

*Akasha*

CENTER FOR INTEGRATIVE MEDICINE



A balance of body,  
mind, spirit  
and advanced  
medicine.

*“At the Akasha Center, We Meet the Patient Before We Meet their Disease.”*

*Edison de Mello, MD, PhD  
Founder & Medical Director*

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## Welcome to the Akasha Center for Integrative Medicine

At Akasha, we blend the technological advances of Western Medicine with scientifically proven Integrative modalities, selecting the ones that will work best for you.

### Our Approach



“The doctor of the future will give no medicine, but instead will interest his patients in the care of the human frame, in diet, and in the cause and prevention of disease.”

*Thomas Edison*

**You have many parts to you. We connect with all of them.**

We believe that illness is not just a set of pathologies, but a personal story. We take the time to consider all factors that impact both physical as well as your emotional health. What’s your overall health and how we can help you optimize it? What’s working about your life and what’s not? What traumas have you had? What are your goals and dreams? Are you living the life you want?

**Unique, integrated and 100% focused on you. It works.**

The Akasha Center’s approach to health care taps into the best of all evidence-based resources available. We make you a partner with us in creating optimum health: mental, physical and spiritual. Studies show that patients who participate in their own healing do much better. We give you the tools: information, education, shared decision-making and all the support you need.

## Mission Statement



The Akasha Center for Integrative Medicine, together with the de Mello Medical Corporation, is a sanctuary for health, wellness and healing.

We embrace and honor the profound power of our patient's mind, body, community and spirit.

We recognize each person is already whole and complete in their path of health, spiritual and financial well-being.

Our approach to evidenced-based integrative medicine is guided by both the ancient wisdom of Eastern medicine and the ever-growing technological advances of Western Medicine.

As facilitators of health and healing, we embody a new model of health care providing a whole-person approach to comprehensive health and wellness.

We bring support for each member of the Akasha community in their own path toward optimal health.

We affirm our patients' birth right to live lives of tenable happiness and fulfillment as we show deep appreciation and respect for the planet.



## **Your Skin & Gut Connection: The Secret to Healthy Looking Skin**

*With Maggie Q*

It probably comes as no surprise to you that the largest and second largest organ in our bodies - the skin and gastrointestinal system respectively - are intrinsically connected and dependent on each other for optimal functioning. Studies investigating the so-called *gut-brain skin axis* began in the early 1930's. The hypothesis was then, and continues to be today, that stress by itself or combined with a poor diet decreases the good gut bacteria and causes the overgrowth of the bad bacteria. This compromises the integrity of the gut lining causing toxins to "leak out" from the gut and into the blood stream, causing inflammation. Take food allergies/sensitivities as an example. In addition to bloating and other GI related symptoms, food allergies often present with skin rashes. Acne, rosacea, premature wrinkles, and a host of other dermatological conditions can be the first sign of imbalanced bacteria that can subsequently lead to decreased hormone metabolism. Stress and emotional health play such a big part on the health of our skin, that a new medical specialty called psych-dermatology is growing at a very fast pace. Like integrative medical doctors, psych-dermatologists are applying their knowledge to try to understand how our GI health and emotions affect our skin. So far, the strongest culprit continues to be inflammation and its effect on the immune system.

Since the health of our skin is a window into the health of our inside, balancing our gut bacteria (microbiome) is undoubtedly the most effective first step to having good and healthy looking skin. The symptoms of bad bacteria overgrowth can easily show on our faces. This is because the overgrowth of bad bacteria increases the immune response in the gut and produces cytokine, a chemical that promotes inflammation. Cytokines are known to destroy the lining of the gastrointestinal system, allowing pro-inflammatory molecules to enter the bloodstream and cause havoc. Oral probiotics have been shown to improve intestinal barrier function and reduce inflammation.

### **The secret? Probiotics.**

The skin plays an important physical barrier to safeguard the internal organs and keep out pathogens and other toxins. In addition to a healthy diet, which should include fermented vegetables, such as kimchi, miso and others, taking probiotics has been shown to strengthen the skin's barrier and help repair the damage caused by atopic dermatitis, acne, chronic rash and other skin conditions. It helps prevent wrinkles by optimizing the gut elimination of toxins and free radicals that can cause skin damage and early signs of aging. In addition, an impressive body of research has also shown that probiotics, not only helps moisturize the skin and repair sun damage, but it is also an excellent adjunct in the treatment of *rosacea*, in the healing of scars and burns, and to help prevent flare ups of eczema and psoriasis. Studies have also shown that probiotics can lessen the likelihood of infants developing these conditions and to lessen the symptoms in children who already have these conditions.

