

## Preventive Health Measures in Ayurveda

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### Abstract

*Ayurveda* emphasizes on preventive treatment rather than curative treatment. *Acharyas* have described *ritucharya*, *dincharya*, etc. for prevention of physical, mental and social problems. Modern medicine also accepts that prevention is better than cure. Prevention is only treatment in many diseases like obesity, diabetes, hypertension, AIDS, etc. Preventive and Social Medicine (PSM) is a growing branch in modern medicine. A vast physical, mental and financial damage can be controlled to do small investment in preventive health measures.

**Keywords** *Dincharya*, *Ratricharya*, *Ritucharya*, *Achar-Rasayan*, *Ashtang-Yoga*



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### INTRODUCTION

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*Acharya Agnivesh* has written about *Ayurveda-prayojanamchasyaswasthasyasthyaraks hanamaturasyavikarprashamanam cha*.

Which means aim of *Ayurveda* is to maintain the health of a healthy person and to treat the disease of a diseased person. This is keen observation of our *acharyas* that preventive treatment is more important than curative treatment. For the prevention of physical, mental and social problems, *acharyas* have described a balanced food style and a restricted life style. Therefore, preventive treatment has been explained primarily before curative treatment. Preventive measures like *dincharya*, *ratricharya*, etc. have been described in the beginning of *Charak Samhita*. *Rasayan* (rejuvenation therapy) and *Vajikaran* (aphrodisiac therapy) have been described in the beginning of *Chikitsasthan* of *Charak Samhita*. These are examples of emphasizing on prevention by *acharyas*.

Modern medicine also accepts that prevention is better than cure but there is no satisfactory treatments for many diseases like obesity, hypertension, diabetes, AIDS, etc. Therefore, modern medicine also accepts that efforts should be done to prevent diseases rather than their treatment.

National health policies are made to emphasize on preventive health measures.

### Review

*Acharya Charak* has described the two aims of *Ayurveda*- first is to maintain the health of a healthy person (preventive treatment) and second is to cure the disease of a diseased person (curative treatment)<sup>1</sup>.

*Acharya Charak* has described prevention at first followed by cure thereby emphasizing on prevention. In ancient times, our *Acharyas* knew about the importance of prevention. *Acharya Sushruta* has described to cure the disease of a diseased person at first and then to maintain the health of a healthy person<sup>2</sup>. Being a surgeon, has explained curative treatment at first because surgery is an emergency which is done immediately in injury, abdominal pain, fractures, etc.

Unlike dichotomic nature of modern medicine, *Ayurveda* is a holistic healthcare system caring body, mind and soul i.e. physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing. *Ayurveda* emphasizes on prevention of physical, mental and social problems before their manifestations. For that, our *Acharyas* has described *dincharya*, *ratricharya*, *ritucharya*, *sadavritta*, *achar-rasayan*, *adharniya* & *dharniyavegas* and *yoga*. One can remain healthy by following these rules otherwise he/she gets ill. Prof

Rajeshwardatta Shastri has written in his book “*Swasthviritta-samuchchaya*” that the work done by a healthy person daily after waking up in the morning to maintain his health is known as *swasthviritta*.

#### *Dincharya*

All the activities which are done from morning to evening by a person are known as *dincharya*.

1. *Jagaran & Malatyag*- A healthy person should wake up in *bramhamuhurta* (early in the morning) to save his life<sup>3</sup>. This rule is applicable for healthy persons only and not for unhealthy persons. In *Astang Samgrah*, it has been described that one should wake up in the morning to consider the digestion of food taken in previous night because proper sleeping for persons having undigested food is essential. Then, one should go for defecation. In *Astang Hridaya*, it has been written that one should defecate facing north direction in the day and facing south direction at night. We should detect the scientific reason of relation between direction and defecation.

2. *Dantadhawan*- For *dantadhawan* (tooth brushing), 12 finger long, straight and having circumference like little finger twig of *katu*, *tikta* or *kashayaras* should be used<sup>4</sup>. *Acharya Sushruta* has described to use twig of *madhurras* also and he has also explained

that *neem* is the best twig in *tiktaras*, *khadir* is the best twig in *kashayaras*, *mahua* is the best twig in *madhurras* and *karanj* is the best twig in *katu ras*<sup>5</sup>. *Acharya Sushruta* has also explained to use tooth powder in *dantdhawan*<sup>6</sup>. After *dantadhawan*, *jihwa-nirlektan* (cleansing of tongue) is done by *jihwa-nirlekhani* of silver, gold or wood having 10 finger lengths<sup>7</sup>.

