Spices Over Pills: Nature’s Pharmacy For Midlife Women Transcript

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Introduction and guest overview

Hello and welcome back to Mastering the Men of Transitions Summit 4.0. I am your host, doctor Sharon Stills and as always, my honor, my privilege, my excitement to be here with you all and helping you learn about all the things you need to know to master your very own hormonal journey.

And today I have a dear friend and colleague who we're going to be talking about. One of my favorite topics, Ayurveda, and just looking at things from a different lens.

And so I have Shivani Gupta in the house. She is an innovator practitioner, an expert in Fuzing Eastern and Western practices. She completed her master's in innovative sciences and her PhD on turmeric.

Wow. A PhD in interior. That's it. I don't think I've ever heard of that before. Yeah. So we're going to learn about turmeric today ladies, which is awesome because it's a very important herb.

She's practice Ayurvedic medicine for over 20 years. And she's is going to show you how to build a toolkit that you can use for your own journey. She's also the founder of Fusion Dairy Formulas, which is an innovative company that helps people with inflammation and pain.

I'm guessing with turmeric. So welcome, Shivani. It's really nice to have you here. Thank you. Thanks for having me. Yeah. My pleasure. So let's just dive in and let's, you know, maybe just like a quick I hear Veda 101 and then maybe go into the different dosages and how that can be pertinent for the ladies listening.

Absolutely. So iron V, that is an ancient system of medicine from India that's over 5000 years old. And so just like we have traditional Chinese medicine where we have acupuncture and all those different modalities under that umbrella, in India, we had our own science going forward with yoga as a sister science, herbology and the herbs we use as a key piece.

And so I like to talk about the six pillars of I provide that, the first one being those shares which I've now renamed to be your elemental design, the elements that are your driving forces across all areas of your life.

I read that came up with the circadian clock.

Ayurveda basics and the three doshas

So circadian rhythm, which we talk about a lot in the longevity wellness space, is from Ayurveda. Ayurveda also talked about how gut health and the digestive fire is the center of all health.

And so if we just focus on digestive fire, then we've got our brain health, our mood, everything on board the way we want. I read the talked about a very yogic diet, a whole food organic, fresh diet as being the nourishing way to balance ourselves.

And then it also talked a lot about self-care in building something called dinner. JTA or the daily self-care rituals that create the framework for us staying our most balanced.

And then finally, like I mentioned, the herbs and spices. I call them super spices because I think we've forgotten the level of power and anti-inflammatory and antioxidant benefits in the spices alone and bringing those back into our lives, especially in the perimenopause menopause journey, can be really powerful as well.

So that's the overview of that. And then you asked about the dosas. I love explaining the dosas because it's an opportunity to understand ourselves better and so on my website at doctor's funny.com.

You can take the quiz and you'll come to understand for yourself. Are you more vata, more pitta or more gather? And so a person tends to be primarily made up of the elements of air and ether.

So this is someone who is always in motion, always running around. So you might be able to think of if this is yourself or someone in your life. So if you're driven by more of an air dosha air element, you're going to have an elevator.

We defined it as like a thin and wiry body, someone who's taller or shorter than most people in their demographic with thinner wrists, oval face. This is someone whose mind goes 100 miles a minute.

They might suffer with insomnia. Might suffer with anxiety, disrupted sleep, constipation, disrupted gut because of the dryness and the coolness aspect of vata.

And so our job in our Vedas say, hey, let's balance you out, let's get you more grounded, let's create more alleviation in the system. And what's interesting about menopause is we talk about how menopause is actually a vata phase of life.

And so a lot of the symptoms that we deal with in menopause are anxiety disrupted, sleep disrupted, body dryness in a lot of ways. And so just balancing vata can help us in that menopause transition alone.

Then there's a dosha constitution called Vita and that person is going to be all fire. Yep. Reddish skin, reddish hair tone. I'm a bit that too. I'm always like red hot.

Like even sitting here, I'm like, gosh, the house needs to be colder. I like, I get sweaty. It's just just when I get to teaching because it's like light and heat.

So add a bit the person. It's predominantly driven by fire and that means reddish skin tone, reddish hair, early green. They tend to be medium frame in the body, not on the thin and wiry, and not on the big boned like kapha side, but right in the middle.