Taking a good probiotic, such as our **ActivatedYou** Advanced Restorative formula containing 30 Strains of diverse colony of 30 billion good bacteria meant to re-populate the colon, is essential to having that healthy glowing skin that men and women alike desire. Adding fiber rich foods, drinking 8-10 glasses of water a day and exercising 3-4 times a week for at least one hour will not only slow down the aging process, but it will also help the probiotics work even better.

## About Maggie Q



Maggie Q was born in Honolulu Hawaii, and has traveled the globe since her upbringing. A humanitarian and activist for animal rights and a health advocate for all, Maggie Q is a woman on a mission. As an actor, best known for her role as "Nikita" in the hit series of the same name, along with roles in Mission Impossible III, Divergent, Live Free or Die Hard and now starring alongside Keifer Sutherland in the hit ABC drama Designated Survivor, Maggie uses her name and fame to passionately advocate for those in need.

Maggie's struggles with her own health led her to do extensive research in the world of nutrition, and her friends will now tell you Maggie knows more about what to do to look and feel your best than most nutritionists or dieticians! She has partnered with Dr. de Mello in ActivatedYou to share what she has learned to help people everywhere live healthier, happier lives.

Maggie's message of health goes further than just our own bodies. She believes in making the connection between human health, animal well-being, and environmental sustainability. It's this message that has driven Maggie to educate not only those around her, but to participate in entering a new paradigm for as many people as she and Dr. de Mello can help.



## **Balanced Hormones = Better Sex, Increased Well-Being and Longer Life**

Hormones are secreted by glands in the endocrine system and have a very complex and important role in our health and well-being. Our entire system is dependent on many different hormones for optimal functional, including growth and sex hormones that carry signals between our organs.

Testosterone, progesterone, estrogen and DHEA, known as the sex hormones interact with other hormones from the pituitary, thyroid, adrenal glands, pancreas, and other endocrine glands to help the body stay balanced and function optimally. When our hormones are balanced, our energy lifts, our mood stabilizes, metabolism balances, cardiovascular and musculoskeletal systems are supported, and sexual drive and function and fertility are optimized.

But hormone balance is delicate and can be disrupted quite easily. Hormone levels naturally change throughout the time of day, month, year and phase of life. Given that natural aging is associated with a loss of sex hormones replacing the age associated decrease in male and female sex hormones lead not only increased well-being, but also to increase sex drive and sexual pleasure. Additionally, it can also improve muscle and bone loss along that can be seen with aging.

### **Types of Male and Female Hormone:**

#### **Estrogen**

Found in greater amounts among women, estrogen is a pro-growth hormone whose main function is growth and development. Because estrogen stimulates fat cells to grow, it is a key component in reproduction. Estradiol, estrone, and estriol are the three different forms of estrogen. Estradiol is considered the main player in physiological function. A deficiency can cause several health concerns, including decreased libido, fatigue, inflammation, hair loss, wrinkles, brittle bones, dry skin and mood swings. Excessive amounts of estrogen can lead to bloating, bleeding, breast tenderness and mood swings.

## **Progesterone**

Considered the counterpart to estrogen, progesterone antagonizes estrogen-driven growth in the lining of the uterus and it is thus essential to the premenstrual cycle. It rises during the second part of the cycle to reduce premenstrual syndrome and prepares the uterus for implantation of a fertilized egg. Also, needed for a healthy pregnancy, low levels of progesterone can lead to miscarriage. An imbalance in the ratio of estrogen to progesterone can lead to many problems with PMS symptoms like irritability, bloating, fluid retention, headaches, and fibroids. It works with estrogen to strengthen bones, sustain cholesterol levels, and support libido. Too much progesterone can cause fatigue, dizziness, and an increased appetite. And progesterone is also neuroprotective.

## **Testosterone**

Testosterone is predominant hormone in men. Its main functions are to maintain healthy muscle mass, stamina, and strength. In addition, it also supports libido, energy, bone density, memory, and well-being. But testosterone is also necessary in proper hormonal balance in women. Similarly, top men, a deficiency of testosterone in women can also lead to many symptoms, such as, low energy, decreased cognition, libido, increased irritability, fatigue and well-being, among others. Testosterone decline in both men and women starts around 35 years old, causing therefore an imbalance between testosterone and estrogen. However too much testosterone can cause aggression, depression, and have the paradoxical effect of impotence.

## **DHEA**

Released by the Adrenal glands, DHEA is most abundant steroid hormone in the body and the precursor to both testosterone and estrogen. Starting as early as 30 years of age, DHEA levels starts to decline leading to fatigue, mood swings, and cognitive ailments. DHEA helps to stimulate protein synthesis, decrease visceral fat, support bone health, and maintain cardiovascular health. DHEA levels that are too high can cause acne, increased facial hair, skin rashes, and liver dysfunction.