3. *Gandush-dharan*- After *dantdhawan*, *gandush-dharan* (keeping liquid in mouth for some times) is done by oil or cold water to remove foil smell of mouth and to make teeth strong<sup>8</sup>.

4. *Anjan- Sauviranjan* should be used daily and *rasanjan* weekly for betterment of eyes<sup>9</sup>.

5. *Nasya- Pratimarshnasya* should be used daily in the morning and evening. For this, *anutail* (a medicated oil) is applied in nostrils by fingers which are beneficial in supraclavicular diseases<sup>10</sup>.

6. *Dhumpan- Dhumpan* (smoking) of herbal drugs is beneficial in many supraclavicular diseases<sup>11</sup>. *Acharya Charak* has explained eight times of *dhumpan*<sup>12</sup>. He has also explained indications and contraindications of *dhumpan*.

7. *Vyayam- Vyayam* (exercise) should be done daily because it provides strength and reduces obesity etc.<sup>13</sup>.

8. *Kshaurkarma- Kshaurkarma* (cutting of hair, beard and nail) provides physical and mental beauty<sup>14</sup>. It has been said to do *kshaurkarma* thrice in a fortnight<sup>15</sup>.

9. *Abhyanga-* Local application of oil in the whole body is beneficial in many diseases. Oil should be applied on head and soles also<sup>16</sup>.

10. *Snan-* Bathing provides physical and mental purity and it has aphrodisiac effect also<sup>17</sup>.

#### *Ratricharya*

All the activities which are done from evening to night are known as *ratricharya*.

1. *Ahar-* Light and easily digestible *ahar* (food) should be taken in the first *prahar* (3 hours) of the night.

2. *Nidra-* *Nidra* (sleep) provides *sukh-dukha*, *bala-abala*, *pushti-karshya*, *gyan-agnan*, etc<sup>18</sup>. *Ratrijagaran* provides *rukshata* and *divaswapna* provides *snigdhta*<sup>19</sup>. *Abhyanga*, meat, milk, ghee, *madya* (wine), favorite scenes, sounds and scents are used in the management of sleeplessness (insomnia)<sup>20</sup>. *Kayavirechan*, *shirovirechan*, *dhumpan*, *vyayam*, *raktamokshan* etc. are indicated in the management of excessive sleeping<sup>21</sup>.

3. *Bramhacharya-* *Bramhacharya* means prohibition of coitus. But restricted coitus with wife for progeny is essential. *Acharya*

*Sushrut* has described to do coitus at the interval of three days in all seasons but at the interval of fortnight in summer season<sup>22</sup>. He has further depicted that excessive coitus causes *karshya*, *shwas*, *Kas*, *Kshaya* etc<sup>23</sup>. *Ahar*, *nidra* and *bramhacharya* is known as tri-upastambh three sub-pillars<sup>24</sup>.

#### *Ritucharya*

There are six seasons in the environment and two states of the sun (see the table no.1). Each season affects the *Doshas* of our body and ultimately, affects our body physiology. There are three states of these *doshas* in our body- *sanchay* (accumulation), *prakop* (aggravation) and *prashaman* (pacification). In different seasons these *doshas* remain in different stages.

**Table-1** Seasons

Months	Seasons	Periods
January	Winter	
February		
March	Spring	<i>Uttarayan</i> (Adankaal) North sided Sun
April		
May	Summer	
June		
July	Rainy	
August		
September	Autumn	<i>Dakshinayan</i> (Visargkaal) South sided Sun
October		
November	Early	
December	Winter	

Purification therapy of *Doshas* should be done in the season when they aggravate to reduce their seasonal complications (see the table no.2). *Ahar* (food) pacifying the specific *Doshas* should be taken in which season the specific *doshas* aggravates<sup>25</sup>. *Acharya Sushrut* has also explained that *Doshas* which are removed in *sanchayawastha* (stage of accumulation), do not get further stages<sup>26</sup>. Last week of going month and first week of coming month is known as *ritusandhi*. In this period *ahar* (food)- *vihar* (life style) of going season should be given up gradually and those of coming month should be adopted gradually to reduce complications of seasonal changes<sup>27</sup>.