Tend to have heartburn, tend to have a personality that's very fiery. So they're passionate. They get excited about things. Personality can tend to be sharp sometimes they can tend towards anger and frustration.

Getting hangry kind of like a volcano that's erupting on the people around them. If they're not staying cool, calm and collected. And so really, the homework of a bit, the person is cool down the fires, manage yourself, don't like overcaffeinated over heat all day.

Instead, have the cooling practices. And what's interesting about menopause? It can create an erratic fluctuation in our Agni or our fires. And so that's why in the menopause transition, sometimes you have hot flashes, night sweats, like really erratic heat.

And so balancing and cooling the system and balancing that is really important through that transition and through that time period, moods can get really elevated as well.

Right? So supporting pitta is a powerful foundational tool for the menopause transition. And then finally you have Ghaffar. Ghaffar is this third body type.

It is earth and water. So this is your person who's bigger boned stronger and they can lift heavier. They have rounder features like a rounder face, curly oily hair, oily supple skin.

This is someone who's a very loyal, very one thing at a time. They talk slower, they move slower. They're very conscientious and intentional. And so a comfort person needs support in revving up their metabolism, sometimes getting things moving, getting off the couch and getting in motion.

And so our job as a practitioner is really to support that movement. And that energy moving and helping the gaffer

stay really balanced. Because gaffers can sometimes be accused of being lazy.

They're not lazy, they're just covered. They have this beautiful, loyal mother caretaker energy. And our job is, is to show the gaffer the beauty of gaffer energy.

And so that's like an overview, a quick overview of the three constitutions. Now I love I just my son who runs my clinic Dillon, I just wrote it was his birthday and I wrote an email to my list and I said happy birthday to my favorite coffee bear because he's my gaffer.

Yeah. As I'm listening to you, I'm going, I got to work on my, I think I need a better Indian accent. Know how I pronounce these? That's okay. I can pronounce everything every which way.

Suppose I tumeric turmeric just depending on who I'm talking to. But that was a great overview, and I, I just have such a special place. I've studied I Arvada, and one of the most powerful healing experiences I've personally had was when I went to India and I spent, I spent a couple of months there, but three of those weeks were in a, small town called Hariharan Pura in Karnataka.

Right. And it was doing, pancha karma. Nice. And it was so, you know, it was so simple, right? We're so used to such fancy things. And we had a lot of downtime and we the most delicious food and got some oil stuck up our noses and things.

But I had been suffering with like, sugar cravings so badly like. And I was there. I need to go back. It was about eight years ago already, and it was the only thing that ever worked because they balanced in me and I left there.

And not only did my sugar cravings go away, but I then wanted to eat spicy foods, which I had never had a taste for before. So maybe you can talk a little bit about like the tastes and the balancing and the spices that can be so powerful.

Personal Ayurveda experience and spice benefits

More than just like we like a little of this on our food because it because it tastes good for sure. You know, bunch of karma and annual detoxification is a big part of what we teach.

And I loved the which is that that's your annual oil change. And skipping it just means the whole system gets gunked up. All the accumulation of toxins and imbalances that we accumulate throughout the year never get cleared out.

And so I'm a big fan of annual or quarterly detoxing just to clean and clear the path, and then we can move forward. So I'm so glad you've done a bunch of government India.

I have to where I've lived there for three weeks and done everything. And you come back so vibrant and so healthy. And so nowadays when I teach that, I teach it like in a faster, easier way that we can do from home.

But I always want everyone to still do that big, profound detox. So in argue that we talk a lot about spices and herbs because it's one of our first line of defense toolkits that we want to use with people.

And it's so interesting. When I go to my friend's home, sometimes my American friends, I'll open the cabinet. I'm like, I need some pepper, I need some chili, I need something on this food.

And I see like salt, basil, rosemary. And I'm like, what? I have like five spice cabinet. I have the main spice cabinet, the spice drawer back up spice mixes in the pantry.

I have like ten hot sauces on a shelf in the fridge. So as Indians were very used to like depth of flavor, complexity of flavor, complexity using spices.

