



Concept of Diet and Lifestyle in Preventing Skin Disorders in Ayurveda

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Ayurveda is one of the oldest traditional medicine systems in South Asia. The objectives of this holistic science are not only curing the disease of the patients, but also maintaining the health of the individual. Ayurveda emphasizes the importance of food, sleep and celibacy, known as Trayoupastambha (The Three Sub-Pillars). Food is undisputedly essential part of the lifestyle, both nutritionally as well as consumption wise. There are certain etiquettes mentioned in classical Ayurvedic Scriptures like Charak Samhita, guiding the society about correct and precise eating habits. Astha Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatana, The Eight Aspects of Food Convention explains wholesome and unwholesome effects of daily diet on lifestyle. A significant role has been assigned to dinacharya and in the maintenance of disease, in addition to food. The three pillars of palliative care are Ahara (wholesome diet), Vihara (wholesome activities), and Aushadha (medication). According to Ayurveda, skin conditions fall under the category of Kushta, and its complex aetiology has been identified. Inaccurate Numerous skin illnesses have been linked to diet and lifestyle choices as major causes of their development, progression, and recurrence. They have the power to stop or change the aetiology of skin disorders and have a good or negative impact on prognosis. A full understanding of these factors will support the management and prevention of skin problems as well as positively impact food choices.

Keywords: Ahara, Diet, Lifestyle, Skin Disorders, Virudh Ahara

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Introduction

The largest organ in the body, the skin is composed of water, protein, lipids, and minerals. Skin also controls body temperature and shields our body from pathogens. Sensations of heat and cold are sensed by nerves Present in the skin.

The skin is composed of three layers of tissue:

1. Epidermis, the outermost layer.
2. The middle layer, the dermis.
3. The fatty or bottom layer, the hypodermis.

Most of the Skin disorders are mainly due to the bad eating habits. *Ayurveda* explains that all the diseases caused in the body are due to the digestive process.

The food we intake also have ability to obstruct the digestion and causes the *Mandagni* which leads to form *Ama* (Toxins) in the body. Food also have potential to increase or decrease dosha in the body which are responsible for majority of the diseases.

In Ayurvedic texts several Acharyas described the factors that we can avoid in our daily routine so that we can live well and healthy. These factors depend on day, night and seasonal practices which are essential for a good lifestyle.

Acharya Charak also described the 8 specific methods of dieting in a very systemic and scientific way. These are 8 major food eating habits that we should follow to maintain a healthy way of living.

Aims and Objectives

1. To compile various dietary and dining rules described in *Ayurveda* Classical texts like *Charak Samhita*, *Ashtanga Hridayam* etc.
2. To provide the ideal way to prevent skin disorders and improve lifestyle by modifying dietary pattern.

Materials and Methods

A detailed screening and referring the available text from various *Ayurveda* Samhitas.

Classics of Modern Medicine regarding Physiology is also referred related with this subject.

Collection of associated information from journals, magazines, articles and various research papers available on internet.

The Role of Ahara (Diet)

The *Panchamahabhootas*, or the five fundamental elements that make up all living and non-living things in the world, are Earth (*Prithvi*), Water (*Ap*), Fire (*Teja*), Air (*Vayu*), and Ether (*Akasha*). The *Panchabhuta* components of food that are consumed nourish the corresponding tissue elements in each of the body's components.

One of the three sub-pillars of *Ayurveda*, *Ahara* is regarded as the finest medicine (*Thrayo-Upasthamba*). Food and lifestyle choices that are in harmony with a person's channels, constitution, and strength are referred to as *Pathya* (wholesome), whereas non-congenial choices are referred to as *Apathya* (unwholesome).

The core idea of *Pathya Ahara* and *Vihara* is the basis for both Ayurvedic prevention and treatment. In terms of suitable food, meal combinations, cooking techniques, storage, dining environment, hygiene, and manners, *Ayurveda* places a strong emphasis on fundamental dietary standards (*Ashta Ahara Vidhivisheshaayatana*).

These *Ashta Ahar Vidhi Visheshayatana* one should consider before taking food are:

1. *Prakriti*
2. *Karana*
3. *Samyoga*
4. *Rashi*
5. *Desha*
6. *Kala*
7. *Upyoga-Samstha*
8. *Upyokta*

1. Prakriti/Nature of food/Quality of food

Prakriti means nature of food having properties like *Laghu* (Light), *Sheeta* (Cold), *Ushna* (Hot) etc.

Every individual has got specific *Sharirika* and *Mansika* nature same as the food having its nature like Heaviness, Hotness etc.

For ex. The Meat is *Guru* (Heavy) and *Moong* is *Laghu* (Light) in nature. *Prakriti* is the natural qualities of the food Mass. Everyone should keep in mind the potency of food is heavy or light in digestion and the effect of food on both either migrate or aggravate in body etc. For ex. If the individual is having obesity or symptoms of *Kapha Vriddhi* should avoid food is heavy implied in nature.