**Table-2** Season and Doshas

Season	Accumulation	Aggravation	Pacification	Indication
Winter	Kapha	-	Vata	Deepanpachan
Spring	-	Kapha	Vata	Vaman
Summer	Vata	-	Kapha	Vata shaman
Rainy	Pitta	Vatta	-	Vasti
Autumn	-	Pitta	Vata	Virechan
Early Winter	Kapha	Vata	Pitta	Vasti

### *Sadavritta*

*Acharya Charak* has described about *sadavritta* in detail<sup>28</sup>. He has depicted about what should be done and what should not be done in daily life. He has described that how to take meal and how to defecate. He has described about how to behave with ladies and how to behave with respected persons. He has explained about socially prohibited activities. He has also explained how to improve mental health and how to do rituals. Thus, *Acharya Charak* has deeply explained about *sadavritta* which should be followed by everyone for mental and social wellbeing. All the matters have not been described here therefore; readers are suggested to study the reference given above for detail knowledge.

### *Achar-rasayan*

*Achar-rasayan*<sup>29</sup> is a special contribution of *Acharya Charak* to the world of *Ayurveda*. The contents of *Ayurveda* are categorized as-

1. Psychological Aspects
2. Personal Aspects
3. Religious and Spiritual Aspects
4. Social and Behavioral Aspects
5. Food and Nutritional Aspects

1. Psychological Aspects

*Satyavadi*- to be honest, trustworthy

*Akrodhi-* to be calm and never be angry

*Ahinsaka-* to be non-violent

*Anayasa-* never be tired but be cheerful

*Prashanta-* to be calm, cool and quiet

*Priyavadi-* to speak pleasant and never speak rough

*Japashauchparam-* to practice incantation of holy hymns and to maintain purity

*Dheer-* to have patience

## 2. Personal Aspects

*Samajagaranswapna-* balance in the state of sleep and wakefulness

*Deshkalapramanajnam-* having proper knowledge of desh and kala

*Yuktijnam-* to be skilled

*Jitatmanam-* to be self-controlled and non-yielding to sensory pleasures

## 3. Religious and Spiritual Aspects

*Dharmashastraparam-* to be dutiful according to ethics

*Adhyatmapravanendriyam-* to be involved in spiritual works

*Tapaswinam-* to practice meditation and to be focused on the task

*Dan-nityam-* to do charity regularly

## 4. Social and behavioral aspects

*Nivrittammadyamaithunat-* avoid alcohol and sex

*Deva gaubramhanacharya guru vridharchaneratam-* to be devoted to

serving Gods, cows, *bramhans*, teachers, sages and elders

*Anrishansyaparamnityam-* to be non-violent always

*Nityakarunavedi-* to be merciful always

*Anahankritam-* to be ego free

*Shastacharam-* to behave well

*Upasitaramvridhdhanam-* to serve elders

*Astikanam-* to have faith in God

*Jitatmanam-* to be self-controlled, non-yielding to sensory pleasures

## 5. Food and Nutritional Aspects

*Nityaksheeraghritashinam-* to take milk and ghee regularly

*Asankeernam-* to take simple and planned diet

*Adharniya and Dharniya Vega-*

*Acharya Charak* has explained about some non-suppressible and suppressible urges of our body which should be followed to maintain health of a healthy person. If non-suppressible urges are suppressed by the individual, he/she gets specific diseases and treatment of these diseases is also described by *Acharya Charak*. *Adharniyavegas* (non-suppressible urges)<sup>30</sup> are as follows-

1. *Mutra* (Urination)
2. *Purish* (Defecation)
3. *Veerya* (Seminal Discharge)
4. *Malavata* (Flatus)

5. *Chhardi* (Vomiting)
6. *Kshawathu* (Sternutation)
7. *Udagar* (Eructation)
8. *Jrimbha* (Percussation)
9. *Kshudha* (Hunger)
10. *Pipasa* (Thirst)
11. *Vaspa* (Lachrymation)
12. *Nidra* (Sleep)
13. *Shram-shwas* (Deep breathing after exercise)

*Dharniyavegas* (Suppressible urges)<sup>31</sup> are as follows-

1. Bad Mental Urges- greed, sorrow, anger, envy, etc.
2. Bad Verbal Urges- rough talking, false talking, untimely talking
3. Bad physical Urges- to hurt physically, extramarital coitus, violence, theft, etc.

Thus, *Acharya Charak* has described here about preventive and social medicine which should be followed for the protection of physical, mental and social problems.

