



## IMPORTANCE OF AYURVEDIC DIETETIC RULES IN PRESENT ERA

**Shraddha S. Bhasarkar**

Assistant Professor, Department of Swasthavritta and Yoga, SMBT Ayurved College and Hospital, Nashik, Maharashtra, India.

**Mayuri Shingnapurkar\***

Phd scholar, Department of Kayachikitsa, Government Ayurved College and Hospital, Nagpur, Maharashtra, India. \*Corresponding Author

**ABSTRACT** Overweightness and obesity rates have dramatically increased in the past few decades. Unhealthy dietary habits are among the factors that can have adverse effects on weight status of people. Dietetics is the practical application of the principles of nutrition. It includes planning of meal for both the normal and sick individuals. The main aim of Ayurveda is to maintain the health in a healthy person and to cure the disease. Ahara, Nidra and Bramhacharya are considered to be the three pillars of life. Among these; Ahara is considered the source of energy and is mentioned first. Ahara is the primary factor on which all the living beings are dependent. Ayurveda, the science of life has not only emphasized on food products but entire quality of it right from selection of food materials to food consumption rules. It is found that a lot of progress is made in the treatment of diseases but as much as the code and conduct of diet are concerned; it seems to be given little importance. Whereas if proper dietetic rules are followed; it would help in the prevention as well as treatment of the diseases. In the present article, an attempt is made to bring forth the importance of dietetic rules.

**KEYWORDS :** Ayurveda, Ahara, dietetics

### Introduction

Today, the prevalence rates of overweight, obesity and diet-related metabolic diseases such as diabetes and hypertension are increasing in every nook and corner of the world most rapidly in lower and middle-income countries. Globalization has changed the food habits of people. Now-a-days young generation people prefer pizzas, burgers, sandwiches, etc over home-made food. 21<sup>st</sup> century is considered to be the era of competition. In this competitive world, overweightness and obesity rates have dramatically increased over the past few decades and are now representing a health pandemic. Stress is now considered to be a global problem and studying it has gained prominence in the scientific literature because of the multitude of negative effects on human health.

People are now using food as a way to deal with feelings instead to satisfy hunger, which is termed as emotional eating<sup>[1]</sup> and the food that provides a nostalgic or sentimental value to someone is termed as comfort food<sup>[2]</sup>. Food consumption is done anytime and for any other reasons other than hunger just to escape from the uncomfortable emotions. Researchers have found that males prefer hot, homemade comfort meals like steaks and casseroles while females go for chocolates and ice cream. These high fat foods like chocolates and ice creams may activate chemicals in body that create a sense of contentment and fulfillment<sup>[1]</sup>. This addictive quality makes one reach for these foods and thus causes overeating and further manifests in obesity. It seems that, in this age of television, smart phones, tablets and computers even if health seemed to be important for everyone when it comes to food consumption people did not take health into consideration and rush for pleasure and taste which often leads to deterioration of health.

Ayurveda, the science of life places special emphasis on *Ahara* and states that food is the vital breath of living beings. Complexion, cheerfulness, good voice, long life, imagination, happiness, contentment, corpulence, strength and intellect all these depend on food<sup>[3]</sup>. Food intake is not only ingestion of food but is way more than that. Eating not only nourishes the body but also the mind but, due to the paradigm shift in the lifestyle of people a majority of them suffer from digestive disturbances like hyperacidity, indigestion, constipation, sluggish digestion, gastro-oesophageal reflux disorders, etc. The art of eating and enjoying food seems to be disappearing in the present day scenario. Health is dependent on food and food if not consumed properly remains undigested which further manifests into majority of illnesses.

This paper focuses on bringing forth the ayurvedic rules of food consumption so that people will consume a proper quality and quantity of food which would help in maintaining their health and will help a diseased to cure the disease.

### Aim and objectives:

This paper focuses on rules of food consumption and their benefits according to Ayurveda classics which would help in achieving and maintaining proper health.

### Material and methods:

The present article is based on the review of ayurvedic classical textbooks. Literature is collected from related *Samhitas*, *nighantu*, national and international journals and other textbooks. Virtual sources are also included.