Although there are many external factors that can affect hormone levels and balance, the good news is that there are steps that we can take to optimize our hormones:

- 1, Exercise. Resistance training helps maintain muscle mass and support bone health, which supports testosterone and parathyroid function. Cardio helps achieve ideal body fat ratios, which supports estrogen metabolism.
2. Diet. Proper nutrition is vital for hormone balance. Specific recommendations for hormone optimization are to limit animal products (especially dairy) and to increase plant proteins, flax, green and cruciferous vegetables, and green tea.

3. Vitamins and minerals. Ideal vitamin levels are necessary to support hormone production. Adequate levels of Vitamin D and zinc are needed for sex hormone function while selenium and iodine are needed for thyroid function. Omega 3 fatty acids are also important for hormone synthesis.

4. Sleep. Improving the quality and quantity of sleep helps restore our natural circadian rhythm, which strengthens our optimal hormone rhythm.

5. Stress. Cortisol is known as the stress hormone. When it is persistently elevated it wreaks havoc on other hormones such as insulin (resulting blood sugar fluctuations and cravings) and adrenaline (triggering the “fight or flight response.”) Reducing stress levels with practices such as exercise, meditation, and social connection all support hormonal health.

6. Toxins. Avoiding toxic endocrine interrupters in our food and environment is also key. Eat organic foods when possible, drink filtered water, store (and heat) food in glass rather than plastic, and avoid pollution as much as possible.

**Next steps.** If you suspect your hormones are out of balance, we can test your levels and create an individualized plan to optimize levels. In addition to the above we may recommend botanicals, supplements, and/or bioidentical hormones.



## Intermittent Fasting

- 1. I've read that intermittent fasting can promote diversity of gut bacteria, which can lead to positive brain/mood changes. True? If so, what exactly is intermittent fasting and how does it work to improve gut health?**

Yes, it is true.

Similarly, to many “new ideas” in modern day, intermittent fasting is not new. What is new today being why people chose to do it. In fact, humans have intermittently fasted throughout our evolution. Whether it was because food was not available or as part of major a religious practice such as Islam, Christianity and Buddhism, intermittent fasting is as old as eating itself. And to go further than the beginning of religion, since our ancestors did not have *year-round available food or the means to conserve it, intermittent fasting was a means of survival.*

*Intermittent fasting (IF) today can be defined as the decision that we make to consciously skip meals in order to optimize health.* In other words, it is when we choose to eat during a specific window of the day and skip certain meals during the rest. We do so to benefit from the many healing changes that can happen on both the cellular and molecular levels in our bodies. Intermittent fasting prompts our our bodies to change certain hormone levels so that fat becomes more readily accessible while the cellular repair

processes along with the highly important gene expression become more efficient.

Let me use human growth hormone levels (HGH) as an example. Current research shows that HGH can increase by as much as 5-fold during intermittent fasting (IF) leading to an increase in the loss of fat while promoting muscle gain. Insulin levels also drop dramatically during intermittent fasting making stored body fat more readily accessible. In addition, by signaling cells to digest and remove old and dysfunctional proteins build up inside cells, IF increases cellular repair processes, a necessary DNA mechanism used to repair oxidative damage. In addition to lowering insulin and increasing growth hormone levels, IF also increases the release of the fat burning hormone norepinephrine.

**2. For newbies looking to try intermittent fasting, what's the best way to get one's feet wet? (I've read that if you stop eating a few hours before bed and don't eat again for 12 hours, that's a good place to start. True?)**

**True.** There are a few methods of intermittent fasting. They all involve splitting the day or week into “eating periods” and “fasting periods.” During the fasting periods, one can eat either very little or nothing at all. Below are the three most common methods:

- **The Lean Gains protocol:** Also known as the 16/8 method, it involves skipping breakfast and restricting your daily eating period to 8 hours, for example from 1 pm to 9 pm. Then “fast” for 16 hours in between.
- **Eat-Stop-Eat:** It involves fasting for 24 hours, once or twice a week; that is, no eating from dinner to dinner.
- **The 5:2 Protocol:** It involves eating only 500-600 calories on 2 non-consecutive days of the week; for example, on Tuesday and Thursday.

Studies show that intermittent fasting can be a very powerful weight loss tool as well. A 2011 study published in the International Journal of Obesity involved 107 obese premenopausal women who followed an intermittent-fasting-type plan showed that after six months, those who intermittently

fasted lost an average of 14 pounds each. Another study in 2014 showed that intermittent fasting (IF) lead to a **weight loss of 3-8%** over periods of 3-24 weeks.

Given that fewer calories are being consumed, IF protocols should, in most cases, lead to weight loss. The problem arises when compensating eating happens. That is, when one eats more than usual during the eating periods.

