

# Ayurvedic Healing of Irritable Bowel Syndrome – A Case Study.

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Phoebe was a thirty five year old woman who worked in a large advertising firm and came to see me with a long history of digestive problems. Since high school she had an extremely sensitive stomach, with too much fruit and salad causing bloating and abdominal cramping. Spicy food would inevitably cause diarrhoea and sometimes vomiting and she was sensitive to both gluten and dairy products. Her symptoms were getting worse as she got older and were exacerbated by stress.

From an Ayurvedic perspective her digestive fire (agni) had become weakened. A very restrictive diet and enzyme supplements from other practitioners had done little to improve her symptoms.

I introduced Phoebe to a holistic approach to building up the strength of her digestion. This involved having smaller and more frequent meals throughout the day, having more cooked food, which is easier to digest, and introducing some gentle spices into her cooking such as cumin, turmeric and small amounts of ginger.

Making lunch the main meal and having a lighter dinner was crucial, as her digestive fire was being doused by a heavy evening meal. Accordingly I got her to have soups for dinner, including carrot and pumpkin. I felt that she was holding a significant amount of emotional tension in her abdomen and so taught her a lying down, meditation practice to help her to relax her digestive organs. I also referred her to a gifted psychotherapist, with whom she developed an excellent therapeutic relationship, to further support Phoebe in letting go of some residual emotional stress she was carrying.

Within a couple of weeks, Phoebe's symptoms improved considerably, her energy levels started to return to normal and some colour had returned to her face. She applied herself diligently to my treatment suggestions. I also got her to massage her belly with warm sesame oil each night.

Over the next 9 months her digestive fire grew stronger and stronger, until she was able to announce proudly that she no longer experienced bloating and cramping, and her bowel habit was now satisfying and regular. She had an unmistakeable glow of health, as she said all this. It was clear to me that she had learned to master her own digestion and was a happier and more contented person because of that journey.

**Dr. Shaun Matthews**