



EPISODE 1019

Why Chronic Disease Is Rooted in Inflammation & the Ancient Science That Can Help You Heal

With Dr. Shivani Gupta

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SHAWN STEVENSON: Today you're going to discover the shocking connection between inflammation and our epidemics of chronic diseases. Heart disease, diabetes, depression, and countless other conditions have a major inflammatory component. And if we're only treating the symptoms and not the root causes of these diseases, we will continue to see rapid degradation.

And how do we effectively treat inflammation? Today you're going to discover the modern science based on a system of medicine with thousands of years of documented history. Through cutting-edge use of Ayurvedic medicine, you'll learn how we all have a unique body type, especially when it comes to health and disease.

You'll discover the common culprits that throw our bodies into inflammation and science-backed ways to finally reduce chronic inflammation and bring your body into a state of health. Some of the stuff that I learned today truly blew my mind, and things that I take for granted that I have access to, I'm now inspired to utilize them at a whole new level.

And so I cannot wait to share this powerful interview with you. But before we get to our special guest, I wanna share something that's prized in the Ayurvedic system that's featured in a mind-blowing peer-reviewed study. In a randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled trial titled Clinical Evaluation of Purified Shilajit on Testosterone Levels in Healthy Volunteers had men between the ages of 45 to 55 take 250 milligrams of purified Shilajit twice daily for 90 days. At the end of the study, the researchers found that versus a placebo, the men taking Shilajit had significant increases in total testosterone, free testosterone, and DHEAs.

Total testosterone increased by upwards of twenty-eight percent. Free testosterone increased by upwards of twenty percent, and DHEA increased significantly as well, serving as a precursor that supports continuous testosterone synthesis, and all of this without negative side effects. And I want you to understand how truly remarkable this is because there are men today, millions of men are taking all kinds of stuff to get a boost to that test and also

dealing with the negative ramifications of these risky treatments and conglomerations of different pharmaceuticals, nutraceuticals.

The list goes on and on. Now, why would men be doing this? Testosterone is obviously a huge influence on our sexual health and sexual function, but this is also about energy. It's about drive, and when it comes specifically to this domain of sexual function Still today, this is not talked about enough, but this study was done with men between the ages of forty-five and fifty-five, and it's well established that about forty percent of men over forty have erectile dysfunction.

About fifty percent of men over fifty have erectile dysfunction, and then it just keeps going up precipitously from there. And just because this condition has now been normalized does not mean that it's necessarily normal. And of course, there are many science-backed ways to support overall sexual function that many of us have access to, and we cannot understate the value of a nutritious diet, of getting adequate amounts of sleep.

Sleep has a huge impact. Again, this is clinically proven on our testosterone levels, our relationships as well, stress, the environment. All of these different things have influence on our testosterone levels. But when it comes to the domain of what can we fortify and supplement with true efficacy, look no further than, again, in the Ayurvedic system.

In Sanskrit, Shilajit is commonly translated to mean the conqueror of mountains and the destroyer of weakness. Need I say more? The Shilajit that I utilize is from the incredible team at Organifi. They're actually providing us with these therapeutic amounts of Shilajit in an easy-to-utilize form with their incredible best-selling Shilajit gummies.

Just go to organifi.com/model right now, and you're gonna get twenty percent off storewide, including their amazing Shilajit gummies. Again, that's organifi.com/model. That's O-R-G-A-N-I-F-I.com/model for twenty percent off. Take advantage. And now let's get to our special guest and topic of the day. Dr. Shivani Gupta is an Ayurvedic practitioner with a master's degree in Ayurvedic sciences and a PhD focused on the science of turmeric.

Her pioneering work blends classical Ayurveda with functional medicine to help patients calm inflammation, balance hormones, and restore their energy. Let's dive into this conversation with the incredible Dr. Shivani Gupta

Shivani, thank you so much for joining us today.

DR. SHIVANI GUPTA: Thank you for having me.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Of course. Of course. Big question to start everything off: Why have you focused your work on inflammation?

DR. SHIVANI GUPTA: Sure. So I grew up in a family that really struggled with diabetes. And so I grew up in Houston, Texas, but every year we'd go to India and see all my grandparents. And one year, by the time I got to college, I had already been visiting and seeing my grandma need a quadruple bypass, my other grandma constantly struggling with the effects of diabetes, my maternal grandfather who passed away of a heart attack, and then it was my paternal grandfather.

And I landed in India one year, and my family had told me, he's not doing well. He's had this injury. Just be ready." But what I didn't know was he had been riding a three-wheeler taxi in India, and his leg had been touching the wheel and had been getting burned and harmed, and he had no idea 'cause he had neuropathy.

And so I grew up with generations struggling with diabetes. I was used to it. And when I saw that happen, I got to India, and it's late at night. We land on this plane. We get home to our dad's house, and w- I go to touch the feet of my grandpa, and he has only one leg. And it literally scared the crap out of me.

I was like, "What just happened?" I felt sucker punched. I felt shocked. And I felt like, why is it that our family accepted this? Like, how is this acceptable as what's happening to someone's life? You're watching this degradation happening. And so I went and touched his one foot, and by the next morning when we woke up, he passed away And I thought, "That's it.

You, you guys are accepting diabetes and all of its after effects for 20 years, all this management of symptoms through hospitals and through doctors' offices, as a death sentence that's just acceptable." And instead, what if we took a different approach? What if we looked at diabetes and said, "How do we reverse this?"

What do we need to change?" And it was my father who I consider the first biohacker. Because whenever my grandparents came to Houston, he would build a biohacking suite. He would get the Power Plate, green juice, vitamins, and he'd always take that quadruple bypass or whatever it was and put it into remission.

And so I saw chronic metabolic disease and chronic inflammation are perfectly reversible, but we each have to make those choices. And so that's what really inspired me on this journey, is I thought, "Gosh, we're just not understanding what's possible for our health, and we're allowing this level of suffering."

