; shivering; heaviness; sad mind; palor body; snowing of eyes and nails and loss of vision, body fire, appetite and thirst. Its increase causes burning sensations in the body and symptoms like insomnia; vertigo; fainting; paleness of eyes, face, skin and urine; whitening of stools and increased thirst and anger.

The factors responsible for the imbalance of "Pitta", relating to various liver disorders, are worm (bacterial and parasitic) infestations and obstructions of the bile ducts. By far the most common cause of liver disease is excessive consumption of alcohol. Alcohol related disorders, which include



alcoholic hepatitis and cirrhosis, outnumber all other types of liver disorders by at least five to one. Apart from alcohol and virus induced liver disease, the liver may be affected by congenital defects, circulatory disturbance, metabolic disorders, poisoning and auto-immune processes. Liver failure may occur as a result of acute hepatitis, poisoning or cirrhosis. Enlargement and jaundice are two common signs of liver disease. According to 'Charaka', all liver disorders, as a whole, are associated with symptoms like weakness, anorexia, indigestion, retention of stool and urine, thirst, vomiting, malaise,

fainting, prostration, cough, dyspnoea, mild fever, loss of digestion, emaciation, pain in fingers and joints, anaemia, redness and discoloration of abdomen, blackening of skin, feeble pulse, loss of blood etc. The usual disorder of spleen is its enlargement; as a result of various infections including typhoid and residual malaria; blood disorders; haemolytic anaemia etc. giving rise to symptoms like biting or burning sensation in splenic region, constipated bowels, scanty or blood red urine, difficulty in breathing, chronic cough, loss of appetite, lethargy, loss of flesh, debility, paleness of complexion, anaemia, increased thirst, vomiting, tastelessness, blurred vision, light-headedness and loss of consciousness. All those causes which lead to the enlargement of spleen produce enlargement and derangements of the liver also and have common symptoms. However, modern medicine does not, so far, have a really effective cure for disorders of the Liver and Spleen. Ayurveda does not treat diseases symptomatically. The therapies are directed at correcting the imbalance of the 'doshas', thereby reducing susceptibility. Accordingly the therapies are aimed at the maintenance of the biliary system, its toning up and prevention of infections, which help in the therapeutic and prophylactic management of the disorders of Liver and Spleen.

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