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Role of Ayurvedic Diet and Dietetics Principles in Prevention of Lifestyle Disorders among Working Women

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is a science that provides the science of balance at mental, emotional (spiritual) & physical status of living being. Ayurvedic classics were emphasized on three important pills which have been considered as the important conducive factors for maintenance of healthy life and health. These are *Ahara* (food), *Nidra* (Sleep) and *Brahmacarya* (Good conduct). These three have been considered as *Upastambha* or the basis of life and health. Among *traya-upastambha*, *Ahara* (diet) has been considered as the first one which shows its importance. In the present era, a woman is known to be multi-faceted and plays some vital roles in our society. There is always a fight against time for a working woman. It became seemingly difficult for her to maintain a work-life balance. Among the Indian women 68% are suffering from lifestyle disorders. Majority of working women in the age bracket of 21-52 years were found to be afflicted with lifestyle ailments such as chronic backache, obesity, diabetes, depression/ general anxiety disorders, cardiovascular disease, malnutrition and infertility. Among the working women 53% of them skip meals and go for junk food, unhealthy diet and bad food habits due to work pressure. Maintaining good health on the basis of fundamentals of Ayurveda which are available in classical literature, a concept of lifestyle which should be adopted for present era will be drawn in to light. Preventive aspect of this system is shown in various do's and don'ts in *Dinacharya*, *Ritucharya*, *Sadvirtta*, *Rasayana* and *Sanshodhana* therapy etc. These *Sadvirtta*, and therapies play an important role in promoting the health by establishing homeostasis between *Dosha*, *Dhatu* & *Mala*. Among these, diet is very important factor for every lifestyle disorders. *Acharya Caraka* has clearly stated, that a daily diet should be (of such quality), which not only helps to maintain present well-being but serves as a prophylactic against coming diseases. This is a very important aspect of preventive medicine as mentioned in Ayurveda classics. Therefore, this article is mainly concerned with the Ayurvedic diet and dietetics principles for the prevention of lifestyle disorders.



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INTRODUCTION

“Ayurveda is the holistic and an ancient science” which has been practiced for thousands of years based on its own unique fundamental principles such as the promotion of health and longevity and prevention of diseases, etc¹. The main objectives of Ayurveda are maintaining the health of the healthy person (“*Swasthasya Swasthya rakshanam*”) and to cure the diseases of the diseased person (“*Aturasya vikara prashamanam cha*”). Ayurvedic classics were emphasized on three important pills which have been considered as the important conducive factors for maintenance of healthy life and health. They are *Ahara* (diet), *Brahmacarya* (celibacy) and *Nidra* (Rest-sleep), also known as *Trayahupastambhah*, which support the life³. Lifestyle disorders are due to poor lifestyle which includes, poor diet, lack of exercise, poor sleep, stress due to the heavy workload. Several factors are resulting in the increasing burden of lifestyle disease which includes longer average lifespan, rising income, decreasing physical activity and increased consumption of unhealthy food⁴.

In the present era, a working woman has to maintain a health and work - life balance. Majority of the working women in the age

bracket of 21-52 years were found to be afflicted with lifestyle ailments such as a chronic backache, obesity, diabetes, depression/ general anxiety disorders, cardiovascular disease, malnutrition and infertility⁵. Some survey has revealed that 80% of urban Indian working women in the age group 25-45 years were observed to be fat; due to the sedentary lifestyle and changing food habits. A busy lifestyle results in lack of exercise and poor nutrition resulting in iron and calcium deficiency. Stress and busy lifestyle become a part of their lives which in turn badly affects the hormones that play a vital role in a woman's body. Among the working women, 53% of them skip meals and go for junk food, unhealthy diet, and bad food habits⁵.

Maintaining good health on the basis of fundamentals of Ayurveda, available in the classical literature, should be adopted for present era. Ayurvedic diet, and dietetics principle are the very important aspect of the prevention of lifestyle disorders.