That was suffering I experienced 'cause it was my grandparents. I saw my parents really suffer losing their own parents, and I thought, "This has to stop. No one else should have this much grief and suffering in their lives."

SHAWN STEVENSON: Thank you for sharing that.

DR. SHIVANI GUPTA: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: So when people hear diabetes, they don't think about inflammation.

DR. SHIVANI GUPTA: No.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Why is this really the catalyst behind so many of the most epidemic chronic diseases today? Heart disease, as you mentioned as well ... diabetes. How does inflammation fit into all that?

DR. SHIVANI GUPTA: We forget as a society that inflammation is the root cause behind every itis. When we go to the doctor's office and they're like, "You have gastritis."

You have arthritis," whatever ends in itis, that means inflammation. And when I learned that, I thought, "That's nuts. We are running to 50 different doctor types, and they're all saying we're inflamed? Why aren't we getting to the root cause of that?" And we know that over 60% of Americans are suffering with chronic disease rooted in inflammation.

So as we're looking around and it's, neuroinflammation, neurodegenerative diseases, heart attack, stroke, we're dealing with cancer, the disease burden is growing, and we're not ever pausing and saying, "What's underneath it?" And I think that it's just a complex topic. People think of inflammation, and they're like, "What is that?"

I don't get it. I don't really feel it, so what, how am I supposed to approach it?" But if you look at inflammation as acute versus chronic inflammation, that's when you start to really get into it. 'Cause acute inflammation is when you hurt yourself. Let's say it's an injury. Let's say you're at the gym or you sprain your ankle.

You're gonna know that you hurt your ankle. It's gonna get red. There's gonna be swelling. There's gonna be pain. And you're gonna think to yourself, "Okay, I gotta do something about that, or I can't walk today." And so that's when we start our NSAIDs and our icing and whatever we can do to get that trouble out of the way.

But when it's chronic low-grade persistent inflammation, it's like this forest fire in our body, but we're just not hearing the fire alarms because it's just quiet enough, and we've really normalized a lot of the symptoms of inflammation. So I meet people all the time who are like, "Yeah, I've got joint pain.

My skin is changing. I've got headaches. I've got, some digestive issues. When I eat, it doesn't sit well," or, "I feel like I'm just more tired all the time. My sleep is disrupted." And when I ask them, "Okay do you think those are connected?" They'll say, "No, I think this is just aging." And I always say, "This is not aging.

This is inflammaging, and it is wreaking havoc in your body. It's causing all this damage." It's like a forest fire in the house. It starts in the attic, keeps coming down, and until you are literally seeing the whole house burning down into ashes, you don't stop and address it. And

so that became my mission, is just to keep saying, "Guys, we are all chronically inflamed as a society, and if we don't address it, we are signing up for early death, and we have to make different choices to change that trajectory

SHAWN STEVENSON: I'm so grateful because we are starting to really unpack and, again, kinda look behind the scenes.

As you mentioned, with acute inflammation, this is something that we are very much aware of. There's pain, swelling, that kinda stuff associated with it. And you talk about this in the book as well, it's also related to infectious conditions, so a respiratory infection, for example. The results that we're experiencing, the symptoms, are a result of inflammation.

And what's managing the inflammation? What is driving the inflammation in our bodies? Does this have something to do with our immune system?

DR. SHIVANI GUPTA: Absolutely. So we forget that our gut and our gut microbiome, and alongside that gut microbiome, is over 70% of our immune cells. I learned this in college, because by the time I reached college, I had taken antibiotics month after month.

I was a sick kid who was always left home and left behind. And by the time I got to college, I went to the student center, and they said, "You can't take any more antibiotics for this sickness. You've taken too many, and you've damaged your gut microbiome." And that was a huge wake-up call to me. I realized, wow, none of us realize that our gut health, our immune health, is tied together.

Now, 20-plus years later, that's much more common knowledge. But yes, when our immune cells see any sort of enemy, they're going to have this response, and they're gonna say, "Hey, we are under attack. We need to survive. We need to fight whatever that is." And so any time there's a virus, a bacteria, even secondhand smoke, environmental pollutants, which is pretty significant nowadays in our modern-day world.

Could be your cleaning products, your skincare, your Teflon pans, your microplastic. That list

is pretty huge. Whatever those toxin burdens are, the body's gonna respond with an immune response, send an inflammatory response, and try to get rid of that enemy. But that enemy inside is pervasive. It's everywhere.

It's spreading. And that's when we start to generate these autoimmune conditions. And so our body is inflamed. It's struggling. And that response becomes a chronic response. That's the problem. Sometimes we have an acute issue, and it turns into a chronic issue, and we don't even realize it. But it's because the body's under attack every single day that the body's saying, "Hey, I'm trying to fight fires in the entire forest, and you're not giving me any help.

You're not bringing in an anti-inflammatory diet. You're not reducing stress. You're not supporting this gut health or immune system. You're not getting proper sleep." And so there's just no way for the body to recover and catch up.

SHAWN STEVENSON: I love this. You're really helping to illuminate the difference with inflammation being this kind of villain versus something that our bodies naturally do.

And this is one of the things that help us to heal, to recover, to even potentially build back, bu- build back better. But- It's when things become chronic and things get out of control. But keeping in mind, inflammation is there to help us when things are running properly and we're in balance. And you talk a lot about balance in the book too.

And I wanna lean into this a little bit more because it's gonna help us to really understand what's going on with chronic disease. When you give that analogy of the attic and the fire starting there, maybe it's a little kindling, a little spark of something. And that might show up for us as maybe we're having headaches- Right

or low energy that are just kinda sticking around. It's just like, where's that coming from? And we don't deal with it. We don't stop and ask questions, what is causing this? That can then evolve to, it can br- start to burn down to the next level- ... to where now we have hypertension or we have insulin resistance.

And then, okay, are we still addressing the root cause? If not, it goes to the next level, to the

ground floor, and this is when we might have full-on diabetes. We might have amputation. We might have a heart attack or a stroke. And it's not until everything is gone that we often really pay attention.

