

Ayurveda Strategies to Prevent Dietary and Lifestyle Induced *Amlapitta*

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ABSTRACT

The key to perfect health lies in maintaining an ideal lifestyle from the time of birth with balance of physical, mental, social, spiritual and environmental factors. One needs to focus on all aspects for a life free from disease. In this era, every person is so busy in earning and achieving goals of life that they risk their health. Ignorance of healthy and nutritious diet, prolonged working hours, sedentary lifestyle and mental stress affects health to major extent. *Amlapitta* is one of the diseases caused by improper lifestyle, diet and excessive stress which affects the digestion of food thereby causing other gastrointestinal ailments. A detailed review of *amlapitta* along with measures to prevent and manage this disease is described here. Good sleep, nourishing diet, regular exercise, regular meditation and yoga, positive attitude enhance the quality of health and do not allow us to fall victim to faulty lifestyle.

Key Words *Amlapitta, Agni, Lifestyle, Diet*

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INTRODUCTION

As the modernisation progresses the lifestyle of people is changing rapidly in which the dietary habits and living conditions are significantly disturbed due to more intake of junk food, less physical activity and much more stress which is affecting the health of individuals to a great extent. This is leading to enormous diseases which hampers the healthy living of people. Today due to modern life style and food habits most of the population are suffering from most common diseases related to gastrointestinal system. Among which *amlapitta* is one of the

most common disease occurring in every age group.

Main causes for the disease are improper dietary habits, stress, not following rules and disciplines of food (*Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatana*) etc.¹.

Oily and spicy food, *Viruddhahara*, *Asatmya Ahara*, packed food, acidic food, bakery products, some fast foods, excess consumption of tea and coffee, excess food intake, drinking excess water after meals, deep freezed products, alcohol, cigarette smoking, etc. Chronic diet-related diseases are on rise around the world due to new lifestyles and eating habits².

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The word “*Amlapitta*” has two words- ‘*Amla*’ (Sour) and ‘*Pitta*’ (juice). Quantity of *Pachaka Pitta* (Gastric juice) is increased in *amlapitta* along with changes in its quality i.e from normal bitter Taste (Alkaline) to more sour Taste (Acidic) as a result of fermentation. Due to increased sour taste, it is called as *Amlapitta*. It has been discovered that irregular intake excess of salty, spicy food, suppression of natural urges and fluently use of NSAID and antibiotics steroids, aspirin like medicine are major role in developing disease *Amlapitta*³.

Description of *amlapitta* in ayurveda literature

Acharya Charaka, Sushruta and *Vagbhata* have not mentioned *Amlapitta* in a separate chapter though it has been referred at certain places in their *Samhita*. *Amlapitta* holds separate description in *Kashyap Samhita, Madhav nidana, Bhavprakash, Yogaratnakara, Chakradatta* and *Rasaratna Samuchaya*.

Sushruta Samhita

Sushruta states that due to excessive use of *lavana* a disease called *Amlika* occurs which is similar to *Amlapitta*⁴.

Kashyapa Samhita

Kashyapa Samhita is the first available text where *Amlapitta* has been described as a separate entity in chapter 16 of *Khilasthana*. An elaborated description of *Amlapitta* along with its treatment has been mentioned in it, but suggestion to change the lack of peace of mind in case where medicine does not provide effective results⁵.

Astanga Sangraha

Absence of *Shodhana* at appropriate time causes many diseases among which *pramilika* is the one. As per commentator *Indu*, *Pramilika* is a synonym of *Amlapitta*⁶.

Astanga Hrudaya

Vagbhata has used the term *Amlapitta*, while describing *Pittaja Hrudroga*⁷.

Madhava Nidana

Madhava Nidana is the second text after *Kashyap Samhita* which gives importance to *Amlapitta* and gave its aetiopathogenesis and symptomatology in detail along with its subtypes as *Urdhvaga* and *Adhoga Amlapitta*⁸.

Apart from this brief description of *amlapitta* is found in many other texts namely *Sharangdhar Samhita, Bhavprakash, Bhaishajya ratnawali* in which drugs used in the treatment of *amlapitta* along with its updrava, arishta lakshan and its management is explained.

Definition of *Amlapitta*

Amlapitta is composed of two words *Amla+* *Pitta*. Also, it is said that *Amla* has been a natural property of *pitta* along with *Katurasa*⁹. *Susruta* has enlisted *Katu* as its original *ras* and mentioned that when *Pitta* becomes *vidagdha* changes into *Amla*¹⁰.

□ The augmented or increased *Amla guna* of *pitta* is known as *Amlapitta*¹¹.

□ The *pitta* which attains *amla guna* and *vidagdhata* is called as *Amlapitta*¹².