DAILY AND SEASONAL REGIMEN OF AHARA/ DIET

Acarya Caraka has been mentioned that person should take foods regularly. These are *Sali* and *Sastika* rice, *Mudga*, *Saindhava Lavana*, *Yava* (barley), *Amalaki*, rain water collected before falling on the ground, *Gritha* (ghee),

Payah (milk), *Jangala Mamsa* (meat of animals dwelling in arid climate) and honey (*Madhu*)⁶. A scientific analysis of this above said ingredient of food stuff rightly justifies the entire requirements of the body in a better way than the modern prescription. The *Sastika* and *Sali* varieties of paddy are examples of the carbohydrate food. *Rakta Sali* (red rice) which is classed as glutinous rice is specially recommended. The red covering of rice was known to possess special nutrient properties even the day of *Caraka* and

Table 1 Nutritive values of Barley (content in 100g)

Protein	9.9g	Phosphorous	221mg	Iron	2.5mg
Carbohydrate	77.7g	Vitamin A	10mg	Selenium(/200gm)	36.40mcg
Fats	1.2g	Thiamine	0.2mg	Tryptophan(/200gm)	0.12gm
Energy	352 kcal	Riboflavin	0.1mg	Fiber(/200gm)	13.60gm
Calcium	29.0mg	Niacin	4.6mg	Zinc	2.1mg

Yava is an efficient food to prevent many life style disorders. Barley contains varying amount of total tocopherol and tocotrienols and Vit. E content which are antioxidant so can act as *balya* and *rasayana* and beneficial in diseases like DM, Cancer, Hypertension and Obesity. Barley also contains one peptide known as *lunasin* which has cancer preventive property; therefore, it is beneficial in various cancers and *betaglucan* (one of the soluble fiber) which helps to prevent of various life style disorder, such as diabetes, PCOD, Obesity etc. When used regularly. *Payah* (milk) represents an all-round food containing proteins,

Susruta. The green gram (*mudga*), which represents the protein content of food, is considered the best of all pulses. *Masa* (black gram) which is known to be more nutritious, was not preferred, because it was comparatively too hard to digest. Though both are rich in protein, light and digestible protein has been preferred to a heavy one. *Amalaki* represents the vitamin content of a balanced diet in addition to milk and vegetable. *Yava* (barley) –(Table 1) again represent the carbohydrates and it is easily digested and is a diuretic.

carbohydrates, fat, minerals vitamins and all that is required for women from infancy to old age. Milk predominately is a *satvika* food. *Sarpi* or *ghrita* represents not merely the fat content but also the intellect building principle. *Goghrita*, one of the excellent sources of fat, including both vegetarian and animals, is described by *Caraka Aacharya*. It is promotive of memory, intelligence, vital fire, semen vital essence. The flesh of animals is considered light and can be easily digested. *Madhu* (honey) is most refined glucose in a liquid form.

Sattvic Foods

These foods are light and easy to digest such as lightly cooked organic vegetables, ripe fruit, nuts and seeds, raw vegetables, honey, ginger, cardamom and small amounts of ghee (clarified butter). Pure cows' milk is considered *sattvic* in Ayurveda, which means free of additives and preservatives.

DAILY CONTRAINDICATED AHARA

Acarya Caraka has been mentioned some foods that we should not take daily. These are heavy food articles such as *Vallura* (dried meat), dry vegetables, lotus rhizomes, lotus stalk. Person should never take the meat of a diseased animal. Moreover, one should not regularly take *Kurchika* (boiled butter milk), *Kilaa* (inspissated milk), Meat of Pig, Cow and Buffalo, Fish, Curd, Yavaka.

Rajasic Foods

These foods are irritating the system of the body. Junk foods like potato chips and chocolate bars, excessively sweet, salty, spicy or pungent foods (such as raw onions and garlic), can cause the mind to become agitated and disturbed and coffee, black tea, chocolate, eggs, large quantity of meat and alcohol also include to the category of Rajasic foods.

