



ISSN 2456-3110

Vol 6 · Issue 5

Sept-Oct 2021

Journal of  
**Ayurveda and Integrated  
Medical Sciences**

*www.jaims.in*

JAIMS

An International Journal for Researches in Ayurveda and Allied Sciences



**Maharshi Charaka**  
Ayurveda

Indexed

# Maintenance of Mental Health during present situation of COVID-19 Pandemic

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## ABSTRACT

Pandemic COVID 19 has affected our life in many ways. It has affected all dimensions of health (physical, mental, social, emotional, vocational, socio-economic dimensions) in one or other way. Maintenance of mental health is an essential component which demands more efforts from inner self of an individual as compare to any other person from outside. Detailed study of our *Ayurvedic* scriptures revealed that our *Acharya* were well aware of this concept and were very much concerned about mental health status of an individual to keep them healthy throughout life. There is a wide description of ways, activities, life style, diet as well as medications and herbs for an individual to stay mentally fit. Thus, in this paper we are going to review the texts in a very practical way that can be adopted in today's life to maintain healthy mental state.

**Key words:** COVID 19, Mental Health.

## INTRODUCTION

On 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019, a cluster of pneumonia cases having unknown causes in Wuhan, China, were reported to the authorities of W.H.O. As in early January 2020, an investigation was launched to determine the cause of these cases. The virus that caused the outbreak was discovered to be SARS-CoV-2. Official name for the virus COVID-19 was issued by W.H.O. on 11<sup>th</sup> February 2020.

COVID-19 is the disease having tendency of man-to-man transmission through; respiratory droplets & droplet nuclei, fomites (clothes, towel, beddings etc.)

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Submission Date: 09/09/2021

Accepted Date: 14/10/2021

### Access this article online

#### Quick Response Code



Website: [www.jaims.in](http://www.jaims.in)

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of an infected person, contaminated surface in the immediate surroundings. Common symptoms may appear within 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. These are; fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty in breathing, fatigue, muscle or body ache, headache, loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or running nose, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea and increased tendency of thrombo-embolism. Post COVID conditions can be ongoing symptoms or appearance of new symptoms like brain fogging (difficulty in thinking or concentrating), headache, palpitations, joint or muscle pain, pins and needle feeling, sleep problems, light-headedness, mood changes, and change in menstrual cycles. Multi-organ effects of COVID are; Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome (experienced by mostly children), post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Bereavement, isolation, loss of income and fear are triggering mental health conditions or exacerbating existing ones. Many people are facing increased level of alcohol and drug use, insomnia, anxiety and depression. People with pre-existing mental, neurological or substance use disorders are also more vulnerable to COVID-19, they may stand a higher risk of severe outcomes and even death.<sup>[1]</sup>

Ayurveda considers healthy mind as one of the fundamentals of health. Mental disorders first manifest in the mind and then afflict the physical body. Mind is an extraordinary sense organ and organ of action that act as a bridge between five sense organs of the body (Sound, touch, sight, taste & smell are the senses and ear, skin, eyes, tongue & nose are their respective sense organs) and soul. When there is an association between the sense objects (e.g., a book), sense organs (e.g., eyes) and soul (inner self), mind is not present in the equation, one cannot obtain knowledge i.e., mind's association with other three entities make gaining knowledge possible. Subjects of mind are; thinking, analysing between good and bad. Making inferences, focussing or concentrating, and determination and decision on basis of discrimination made between good and bad.<sup>[2]</sup> Thus, any derangement in thinking, analysing, inference making, concentrating and decision making are the common manifestations of unhealthy mental state. Ancient scriptures explained many ways to keep mind healthy which will be discussed in result and discussion sections in detail.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The review of Ayurvedic scriptures, research articles, updated Government publications related to COVID 19, and mental health was done. Relevant material was extracted, analysed, correlated and is being presented here in this paper with most appropriate explanations.

## AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Aim and objective of this paper is to provide the most relevant, applicable *Ayurvedic* methodology for prevention of mental disorders and maintenance of mental health during present era of COVID-19 pandemic.