And so thank you for this, because you're helping us understand what's happening all the way up in the attic when it has to do with inflammation.

DR. SHIVANI GUPTA: Absolutely. I mean, I think people aren't understanding those subtle cues the body is giving us. We really think of it as temporary or situational. When I get a headache, I always stop and say, "What is causing this?"

What do I have to do? Is it hydration? Is it caffeine? Did I forget to have my tea for the day? Is it rest? Is this a tension headache, just too much stress in my day, and I haven't given myself a decompression break? Is it food? Am I calorically supported? Did I eat enough today, or is that why I'm getting this 3:00 or 4:00 headache?"

What is it? And what I find is instead of asking what is it, everyone just pops the Tylenol. They're like, "Let me just shut off the pain." That's the easier solution. It's a headache. We shut off the pain. But never pausing and saying, "Okay it's day 30 now of an afternoon headache. How do I need to shift my day?"

Do I need an afternoon walk? Do I need more decompression? What is the tool that's natural that I could reach for?" But also, where's the awareness of that root cause? And so you're right. That attic analogy I gave in the book was imagine you put your Christmas decorations away, and there's this one smoldering match that's still left in a box, and it gets started.

But we forget that it's the tiny message, then it is that bigger message. And until we get to full-blown diagnosis, full-blown surgeries and treatment needed, we're not addressing it. But it could be so much simpler. It could be the body gave you one signal, and you stopped and said, "Hey, why is my body giving me this signal?"

Instead of shutting off the signal with a drug or a medication, let me pause and really see the why. So I take an NSAID or a painkiller less than once or twice a year. It has to be that I am non-functional and I can't get out of bed for me to reach for something like that, because my job to honor this body is to actually address it right at the beginning when it starts.

And I think that applies to so many things. When our body starts to gain weight All of a sudden, five pounds, seven pounds. That's a shift. What is happening metabolically? Inflammation is a part of that equation. And so many people say, "Okay, I'm gonna lose weight just by eating less and drinking more water and moving more."

But if we're inflamed, we're in this catch-22 cycle that makes it 10 times harder to lose weight. And so, so much of what I'm trying to teach is much more upstream. Have the awareness of the lifestyle we can put in place, the ancient wisdoms- Yes ... that can help us really build a lifestyle that keeps us uninflamed.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And this ... ancient wisdom is really your expertise And so I would love to talk about that in Ayurvedic medicine and how it can actually inform us on solutions- ... for inflammation, and just all these chronic issues. And one of the things you talked about in the book has to do with, again, going back to the immune system, this relationship to gut health.

This was noted thousands of years ago... in Ayurveda. Let's talk about that.

DR. SHIVANI GUPTA: So ancient Ayurveda is this entire system of health, healing, and medicine from India that's over 5,000 years old. And within Ayurveda, they taught us these core pillars of health, and it was really the first preventive medicine.

Root cause medicine, precision medicine, really, before the time we live in now. And so what I love is so much of the longevity world and the biohacking world are actually talking about all the wisdom rooted in ancient Ayurveda. And so Ayurveda talks about our circadian clock, and how living in rhythm with nature and our circadian clock from nature is the best way to have vitality and preventive health.

Then it teaches us about our gut health, and how gut health is the center of all health. Then Ayurveda teaches us that daily self-care rhythms are the best way to build ritual and rhythm into our day- ... that helps us have the vitality and levels of energy we want. Then we talk a lot about food, how to live according to the circadian clock, how to have food that's truly nourishing and seasonal and local, and how food is the building blocks of our health.

And then we also talk a lot about how we have these different doshas, or what I call our elemental design, and that's our blueprint for how to navigate our own individual health. Oftentimes nowadays, we are all watching what's trending on social, and we're trying to just quickly buy every trendy thing, hoping that it'll save our health.

Right now, the agenda in midlife is you need to have a vibration plate or a trampoline, you need to be cold plunging, everyone needs a sauna, everyone needs red light. The list goes on and on, and the budget for that keeps having to increase, when instead Ayurveda said nature is the ultimate healer. Go outside.

When you need to be grounded, feet in the grass. When you need that red light, go for a circadian walk in the morning and the evening. And so, so much of what we're seeking for our health right now that we're craving could be fed to us by just being in community and communion with mother nature instead of staying inside and battling it by going after tech, machine and habit stack that we're trying to jam into our lives.

I think part of what we're doing here is we forget we're not a machine, we're not a robot, we're not a car. So many of my health analogies are around cars 'cause I'm into cars, and I'll say, "Don't let the gas tank go below empty," and all these things. But we're a body with a soul. We have our own individual biology, mental nature, emotional nature, spiritual connection.

And so in Ayurveda when we talk about elements, we teach that the five elements, earth, ether, fire, water, and air, these five elements make up our body types, and we teach that there's three body types, vata, pitta, and kapha. And so knowing your elemental design is actually a beautiful blueprint for how to move forward.

Right now we love things like personality tests, like we wanna know our Myers-Briggs or our StrengthsFinder, like what are we? But this ancient wisdom actually taught us you are either more fire, more air, or more earthy, and accordingly you are meant to navigate your life with that. It's a self-understanding that shows you how to eat for your d- body type, how to sleep for your body type, what self-care to use, what super spices to use to stay more balanced.

And so like you said, it's actually about balance and harmony more than it is about forcing the body to do something and assuming that we're all the same.

SHAWN STEVENSON: That part, first and foremost. Just even being able to have somewhat of a blueprint to follow, because it's just like, why are certain people just naturally thinner?

Or they tend to have a m- more cold nature. Their thermal regulation's different from everybody else. Why are you cold all the time? It's just like these things that we might look at as positive or negative, these can be helping us to be informed about our dosha. True. And again, thousands of years of history and education and helping people. This incredible system in what you're teaching us, you're giving us insight into how we utilize this knowledge for our own good.