2. Karana/ Food Processing

Karana is also known as '*Sanskara*' which means alteration in the properties of substances by using some process like Dilution, Application of heat, Vaporization, impregnation, preservation, preservation etc. like Rice is Heavy in to digest but after boiling or frying it is transformed in its light form.

3. Samyoga/Combination/Mixing

Samyoga is mixing or combining two or more substances for manifestation of special qualities which cannot be achieved by using same article only. These combinations altogether may produce new qualities in food, so while preparing the food one should consider that the ingredients used in food are compatible and should be properly mixed together and does not harm the quality of food.

For ex. Honey and Ghee when taken wholesome are good for body but when mixed in equal quantity is not advised. Also, when we mix milk and fish though both are sweet ion taste but due to contraindication in their potency, they vittate the blood and obstruct the *Srotas*.

4. Rashi/Quantity

Rashi is the measurement of each ingredient in the food that determines the effect on the body which is good or bad. Quantity of food in its whole form is *Sarvagrah* and the Quantity of its ingredients in separate form is *Parigrah*.

The person should be aware to take food in prepare amount according to their digestive power. The nature of the person is the amount of food that should be digested in perfect time without causing any problem.

As per *Acharyas* half of the stomach is to be filled with solid food, one quarter with liquids and another quarter should be kept vacant for the free movement of air. The absence of these measures results under two heads.

- 1) *Heena Matra*
- 2) *Ati Matra*

If a person taking food in less quantity leads to impairment of strength, complexion, energy, metabolism and feeling of fatigue and if individual takes food in more quantity can cause obesity, chronic health problems, indigestion, diabetes etc.

5. Desha/Habitat

Desha denotes place relating to the growth and suitability respect of place. It's also meaning the geographic region where the person is living. In *Ayurveda* *Desha* represents both the *Bhoomi Desha* as well as the *Deh Desha* (body) one should consume food according to their Region of living. The food substances grown in same region which is native region for the person suits him. *Desha* helps to understand the dietary habits, probability of diseases and the good or bad food for the individuals living in particular region.

6. Kala/Time

Time is used in so many senses, like in general sense as well as the stages of life (New-born, Young, Adult and old), in seasons (Winter, Rainy, Summer, Spring), in daily time (Morning, Afternoon, Evening, Night). *Ayurveda* says one should take food according to their stages of age, daily routine, seasonal routine and also on the condition of individual like healthy and diseased.

7. Upyoga Sanstha/Classical rules of dieting

It means rules of dieting

- 1) The food should be warm, tasty, qualitative and easily digestible.
- 2) It should be *Snigdha* (oily).
- 3) The food should be taken in proper quantity according to the digestive power of a person.
- 4) The food should be taken when the last meal is digested.
- 5) Eaten not too fast nor too slow.
- 6) It should include all the 6 tastes (Sweet, Sour, Salty, Pungent, Bitter and Astringent).
- 7) Should be chewed properly.
- 8) Long term use of any one taste should be avoided.
- 9) Laughing, talking, thinking while eating should be avoided.
- 10) Food should not be taken in angriness. Anxious, Nervousness or any disturbed state of mind.

8. Upyokta/The User

The user is who intakes food, habituation depends on him. The food we intake is depends on prakriti(nature) of person to person which is known as *Satamya*. As the nature of food is considered one should also consider the nature of the individual taking diet.

Ayurvedic Food Guidelines for mindful eating in Ayurveda:

1. Maintain a consistent meal schedule.
2. Consume foods that are suited to your body's needs.
3. Choose meals based on your individual constitution (*Prakruti*).
4. Follow proper hygiene practices while eating.
5. Include nourishing, unctuous foods in your diet.
6. Eat warm, freshly prepared meals.
7. Opt for foods that are easy to digest.
8. Focus on both meal and act of eating itself.
9. Ensure your diet includes all six fundamental tastes.
10. Favor sweet flavors in most of your meals.
11. Eat at a steady, relaxed pace without rushing.
12. Have meals after taking a bath.
13. Eat only when you have a genuine appetite.
14. Wash your hands, feet, and face before eating.
15. Begin meals after offering prayers and paying respect to ancestors.
16. Serve food to teachers, children, and guests before eating yourself.
17. Appreciate your food and avoid criticizing or belittling it.
18. Eat in a calm and peaceful manner.

Ahara Matra (Meal Quantity)

Each person has different needs for food and nutrition, which are influenced by factors including age, *Sharira Prakriti*, and *Agni* state. According to *Sushruta* and *Vagbhatta*, in the hypothetical scenario where the stomach's capacity is divided into four sections according to the contents, one should eat two parts solid food, one liquid food, and one part remain empty to facilitate the passage of *Vata*. order in which food is consumed *Amla*, *Lavana Ahara*, and *Guru*, *Madhura*, and *Snigdha* food should be consumed first during a meal. Foods containing *Ruksha*, *Katu*, *Tikta*, and *Kashaya* should be consumed at the final stages of meals to ensure optimal *Agni* activation, and food absorption. For optimal digestion, it is recommended to rest for *Muhurta Matra* (48 minutes) after eating.