- Dietetic rules according to *Acharya Charaka*<sup>[4]</sup>:

#### 1) *Ushna*

One should consume food which is warm and fresh. This improves the taste of food, kindles the digestive fire and hastens the process of digestion.

#### 2) *Snigdha*

One should not eat food which is roasted, hard and dry. One should always consume unctuous food. It improves the plumpness of the body, strengthens the sense organs, promotes strength and improves color and complexion.

#### 3) *Matravat*

One should consume adequate quantity of food neither less nor more. This promotes the longevity of life helps in easy elimination of the bowel and flatus, does not impair the power of digestion. Food when taken in proper quantity gets digested easily without any difficulty.

#### 4) *Jeernam*:

One should take food only when previous meal is digested. If one constantly happens to take meals before the digestion of previous meals the undigested food (*ama*) mixes up with the latter food taken and leads to instant provocation of all the three doshas. Therefore, one should consume food only after proper digestion of previous meal. This imparts a sense of lightness in the heart and chest and does not vitiate the body tissues.

#### 5) *Viryaviruddham*

One should not consume food which are incompatible or having contradictory qualities. One should not take food which is undercooked, overcooked or improperly cooked as it may lead to various diseases like *kushtha*, *visarpa*, etc.

#### 6) *Ishta deshe ishta sarvopkarnam*

One should indulge in the act of taking food in proper, pleasant and comfortable place with all the required accessories. If the place is not pleasant and comfortable leads to emotional stress and thus alters the digestion process. Mood plays a vital role in eating, digestion and even assimilation of food. Digestion is predominantly a parasympathetic activity which is activated and functions at its best when the organism

is relaxed and calm. Hence one should follow this rule.

#### 7) *Na atidrutam*

One should not consume food hastily, in hurry or urgency. This delays the digestion process and may lead to the entry of food in the wrong passage. Therefore, one should avoid taking food in hurry.

#### 8) *Na ativilambitam*

One should avoid eating too slow. Eating very slowly does not impart the sense of satisfaction and therefore leads to excess consumption of food. This also leads to delayed digestion. Therefore, one should avoid eating too slowly.

#### 9) *Ajalpana Ahasana, Tanmana bhunjita*

One should avoid eating accompanied with excessive talking, laughter and also one should not engage the mind in other activities while eating and should pay attention to food one is eating. If one consumes food in such a way it does not impart the sense of satisfaction and the food does not get easily digested. Hence, one should do mindful eating.

#### 10) *Aatmanam abhisamikshya bhunjitam:*

One should eat rightly considering one's own constitution. This helps in the proper digestion of food.

#### Dietetic rules according to *Acharya Sushruta*<sup>51</sup>

1) *sheeta* 2) *ushna* 3) *snigdha* 4) *ruksha* 5) *drava* 6) *shushka* 7) *eka kala* 8) *dvikalika* 9) *aushadh yukta* 10) *alpa ahara* 11) *dosha prashmana* 12) *vruttyartha*

#### 1) *Sheeta*

*Sheeta* ahara is to be consumed when an individual is affected by thirst, intoxication, burning sensation, poisoning or if suffering from epileptic seizures. *Sheeta ahara* consumed in these conditions proves beneficial.

#### 2) *Ushna*

In aggravated *Kapha* and *Vata Dosha* one should consume *Ushna Ahara*. When body is dominated with the *kleda* or if the person is being treated with purgative treatment *Ushna Ahara* proves to be beneficial.

#### 3) *Snigdha*

One should consume *snigdha ahara* when he is emaciated by excess exercise and cohabitation. *Vata prakruti* person should also consume *snigdha ahara*. In parched condition of body *snigdha ahara* is beneficial.

#### 4) *Ruksha*

People suffering from Diabetes Mellitus, having excessive fat all over their body and people with unctuousness should consume *ruksha ahara*.

#### 5) *Drava*

Weak, emaciated, parched, debilitated and thirsty people should consume *drava ahara*.

