

Pills and shots are not the only way to manage diabetes. We tell you about some natural and innovative cures for this disease

By HARSHACHAWLA

NOT A day goes by without a new report being published on diabetes in the paper, indicating the growing magnitude of this disease. About ₹1.7 billion were spent treating the country's 51 million diabetics last year, and experts say this figure is slated to rise. While prevention is clearly more cost effective than cure, natural remedies are occasionally better than allopathic ones once the disease has struck. We tell you about three ways of dealing with diabetes.

MARVELLOUS METHI

A RECENT study done by Indian doctors reaffirms the belief in natural cure of diabetes. The Research Society for Study of Diabetes in India reports that early intervention with *methi* powder and yoga can stall the development of type 2 diabetes. This study, the first of its kind, was carried out on people with impaired glucose tolerance (IGT) who are highly susceptible to diabetes. "We have been recommending *methi* to diabetics for a long time. It has a significant impact on people with diabetic neuropathy," says Dr Preeti Chhabra, consultant, Department of Ayurveda, Sir Ganga Ram Hospital.

Methi or fenugreek is considered one of the most valuable spices for the control of glucose metabolism. The secret lies in its seeds that contain an amino acid called 4-hydroxyisoleucine. This amino acid is believed to stimulate the secretion of insulin from your pancreas.

Dr Chhabra says that *methi* should be administered in a manner best suited to an individual's constitution. *Methi* seeds can be soaked and sprouted or the dried leaves can also be eaten. "It's always good to get yourself examined by an ayurveda specialist before going for any kind of natural cure. For instance, gulping *methi* seeds on an empty stomach might not suit certain people," adds Dr Chhabra.

OXYGEN CURE

ONE of the problems faced by diabetics is the slow healing of wounds. This increases the risk of infection which may land diabetics in a medical emergency. Amputations among diabetics are 10 times higher than non-diabetics. Till some years ago the only way to heal such wounds was dressings and antibiotics. But today there are painless though expensive ways of treating hard-to-heal wounds.

Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy or HBOT is a painless and a non-invasive way to treat non-healing wounds which diabetics often get in the legs and feet. It is given inside a pressurised chamber where patients breathe 100 per cent oxygen at two to three times normal atmospheric pressure. A patient comfortably sits in the chamber with five or six other patients for about 90 minutes. "We started HBOT 10 years ago and awareness about it is slowly growing. Today we see two to three diabetics in a day," says Dr Tarun Sahni, senior con-

India has 51 million diabetics, the highest number in the world

sultant, hyperbaric medicine, Indraprastha Apollo Hospital.

HBOT works by supplying the oxygen the body needs to stimulate healing. Some wounds heal slower than others due to the lack of oxygen in the body for repair work. Diabetes often leads to fatty deposits in arteries that slow down the circulation of

oxygen in the body. "Oxygen supplied to the body stimulates the growth of new blood vessels therefore improving circulation and the body's own ability to repair itself," explains Dr Sahni.

If medications and dressings fail to heal the wound within two to three weeks, go for HBOT. It takes about 10 to 20 sessions

depending on the severity of the wound to show good results. Each session lasts for 90 minutes and costs ₹3,200.

SUNSHINE CURE

A NEW study links low levels of vitamin D with gestational diabetes and has advised mothers-

A handful of seeds for that high sugar level

PARISH SHARMA