Tamasic Foods

Old and leftover foods, fried food, Excessive meat, chicken, seafood, eggs,

hard cheeses, Alcohol, Frozen foods, and Fast foods are coming under the Tamasic food. These foods are not recommended to intake daily as a habit.

Dietetics principles of Ayurveda that help in prevention of lifestyle disorders among women.

1. Principle of Balanced Diet

According to Ayurveda, the diet which nourishes both mental and physical built is called balanced diet.

A). Sadarasa yukta Ahara

The appropriate use of all the six rasas maintains the equilibrium *Dosha, Dhātu* and *Mala* of the body.

B) Ahara matra

Ahara Matra means the amount of food which does not disturb the equilibrium of *Dhatus* and *Doshas* of the body and it is easy to digest and metabolize in proper time as well as proper quantity. *Acarya Caraka* specifies the quantity of food according to its quality in the same chapter. If the food article is heavy (*guru*), only three-fourths or half of the stomach capacity is to be filled up. Even in the case of light food (*laghu*) articles, excessive intake is not conducive to the maintenance of the power of digestion and metabolism. *Acharya Caraka* further describes (*Vimanasthana* Chapter 2) that the stomach capacity should be divided into three parts, one part of it should be filled

up with solid food, the second part with liquids and the third part should left for *vata, pitta and kapha*.

2. CONSIDERATION OF ASTA-AHARA VIDHI VISHESHAYATANA

According to *Acarya Caraka*, there are eight factors which determine the utility of the various types of food⁷. These eight factors should be essentially considered before taking the foods (Table2).

Table 2 Asta- Ahara Vidhivishesh Ayatana

1	<i>Prakriti</i>	Natural quality of food
2	<i>Karana</i>	Processing food
3	<i>Samyoga</i>	Combination of substances
4	<i>Rashi</i>	Quality of food
5	<i>Desha</i>	Place where the food is grown and cultivated
6	<i>Kala</i>	Time of intake of food
7	<i>Upayoga Samstha</i>	Rules of taking food
8	<i>Upayokta</i>	The persons who consumes the food

1 Prakriti

Prakriti means natural quality which is inborn. *prakriti* refers the natural quality of the food (and medicines) like *Guru* (heaviness) *Laghu* (light). such as *Masha* or black gram is heavy and *Mudga* or green gram is light in nature.

2 Karan (Processing of Food)

Processing results in the transformation of attributes. This is affected by application of several processing techniques such as using heat, cleansing, dilution, churning, storing, maturing, flavouring, impregnation, preservation, and container etc.

3 Samyoga (Combination of food substances)

Samyoga means combination or mixing of two or more substances. When more than two substances are combined together, the quality of the combination will be totally different from the individual components. When combination of honey and ghee in equal proportion will prove lethal and are dangerous for health. etc.

4 Rasi (Quantity of food)

Rasi means quantity of foods. Quantity of intake food is very important for health. The ideal food should be taken in proper quantity. The quantity of food in its entirety is known as "*Sarvagraha*" and the quantity of each of its ingredients is known as "*Parigraha*."

5 Desha (Place where the food items are grown and cultivated)

Desha/ places refers to the habitat, in fact natural habitat in which a food grows or its cultivated. According to Ayurvedic classics, there are three types of *Desha* i.e *Jangala* (dry regions), *Anupa* (Marshy regions), and *Sadharana* (moderate zones).

6 Kala (Time of consumption of food)

Kala can be defined stands for both the time in the form of day and night and states of individual (viz. condition of health, *prakurti* and age). The latter is relevant to the diseases e.g *kapha* diseases is predominant during childhood and fever

etc. due to dietetics error, whereas the former for the determination of the wholesome to different types of seasons. Some people the time of consumption of food differs from day by day.