### *Yoga*

Ultimate goal of *yoga* is to get salvation by spiritual growth. But, today *yoga* is used globally for physical and mental wellbeing. These are superficial aspects of *yoga*. Spiritual aspects of *yoga* are practiced only by some saints, while these should be

practiced by common people of the society. *Astang-yoga* has been described by *Patanjali* in *Yogasutra*.

#### 1. *Yama* (moral codes)

- *Ahimsa*- nonviolence
- *Satya*- truthfulness
- *Asteya*- nonstealing
- *Bramhacharya*- celibacy
- *Aparigrah*- nonpossessiveness

#### 2. *Niyam* (personal disciplines)

- *Shauch*- Purity
- *Santosh*- satisfaction
- *Swadhyaya*- study of Vedic literatures which leads to self-realization
- *Tapa*- austerity and observances for body and mind
- *Ishwarpranidhan*- surrender to God

3. *Asana* (yogic posture) -It provides physical and mental equilibrium

4. *Pranayam* (yogic breathing)- It provides physical and mental health

5. *Pratyahar*-withdrawal of senses from external objects

6. *Dharana*- concentration on objects

7. *Dhyana*- meditation

Undisturbed flow of thought around the object of meditation

8. *Samadhi*- salvation

State of super bliss, merging of individual consciousness into universal consciousness,

union of *Shiva* and *Shakti* in *sahasrar chakra*.

Thus, a balanced life style has been described by our *acharyas* for prevention of physical, mental and social problems. We can prevent many problems before their manifestations to follow these do and don'ts. In modern medicine, there are no as such moral descriptions for prevention of physical, mental and social problems. But there is description of cleanliness, sterilization, nutrition, vaccination and health education for prevention of diseases. A large population of world is suffering from obesity, hypertension, diabetes, AIDS and cancer of which there is no proper treatment. Therefore, modern medicine also accepts that prevention is better than cure. Preventive and social medicine (PSM) is a subject in UG and PG courses of modern medicine. Now health policies are made to emphasize on PSM. There is a passage from an article published in magazine "Questia" is given below-

It is wise to prevent a disease rather than trying to cure it once it has already affected a person. Antibiotics are given by doctors to fight serious infections. These are all cures that lead to various damages to the body as they have a weakening effect on the body. Hence, it has often been advised that an

overdose of medicines should be avoided. In fact, as far possible one should let nature find its own ways of curing the patient and medicine should be taken only when the patient is suffering from a violent attack of some diseases. We must prevent any disease from attacking us by eating nutritious food and building up our resistance to such diseases causing bacteria. Regular exercise, plenty of fresh filtered water, fruits, etc. can be used to prevent diseases from coming close to us. Sugar and salt must be taken in limited amounts and we should stay away from spicy and fried food<sup>32</sup>.

A moral case is increasingly being voiced against cost effective approach to medicine. No one would deny that prevention is better than cure<sup>33</sup>. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. It is sensible to spend a bit of time and effort to prevent a more costly bad occurrence<sup>34</sup>. A part of an article published in NEJM is given below-

Hillary Clinton's plan is to focus on prevention, wellness not sickness. John Edward has stated that study after study shows that primary and preventive care greatly reduces future health care cost as well as increasing patient's health. Mike Huckabee has said that a focus on prevention would save countless lives, pain and suffering by the victims of chronic

conditions and billions of dollars. Barack Obama has argued that too little is spent on prevention and public health<sup>35</sup>.

However, no one can ignore the importance of hospitals and doctors. They have existed to save people's lives. But rush in hospitals and a vast physical, mental and financial damage can be controlled to do small investment for health educations and preventive health measures.

## CONCLUSION

After studying *Ayurvedic* texts, we find that main focus of *Ayurveda* is on prevention. Prevention of physical, mental and social problems can be done to follow preventive health measures described in *Ayurveda* i.e. *dincharya*, *ritucharya*, *achar-rasayan* and *sadavritta*, etc. There are suggestions for food style and life style to prevent physical problems. There are suggestions for *yoga* for mental problems. There are suggestions for *sadavritta* and *achar-rasayan* for behavioral and social problems. Thus, these are suggestion for a healthy and harmonious life by prevention of physical, mental and social problems.

Now, modern medicine also accepts the importance of preventive and social medicine. Health policies are made to

consider preventive health measures. There is need of moral education because corruption and violence could not be stopped by laws only. Thus, there is need to propagate and follow these preventive health measures described in *Ayurvedic* texts to make this planet happy, healthy and harmonious.

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