And one thing I've thought about is, as we're moving through perimenopause and menopause, I'm in the midst of perimenopause now. We're taught a lot about eating more protein, and it can get really boring and really annoying to try to eat so much protein in your day.

As an diabetic practitioner, I have like a self conflict with this idea of overdoing any one macro in my diet. But as I do try to increase my protein intake, I'm leaning on the spices more.

I'm like pesto on everything, Indian spices on everything to make it fun and wholesome, but also to get the benefits. Because when we're talking about the spice kind or Veda, we're talking about turmeric, ginger, fenugreek, fennel, red chili powder, just using the the basics of the spice kit can create such a beautiful flavoring, of course, but each one of those spices has profound benefits for gut health, inflammation, brain health, for lymphatics, for antioxidant effects.

So anytime you're looking at a superfood like our blueberries, our spinach, and all those good ones that we know about when I research them, and I was like, well, what makes these also good?

It's an anti-inflammatory antioxidant. Then when I was in my herbology course sitting there, they talked about, oh, well Ginger does that. Oh well, you know, cilantro is a heavy metal detox.

Turmeric does all these things. And that got me really excited. So that's why I ended up doing a whole PhD on turmeric is I was sitting there and they said tumor is antiviral, antibacterial, antifungal, gut protective.

So it kills off bad bacteria in the gut but keeps the good anti-parasitic, which is a pretty big deal. Right now we're having more conversations around parasites and how we don't parasite cleanse enough in the United States.

It is also very powerful as an antioxidant and reverses oxidation in the system. And what I find interesting is we have a lot of science now on curcumin for menopause.

And so there are scientific studies published. I remember reading about one clinical trial where they had 93 postmenopausal women, and they found that taken curcumin, curcumin daily reduced their hot frequency by 51%.

Then we saw about whole cysts, whole symptoms being reduced by curcumin as well. We see that it has a cardiovascular boost because it's going to help with vasodilation.

It's going to help with blood flow in the body as well. I've seen it work on cholesterol. We know cholesterol rises a lot. And so I think of it as a great adjunct solution with HRT or a supportive solution for HRT to help reduce our dosages.

For some people could replace HRT, but that's going to be a very small population of people, depending on the issues we're seeing. And that's obviously a personal decision with people on HRT, but I find it interesting that it can have such a profound anti-inflammatory effect in the system, such a good gut effect, cardio effect, that it'll support all these different baseline issues that are amplifying, I would say are menopausal symptoms that we're dealing with.

And so I've just become very, very much a fan of utilizing curcumin for a lot of those things. And so most people don't realize that curcumin is 3% of the tumeric plant.

And so just taking turmeric, the spice isn't enough. But utilizing curcumin is a very effective solution. So okay. Yeah. So I never had a PhD on turmeric in the house.

So I've got some questions. Go ahead. Trying to think what's going through everyone's mind. So so say that again. The curcumin is 3% of the turmeric plant. So how so how can we get it.

Are you saying it's not enough to just cook with it. Do we need to take it as a supplement, or are there different ways to take it? What's the best way? There's so many different options.

I think you have an option. Are there any indications? Because I'm like getting ready to grab my my curcumin. I'm like, that sounds good, you know? Sounds like a wonder, wonder supplement.

So is there anyone who it, you know, give it a little low down. Sure. So out of the entire turmeric plant, only that 3 to 5% is the curcumin OIT. And so many of us in modern day times are being told, just take your turmeric.

And when you go to the health food store, it's like turmeric, orange juice and turmeric and tortillas and all these ideas. But you're not going to get enough from food when we talk about that significant reduction of inflammation.

And so when we do take curcumin from turmeric as a standardized 95% perk, humanoids that we're going to take, it's important to take it with black pepper or a healthy fat.

When you take it with black pepper, we know it's going to increase that absorption by 20%. And I worked in the lab where the scientists discovered that, and I thought that was so exciting because in Indian food, our gut of masala has black pepper.

So our ancient science always knew how to fuze these things together properly. Now, healthy fat will help that curcumin cross the blood brain barrier.

And we know that in women's health right now, dementia brain health needs to be a big focus. It's an obsession of mine right now. How to keep my brain working on all cylinders all the way through.