And one of the things that is talked about within this context is digestive fire. And there's a term for that as well. Agni. Because everybody's digestion, based on your dosha, it's gonna be different, and the foods that can help to support or throw you out of balance. So talk about what that is again.

What is, what's the name?

DR. SHIVANI GUPTA: Agni. And so in Ayurveda, we teach that we all have this digestive fire called agni, and that fire is the center of all health. And so this understanding that treat it like a campfire. Assume that your digestion is actually there to support you every day, so you are meant to honor it.

And I meet so many people who, even in my own family, they'll eat anything, they'll eat leftovers. The meal is done. but they'll iust finish what's on the plates. They won't even think

about food combination or what is the right proportion of food to eat for your body type. So agni means that campfire, that fire, the stronger and more robust it is, that's our metabolic fire as well.

And so when we don't focus on that metabolic fire, when we stay-- when we instead say, "Okay, I'm just gonna eat whatever is here. I'm gonna eat whatever's available. I'm gonna microwave it. I'm gonna just cook it however," we're not getting the best nutrition and support into the body. And so one way Ayurveda teaches it is build a good campfire, small, medium, large branches.

Every morning when you wake up, kindle that fire. Get it going for the day. Maybe that's things like ginger lemon tea first thing. Don't go for the caffeine first. Modern science has now proven that benefit, but Ayurveda already stated this win- wisdom 5,000 years ago. So open up that fire, get it going. Eat your three square meals a day.

We are not meant to munch and snack all day. If we were out in the forest and we built a campfire, we wouldn't keep that thing running and needing us 24/7. We would use it for our specific meals, and then we'd settle down the fire, and we'd settle it down for night as well. And that's our intermittent fast.

We're meant to hold a 12 or 14-hour fast. Once you settle that campfire out for dinner, you're not gonna use it again just for a little munch. You wanna keep that settled. And so this wisdom is really illuminating for us- ... the power of honoring that fire and then knowing that fire actually applies to everything else as well.

That's your mental fires, your ability to really think and produce for your day. That's also your energy and your vitality. And so we talk about weak fire. Weak digestive fire means you're not able to digest your nutrition, not able to get the benefits of your food. That's why we're all so vitamin and mineral deficient right now.

The fire is lacking. Or some people have an over-burning fire, and they're hangry and hungry all the time, and that needs to be moderated a little bit. So it's really about this honoring and

understanding that fire's the center of all things. And if you have that is your vitality and energy.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And you point out also, with the fire being weak, this doesn't just mean I'm not digesting my food properly or might experience bloating or mineral deficiencies, nutrient deficiencies, but also you state that it means that your food is literally becoming poison instead of fuel. If we look into this inflammation equation, that's a big part of it.

Absolutely. Weak digestive fire. And I wanna ask you about another concept I believe is called ama? Yes. Toxic accumulation. Talk about that.

DR. SHIVANI GUPTA: For sure. So when we are living our lives, we are consuming a lot of things, not just food. We're consuming the emotions of others, our mental fires are usually going 24/7, especially in the modern-day world, consuming social media and the news and everything else.

We're on all the time. I don't know about you, but in my own sleep, a lot of times I'm dreaming about work and my business. And so because we're consuming so much, we actually need beautiful restorative sleep to clear everything out. But as a society, we're not honoring sleep as the most important recovery tool for regeneration, healing, everything else.

On the circadian clock, we teach that 10:00 to 2:00 is the most important time to sleep, and most of us are not giving ourselves that healing sleep. And 10:00 to 2:00 is when we clear the e- the entire lymphatic system. We clear out the immune cells. We clear out ama, or this toxin residue that forms. So ama is this understanding that if we eat well, sleep well, live our lives with joy, really have boundaries around what all we consume, then the body knows with its digestive fire how to process that.

Yes. And the end result is this thing called ojas, or true vitality. But what happens instead? Most of the time we are eating on the go, eating while driving, eating while running around, eating unconsciously. Maybe we sit down to eat at a table, and we've got our phones on, and we're consuming something, not even paying attention to that food coming in.

So there's no connection between our mind and our stomach. We have no idea what went in. I don't know about you, but sometimes I'll finish a meal and I'm still hungry. I want something else 'cause I'm unsatisfied from what I ate. And so that awareness of what are we eating, what are we putting in our bodies, having a guard in our mind against content that's not good for us.

We teach in Ayurveda that when you're pregnant, every single thing you watch and consume will go to the child. And so in the same way, how are we allowing ourselves to watch just anything our algorithm feeds us? Sometimes I'll see a clip and I'll say, "Oh my gosh, that's horrifying," and it creates this huge fight or flight response inside of me, and that's my cue.

I am not watching this anymore. This is bad for me. And so we need to have those guardrails because if there's so much that we're trying to consume, it's almost like you're dumping everything onto a digestive fire, assuming it can process it- ... and it cannot. And so what happens? It becomes putrid. It becomes fermented.

It's like becoming a garbage dump inside of you, and that's when we create something called ama. It's this toxin, poisonous residue, and the body says I don't know how to digest this. I don't know how to get rid of this. She's not gonna sweat it out. She's not gonna necessarily hydrate enough to flush this out, so I guess I just have to park it somewhere."

And look at what's happening here in America, at least in the West. We're becoming more and more obese. The body is parking it wherever it can. And we don't have a culture, here in the West at least, around detoxification. In India, in Ayurveda, in a lot of the Eastern cultures, there's a cultural understanding of daily, monthly, seasonal, and annual detoxification.

So when I go to India to the Ayurveda centers, they do something called Panchakarma. Panchakarma is like this annual detox that is like the most profound oil change you will ever have in your life. Sometimes it's a little intense 'cause it's got colonics and enemas and these massages, but it also has yoga and pranayama and deep breathing and all the things to reset the nervous system in the body.

