



# Diabetes, an Eastern Medicine Point of View

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For those with diabetes mellitus, often referred to simply as diabetes, achieving healthy sugar metabolism is the primary goal. From an Eastern medicine point of view, normal sugar metabolism involves a balanced coordination between key energy and organ systems of the spleen, liver and kidneys. In a healthy person, these organs coordinate the even control of blood sugar. Unfortunately, when any of these organs get out of sync, high blood sugar (hyperglycemia) or low blood sugar (hypoglycemia) may result.

Organ and energy balance is particularly susceptible to specific dietary factors. A diet high in refined sugar, starch and/or excess proteins can put a great deal of stress on the body and result in the following energy imbalances:

1. Spleen energy deficiency can lead to an inadequate supply of insulin.
2. Liver energy stagnation can disrupt the control of sugar production and metabolism.
3. Decreased kidney energy (cold dampness) can prevent the cells from taking up sugar, and is sometimes called insulin resistance.

Prolonged dietary imbalances can lead to progressive inability of the body to control its blood sugar levels. This condition is referred to as diabetes mellitus, type 2.

Based on Eastern medicine philosophies, there are actually two

types of diabetes associated with these imbalances:

- Spleen deficiency – people with inadequate insulin to control their blood sugars.
- Kidney deficiency – people with elevated insulin and hyperglycemia, known as insulin resistance.

If you are confused by the terms *spleen deficiency*, *kidney deficiency* and *liver stagnation*, it is simply the concept created by Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) practitioners to describe interrelated functions of the organ systems and energy pathways in the body. This type of philosophy is radically different than that of Western medicine, which focuses primarily on a physical part of the body or symptom of a disease condition.

## Weight Reduction, Exercise

In my opinion, the ultimate solution for individuals with diabetes mellitus type 2 is weight reduction (to reduce the need for insulin) and exercise, as well as a healthy, balanced and low-glycemic (low sugar) diet. There are also multiple nutrients that assist the body in balancing sugar metabolism including niacin/niacinamide, lipoic acid, essential fatty acids, chromium, vitamins B6 & E & C, zinc, magnesium, vanadium, taurine and herbs. In both TCM and Vietnamese herbal medicine, herbs have been used for hundreds of years to promote organ and energy balance as well as healthy insulin and sugar levels. Practi-

tioners of Eastern medicine use herbal blends to balance the spleen, kidney and liver energy. In TCM, balanced spleen energy is important for the pancreas, which provides insulin in response to elevated sugar levels. Insulin promotes the transport of sugar into the cells. Kidney energy is important since it controls the cell membranes and the cellular uptake of sugar by insulin.

In summary, when the body's organs and energies are working in harmony it can be very helpful for those with diabetes mellitus (hyperglycemia). Eastern medicine philosophies do not imply a cure for diabetes, but instead focus on the optimization of the body's ability to function normally. Normal function of the organs and energy pathways associated with diabetes is ultimately the goal for practitioners of eastern medicine.\*

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