

Triphala

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Triphala is an Ayurvedic herbal rasayana formula consisting of equal parts of three myrobalans, taken without seed: Amalaki (*Emblīca officinalis*), Bibhitaki (*Terminalia bellirica*), and Haritaki (*Terminalia chebula*), with potential anti-cancer properties.^[1]

The word *triphala* (better *triphālā*, from Hindi/Sanskrit: त्रिफला, pronounced [triˈpʰɐɭɑ], widely mispronounced [triˈfɑːlə] or [triˈfæːlə] among English speakers) means literally “three fruits”.

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Health benefits

Triphala is used to promote appetite and digestion, increase the number of red blood cells, and aid in removal of undesirable fat in the body. When dissolved in the mouth, Triphala is used to clear congestion and headaches. Other claimed benefits include helping maintain normal blood sugar levels, as well as improvement in skin tone and colour.

A popular folk saying in India is, "No mother? Do not worry so long as you have *Triphala*." The suggestion is that *triphala* can care for the internal organs of the body as a mother cares for her children. The three herbal fruits of Triphala promote internal cleansing, reduce conditions of stagnation and excess, and improve digestion and assimilation of nutrients.

In Puri (2003), *Rasayana* under *amla* discusses controversies about the three important constituents (*amla*, *haritaki* and *bibhitaki*) of this compound preparation, along with its use in Ayurveda, various preparations made from it and their pharmacological and therapeutic properties.

Contemporary Research on Triphala

Recent medical research conducted by several leading academic institutions in India such as the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre and Jawaharlal Nehru University has revealed that Triphala has a significant medicinal value as a potential detoxifying and anti-cancer agent.^[2]

In a study entitled ‘Potential of traditional Ayurvedic formulation, Triphala, as a novel anticancer drug’ published in the January 2006 issue of Cancer Letters, scientists at the Radiation Biology and Health Sciences Division, Bhabha Atomic Research Centre, found that Triphala had the ability to induce cytotoxicity (cell death) in tumor cells but spared the normal cells.^[2]

Similarly, a December 2005 report in the Journal of Experimental and Clinical Cancer Research from the Radiation and Cancer Biology Laboratory at Jawaharlal Nehru University noted that Triphala was effective in reducing tumor incidences and increasing the antioxidant status of animals. constituents.”^[2]

Another report from the Department of Botanical Sciences, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, found that "Triphala" showed a significant cytotoxic effect on cancer cell-lines and the effect was similar on all cancer cell lines used in this study.” The results, reported in the Journal of Ethnopharmacology in February 2005, reveal that the results may be due to the action of gallic acid-a major polyphenol observed in "Triphala". The same authors had previously reported that Triphala “had promising antimutagenic/anticarcinogenic potential.”

In February 2006, scientists from the Dr. A.L. Mudaliar Post-Graduate Institute of Basic Medical Sciences, University of Madras, Taramani Campus, reported supplementation with Triphala prevents the noise-stress induced changes in the antioxidant as well as cell-mediated immune response in rats. What this means is that Triphala is an anti stress agent. This study concludes that Triphala restores the noise-stress induced changes because of its antioxidant properties.^[2]

Antioxidant studies conducted at The Radiation Chemistry and Chemical Dynamics Division, Bhabha Atomic Research Centre in Trombay revealed that all three constituents of Triphala are active and they exhibit slightly different activities under different conditions and the mixture, Triphala, is expected to be more efficient due to the combined activity of the individual components. The findings were reported in the July 2005 issue of Phytotherapy Research. Two months later, scientists from BARC reported on the radio-protective ability of a component of Triphala.

Similar results were also reported from Kasturba Medical College, Manipal, in the Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine, when scientists claimed that “Triphala, an ayurvedic rasayana drug, resulted in an increase in the radiation tolerance by 1.4 Gray of gamma-irradiation”. They concluded that while Triphala provided protection against both gastrointestinal and hemopoetic death, the animals did not survive up to 30 days post-irradiation beyond 11 Gy irradiation.^[3]

See also

- Ayurveda
- Rasayana
- Research and innovations in Ayurveda

Notes

- [^] Sandhya, T. et al. "Potential of traditional ayurvedic formulation, Triphala, as a novel anticancer drug", *Cancer Letters*, Volume 231, Issue 2, 18 January 2006, Pages 206-214.
- [^] ^a ^b ^c ^d Ayurveda's Triphala Emerging as Cancer Fighter by Francis C. Assisi (<http://www.indolink.com/displayArticleS.php?id=082106115647>) *indolink.com*
- [^] Jagetia G.C. *et al.* (2004). "Triphala, an ayurvedic rasayana drug, protects mice against radiation-induced lethality by free-radical scavenging (online (http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/entrez/query.fcgi?cmd=Retrieve&db=PubMed&list_uids=15673991&dopt=Abstract))". *J Altern Complement Med* **10** (6): 971–978. doi:10.1089/acm.2004.10.971 (<http://dx.doi.org/10.1089%2Facm.2004.10.971>) .

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