## RESULT

In Ayurvedic scriptures, description of mental disorders, their causes, pathogenesis, prevention and treatment is widely described but in scattered form. The common causative factors of mental illnesses are;

fear, anxiety, stressful environment of surroundings, inappropriate behavioural activities like anger, over indulgence of senses (e.g., overindulgence in sexual activities), drug/alcohol abuse and incompatible or nutrition deficient or adulterated Diet.

These causative factors lead to vitiation of *Mansika Doshas* (Psychic *Doshas*) i.e., *Raja* and *Tama*, which in turn cause vitiation of *Hridya* (the seat of *Mana*) as well as *Manovahi Srotasa* (channels of *Mana*). Involvement of *Manavahi Srotasa* (channels of *Mana*) produces *Manovahi Lakshana* (psychological symptoms). Vitiating *Mansika Doshas* (Psychic *Doshas*) also cause vitiation of *Sharirika Doshas* (*Doshas* of physical body) which leads to psychosomatic health problems.<sup>[3]</sup>

Prevention of mental illnesses and maintenance of good mental health can be achieved by following ways:

1. *Nidaana Parivarjana* (Avoidance of causative factors)<sup>[4]</sup>
2. *Acharya Rasayana*<sup>[5]</sup> & *Sadvritta Palana*<sup>[6]</sup> (Life style for Mental Attitude Rejuvenation)
3. *Sattvavajya Chikitsa* (Mindfulness therapy)<sup>[7]</sup>
4. *Dharniya Vega* (Suppression of bad behavioural urges/activities)<sup>[8]</sup>
5. *Satvika Ahara* (Mind rejuvenating diet)<sup>[9]</sup>
6. *Nidra* (Sound sleep)<sup>[10]</sup>
7. *Daiva-Vyapashraya Chikitsa* (Divine therapy)<sup>[11]</sup>
8. Single herbs for Mind rejuvenation<sup>[12]</sup>
9. *Medhya Rasayana* (Formulation of four herbs which specifically act on intellect)<sup>[13]</sup>
10. *Yoga: Asana* (Relaxing postures), *Paranayama* (Relaxing controlled breathing technique) and *Dhyana* (Meditation)<sup>[14]</sup>
11. *Kriya Yoga: Tapa* (Enthusiasm), *Swadhyaya* (Self-analysis), *Ishwara Pranidhana* (Dedication to God)<sup>[15]</sup>
12. Miscellaneous: *Panchkarma*, *Abhyanga* (Massage) and *Shirodhara* (To pour medicinal oils or decoctions on head)

13. *Yuktivyapashraya Chikitsa*<sup>[16]</sup> (Use of formulations/modifications in life style & diet - individual specific): It includes medicines, life style modification and dietary specification according to condition of patient.

## DISCUSSION

### *Nidaana Parivarjana (Avoidance of causative factors)*

During this time of pandemic COVID 19, causative factors like fear from getting infected, stress of working in unsafe environment at office, isolation etc. seems to be unavoidable but other causative factors must be prevented such as; one must avoid alcohol/drug intake. We should; eat balanced diet, avoid unnecessary roaming, maintain harmonious environment at home and workplace.

### *Achara Rasayana & Sadvritta (Life style for Mental Attitude Rejuvenation)*

One should be truthful & utter pleasant words, avoid anger, avoid alcohol, maintain celibacy, non-violence, non-exhaustion, stay calm & stable in thoughts, perform religious rites & charity, maintain hygiene, regular intake of milk & *Ghritta*, possess knowledge of things appropriate to time and place, develop wisdom to judge between good or bad for us. One should be free from ego & narrow mindedness, bear good conduct and self-control, believe in God, study scriptures regularly and acquire spiritual knowledge, respect seniors, cow (animals), Brahmins (knowledgeable persons), teachers and preceptors, be compassionate and use sense organs properly, maintain regular period of awakening and sleep.

By following such codes and conducts, an individual becomes strong physically, mentally, spiritually and socially.

- Mind gets engaged in positive activities which lead to development of positive attitude towards life resulting in happiness of an individual.
- There will be change in behaviour like from Anger to calmness, Greif to joy, Violence to non-violence and Greed to satisfaction.

- Individual become able to differentiate between good and bad.
- One develops self-control.
- There will be social behaviour changes and such harmonious environment give calmness to mind.

