

## **Type 2 Diabetes: Herbs, Foods, and Supplements, Part 2**

### **By Lori Kelsey DOM**

Why might there be varying degrees of benefit from herbs that have been popularized and commercialized to help manage Type 2 Diabetes? Cinnamon, Bitter Melon, and Gynostemma for example. Because different herbs affect different aspects of blood sugar control. Similarly, according to Chinese herbal theory, herbs should be matched to a person's constitution.

#### **Cinnamon**

In 2013, the American Diabetes Association said there is no evidence to support the daily use of Cinnamon to control blood sugars. However, there are many studies showing the contrary. A review of animal studies revealed that Cinnamon decreases blood sugars by increasing glucose uptake and storage.

Human studies showed that low daily doses of Cinnamon had the added benefit of lowering triglycerides and increasing HDL (good cholesterol). Cinnamon bark is one of the most warming herbs in the Chinese herbal formulary. Therefore, constitution is considered when prescribing this herb to yin and blood-deficient persons.

#### **Bitter Melon**

Bitter melon is sold as "Bitter Melon Sugar Balance *Plus*". In animal studies 400mg/kg of this herb lowered post-meal blood sugars. In these studies, it inhibited glucose absorption from the gastrointestinal tract, enhanced insulin sensitivity, and inhibited the creation of glucose by the liver (gluconeogenesis). It may also improve pancreatic cell function, and increase insulin excretion.

A review of human studies showed contradictory effects on blood sugar control. Ironically, Bitter Melon is not traditionally used in Chinese medicine to lower blood sugars per se. Rather, it benefits thirst due to "Summer-heat", which is somewhat different than the thirst (polydipsia) caused by elevated blood sugars. And the medications that control post-meal blood sugar surges are taken at each meal (not just once a day).

#### **Gynostemma**

Gynostemma is an adaptinogen, and a cooling qi tonic that is similar to *American Ginseng*. It is sold in health food stores as "Jiao Gu Lan" pills, or "Panta Tea". A clinical trial demonstrated that low doses of Gynostemma improved fasting, and post-meal blood sugars. Paradoxically, in this study 800mg of Gynostemma daily lowered HbgA1c (a benchmark of adequate blood sugar control) only 0.6%. Oral medications lower HbgA1c up to 2% in comparison. HbgA1c <7.0 is desirable for diabetics.

Gynostemma was shown to regenerate pancreatic cells in animal studies, with 200mg/kg of the leaf extract equivalent to 4 units/kg of insulin. Blood sugar levels dropped significantly after 45 days of administration. Too much insulin production is a problem in *early* Type 2 Diabetes (despite insulin resistance), and this may be another consideration when using Gynostemma.

Lori Kelsey DOM (Doctor of Oriental Medicine) will speak on managing Type 2 Diabetes with herbs, nutrition, and supplements at Longevity Chiropractic 710 Main St. Clayton, NM on Friday September 4, 2015 from 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm. **Topics covered:**

- *How different herb, foods, and supplements affect blood sugar control.*
- *Prognosis with these complementary & alternative therapies.*
- *Planning the finances, time, energy & lifestyle changes for best results.*
- *Herbal treatment plan & cost.*
- *Western medicine goals & measures of treatment success.*

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