IF has also been shown to decrease inflammation, LDL cholesterol and triglycerides levels and protect against Alzheimer's by increasing a brain hormone called *Brain-Derived Neurotropic Factor (BDNF)*. In addition, animal studies have shown that it can also help prevent cancer.

### **But how does it work?**

**Intermittent fasting (IF) is energy efficient. During eating the body spends time, sometimes many hours depending on what it is being consumed, processing the food and burning it to be used as energy rather than stored fat. This is especially true for carbohydrates/sugars, which the body prefers to burn as energy before it uses any other source. However, during the fasting state, because the body does not have a recently consumed meal to use as energy, it pulls the energy it needs to function from the fat stored in your body, rather than the glucose in the blood or glycogen in your muscles/liver.**

**Intermittent fasting can be very beneficial to our guts because the gut bacteria have a circadian cycle, which means that different species are more prominent at different types of day. **Research has shown that in obesity, for example, this cycle is blunted leading the bacteria to actually influence the food choices that we make.** Studies have shown us that **time-restricted feeding can actually restore the normal circadian cycle of gut bacteria and significantly improve metabolism.****

**But** intermittent fasting is not for everyone. I do not recommend it for underweight patients, pregnant women and for those with eating disorders, diabetes, high blood pressure or who take any medication. And although there is some evidence that intermittent fasting may not be as beneficial to women as it is for men, the jury is still out because IF is to believe to also have the potential to influence a woman's menstrual cycle. I highly

recommend that anyone interested in starting an intermittent fasting (IF) first consult a licensed and reputable medical professional.

## **How to Start**

We all likely already done some form of intermittent fasting in your life. Most of us have at one time or another not eaten dinner, slept late and not eaten until 2-4 hour later, or gotten sick and did not feel like eating much. Some of us are actually “not big eaters” and naturally skip meals.

For those wanting to explore intermittent fasting for the first time, I believe that the 16/8 method is the easiest and mostly likely to stick for a lot of people. But for most people, planning when to eat or not is in-and-of-itself already stressful. This can lead to even higher cortisol levels, one of the main hormones that we are attempting to balance during fasting. For those who do not “feel off “when there is not food in your belly, perhaps trying the 24-hour fast 1-2 times maximum a week is where to start. But above all, I recommend that people fast when it is convenient. That is, skip meals (but NEVER water) when it is convenient or you find yourself “running around” with not time to eat. Just be conscious NOT to do that any more than twice a week - and do not let that become an excuse for you to not take proper care of yourself. Instead, use it as an opportunity to become better aware of your health and the needs of your body.

And lastly, I always remind my patients that proper nutrition becomes even MORE important when fasting. Choosing wisely which foods to eat needs to be the first step when fasting. Fasting, when followed by with highly processed, pro-inflammatory (toxin-rich foods) foods will lead to do more harm than good. The idea behind fasting is to reboot your system so that it can operate more optimally – not to challenge it even further with unhealthy foods.

## About The Author, Dr. Edison de Mello



Born in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Dr. de Mello was introduced to the practice of complementary medicine by his beloved grandmother, Nana, at a very early age. Dr. de Mello remembers her as a natural healer who, with her many teas and potions, always had a remedy for the common everyday malady. Nana practiced her “medicine” with so much love and dedication that her simple presence, caring manner, smile, and unwavering respect for people were healing and inspiring. Nana’s approach to healing and her loving mentorship were so profound for Dr. de Mello that in 1979, when he entered college, a career in healthcare was a natural choice.

He graduated from the University of North Texas in 1982 with a bachelor’s degree in Psychology and went on to earn an MA degree in Psychology and a doctoral degree in Health and Human Services/Psychology. For his master’s degree thesis Dr. de Mello was the co-author of a Head Start program funded by the National Institute of Mental Health entitled “Strengthening Head Start Families through Mental Health Intervention.” Intrigued by the bio-psychosocial aspects of gastrointestinal disease – the subject of his doctorate dissertation, “*Gut Feelings – A Psychosocial Approach to Gastrointestinal Illness,*” Dr. de Mello entered Medical School in 1991 with the ultimate goal of creating an innovative medical Center that would bridge the gap between Western and Eastern medicines. Knowing that a solid and well-respected training in evidenced-based Integrative Medicine was crucial for his vision of such a center, Dr. de Mello completed most of his medical student clinical rotations at renowned University of California, San Francisco School of Medicine hospitals.

Envisioned as a “healing sanctuary,” where all parts that compose a person, namely mind, body and spirit, are equally addressed when treating and preventing disease, The Akasha Center exemplifies Dr. de Mello’s vision and strong commitment to the practice of integrative medicine. His goal is to help every patient get the best out of the integration of science-proven approaches to medicine, drawing from both the technological advances of the West and the ancient wisdom of the East.



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