

## CONCEPT OF IDEAL METHOD OF FOOD INTAKE IN AYURVEDA

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### ABSTRACT

The health is the supreme foundation for the achievements of life, health and disease are defined as pleasure and pain respectively. In order to prevent the manifested disease and cure the manifested ones, one should follow ideal life style as prescribed in Ayurvedic text. Life style means the way in which a person lives. Aahar, Vihar and Vichar can be included under the life style. Aahar is also included under Trayupstambha of life ie Aahar, Nidra and Brahamcharya. Aahar is not only need for continuity of life but also for varna, bala, swara, upchaya and harsha etc. all are dependent on diet. Aahar as well as method of

intake both have equal importance to maintain health. In Ayurveda Acharya have advised to take ushna, snigdha Aahar with full of concentration. Quantity of Aahar is depend upon agni of person and nature of food item. According to Ayurveda food should be taken only when previous meal is digested and there is complete prohibition of reheated food. But now a days most of people eat cold items, frozen food, reheated food by microwave. Most of people are busy in TV, phones calls, computer, meeting, chatting, talk and laugh during meal. All these factors disturb the digestive power and lead to serious digestive disorders or even can cause carcinoma.

**KEYWORDS:** Trayupstambha, Brahamcharya, Upchaya, Digestive Power.

## INTRODUCTION

Ahara is the food which is ingested; it includes all food like eatable, lick able, drinkable etc. Diet is one from the point of view of intake. It is the vital breath of living beings that is why the people rush to the food. Complexion, cheerfulness, good voice, life, imagination, happiness, contentment, corpulence, strength and intellect all these are dependent on food. So Ahara is the most essential requirements of all living beings. Nowadays there is increased prevalence of life style disorders, in which faulty dietary habits play an important role. Ayurveda has given detail discipline and process to take the Ahara for an individual and in general both. This discipline is titled as Ahara vidhi vidhan, where all the law about the diet and drinks are given. Basically Ayurveda is having an introducing concept that the health and disease both are the product of Ahara. As acharyas had described Ahara, Nidra and Brahmcharya are Trayopstambha (three sub pillars) which support the body itself. Here Ahara has been placed first which shows that it is most important to maintain and sustain the life. Ahara supplies bio-energy to the body. This bio-energy is supplied by proper and adequate nutrition in the form of it's essential constituents (viz.- protein, carbohydrates, fats, minerals, vitamins and water). In Ayurveda, Ahara as well as the method of it's intake both have equal importance. Food which are consumed according to the prescribed methods (in the scriptures) are the seat for the satisfaction for the life. ojas, teja (splendor), dhatus, senses, bala (strength), Tushti (satisfaction of mind), Arogya (Health), are all dependent on food. They are fuel for the Agni (fire inside the body) which is the main basis for sustaining the body. In the present modern life style, we do not take care of our health and the consequences of our eating habits and other styles of life, which are harmful for us.

## AHARA VIDHI VIDHAN

Ahara vidhi vidhan described in our classics which are the foundation of dietetics. Which indicates the method of ahara, these are Ushna, Snigdha, Matratvat, is consumed after the digestion of previously ingested food, Virya avirudha ahara, is to be taken into Iste Deshe where it is provided with Ista sarvopakarana, Not to be taken speedily, Not to be taken too slowly, taken without taking with others, taken without laughing, Taken with the concentration of the mind.

## USHNAM ASHNIYAT(One should eat warm)

The first requisite regarding prepared meal is that it should be taken Ushna (Hot). If ones taking hot food feel of proper taste, stimulate the Agni (Digestive power), Vatanulomana and

Reduction of Kapha are achieved. The specific sequence of Ahara Vidhi Vidhan is practically very important. Besides the whole meal being Ushna, it must begin with Ushna anna, so that profuse flow of saliva and gastric juices are achieved for the next food items.

Ayurveda also recommends that you should drink your water warm, as cold water can weaken your Agni (digestive fire). One should take warm water during and after meals. Water boiled and reduced to one-eighth, one-fourth or half of the original quantity or simply boiled and removed, all are called Ushnodak. It has swadu vipaka (sweetness at the end of digestion) and sheeta viryatmaka (cold in potency) even though used hot. So injudicious use of hot water (either less or more than required) does not cause much change in digestion.

Ideal water for drinking: Water boiled and reduced to one-eighth, one-fourth or half of the original quantity, suitable to the region, season or its heaviness or lightness and which is devoid of foam, is clear and pure is ideal for drinking.

