

Vitiligo - A natural treatment

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What is Vitiligo?

The term vitiligo is derived from the latin word "vitelius" meaning "calf". It was first used by Roman physician Celsus in the second century AD. The characteristic white patches of the disease resembles the white patches of a spotted calf. Vitiligo is an ancient disease mentioned in religious texts such as the Bible and the Holy Koran. The disease is known as "Bai Dian Feng" in traditional Chinese medicine, "Shewetakusta" in Indian classic Atharva Veda and "Kilas" in Vinay Pitah, Buddhist sacred book, "Bars" in Arabic and "Pulbheri" in Punjabi.

Signs and Symptoms of Vitiligo

- White patches may be different in size, shape and tend to enlarge peripherally
 - White patches may be localised general or segmental
 - In some individuals the hair in the affected area may also lose its colour and become white
 - White patches are very sensitive and vulnerable to sunburn
 - Vitiligo is not an infectious disease, although some individuals or groups may inaccurately perceive it to be infectious or contagious
 - The physical presentation of vitiligo may be seen as disfigurement by individuals or groups which can lead to social isolation and its consequences of psychological dis-ease and turmoil

How Common is Vitiligo?

The world incidence of vitiligo is between 1% and 8%. Vitiligo seems more common within populations in which the contrast in skin colour is readily apparent. It can affect any individual.

Fifty percent of known cases appear before the age of 20.

What Causes Vitiligo?

The causes of vitiligo are shrouded in confusion and mystery, especially within Western medicine. Lots of conflicting therapies with very few safe and effective treatments. However, natural traditions of medicine such as traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) and Eastern traditional medicine (TIBB) are clear about the causes of vitiligo and have safe and effective natural treatments. These brief notes will discuss two safe, natural and effective methods of treating vitiligo.

1. Foods
2. Herbs

The Digestive System and The Skin

Because the skin forms the coating of the body we do not normally associate it directly with the digestive processes. Yet if we are to understand the true functions of the skin and return it to its healthy state, then we need to understand that it is intimately associated with nutrition of the whole body, including the skin and specifically in vitiligo. The quality and quantity of blood and lymph is directly mediated by foods and drinks we use and the state of our metabolism.

Metabolic Disturbance

This is a concept not known in western medicine. In all human societies, until industrialisation, great importance was placed on understanding and using foods and drinks to maintain health and cure disease. However, due to industrialisation and the removal of many people from natural environments, in particular from farming, many people view food as having no real relationship to health. This is particularly true of western trained health care professionals. Natural medicine knows the importance of good food and its role in keeping healthy.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, "The stomach is the home of disease, diet is the main medicine".

The Chinese people clearly saw this relationship when they wrote, "Whatsoever was the father of disease, an ill diet was the mother".

Hippocrates, who is sometimes called the 'Father of Medicine', wrote, "Let food be your medicine and medicine be your food".

Ibne Sina, a great Arabian physician and scholar, wrote a thousand years ago, "Most illnesses arise solely from long continued errors of diet and regimen".

Impairment of blood and lymph (fasad-ud-dam) and coldness of blood (burudat-ud-dam) are the primary causes of vitiligo. The transformative faculty (quwat-e-mushabbeha), the power that brings changes and shapes the nutrients into tissue proper is faulty. It is due to this defect that depigmentation occurs. This can be overcome by **removing cold and damp-mucus forming foods from the diet.**

Vitiligo & Diet

Diet plays an important role in the treatment of Vitiligo. Cold and phlegm producing foods are harmful in this disease. Not only the response of the treatment is delayed but also the lesions can spread if such foods are used frequently. Food items which are restricted, and those recommended, are those given below:

Restricted Food Items - DO NOT USE

a) Items which are likely to produce changes in the blood

(Fasad-ud-dam) e.g.; fish, beef, brinjal, heavy and light food mixed simultaneously.

b) Items which are likely to increase the production of phlegm (balgham) e.g.; Milk, curd, buttermilk, lemon & lime, tamarind, oranges, and variety of all citrus fruits, red sorrel, parsley, custard apple, guava, prunes, cashewnut, melon, watermelon, Chinese dates, tomatoes, amla, Indian sorrel.

Recommended Food Items - USE THESE

Wheat, Indian millet, pulses, specially Bengal gram, pure ghee obtained from butter, broad beans, French beans, spinach, bitter gourd, ridge gourd, onions, beet-root, carrot, chillies, red pepper, pistachionut, walnut, dates, mangoes, apricots, grapes, potatoes, papaya, amaranth, fenugreek, drumsticks, turnips, almonds.

Stimulating metabolism

Herbal Prescription:

- Glycyrrhiza glabra
 - Ficus carica
 - Foeniculum vulgare
 - Foeniculum vulgare (root)
 - Adiantum capillus-veneris
 - Althaea officinalis (seeds)
 - Malva sylvastris (seeds)
 - Rosa damascena
 - Vitis vinifera
 - Apium graneolens (root)
 - Zingerbeer officinale
 - Cassia angustifolia (leaves)
 - Operculina turpethum

Instructions

Take three grams of each ingredient of the above prescription (Munzj Balgham), soak in 500mls of hot water at night, cover

and leave overnight. In the morning make a decoction (joshanda). Boil for 15 to 20 minutes and strain. Use luke warm on empty stomach in the morning. Use for minimum of seven and maximum of ninety days, depending on chronicity of vitiligo.

Contra indications

Do not use if irritable bowel symptoms.

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