And so instead of asking everyone to go to India and do that, where it's pretty intense, I instead teach it as daily self-care rituals that help us gently get rid of that ama or toxin residue. And so one simple way to do that is a copper tongue scraper. Every morning, you can take a copper tongue scraper, and you gently scrape the tongue 7 to 14 times, and that simple habit will massage all the organs of the body.

Just like in reflexology, we teach that all of our organs are reflected on the bottom of our feet. So for example, when you're pregnant, you don't get reflexology 'cause they might push the wrong thing and put you into early labor. And so just like all those organs are reflected there, they are reflected on our tongue, and by gently scraping the tongue, we're gently massaging all those organs and getting rid of ama.

And so we teach daily habits like this, beautiful sleep, movement, good eating, but also things like copper tongue scraper that'll help us reset and support the body in gentle detoxification.

SHAWN STEVENSON: This is so good. I just did the copper tongue scraping today, this morning before I came in here. Nice. So I'm feeling really good about it now.

DR. SHIVANI GUPTA: Awesome.

SHAWN STEVENSON: But also it's a hack to your vagus nerve potentially as well. There's so much connection there with what's going on in our mouth with the rest of our bodies. True. So this is so good. And also this relationship with this, again, thousands of years pointing to this kind of metabolic goo, this buildup, is really in alignment with our modern term of endotoxemia

DR. SHIVANI GUPTA: Correct ...

SHAWN STEVENSON: Which is so common, it's absurd, and it's just overlooked. And our body not efficiently processing our food not efficiently clearing metabolic waste, and not to mention all the toxin buildup just from the environment that we live in.

And you're addressing all these things. We have to be intentional and proactive today. This is not a joke. This is not this is not a practice. It's all happening right now. And so these tools and these insights are incredibly valuable. And so pointing back to Ayurveda, there's some specific I mean, and now I hesitate to call them spices because of my education from you now, but in particular the five spices.

And one of them, turmeric in particular, is where your PhD was focused on, the science around turmeric, which truly you are The world-leading expert in this subject matter, and something that I've been very interested in, engaged with for 20 years.

DR. SHIVANI GUPTA: Nice.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And so to be able to learn from you and to think about it differently has been super helpful.

So let's talk about the value with these five spices, but of course, I'd love to start with turmeric.

DR. SHIVANI GUPTA: Sure. I think of the spices as super spices and super herbs, 'cause in the West, we talk a lot about super foods. We're all running to the health food store and buying salmon and blueberries and spinach and goji berries, matcha, like anything we can find.

And each super food has its benefits. A lot of times they are powerful at being antioxidants, immune supports. I've always loved playing with them and trying them. And when I was doing my master's program and we started talking about each of these spices, I was shocked. Because in my own grandmother's kitchen, whenever I went to India, when I got sick, she would just open up the spice cabinet.

She'd say, "I'm just gonna heat up some cumin seeds for you in some water. Drink this tea." And it was like an elixir. It was magical, and it would heal whatever was going on, whether it was stomach issues or a headache. She had all these recipes that she had created or that had been passed down to her through generations.

And so when I started learning the scientific benefits of these super spices from ancient Ayurveda, I realized, gosh, we are sitting on a treasure chest of gold in India, and we are just not sharing this with the world in the way that the world needs to hear it. And so that's been my mission for 20 years, is whenever I went to Ayurveda school in India, the professors would take you out back into the garden, and they'd say, "Just so you know, tulsi is an adaptogen.

It helps people calm down. It's a beautiful tonic. These are cumin seeds. When anyone has gut digestive issues, add more cumin seeds to the food. They'll feel better." "Here's cinnamon. Blood sugar levels." That piqued my interest. I've got a family of diabetics. We should be using that cinnamon more.

But we forget that this simple plant can give us all those profound benefits. Then we love things like fennel. Let's say after a meal you have indigestion or gas or bloating. Fennel seeds in water will calm and soothe that down. So it's simple, easy things like that we can use. And when the professor got to ginger, I thought, "Gosh, I've had digestive issues my whole life 'cause I take antibiotics and my gut health.

You're telling me ginger tea once or twice a day could have been healing my gut this entire time? I didn't know that." Finally, when the professor got to turmeric, I was like, "This is insane. You are telling me turmeric can do all of this? I should have been high-dosing turmeric since I was a child because I needed it this entire time."

So what interested me about turmeric the most is it is anti-inflammatory, and it's considered one of the most powerful natural anti-inflammatories that we can use for the body. It's also a powerful antioxidant. But what's interesting is instead of just being an antioxidant where we go and take vitamin C, vitamin E, all these different solutions, and those support us for that one day, turmeric actually activates the NRF2 pathway and gives us our own antioxidant factory.

So our own body is gonna keep producing those antioxidants that we need, whether it's glutathione or catalase or all the others, and that really excited me. I was like, "I need a factory in my body that will constantly help me reverse my aging, feel young, feel vibrant, feel

healthy, but also battle against a lot of the chronic inflammatory diseases we're talking about."

But then I learned that turmeric is antiviral, antibacterial, and antifungal. That to me was profound because I was a kid who was always sick and left at home. And so when we talk about antiviral/antibacterial, I think of turmeric as this ultimate janitor. It goes into our bodies and cleans house.

Everything that doesn't belong there, could be malignant cells, could be senescent cells, these zombie cells that run around and damage everything, but it leaves everything in place. So you mentioned endotoxemia, leaky gut. Our body needs support when it comes to keeping a healthy gut barrier, a healthy brain barrier as well.

So turmeric goes in there and supports our endothelial cells. It closes the tight junctures. It keeps the good bacteria in place. That to me was incredible. I need solutions like that, that heal my gut, heal my brain, reduce neuroinflammation. And so turmeric's also got a very powerful role when we talk about neurodegenerative diseases.

I saw my family struggle with Parkinson's, with Alzheimer's, and I thought, "How are we gonna solve for this one? How can it be that the end stage of life is this difficult?" But we know through the scientific research, turmeric impacts tau tangles, beta amyloid plaques, neuroinflammation. It also creates neurogenesis, giving us new brain cells, and mitogenesis, new mitochondria, and that to me is incredible.