A perimenopause can throw you on a roller coaster, so I'm like, how do I get off this thing? So curcumin with black pepper, taking it with meals is the way to get that result.

Now, when it comes to your curcumin supplements, there's such a range of qualities. And when I finish my PhD I thought, okay, well, I'm just going to find a great one and that'll be awesome.

But I couldn't find one. And so I sat down with a factory and said, I want to make a formula that all of orthopedics and all of medicine will use. So when I have pain and inflammation, they don't just say, you know, here's an end said, because I don't tolerate those things well.

And so I went out and built a formula just to prove in orthopedics and all of Western medicine that natural solutions work as well as their solutions.

So that's been my body of work for ten years now. When it comes to our at our contraindications, the main one is blood thinners. Curcumin does have a vaso dilating effect.

So I tell all my doctors don't give it to your patients on blood thinners. We don't have any other known contraindications at this time. There is so much exploding science around curcumin, but we aren't seeing too many adverse effects or negative effects.

What we are seeing is that global reduction of inflammation because it affects NF kappa B, TNF alpha, interleukin six, and so many of the pathways. And so it's just become a big obsession of mine to understand how many ways can we prove curcumin ginger, all these herbs will support us on this menopausal journey.

I think we need a lot more tools in our toolkit. I created a tea.

Curcumin, turmeric, and menopause support

It's called Menopause Support tea currently because everyone was coming to me saying I have hot flashes. I thought, you know, in I that we have tools, we have to dig in and find them.

We have to find those adaptogens and those different things that we can use to cool the system down. So yeah, so curcumin has a lot of wonder miracle supplement effects.

And so that's usually my first one I reach for. And then I say, okay, now that we've got the fire cooled down a bit. Now let's talk about lifestyle. Let's approach sleep. Let's approach self-care.

Let's talk about your exercise. Let's talk about diet and all those other things as well. I love that. So you mentioned before that menopause is a, you know, a vada state.

And and I think here in the States and I know a lot of you are listening from other places and maybe you find that too. But will I always kid around or when I'm talking to someone who understands I or Vada?

It's like we're so vada deranged, right? Because we we burn the candle at every end. And where we, we're relearning here how to say the sacred know and to make space and to honor silence and all of those things.

And so I was hoping you could give the ladies listening like, what are some at home self-care tools that they can start integrating from Aya Veda to, to balance that.

But, for sure. Well, when it comes to those vata specific symptoms, a lot of it ties directly to the menopausal common symptoms. So you've got dry skin, you've got vaginal dryness, you've got that irregular period anxiety worry, that racing mind.

That's a sign of what the derangement or what that imbalance. Like you said, insomnia waking up 2 to 4 a.m. that's vata joints aching, those creaky ness and stiff joints having bloating and constipation or gas.

All of that is vata. And so when we talk about our videos toolkit, Ayurveda says first and foremost, slow down, which is interesting because most of us are not willing to do that.

Right. It's hard. I myself am like, what? That can't be the homework. I can't do that one. I've got kids, I've got my business. But in our video, what we teachers, you can build a self-care rhythm for yourself that fits into the slices of your day.

It's about making these tiny slices. So the first one I teach is actually tea time is me time. And I'm like, if you can just learn to pause five times a day for a few minutes, this one habit is a mindful moment.

It's an anchor point to check in with yourself. And I use this one and it's it's transformed my whole life. I literally pause and say, what do I need today?

Have I scheduled my day or my week? So I get to eat and I get to survive. And a lot of times my intuition will come up and say, you need to cancel that.

You need to say no to that person you're going to heart. You didn't plan for dinner. And so I use that mindful moment as my anchor point. And then that one thing can kind of open up the opportunity to say, oh, am I even eating today for my dosha to be balanced?

And so I'll check in with myself and I'll say, okay, well, what's your afternoon snack today? Are you eating? Are you going to order the foods you need to have at home for your health?

And so what that teaches us eat more warm foods, moist foods, foods that are going to really warm you up from the inside. But that's very much needing to be balanced by everything grounding.

So if you are all air and dry and in the ethers, the one thing that you need is to be grounded into the earth. So that's feet in the grass. That's taking a moment to align to your circadian clock that's using oil.