### *Sattvavajya Chikitsa (Mindfulness therapy)*

- It is the modality which is therapeutic for mental or emotional stresses and disturbances. *Sattvavajya* term also implies to the withdrawal of mind from harmful objects. Five broad components of *Sattvavajya* (mindfulness therapy) are; *Gyana* (knowledge), *Vigyana* (scientific knowledge), *Dhairya* (will power), *Smriti* (memory) and *Smadhi* (Yoga practices).<sup>[17]</sup> During this pandemic of COVID 19 following practices will be helpful for good mental health;
  - Promotion of spiritual knowledge,
  - Promotion of practical and scientific knowledge,
  - Development of patience or will power,
  - Promotion of positive memory,
  - Development of concentration skills to focus the mind through *Yoga*

Along with this *Dhee* (uplifting intelligence), *Dhairya* (boosting confidence and determination) and *Atmadi Vigyana* (knowledge of the inner-self) are ideal therapies of the mind.<sup>[18]</sup>

- Uplifting intelligence will bring about the judgement and discrimination of the negative thoughts.
- Boosting confidence and determination will bring firmness/strength to the disturbed mind and will also preserve the mental stability.
- By pondering into one's own shortcomings individual will try to overcome them and there will be development in psychological personality.

### *Dharniya Vega (Suppression of bad behavioural urges/activities)*

- One desirous of his wellbeing should suppress urges relating to rashness and evil deeds mentally, orally and physically.

- A wise person should refrain from satisfying the urges relating to greed, grief, fear, anger, vanity, shamelessness, jealousy, too much of attachment and malice.
- One should also refrain from letting loose the urges of speaking extremely harsh words, back biting, lying and use of untimely words.
- Violence to others, urges related to such physical actions including adultery, theft and persecution are to be restrained.

#### **Satvika Aahara (Mind rejuvenating diet)**

A diet which has following properties is considered as *Satvika Aahara* (Mind rejuvenating diet):

- *Ayu Vivardhana* - Improve life expectancy & quality of life e.g., Staple diet like Wheat, Cereals and pulses.
- *Sattva Vivardhana* - Diet having direct impact on mind, improve memory, intellect, concentration and recalling power. e.g., *Brahmi*, *Shankhapushpi*, *Jyotishmati*, *Vacha* etc.
- *Bala Vivardhana* - Improve strength as well as immunity. e.g., Milk, *Ghritta* as well as staple food.
- *Arogya Vivardhana* - Maintain health by preventing particular diseases. e.g., *Guduchi*, *Tulsi*, Water.
- *Sukha Vivardhana* - Provide happiness & comfort. e.g., palatable food like semi solid food for an elder who has poor denture.
- *Preeti Vivardhana* - Increase love. e.g., Garnished food presentation, Food with particular fragrances.
- *Rasya, Snigdha* - Tasty, Juicy & unctuous.
- *Sthira, Guru* - Providing stability and energy for longer time. e.g., *Lapsika* (Semi-liquid sweet preparation of semolina with milk), *Sattu* (Roasted grounded black gram mixed with Jaggery and water), *Manda* (Rice water), Dry fruits.
- *Hridya* - Pleasing e.g., Dry fruits, Fresh fruits.

*Satvika* Diet is based on food that contain one of the three *Yogic Guna* (qualities) known as *Satva*, which has the qualities of pure, essential, natural, vital energy containing, clean, conscious, true, honest and wise. Body and mind are inter-connected. If body is healthy, mind will also be healthy and vice versa.

#### **Nidra (Sound sleep)**

It results in relaxation of mind. Sound sleep improves quality of life. It leads to development and repair of the body, improves learning capacity, and immunity.

#### **Daiva-Vyapashraya Chikitsa (Divine therapy)**

Chanting of *Mantras*, wearing *Mani* (precious gem), *Mangal Karma* (auspicious rites) *Bali* (sacrifice-not of animals or living creatures), *Uphara* (oblations), *Homa* (offering ghee to the fire), *Niyama* (vow), *Upvasa* (fasting), *Prayshchita* (atonement) etc. is *Daiva-Vyapashraya Chikitsa* (Divine therapy).