So you want more energy, you want a brain and a gut that works, you wanna fight off all the colds and all the sicknesses, turmeric is your plant to help you get there

SHAWN STEVENSON: And the crazy thing is, and this is just something we're gonna keep pointing back to, modern science is affirming ... what's been known for centuries.

And actually, not too far from here, UCLA, there's some researchers that have recently revealed but you know, again, with turmeric, it's oftentimes isolating just looking at curcumin. Correct. One of the bioactives, but there's so much more in it, in the whole thing

itself. But they found that curcumin has these, again, neurodegenerative protection qualities in helping to reduce inflammation, but in particular, they found that there was these cognitive benefits.

Improving memory improving reaction time, just making the brain work better. But what you just shared with us is it isn't just bringing in some temporary antioxidants. It's helping to activate and to support and to ramp up the antioxidant systems in our body. True. So that equation of inflammaging that you were talking about before, accelerating the aging process, this is one of those things, again, helping to slow things down, really functioning at the level of like nutrigenomics.

DR. SHIVANI GUPTA: Correct.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And so changing the way that our that our genes are being expressed. It's so powerful. Talk about turmeric just a little bit more for us.

DR. SHIVANI GUPTA: For sure. So when it comes to turmeric, most people don't realize that out of the entire turmeric plant, only 3% of it is the curcuminoids, and those three curcuminoids are the most effective part at reducing inflammation.

But we need to get them in the right proportion. We need to get them at the right potency for them to really deliver that result. And so we have seen that now there's over 17,000 scientific studies that talk about the benefits of turmeric. Some of the ones that interest me the most are the ones where we do clinical trials head-to-head against NSAIDs.

We do an NSAID trial, we do double-blind placebo control trials all the time on turmeric in human studies, and compare NSAIDs to turmeric. And what they have seen is turmeric is as effective at reducing that joint pain, but without the side effects. And then the British Medical Journal, BMJ, did a study on 158 patients comparing PPIs, which we take all the time for gut issues, and comparing that to turmeric.

And they proved in that double-blind trial that turmeric was as effective, but without the side effects. And so what we're seeing is study after study shows that when we're talking about

inflammation in the body, we could use highly potent curcumin instead of just using the drug that we're choosing.

Or what I do is I've talked to doctors for a decade about adjunct solutions. Let's use them together. A lot of people come up to me and they say, "You're the turmeric girl. I juice my turmeric every day," or, "I'm using it on my food." And so the biggest question I ask is, "How should I take my turmeric? Is this enough?"

And so what I like to share is in ancient Ayurveda, we didn't use fresh turmeric as much. We did take it and dry it into the spice. India is actually the largest consumer of turmeric in the world because we use it in our breakfast, lunch, dinner. It goes into everything. But if you are gonna eat turmeric, make sure you're using it with black pepper or a healthy fat. These are the two things that help it absorb in the body so much better.

We know black pepper increases that absorption by 2,000%. We know the healthy fat can help it absorb and help it cross the blood-brain barrier. And so when I meet with people, I say sprinkling it on your chicken once a day, half teaspoon, is not gonna be enough to get that significant therapeutic dose that we want to have.

We want a dose that's gonna significantly reduce that inflammation and help us get where we're trying to go. When I was 14, I actually worked in the lab in Houston, Texas at MD Anderson Cancer Center, where the scientists discovered that black pepper increases that absorption by 2,000%. And so turmeric has been swirling around in my world for over three decades now, and it's so interesting to talk about it now 'cause there is so much scientific literature.

And when I did my PhD dissertation, I actually talked about how powerful curcumin can be when it comes to our joint health as we're aging, when it comes to our cardiovascular health. With its neuroprotective effects for our brain, we want to keep this brain working, focused, sharp for as long as possible.

Why wouldn't we bring in a simple plant that can do the heavy lifting for us and help us stay well? And then for everyone who travels a lot or feels like they're getting sick constantly.

turmeric can go in there and really build this resilience in the immune system so we're not struggling with that, so we don't feel so fragile or likely to get sick.

And so those registered clinical trials of turmeric, there's meta-analysis studies that I've seen that looked at over 5,000 patients and said, "This is one of the most powerful and significant natural compounds when it comes to its anti-inflammatory and antioxidant effects."

SHAWN STEVENSON: That's incredible. It's so incredible.

So why, again, curcumin is remarkable for what curcumin does. Why would we want to look towards more of the compounds in there, more of the maybe concentrations of turmeric, not just this one isolated compound, but the whole thing?

DR. SHIVANI GUPTA: It's interesting. When I was doing my PhD, I saw studies that showed that non-curcuminoid turmeric also has an anti-inflammatory effect.

So I'm confident that in the next couple decades we will find more and more compounds within the turmeric that benefits us. So that is the argument for incorporating it into our food. Bring it into your food, bring it into that lunch and dinner, always adding the black pepper or the healthy fat. We know food is medicine, and so fitting it into our lives as that nutrient density, as that support to the body is so important.

Now, my research did lead me to studying using those curcuminoids in a powerful way because coming from my family history, I really wanted a solution that would land the plane and get me the result I needed, because I am literally surrounded by a family of diabetics who struggle so hard with obesity, chronic metabolic disease, and those after effects of diabetes.

And so for that crew who is chronically inflamed and struggling, I do reach into the supplement world. When I was studying, everyone would come up to me and say, "Whose turmeric should I take?" And so I started doing the research. I started studying all the labels, and it's actually really hard in the supplement world to make sense of whose supplements to trust.

And there was a study then that said over 75% of the supplements on the big box retailer shelves are full of rice grass. They're not even putting the main ingredients in that we need, and that shocked me because I had already struggled with my own health and gut health. I thought, how can it be that if I go to the store and buy vitamin D, it might not be the 5,000 IU - the 5,000 IUs of vitamin D that I need?