So we love oil. And I read that I would prescribe or recommend a half teaspoon or a teaspoon of key on top of your meals, just to ground you down and create that oil on the inside.

I'd recommend in the evenings building a beautiful evening ritual of self-care. A lot of the self-care rituals we teach

in I RV that are actually in the morning.

And I think what's more practical in the West is let's move them into the evening and set aside half an hour at night to do dry brushing up, massage where you take a food grade organic Ayurvedic oil and it can be any oil.

You can use coconut oil from your pantry, but you sit down and massage the body from the feet all the way up to the neck, creating this moment of real grounding and tuning into yourself.

I know we have a lot of hair loss in perimenopause dealing with it now, so it's like massaging that into your hair will also give you that thicker, more luscious hair.

It'll keep our skin supple. It'll be an oily Asian of the joints as well. And so these are some simple tips. Inexpensive. So I like to give like what's inexpensive easy and doable into our day.

But what it's doing is it's it's a free gifting to self. It's a self-love moment for ourselves. And each one of those that we do really adds up. As long as we're setting that intention of, you know, I'm doing this for me and I'm gifting this to myself, I find that we can completely transform that.

But the imbalance we're talking about and bring it back to more grounded whole self and then everything can shift. Tyler will be under massage. You so good.

I get the best sleep when I do. Of young. Oh, my God, the best thing. And I have another question, but I just have to say one of the best experiences in my life was.

So I love Sarah Dara. We're actually going to. I'm figuring out how we can offer to my new clinic, because I think the dripping of hot oil onto your third eye is powerful, and everyone needs to experience that.

But when I was in India, I had like full body Shura Dara, where they just, like, dripped oil over my whole body. And I just felt like this must be what it's like to be a pancake and have, like, hot butter and sirup dripped all over you.

And it was like it was so divine, so awesome. Speaking of. So, I want to go back because I think there's some important clarifications here that, sure, the ladies could benefit from because like we're talking about dryness.

And I think especially in the West, we think it's really important to eat raw food, to eat raw edges, to eat raw salad. So if you could just talk a little a bit about like what are drying foods and what would be better options, how to cook them for this stage of life?

I think that would be really helpful. Absolutely. One thing we do a lot in the West is we jump on every fad and every trend, and I'm a culprit too, so I totally.

Except that when I go high protein, sure, I'll fit in 100g in my day, and then it's my whole body and blood work goes the wrong direction. I'm like, oh gosh, not that I forgot.

Vata balancing self-care and daily rituals

I have a dosha. My dosha comes first. So we very much in our area that teaches dosha first. All those things you want to try has three has to be customized to your constitution.

And so really understanding yourself and your body Constitution first is key. And then taking that and saying okay, well modern day life is about that and balancing and menopause is especially in balancing for that.

How am I going to address that while staying balanced in my dosha? So I'm a fiery bit that I'm supposed to say, cool, I want to eat those cooling foods.

But as I transition through this time period and I read says this is a huge metabolic shift. This is a huge body and

gut shift and brain shift. We're about to happen.

We have to accommodate it. And so like you said, when we talk about dryness and balancing of what that person is actually meant to eat, more cooked foods, easy to digest foods, we're not meant to eat all this raw, cold salad foods.

We don't necessarily have the gut digestive fire for it. So the focus is first building that gut digestive fire, making it strong, getting it balanced by giving it easy to digest foods.

And once you have that robust, healthy gut which most of us don't have right now, most of us have some level of gut dysbiosis. That's just the state of affairs.

So until we have that, we're not going to stay balanced. And so really it's about paying attention like what is causing the gas and bloating. Do you need to shift the diet to be much more kind to yourself, easier to digest before you go back into raw cold and all those ideas.

Yeah I have, I had to drag many a raw food list. Yeah I'm sure let's steam our veggies because they can make a huge difference. And also like the environment like right now it's think it was 113 degrees here yesterday.

So it's pretty dry here. Yeah. So taking your you know the season into account. And also I think it's important to know that we're, we're a combination.

So like I was raising my hand for a bit, but I'm a bit of, correct. We have, we have, we're, you know, of course. Right. We're not all one thing, but it it is so important.