It is the indisposition produced by the excessive formation of acid in the stomach, due to which patient feels burning sensation in the throat and heart region.

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CAUSES OF AMLAPITTA

As per *Acharya Kashyapa*¹³

- Consumption of incompatible, stale and sour food which increases burning sensation in gastro intestinal tract.
- Other factors which aggravate *pitta* includes excessive use of hot, unctuous, dry, sour and liquid food products. *Kulaththa* and sugarcane preparations, parched cereals, wildly growing rice and *pruthuka* (flattened rice obtained from boiled paddy).
- *Adhyashana* i.e eating before the digestion of previous meal.
- Indigestion; manifestation of *Ama*, which develops at tissue level.
- Drinking excessive water in between single meal and consumption of stale food.
- Improperly processed wines and drinks.

All these factors leads to *agnimandya* which further results in *Amlapitta*.

Viharaja nidan

- Suppression of natural urges, working in atmosphere like strong sunlight, near hot furnaces, near radiations and handling of chemicals.
- The environment described as *anupa-desh* i.e having more moisture or humidity in atmosphere increases fluid quality of *pitta*¹⁴.
- Repeatedly sleeping in day time after eating, over bathing and tub bath¹³.

Manasika nidan

- Mental stress and strain. These psychological factors may disturb the balanced

doshas further causing imbalance.

Other factors

- The prolonged use of analgesics and anti-inflammatory drugs, habit of smoking and tobacco chewing will also cause increase in sour quality of *pitta*.

Pathogenesis of *amlapitta*

Due to all the etiological factors of *amlapitta*, the three doshas are provoked. *Pitta* is provoked predominantly by sour (and fluid) property. This *pitta* causes mildness of digestive power. In this condition if the dietary as well as other etiological factors are continued it results in indigestion of food. The food becomes sour and toxic. Aggravated *pitta* gets fermented due to its sour quality. This fermented food in turn gets acidified and gets situated in stomach. This gets severely vitiated due to *pitta* and cause the disease *Amlapitta*¹⁵.

Symptoms of *Amlapitta*¹⁶

- Diarrhoea
- Heaviness of abdomen
- Acidic eructation
- Headache
- Pain in cardiac region
- Flatulence of abdomen
- Lethargy
- Gurgling sound of bowel
- Burning sensation in throat and chest.

Amlapitta due to *vata*, *pitta* and *kapha*¹⁷

Vata- pain, lethargy, yawning

Pitta- giddiness, burning sensation

Kapha- heaviness along with vomiting

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Classification of *amlapitta*, as per *Madhavanidan*¹⁸

1) *Adhoga amlapitta* – In this type, provoked *pitta* of sour quality moves in downward direction and produces symptoms such as diarrhoea (watery greenish yellow, foulsmelling stools), excessive thirst, nausea, rashes on body with sweating, horripilation and yellow discolouration to skin, nails and eyes.

2) *Urdhwaga amlapitta* – aggravated *pitta* of sour quality moves in upward direction in body and causes vomiting, which is greenish yellow, blackish red, sour, sticky or clear, sour bitter, salty. Sour, bitter eructation, vomiting occurs during the time of digestion of food or on empty stomach, burning sensation in throat, chest, abdomen; headache, nausea, loss of taste, burning of hands and feet. Patient feels better after vomiting.

Types of *amlapitta* according to dosha aggravation¹⁹

1) *Vataanubandhi amlapitta* – Due to association of *vata* in *amlapitta*, it shows features as tremors, fainting, pricking pain, delirium, dizziness, weakness, darkness before eyes and horripilation.

2) *Kaphaanubandhi amlapitta* – The aggravation of *kapha* is more and is responsible for symptoms like expectoration of thick phlegm, heaviness in body, loss of appetite, shivering, general weakness, vomiting, reduced digestive power, itching and excessive sleep.

3) *Kapha-vatanubandhi amlapitta* – Aggravated *kapha* and *vata* both produce mixed symptoms in this disease.

Apart from these three types, *Madhavanidan*, *yogratnakara*, *Bhav-Prakash* had mentioned one more type known as *kapha-pittanubandhi amlapitta* which is characterised by sour, bitter eructation, pungent taste, loss of appetite, vomiting, burning sensation in chest, upper abdomen and throat, giddiness, headache, salivation and sweetness in mouth.