And so everyone encouraged me. They said, "If you are a turmeric girl, you should just make your own. We need one that actually works. We need someone who we trust to make one." And so that's what led me 10 years ago to creating my own formulas, because I wanted to create a formula that was so potent that when you go to your orthopedic surgeon, your rheumatologist, your functional medicine, your chiropractic, and they say you have joint pain or anything like that, you, they would also say to you, "You can take turmeric for that."

And that's been my dream, is what if every doctor in America, when we walked into their office, and they say, "You have something-itis. You've got this inflammation going on," what if every doctor just said to us, "You could also take turmeric for that"? Because they are the experts, and my whole life when I have gone to the doctor and asked, "Is there a food I can use for that?"

Is there something else? Is there a natural alternative?" I was always told no. And so that's my whole life dream, is by the time I leave this planet, every doctor says, "Turmeric can also help you. Things are changing. Things are changing, and you're one of the really powerful voices in this, so I appreciate it so much."

SHAWN STEVENSON: Thank you. And speaking of Fusionary Formulas, can you talk a little bit about that and where people can get access?

DR. SHIVANI GUPTA: For sure. So I created Fusionary Formulas a decade ago, and it's a fusion of the East and the West. Because in the East, we have this ancient wisdom, but in this modern time, we have such powerful science proving all that ancient wisdom to be true.

And so I created it to reach the highest potency we can while matching and mimicking Mother Nature's proportions. Because Mother Nature knows best, we have to honor her wisdom, and so this formulation I created has helped tens of thousands of people. People call me all the time and they say, "I was taking turmeric, but I wasn't feeling anything."

And then I took your turmeric, and now I feel it. This thing is strong. I absolutely feel the difference." And that was my dream. So now it's in thousands of doctors' offices who are using it on their patients. And we're collecting that data as well. And so eventually, I cannot wait to see all the published literature we can do on what we've done for so many different people for their health struggles.

We made a special code for your audience, modelhealth at Fusionary Formulas will give them 15% off.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Amazing. So fusionaryformulas.com and use the code modelhealth.

DR. SHIVANI GUPTA: Exactly.

SHAWN STEVENSON: All together as one word, modelhealth. Yes. Awesome. I appreciate that. Thank you. And I think you might have brought me some stuff.

DR. SHIVANI GUPTA: I did.

SHAWN STEVENSON: There's a bag out there, but I hit you with the gift bag first, so I don't know if you, maybe that was for me

DR. SHIVANI GUPTA: It was. Absolutely.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Awesome.

DR. SHIVANI GUPTA: Absolutely. I brought you the Turmeric Gold, the Inflammation Relief. I'm really into teas as natural solutions that can help us sleep better and feel better and unwind at the end of our day, so I brought all of that for you.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Amazing. I appreciate it. I love goodies. And so by the way, one of these compounds in turmeric that has recently been identified, and again, we're just learning more and more what our ancestors already knew and this compound is called ar-turmerone. Yes. And this is so fascinating. This was published in the journal Stem Cell Research & Therapy.

Nice. All right? So they're looking at stem cells as the topic of this entire peer-reviewed journal. And the study detailed how neural stem cells proliferate 50 to 80% faster when exposed to varying levels of ar-turmerone from turmeric. This is incredible. And again, the biopotentiators matter as well.

So you mentioned the black pepper and the healthy fats. And so, but this is something traditional. And what you're doing is helping us to stack conditions right from our spice cabinet, but also using super high quality again, you call them super spices concentrates, and formulas so that we can get some of these benefits as well.

I wanna ask you about something. Let's stay upstairs. Okay. It's more than that because there isn't a separation between our brains and our bodies, our mind and our bodies. They're all connected. But you brought up the topic earlier that I don't wanna glance over, which is this mental inflammation.

And so many of us, and it's so important, I hope everybody's hearing me very clearly, that our thoughts can be toxic. Our thoughts can contribute to that inflammation in our bodies. And so this is someplace for us to really focus our attention as well, because we can change our health And that can be just a thought away, literally.

Let's talk about that.

DR. SHIVANI GUPTA: It's so true. In the book, I talked about all the different ways we can build a lifestyle to help us win at inflammation. Circadian lifestyle, our diet, our gut. And when I got to the end point of that book, I thought, if I don't explain to people this last piece, it might actually negate everything else that we do."

Because I could live my life walking, lifting, yoga, which I do, eating really well and really clean, and fighting for it to be organic and fresh and local and all those things. I honor my gut health every day like it is my first job above all jobs. I bring in the self-care routine and detox the ama and toxins.

But if we are filling in the body faster with the stresses and poisons that we've talked about, that ama, than we are removing it, we're never gonna win. And nowadays, what I see is women, at least most of my clients are women, they're struggling 'cause they're like an empty bucket. There's nothing left in the gas tank.

They're scraping the bottom of it, trying to take care of every single other person in their lives. I know I'm a culprit of that. I'm a mom, an entrepreneur, a wife, all those things. And so we're making everyone else happy, all those plates are spinning, but we've got nothing left. And so I wanted to highlight this term of mental inflammation, when we're carrying such a huge burden, and every single thing that's coming our way is stressing us out as well.

And we're not standing guard at the door of our own energy, our mental health, our emotional health, all of those things. And so oftentimes it's one last stressor that is the straw that broke the camel's back. And that's when people usually find an Ayurvedic practitioner, when they've already gone to the doctor and said, "I don't know what's wrong," and it's this chronic low-grade persistent inflammation that's percolating.

When they've gone to chiropractic, naturopathic, homeopathic, everyone. You usually find Ayurveda as a system of health dead last, and you're already towards death's door. And so part of my mission is just to say, "Hey, guys, way up front, let's talk about this system of health." It's really a system of understanding ourselves and navigating life differently.

If you know you're an air body type, you would understand that you actually need to stand much more at the guard of your door. You need to ground more and protect your energy. If you're a fiery body type, you actually have a lot more tolerance and give in the system. But you're actually much more likely to max out and burn out.