And I think this is where whether it's either Veda or traditional Chinese medicine or bio regulatory medicine, where we are taking into account the Constitution.

Yeah. Makes the makes the prescriptions and the remedies so much more powerful than just a functional medicine perspective where you're just treating everyone the same way.

Because what's that saying? We'll say one woman's poison is another woman's medicine or vice versa. And so we do have to respect these, these constitutional differences.

They make a big difference even in herbs, right? Some herbs or cooling, some herbs and warming. And so I think that's why it's so profound. So, I could just sit and talk.

You're such a joy. And I love this conversation. I could talk to you all day long. Is there anything else? Any other, What did you say? Like golden rhythm.

Things that you want to share with the ladies, like for self-care or protocols or anything? That we didn't talk about, that we can sneak in real quick.

Or did we get to at all? Sure. I would say definitely. Building that rhythm and ritual ties your daily self-care rhythm into your circadian rhythm and then customizing it to your dosha.

Like you said, that customization makes it so much more powerful. Some of us need warming oils. Some of us need cooling oils. Some of us need more adaptogens.

I'm a bit that I run it like a really high performance level, but that also means I can carry a lot of stress with it because I'm trying to push every boulder up at the same time.

And so for me, I lean heavily myself into the adaptogens like ashwagandha, which we know reduces anxiety. We know it supports our cortisol balance. Or there's other adaptogens like shut the Ovary, which is phyto estrogenic.

It's it's like our queen of adaptogenic herbs for the reproductive organs or like I mentioned, tumeric, which helps with that brain fog helps with that chronic inflammation that's causing havoc in our bodies, that's affecting our metabolism and joint pain.

So even curcumin is considered adaptogenic in a sense. And so I love playing in that world and creating teas or anything I can that'll help us stay balanced in a rhythm throughout the day.

So morning, mid-morning, afternoon high tea in the afternoon after that, and then our evening rituals for really great sleep. All of that is so well supported through our Veda, through the lifestyle and through the herbs, so that we can have more ease.

Because I don't think we're meant to suffer through this time frame. We're meant to keep reaching for the right tools. And I know in the West, at least most of us in the West are going to go so far, so fast.

Adaptogens, tea rituals, and where to learn more

We're not ready to slow down yet. And so I'm all about picking up whatever tool I have to so I can get, so I can keep performing at the level I want to, but also have brain on board, inflammation reduced and all those things.

So that would be my last tip is reach into the Adaptogenic group as well, because there's a lot of support there for us. And I reach into it all the time with teas and things like that.

And your tea. Your mug is beautiful. Thank you. I got it in India, and, And I love that. That's going to be my new one of my new phrases. Tea time. There's me time. I love it.

Exactly. It's my favorite, honestly, out of the self-care rituals, like if I have tea time is me time. Life is good. And the minute that gets off base, everything goes off center and I love that.

So let's start a new and we're all going to tea. Time is me time. So where can they learn more? And I know you graciously. If anyone wants to check out, your products, you have a code to give them a little discount, which we appreciate.

So if you can just give us a little how do we how do we stay in touch with you? How do we learn more? Sure. So my website is my name Shivani Group that.com.

And I'm at doctor Dot, Shivani Gupta on Instagram and all the socials. My supplement company that's Ayurvedic is fusion formulas.com. It's f u s ionic r y.

And I made the code doctor stills to give you all 15% off on your first order. And if you have any questions, you can DM me anytime. If you call the 800 number, you'll get to me.

I love answering questions about tumeric and adaptogens like that's my favorite topic, so reach out to me any time. I love that. And you also have a book coming out?

Yes, I have a house book coming out February 2026 on information and I r Veda. I can't wait for that to come out into the world. I'm very excited for that and for you.

So go check her out. Shivani gupta.com visionary formulas.com is Dr. Stills. To get a discount get some tea so you can have tea. Time is me time. Check out your cumin.

Because we learned a lot about curcumin today. And so it really is a super power that you can have in your toolkit. So thank you, thank you, thank you I'll say eight was so good to see you for being here and sharing your wisdom and thank you everyone for being here.

And we'll be back with another talk. So stay tuned