### **BENEFITS OF USHNODAK**

Warm water stimulates hunger and kindles digestive fire, helps digestion, soothes throat, cleanses bladder, reduces hiccups and alleviates increased vata and kapha. It eases symptoms of cold, cough, fevers and breathlessness. It removes Ama the metabolic toxin of body. Warm water is best in winter and after eating oily preparations of flour and those which are difficult to be digested.

### **SNIGDHAM ASHNIYAT(One should eat unctuous food)**

The meal made should be Snigdha (Unctous). The Snigdha Ahara causes Agnidedpana, carminates flatus, facilitate early digestion, it taste well, develops body, provide firmness to sense organs, increase strength, produces clarity of complexion.

### **MATRAVAT ASHNIYAT(One should eat in proper quantity)**

It means eat in adequate amount. The Lakshana by which a person can decide that is Matravat are, freedom from distress is in stomach, Gratification of the senses, absence of any cardiac discomfort, sense of ease in the standing, sitting, lying down, walking, inhaling, exhaling, talking.

### **JIRNE ASHNIYAT(One should eat when the previous meal is digested)**

It means eat after digestion of the previous meal. If one takes food before the digestion of the previous meal, the digestive product of the previous food i.e. undigested ahara rasa of food

taken afterwards it provokes all the doshas.

**VIRYA AVIRUDHA ASHNIYAT(One should take food consisting of the items non-antagonistic in potency)**

Virya is the power of substance by which action takes place. Eat those food which are not antagonist in virya (potency). Otherwise person may get afflicted with diseases like skin disease (Kustha), Visarpa etc.

**ISHTA DESHE / ISHTA SARVOPKARNAM ASHNIYAT(Eat in desired place with desired articles)**

Eat in congenial place provided with all the necessary appurtenances. One eating at congenial place does not get depressed in the mind by the depressing emotions produced in unpleasant environment. Therefore should eat in congenial place and circumstances means one should be supplemented with all accessories.

**NA ATIDRUTAM ASHNIYAT(Do not eat in hurry)**

Do not eat hurriedly. If food is taken too hurriedly it enters into a wrong way and will not be properly placed. Food taken in hurry can obviously affect the power of digestion by increasing the vata.

**NA ATIVILAMBIT ASHNIYAT(Do not eat very slowly)**

Do not eat too leisurely, that food would become cold, eats more than required, does not give satisfaction, and there will be irregularity in digestion.

**AJALPANA, AHASAN, TANMANABHUNJITAM(Eat with concentration without talking and laughing)**

Don't talk or laugh while eating, one who talks and laughs while eating is liable to suffer the same disorders as the one who eats too hastily. In this most important one is that the food should be eaten with concentration. Talking and laughing divert the attention from the meals and the food is eaten too slowly or too hastily.

**AATANAM ABHISAMIKSHYA BHUNJITAM(Eat after considering one self thoroughly)**

Eat rightly, considering your constitution. One should consume food in prescribed manner. The knowledge of usefulness of food, whether it is wholesome for him or not should be thought. These were the dietic rules for both healthy and unhealthy persons but Sushruta has

given Dwadasha Ashana Pravicharana especially for unhealthy people. These pravicharana facilitate the use of different type of ahara and ahar vidhi according to the status of health of the person. According to Charak Acharya the food eaten by one with chinta (Anxiety), Shok(Grief), Bhay (Fear), Krodh (Anger), Dukha (Pain), sedentary habits or keeping awake at night, though it is prescribed diet and is eaten with strict regard to measure, will fail to be digested properly.

### **ASHTA AHAR VIDHI VISHESHA AYATANANI (EIGHT SPECIFIC FACTORS OF METHODS OF DIETICS)**

Ahar Vidhi Vishesha Ayatanani means the factors responsible for wholesome and unwholesome effect of the Ahara and methods of Ahar sevan (special rule for diet intake).

These eight factors should be considered before taking food as described in Ayurveda. 1) Prakriti (Nature), 2) Karana (processing), 3) Samyoga (combination), 4) Raashi (quantity), 5) Desha(place), 6) Kala (time), 7) Upayogasamstha (rule of use) and Upayokta(User).

In present era there are many wrong eating habits like eating when not hungry, eating soon after meal, eating hurriedly, eating at the wrong time of the day, eating incomplete & wrong food combinations, overeating, eating too much heavy too light food, emotional eating, eating food one cannot digest, eating when constipated, drinking cold or chilled water at all during meal, taking too much water during meal or too little water in a whole day, preserved, frozen and stale food, too spicy, sour, salty food etc.