#### 6) *Shushka*

In diseases like *prameha, kushtha, visarpa* (Diabetes Mellitus and many skin disorders) and *vrana*; *shushka ahara* proves to be beneficial as it does not provoke any of the *doshas*.

#### 7) *Eka kala ahara*

One meal a day is recommended in weak digestive capacity.

#### 8) *Dwikalika Ahara*

Two meals a day is recommended for people having proper digestive fire.

#### 9) *Aushadh yukta ahara*

This kind of *ahara* is beneficial for people who are having an aversion to take medicine.

#### 10) *Matra hina ahara*

In people suffering from impaired digestion *matra hina ahara* is beneficial.

#### 11) *Dosha prashmana ahara*

Food items and drinks should be consumed by taking into consideration the *doshas* of the body. Also, food should be taken according to seasons.

#### 12) *Vruttyartha*

This includes *Ahara* with *Shadrasa*, the food that preserves the healthy state of the body by maintaining the normalcy of *deha dhatu* should be consumed.

#### Dietetic rules according to *Acharya Vagbhat*<sup>61</sup>

According to *Acharya Vagbhata* one should consume food only after the complete digestion of previous meals. Clear belching, sense of enthusiasm, easy evacuation of the bowels, lightness of body, proper occurrence of hunger and thirst are the characteristics of the proper digestion of food. When one gets to see all these symptoms, he should consume the next meal. If these rules are followed one can maintain the proper health of the body.

• Dietetic rules according to the present day era would include:

- 1) One should not watch TV while eating.
- 2) One should not use facebook/twitter/snapchat/instagram/whatsapp while eating.
- 3) One should not attend calls while eating.
- 4) One should not disrespect food.
- 5) One should not waste food.
- 6) One should chew food well before swallowing.
- 7) One should not eat in a hurried manner.

#### Discussion:

Unhealthy and improper dietary habits happen to be a primary reason for the increasing metabolic diseases in present era. *Ahara* (food) is a part of our daily routine along with the quality, quantity and taste of food if one remembers to concentrate a little on the right way of consumption of food and the regimen related to *Ahara* described in *Aurveda*, positive health can be achieved easily. Faulty dietary habits lead to the manifestation of different metabolic diseases. In this context, the rules of food intake described by our ancient *acharyas* prove to be the most ideal in today's lifestyle. These methods of *ahara* consumption should be taken into consideration during the consumption of food they help oneself make disease free and maintain proper health. The *ushna* property of *ahara* helps in improving the *dhatwagni*. *Ushna ahara* and *snigdha ahara* can be used in diseases caused by *prukupit vata*. *Shushka ahara* and *ruksha ahara* mainly help to mitigate *prakupit kapha* and *meda* thus preventing from obesity. *Drava ahara* maintains the cell integrity. When we do mindful eating as described by *Acharya Charaka* that is when we pay proper attention to our food on purpose without judgments it helps in better digestion, helps in healthy weight loss, helps in stress reduction and leads to better digestion. So, by following these dietetic rules, we can prevent ourselves from various health problems and can cure many metabolic diseases.

#### Conclusion :

Today, majority of population is pre-occupied with stress. Higher stress levels tend and adopt unhealthy dietary habits. This stress further manifests into various health issues like indigestion, hyperacidity, diarrhea, anorexia, etc. *Ahara* is considered the basic need of life. Not only diet but methods of diet intake are equally important for the continuity of life. According to *Acharya Kashyap*, food is the *Mahabhaisajya*<sup>71</sup> as food has always been a major role in the prevention and cure of diseases and also in the maintenance of health. One should not eat food for the sake of taste but should eat for maintaining good health. It can be concluded that *Ahara* should be taken according to these eating habits are mentioned by *Acharyas* which has been proven very scientific. So, by following these habits, we can prevent ourselves from various health problems and can cure many other diseases. The dietetic rules if followed properly can help in achieving the noble goal of maintaining health. By proper understanding and following these, we can easily achieve both the *Prayojana* of *Ayurveda* and lead a healthy life.

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