7 Upayoga Samstha (Rules and regulations for consuming food)

Upayoga Samstha stands for dietetic rules. They are for the most part dependent on the symptoms of proper digestion (*Jeerna Ahara Lakshana*).

8 Upayokta (The person who consumes food)

Upayokta is that who consumes food or consumer. Since *Upayokta* (consumer) takes the food, he is very important. *Upayokta* also can define that the person who takes food as a regular habit, at right times, in proper quality and quantity.

3. Rules of Taking Ahara (Dietic Rules)⁸

There are different rules laid by *Acarya Caraka, Susruta* and *Vaghbata*⁹.

1. Usnam asniyata

Ushna means the temperature of food. One should take warm food. If one follows this rule and eats warm food; it tastes well, also the eaten food stimulates the digestive fire and gets digested quickly. If one takes warm food helps in *Anulomana* of *Vata*, stimulates and secretes *pitta* thereby increasing *Agni*.

2. Snigdham asniyata

Snigdha means of unctuous food. The term *Snigdha* does not refers to *Sneha dravyas* like ghee, *taila* but also *Godhuma, Shali rice* etc. are advised as *Snigdha*. Unctuous food stimulates the *Agni*, helps in *Anulomana* of *Vata*, stimulates *kledak kapha* due to its *Kledan* property, provides firmness to the sense organs, increases the plumpness of the body, promotes strength and brings out the brightness of complexion.

4. Jirne asniyata

Jirne asniyata means one should take food only when previous meal is digested. If one takes food before proper digestion of the previous foods, an *Apakwa Anna rasa* (the digestive product of previous food) gets mixed up with the product of food taken afterwards, resulting in the vitiation of all the *Doshas* and also one should take food having no contradictory potencies. A Person who take food when the previous meal is digested, it promotes health and longevity in its entirety.

5. Virya Avirudham asniyata

Virya/ Potency is the power of substance by which action takes place; nothing can be done in absence of the *Virya*. Eat those food articles which are not antagonistic in *Virya* (potency). Eating the food that is not antagonistic in potency one will not be afflicted with disorders born of incompatible dietary.

6. *Istedese*, *Istasarvopkaranam asniyata*
Istedese means to eating in a hygienic proper place provided with all the necessary condition during meals. One should take food in proper place with all the accessories and should not produce disturbing emotions like *kama*, *krodha*, *chinta*, *bhaya* etc. By following this a person does not get afflicted with such of the factors that would result to the disturbed mind.

7. *Na Atidrutam asniyata*

One should not take food too hurriedly; if food is taken too hurriedly it enters into a wrong passage; it gets depressed and it does not enter into the stomach properly. In this situation one can never determine the taste of food articles and detect foreign bodies like hair etc., mixed with them.

8. *Na Ativilambitam asniyata*

Na Ativilambitam means to that one should not take food too slowly because this will not give satisfaction to the individual. In this situation, the food becomes cold and there will be irregularity in digestion. Therefore, one should not take food very slowly. All these factors hamper *Agni* and the food can't be digested properly.

9. *Ajalpan, Ahasan, Tanmanabhunjita*

One should not talk or laugh or be unmindful while taking food, the secretion of gastric juices gets disturbed and finally the system also gets affected which affects

body as well as mind. The most important thing is that the food should be eaten with enough concentration towards it as well as towards the eating process. Talking and laughing divert the attention from the meals and the food is eaten too hastily or too slowly.

CONCLUSION

Finally, it can be concluded that Ayurveda provides better solutions in the form of proper dietary management (*Matrashitiya*, *Tasashitiya*) to prevent lifestyle disorders among the women. A healthy person should; therefore, follow a course of life conducive to the maintenance of good health. This is very important part of women's health, because as a working woman has to manage her health as well as her family health. Therefore, balanced diet and dietary principles which are clearly mentioned in Ayurveda is a help to reduce the lifestyle diseases.

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