### **DISCUSSION**

Food is consumed for nutrition purpose on daily basis and it can also be used as a drug whenever required according to the disease condition. In other hand, the food also causes many disorder too if it is infected, contaminated, treated with chemicals or by nature itself (eg. Poisonous mushrooms, Toxins etc.) If any deficit found in the food habits and in hygiene it should be suitably corrected along with creating the awareness. Nutrition is of the highest priority in todays life and it's the hub of everyone who is desirous of good health. The importance of nutrition is emphasized by its role in maintaining health.

Improper dietary habit is primary reason for the increasing trend of health disorders in current era. Intake of frozen food, canned, processed food play an important role. So there is need to awake the people about the importance of fresh food. According to Charaka Samhita,

processing of substances which leads to alteration in the inherent properties of substances is known as Sanskara. In the process of freezing large ice crystals are formed that can damage cell walls and destroy the texture and flavor of foods. Even though freezing is regarded as the simplest and most important preservation process for fruits and vegetables, it is not a perfect process since it is well known that some nutritional value (vitamins and minerals) may be lost during the freezing process.

At present many modern food processing methods are in practice. These methods bring about chemical as well as physical changes in consumption of the food substances. They definitely improve the appearance, taste, flavor, shelf life, preservation of food. At the same time they are changing the properties of food constituents making them unsuitable for human consumption, causing many diseases. According to modern perspectives processing techniques are used for the preservation of food, to increase the digestibility, to enhance the color and flavor of the food in order to and increase the appearance of the food and ultimately to increase the appetite and they reduce the cooking time but, becoming a root cause for various disease. Microwaving the food causes water molecules in the food to increase at very high frequency which cooks food instantly and saves time but, it alters the chemical structure of the food at the same time. Many diseases can be prevented arising merely due to faulty dietary habits. According to traditional method of cooking prescribed by Ayurveda, gradual cooking helps the food to become more digestible, which is not achieved by microwaving. The plastic containers are used to cook food in microwave many a time. Another problem with microwave oven is that carcinogenic toxins can leach out of plastic and paper containers or covers, and into the food.

As per the modern researches it is reported about the leakage of numerous toxic chemicals from the packaging of common microwave foods including pizzas, chips and popcorn. Frozen products initially lose fewer nutrients overtime due to oxidation even in a frozen state while fresh food provide greater nutrient intake than frozen food. Viewing the above points it can be concluded that ahara should be taken according to Ahara vidhi vidhana (dietary guidelines) and which are truly scientific as mentioned by our Acharyas.

The Deepana (stimulation of digestive power) property of warm water causes expansion of srotas (microchannels) of digestive juices. The Ushnodaka causes digestion of Ama, Kapha and helps to expel them through bowels. The mucous and Kapha get eliminated easily and the ailment gets attacked right at the root. Thus Ushnodaka expands the microchannels carrying

Doshas (according to Ayurveda three dynamic substances), Dhatus (fundamental tissues), and wastes, removes their sluggishness, makes them soft. The elasticity of these channels is restored gradually. This will help to rebalance each dosha. The increased hunger as a result of increased flow of digestive juices causes proper digestion of food resulting into increase of Dhatus. In this way we can say that warm water is appetizer, digestive, cleanser of channels and ideal for drinking.

## CONCLUSION

Food and drink with desirable smell, taste and touch and having been taken according to Ayurvedic prescribed method is said as vital strength by expert on the basis of observing their results directly, because the condition of internal fire depends on their fuel. They produces energy in mind, constitution of Dhatus, strength, complexion and clarity of sense organs, if properly taken, otherwise they become harmful.

Our classics are store houses of valuable thoughts. Diet is considered as basic most cause of life. Not only diet but also method of food intake has an important role in the continuity of healthy life. The rules and methods of diet intake are mentioned in Charak Samhita as Ashta Ahara Vidhi Vishesha Ayatanani and Ahara Vidhi Vidhana. The application of these rules is effective in maintenance of health as well as in the curative aspect for many diseases. According to Kashyap Samhita, food as always been an important way to treat illness and maintain health and that's why he called food as Mahabhaishyajya. In the present modern lifestyle we do not take care of our health and the consequences of our eating and drinking habits and other styles of life. It is very important aspect regarding dietetics that when to take food. Many diseases can be prevented arising merely due to faulty dietary habits. Ayurveda also recommended that warm water is good for digestive health. Thus warm water has medicinal properties other than as normal drink. In this way healthier eating habits may help to lower the risk for many health problems.

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