



Can Naturopathy Help Manage Type 2 Diabetes?

WHAT IS NATUROPATHY?

Naturopathy is a holistic and prevention-focused approach based on natural practices such as good nutrition and a healthy lifestyle to support the body's natural healing abilities. A major focus of naturopathy is identifying and treating the root causes of health problems, rather than attempting to manage the symptoms.

Our Purpose

Our purpose is to be a global facilitator of health and wellness through access, education and advancement of Traditional & Complementary Medicine (T&CM). The World Health Organization (WHO) advises that lifestyle-related diseases (or non-communicable diseases) are responsible for more than 70% of deaths worldwide each year.

Knowledge represents empowerment. By sharing this evidence-based, peer-reviewed research, we aim to support everyday people to take ownership of their wellness, by making informed decisions and choices in conjunction with their health professional.

How This Study Could Help You Manage Type 2 Diabetes

On average, in Australia, a person is diagnosed with diabetes every five minutes, yet changes to diet and lifestyle could delay or even prevent about 58% of type 2 diabetes cases. This study explored how effectively a naturopathy program could support treatment for type 2 diabetes, and is titled:

IS ADJUNCTIVE NATUROPATHY ASSOCIATED WITH IMPROVED GLYCAEMIC CONTROL AND A REDUCTION IN NEED FOR MEDICATIONS AMONG TYPE 2 DIABETES PATIENTS?

You can read the full study here: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1186/s12906-016-1264-0>

Why Is This Study Important?

Type 2 diabetes is a complex and progressive condition characterised by reduced insulin production in the pancreas, as well as an increased resistance to insulin. This potentially leads to elevated blood glucose levels (the amount of sugar in the bloodstream).

The disease is conventionally managed using a combination of pharmaceutical medicine and lifestyle adjustments including diet and exercise. If diabetes is poorly controlled, chronically high blood glucose levels can lead to complications ranging from blindness and nerve damage to stroke and heart disease.

A key indicator of diabetes management is the percentage of glycosylated haemoglobin, abbreviated HbA1c, in the bloodstream. Unlike blood glucose testing, which measures how much sugar is in the bloodstream at the time of testing, HbA1c gives a more long-term picture of blood glucose stability.

Good glycaemic control (meaning how well the levels of glucose in the blood are managed) is difficult to achieve when relying mainly on medication. Additionally, it is reported that the side effects and possible complications of pharmaceutical medicine influences many people living with type 2 diabetes to seek ways of reducing their medication intake.

In 2016, the number of people with diabetes worldwide was estimated by the WHO to be 422 million, and at the time this study was published, 65 million of those people were living in India. Considering the high percentage of people in low-income populations living with diabetes, in India as well as worldwide, it is desirable to identify treatment options which do not involve the cost of medication.

What Does This Mean For My Wellness?

The findings of this study provide a statistical indication that a naturopathic program of diet, exercise, rest and education may offer significant reductions in HbA1c levels, as well as blood glucose. This suggests naturopathy may be an effective and inexpensive way to support conventional treatment for type 2 diabetes.

The authors hypothesised that educating people about how to prepare the meals initially provided as part of the naturopathy program made them feel empowered to play an active role in their own wellness. This was speculated to have a meaningful role in helping people stick to the dietary recommendations, indicating the importance of education as part of achieving lasting lifestyle changes.

There was no restriction on the quantity of food people were allowed to have, as long as they followed the recommended ingredient list. For people who have type 2 diabetes, this suggests that significant benefits can be achieved by choosing specific foods, without limiting how much of them one consumes.

The researchers also observed that strict criteria were imposed on the definition of a 'favourable outcome'. This included not only significant reductions in HbA1c, but also a decrease in medication dosage by at least 50% over the three months of the trial. It was suggested that if less restrictive criteria were used, an even higher proportion of participants would have been classified as achieving a favourable outcome.



How Does This Relate to Naturopathy?

The program of naturopathy investigated as part of this study was offered to patients being treated for type 2 diabetes at the Manthana Satyanarayana Raju Arogyalayam hospital in India. It included a vegetarian diet rich in whole grains, with no added salt, oil or sugar, and no restrictions on the amount of food participants were able to eat.

Further, twice-daily sessions of yoga postures and breathing exercises were prescribed, and participants were given instructions about how much rest they needed to have. A total of 101 participants, who had all been on anti-diabetic medication for at least one year, completed the study.

In this study, researchers affiliated with the hospital as well as other health organizations investigated how effectively this naturopathy program could support conventional treatment for type 2 diabetes. The authors noted that there were anecdotal reports of some patients undertaking the naturopathy program who no longer required medication to maintain healthy glycaemic control.

However, there was no systematic evidence indicating how effective naturopathy might be for helping manage type 2 diabetes.

Key Findings About Naturopathy for Helping Manage Type 2 Diabetes

- The researchers reported there were significant average reductions in blood sugar levels, as well as HbA1c percentage, after three months of naturopathy treatment. They observed that the “effect was more pronounced” among patients who commenced the study with a higher percentage of HbA1c.
- Nearly 80% of the participants showed “moderate to excellent” compliance with the prescribed diet. The authors observed that adherence to the diet plan was the factor associated with the greatest improvement in glycaemic control.
- At commencement of the trial, the average HbA1c level of participants was 8.2%. After three months of the program, this dropped by 1.7% in those who followed the dietary recommendations most rigorously. The participants who complied poorly with the program experienced an average reduction of 0.4%, but even moderate compliance still resulted in an average decrease of 1.1%.
- Almost one in five participants followed up after three months of naturopathy were able to completely stop taking their medication, while maintaining control of their symptoms, as evaluated by a diabetes specialist.
- The “favourable outcomes” achieved by the participants were notable particularly given the three-month intervention in a group that had diabetes ranging from at least one to over 10 years. However, this study did not use a control group and the authors noted that these results would benefit from assessment against longer-term, randomised controlled trials.

Disclaimer: The above does not constitute medical advice, and as with any exercise or wellness program, please consult your medical professional before commencing naturopathy to support management of type 2 diabetes.

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Quoted from journal description

References

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[HbA1c test | healthdirect.gov.au](#)

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