Pathya & apathya for *amlapitta*

Acharya Kashyap states that healthy measures should be followed and the ones causing the disease should be avoided. It includes following measures-²⁰

Pathya ahar

Apathya ahar

Goghrit, Godugdha, jangal mansa

Til, Urad, kulthi

Kalay shak, pautik, vasa pushp, vastuk *Avi dugdha, Dhanyamla*

Rason, Haritaki, pippali, puran madira

Lavana, Amla, Katu Rasa dravya

Guru anna, Dadhi, Madya

Pathya vihar

Apathya Vihar

Vamana, Virechana, Basti, shital jalpan

Veg dharan

Atap sevan

Diwaswap

Pathya/apathya as per *madhavanidan*²¹

PATHYA APATHYA

1. Drink sufficient water

2. Avoid long gaps between the meals

3. Regular exercise

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2. Avoid late night work
- Take coconut water
- Avoid spicy, oily and fried food
- Take watermelon juice
- Avoid arahar and urad daal and ground nuts
- Avoid alcohol and smoking
- Avoid curd

General rules of diet and lifestyle to be avoided in daily routine-

1. Intake of Excessive spices, chillis and other irritant substances in food.
2. Fried, oily food items, salty and sour food in excess amount should be avoided. This also causes formation of Ama.
3. Food which is not as per ashta aahar vidhi vidhan should be avoided. It is the Viruddha Ahara and it should be strictly avoided because it is considered to be one of the main etiological factors of the disease.
4. Avoid untimely and irregular food habit.
5. Excessive water intake after consuming food should be avoided as it interferes with the concentration of the digestive enzymes and slows down the digestive process.
6. Addiction of smoking, tea, coffee, tobacco, alcohol should be avoided.
7. Avoid lying down immediately after food and in supine position. Even if one does so then it should be in the left lateral position.
8. Avoid stress.

Rules to be followed in healthy manner-

1. Light food, coconut water, food items having cooling properties.

2. Vegetables like white pumpkin, bitter gourd, matured ash gourd, leafy vegetables should be consumed.

3. Fruits like gooseberry, dry grapes, black grapes, sweet lime, pomegranate, fig, dry fig,

4. Take adequate amounts of fluids like pomegranate juice, lemon juice, amla juice, sweetlime juice, medicated water with *ushir* (wala) or coriander seeds, or *laja* (puffed rice) lukewarm water.

5. *Dadimpak* (sweet preparation made of pomegranate) *Moramla* (jam made from amla), *gulkand* (jam made from rose petals) with milk.

6. One teaspoonful of *ghee* with warm milk.

7. Take adequate sleep & rest.

8. Practice Yoga, *pranayam*, meditation.

DISCUSSION

The body constitution of each individual is unique and its functioning depends on the nutrition we take and lifestyle we adopt. Healthy state of body is indicated by balance of *doshas*. But this may get disturbed due to inappropriate lifestyle, diet, seasonal changes, suppressed emotions and stress factor. The etiological factors of *amlapitta* initially causes vitiation of *doshas* and *agni* which further leads to *ama* formation. This *ama* gets accumulated in the *srotas* (circulatory channels) thereby causing obstruction to flow of nutrients. It further migrates the vitiated *doshas* to other sites causing various disease.

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Best way to treat Lifestyle disorders is by altering the cause of disease i.e by modifying the *aahar*, *vihar* and other factors which is causing *amlapitta*. This could be implemented by adopting *pathya* and avoiding *apathya* mentioned above. Other ways to be taken in consideration are-

Panchkarma- It is used to cleanse the body channels(*srotoshuddhi*) to eliminate toxins (*ama vish*) out of body and brings homeostasis of *sharir mula i.e dosha, dhatu, mala* along with *manas dosha (raja and tama)* to obtain psychosomatic beneficial effect which further leads to chemical balance.

Aachar rasayan- It is the code of conduct in ayurveda that implies moral, ethical and behavioural conduct. It includes practices like freedom from anger, non-indulgence in alcohol, non-violence and other factors which cause vitiation of *doshas*. One should follow such conduct for healthy and happy life.

Dincharya- Lifestyle disorders are caused mainly by the way of living. One such important factor in that is *dincharya* i.e daily routine. The way we manage our daily activities from waking up in morning to sleeping at night, each one of this holds importance. List of all activities to be included in *dincharya* is mentioned by different acharyas in *samhitas*.

Ritucharya- *Ritu* signifies the different seasons of year. *Ritucharya* is important for adaptation of body according to changes in environment for key to survival. One should focus on food to be consumed as per *ritu*, dressing and other regimen

to be followed to avoid derangement of homeostasis in different seasons.

CONCLUSION

Amlapitta is most irritating disease which occurs due to faulty dietary habits, lifestyle and mental stress. Ayurveda agrees to the fact that no medicine is equivalent to food. Lifestyle disorders can be treated well with merely appropriate diet and lifestyle if diagnosed at early stage. It is *yapya* (not totally curable or difficult to cure) disease which can be managed well with *pathya* along with treatment thereby building the better health to live long and healthy life. Good sleep, nourishing diet, regular exercise, meditation and yoga enhances quality of life and do not allow us to fall victim to addiction and a faulty lifestyle.

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