It helps in creating positive and sound environment around an individual which will boon his own mental status. It gives a sense of security and wellbeing to the individual.

#### **Single herbs for Mind rejuvenation**

*Brahmi* (*Bacopa monnieri*), *Mandukaparni* (*Centella asiatica*), *Ashwagandha* (*Withania somnifera*), *Jatamansi* (*Nordostachys jatamansi*), *Shankhapushpi* (*Convolvulus pluricaulis*), *Vacha* (*Acorus calamus*), *Jyotishmati* (*Celestrus paniculatus*), *Kushmanda* (*Benincasa hispida*) etc.

These herbs can be added in diet as; by mixing with milk or water, making *Sharbat*, herbal tea and in the form of sauces etc.

#### **Medhya Rasayana (Formulation of four herbs which specifically act on intellect)**

Juice of whole plant of *Mandukaparni* (*Centella asiatica* Linn.), powder of *Yashtimadhu* (*Glycyrrhiza glabra* Linn.) with milk, stem juice of *Guduchi* (*Tinospora cordifolia* Wild.) and paste of whole plant of *Shankhapushpi* (*Convolvulus pleuricaulis* Chois) are called *Medhya Rasayana*.

Herbs and *Medhya Rasayana* shows soothing and rejuvenating effect on mind, increases intellect, enhances metabolism and immune response of the body. *Medhya Rasayana* has shown nootropic effect (enhanced memory or other cognitive functions of brain). It acts on the basis of anti-oxidant; adaptogenic or essential trace elements present in them.<sup>[19]</sup>

### Yoga

- *Asana* (relaxing postures) : *Makrasana* (The crocodile Pose), *Shavasana* (The corpse pose)
- *Paranayama* (relaxing controlled breathing technique): *Bhramari* (Bee humming sound), *Nadi Shodhana* or *Anuloma-Viloma* (inhalation and exhalation from nostrils alternately)
- *Dhayana* (meditation)
- *Trataka* (to stare and focus at a point till lacrimation)
- *Yoga Nidra* (*Yogic sleep/ sleep guided with instructions to the mind*) relaxes mind (as per Morarji Desai National Institute of Yoga)

These are best modalities to relax, calm and control the mind.

### Kriya Yoga

*Tapa* (enthusiasm), *Swadhyaya* (self-analysis), *Ishwara Pranidhana* (dedication to God) are collectively called as *Kriya Yoga*.

These are necessary to control and to direct the activities of mind in a positive direction.

### Miscellaneous

*Panchkarma* procedures, *Abhyanga* (Massage), *Shirodhara* (to pour medicated oils or decoctions on head) are other procedures which can be adopted to relax mind.

### Yukti-vyapashraya Chikitsa

*Yukti-vyapashraya Chikitsa* includes use of medicinal formulations, individual specific modifications in procedures, life style & diet.

Above mentioned all modalities should be followed by every individual. But in case of particular condition of an individual, specific plan of action should be adopted. e.g., Even after all measure's insomnia persists, physician should add medicine like *Tagar* (*Valeriana wallichii*) formulations, to induce sleep.

### CONCLUSION

Hence, it is concluded that mind plays a very vital role in maintaining the individual health. During pandemic of COVID 19, the cases of mental illness are rising day by day. Therefore, to prevent mental illnesses and to maintain mental health one must adopt measures for mental peace such as; Mental attitude rejuvenation therapy, Mindfulness therapy, Devine therapy, Mind rejuvenating diet, Sound sleep, *Yoga: Asana* (relaxing postures), *Paranayama* (relaxing controlled breathing technique) and *Dhyana* (meditation), One must suppress bad behavioural urges/activities. *Kriya Yoga: Tapa* (enthusiasm), *Swadhyaya* (self-analysis), *Ishwara Pranidhana* (dedication to God) should be followed. Purification of the body should be done by *Panchkarma* procedures. Single or combination of herbs for mind rejuvenation which specifically act on intellect should be used.

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**How to cite this article:** Dr. Sushma Kumari. Maintenance of Mental Health during present situation of COVID-19 Pandemic. J Ayurveda Integr Med Sci 2021;5:201-206.

**Source of Support:** Nil, **Conflict of Interest:** None declared.

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