That's your MO. And so understanding that helps you really navigate your day differently and your life differently. And if you're more earthy, more fire, I mean, if you're more earthy, all of a sudden you are that loyal person who takes care of everyone and gives, gives, gives. But forgetting to nourish and take care of self.

And so Ayurveda gives us these blueprints and these keys to the treasure chest and says, "If you understand yourself better, you're gonna eat differently, sleep differently, navigate differently, but also guard your mental and emotional health differently." And that self-knowledge, that self-wisdom is so empowering.

If you had the wisdom to know how your body type relates in this world as you walk this world, you would navigate from a completely different space. And that space is so empowering. What I see is we're living in a time where we keep habit stacking. We keep pushing harder. We think of the body as a robot and a machine, and we're demanding diagnostics, A+ on blood work, A+ on functional medicine testing.

What does my Oura Ring say about my sleep? Was it perfect or was it horrible? When instead we could tune into nature more, get into nature more get in touch with ourselves more, and really put blockades in place against the mental inflammation that's trying to influence us, instead of us really pausing, grounding, and influencing from within.

SHAWN STEVENSON: We can stack with something very practical, something that we've been doing for thousands of years, which is something you call a circadian walk. Yes. Talk about that.

DR. SHIVANI GUPTA: So I find that if we just make time to decompress throughout the day, then we won't struggle as much with this thing called sympathetic dominance.

We're talking so much in the current culture about the nervous system, about being in fight or flight, or being in rest and digest. But when I see that content online, I'm like, "You don't live my life. You don't know that I'm on airplanes at conferences traveling, and when I'm home, I'm navigating 100 things.

How do you want me to do that?" And so I had to find a system to build it into my own daily rhythm. And so a circadian walk in the morning, no iPhone, no podcast, no content, is my way to really decompress, tune in, and ask myself some powerful questions. How are you doing today? What do you need for today to be better?

What do you need for this week to be better? And that's really a moment to go inward and do a gut check with myself- ... and see, how am I feeling? And sometimes I'll get messages from my body. Your hip hurts, and you didn't address this yet. When are we gonna do that? Or different things I've forgotten or different messages I need to pause and address.

So to bookend my day with a circadian walk at the beginning and end is one of my most powerful tools I have to give myself space. And then I also built another one called Tea Time is Me Time, 'cause Ayurveda loves the power of plants and herbs and super spices. And so I have tea time about four times a day, and each time, that's my moment to check in- and tune inwards. You can't chug a cup of hot tea. That's gonna hurt. And so that cup of tea is a moment to sip. We know it's vagus nerve toning to sip a hot beverage. It's that moment to tune inwards. Sometimes I'm in meetings, people are talking and running around, and I'll just take that moment for myself and calm my nervous system down, really relax, enjoy that cup of tea, but again, ask myself those powerful questions.

What do I need for today to be better? And the message oftentimes is you need to hydrate more. You forgot to take your supplements . You have a new instructor today, so you get to eat dinner. Let's really remember what's important here. And so that, I think, is the most powerful message of Ayurveda, is you come first.

You have to fill your cup before you fill anyone else's. But also honor thyself and honor thyself in this powerful way so you get to have longevity, so you don't struggle through your last quarter of life, so you get to actually enjoy this life that's happening around you. And it can be that simple as circadian walks, tea time is me time, some simple super spices, and some self-care tools that really help us stay on point and feeling our best.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Amazing. Tea time is me time. I love that. So you know the new term that the youngsters are using, tea, that your body is tea. Actually, I heard the song today, a brand-new song. Apple sent me the new release this morning, and the song is called Body is Tea from Coco Jones, I believe, which is pretty fire.

DR. SHIVANI GUPTA: Nice.

SHAWN STEVENSON: But tea time is me time, and really helping us to, again, reframe some of these simple practices. And truly, like you just mentioned the practice of just having tea and slowing down, like this can be super therapeutic on so many levels. So we're habit stacking-

DR. SHIVANI GUPTA: Exactly

SHAWN STEVENSON: ... but with something that isn't ultra-complex- Right

and crazy and sometimes even unnecessary. These are things our bodies expect us to do and I appreciate you so much for helping to remind us of the value of these things. And so if you could, can you share where people can pick up a copy of your new book, The Inflammation Code? Yes. And also where they can follow you.

DR. SHIVANI GUPTA: For sure. So my website is my name, drshivani.com, D-R-S-H-I-V-A-N-I. And there is where the book is, and all my master classes, and everything else that I teach. And then on Instagram, I'm @dr.shivani gupta. And I have The Inflammation Code podcast as well, where I have great experts like you on who share their wisdom as well.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And you're so good at it. You're so good. You're such a great interviewer, just a great personality. I really enjoy just listening to you, and I appreciate your work, and how insightful you are, and also your family, your connection. Your sister's here as well, Neha. Shout out to Neha. And, you're just really remarkable, so this has been very special.

I appreciate you so much.

DR. SHIVANI GUPTA: Thank you. Thanks for having me.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Of course. The one and only, Dr. Shivani Gupta, everybody.

Thank you so much for tuning into this episode today. I hope that you got a lot of value out of this. I am inspired in a whole new way to utilize my spice cabinet, to utilize my super spices.

In particular, getting those therapeutic amounts of turmeric. There's so many incredible things that super spice, again, thousands of years of documented history, can do for our bodies, for our brains, for our mental health. The list goes on, and on. So again- All of this information is incredible, but knowledge is not power.

It's potential power. It's the action that we take as a result. So hopefully something inspired you today to take that circadian walk for yourself, to utilize your super spices, whatever the case may be. But definitely check out the work of Dr. Shivani Gupta and follow her on social media and her incredible show as well.

Definitely check it out because she's just very talented. A talented communicator, a talented interviewer as well, and I think that you'll really enjoy it. And we got some epic masterclasses and world-leading experts coming your way very soon, so make sure to stay tuned. Take care, have an amazing day, and I'll talk with you soon