

Metals In Ayurvedic Medicine

It was reported in the Journal of the American Medical Association that some Ayurvedic herbal formulations have been found to contain heavy metals known to be toxic. The herbs analyzed were sold in the Boston Area. As soon as the report came out, the California College of Ayurveda^[1] was contacted by the media for comment. This prompted us to look further into the story. Here is what we have learned.

The contaminated product was mostly gathered through Indian grocery stores with a 20 mile radius of Boston. The herbs tested included Mahayogaraj guggulu and others containing bhasmas. Bhasmas are metals that go through a purification process that turns them into ash. Because there have been questions in the past about the safety of bhasmas, these are not supposed to be sold in the United States. Indian groceries however sometimes import through small distributors by-passing US regulations.

We have no reason to suspect the inclusion of any metals from popular suppliers such as Bazaar of India, Om Organics or Banyan Trading. In addition, here at the California College of Ayurveda, almost every formulation is mixed at our pharmacy from raw herbs and we know exactly what is going into them. Those formulations that we do receive prepared for us are received from reputable distributors who have assured us of purity and we are not at all concerned.

It should be noted that the pharmaceutical and medical industry love to promote contamination of Indian and Chinese herbs as it suits their interest. You won't see it in American newspapers but the Indian Supreme Court just ruled against Coca Cola requiring them to label their product in India as containing pesticides known to be harmful to one's health. This is a political as well as a health issue.

The California College of Ayurveda advocates for the importation of clean and pure herbs and we support controls to assure that only quality herbs are imported from all regions of the world.

It is important to note that there is no such thing as an Ayurvedic herb. Marketers of herbs from India have used the name Ayurveda as a tool to sell herbs. In actuality, there are Indian herbs, American Herbs, European Herbs, South American herbs and so on. Ayurveda is the paradigm in which it is used. When any herb from any part of the World is used based on the Ayurvedic understanding of the nature of the patient, the nature of the disease and the nature of the substance, this is the practice of Ayurveda.

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