Virudha Ahara (Dietary Incompatibility)

The Ayurvedic notion of *Virudhahara* plays a crucial role in understanding the pathophysiology of various diseases. According to *Acharya Charaka*, *Virudhahara* is a particular diet and its combinations that cause the metabolism to be disrupted, which hinders the process.

Regarding tissue production and which possess the opposite characteristic of the tissue is referred to as *Viruddha Anna*, or incompatible diet. *Virudha* is defined as a diet that has properties that are mutually exclusive, that contradict tissues, that can have unfavorable effects on the body when processed in a certain way or amount, or that contains foods that could have unfavorable effects if consumed at the wrong time. Almost eighteen different varieties of *Virudha Ahara* have been documented in Ayurvedic literature, along with a list of consequences that include skin ailments.

The Role of Vihara (Lifestyle)

Ayurvedic descriptions of *Dinacharya*, *Ritucharya*, *Sadvrta*, and *Nidra* make it abundantly evident how vital a healthy lifestyle is to the avoidance and treatment of several ailments. An increasing amount of research has shown that lifestyle modification is a crucial part of treating chronic diseases and can be just as successful as medicine while being risk- and side effect-free.

A lifestyle is a distinctive set of behaviours, such as social interaction, entertainment, and attire, that make sense to oneself and to others in a particular time and place.

Dinacharya (Daily Routine)

Ayurveda emphasizes the importance of harmonizing one's lifestyle with nature:

- Waking up during *Brahma Muhurta*, ideally between 4:00 and 5:30 AM, is considered beneficial.
- Drinking water in the morning, based on individual capacity, aids in the elimination of toxins from the body.
- Responding to natural bodily urges is essential for overall well-being.
- Soft brushes made from *Apamarga*, *Karanja*, and *Khadira* twigs are recommended for oral hygiene. Cleaning the tongue with a flexible metal strip or a plant twig helps improve digestion and stimulates appetite. Proper oral care is necessary.
- Washing the eyes with fresh water daily helps maintain good vision and prevents eye-related issues.
- Using *Triphala Phanta* regularly cleanses and refreshes the eyes.

- Chewing betel leaves combined with small pieces of *Kramuka* (areca nut) and aromatic spices like cloves and cardamom aids digestion and freshens the breath.
- A full-body oil massage should be practiced daily, as it nourishes the skin, enhances softness, and promotes physical resilience.
- Regular exercise supports healthy skin, joints, muscles, circulation, and metabolism. It strengthens immunity, improves blood flow, and keeps bodily pathways (*Srotas*) open.
- Physical activity helps in weight management, optimizes organ function, and stimulates digestion and appetite.
- Bathing purifies the body by removing sweat and toxins while enhancing vitality, strength, libido, appetite, and longevity.
- Wearing clean clothes and applying fragrance after bathing contributes to personal hygiene and confidence.
- Regular grooming, including haircuts, nail care, and shaving, is encouraged.
- One should avoid extramarital relationships and refrain from sexual activity with individuals who are pregnant, menstruating, lacking passion, significantly older or younger, or suffering from chronic illnesses.

Ritucharya or The Seasonal Routine

In addition to the day-to-night dietary plans, seasons have been carefully considered in Ayurvedic classics. The year is split into six distinct seasons, each of which has a specific dietary plan recommended. In spring, a diet high in bitters, spices, and astringents is recommended; foods high in salt, sourness, or sweetness should be avoided. It is advisable to consume wheat, barley, honey syrup, fruits (such as mangos and jack fruits), and meat from forest animals. *Pitta* is aggravated throughout the summer months because of the high temperatures. *Pitta*-pacifying cold, watery, sweet, and fatty foods are therefore recommended. Avoid eating a diet that is very hot, spicy, sour, salty, or spicy. Consuming rice, milk, ghee, sugar, coconut water, grapes, and forest animal meat are recommended.

The rainy season aggravates *Vata*, making sweet, sour, & salty foods & drinks ideal for pacifying it.

The dish needs to be hot, dry, fatty, and simple to break down. Soups made of preserved rice, wheat, barley, and mutton are recommended. In the pre-winter and winter months, *Vatadosha* intensifies. Owing to the chilly, dry, and windy weather, a *Vataghna* or *Pittavardhaka* diet is advised. Foods that are hot, sweet, sour, and salty, as well as milk, sugarcane, rice, oils, and fats, are encouraged. The autumnal season aggravates *Pitta dosha*. Thus, it is best to consume ghee that has been treated with bitter medicines; purgation, bloodletting, cooling, and a low-calorie diet are recommended. Diets heavy in sweet, spicy, and bitter flavours are recommended.

Sadvritta (The Ethical Regimen): Moral guidelines

Ayurveda offers essential guidelines for achieving mental well-being. These universal ethical principles apply to everyone, everywhere, and at all times. Practicing them fosters inner balance and harmony:

- Always be truthful.
- Maintain control over anger and avoid it in any circumstance.
- Resist unhealthy dependencies on sensory pleasures.
- Do not cause harm to others.
- Try to avoid unnecessary hardships whenever possible.
- Learn to regulate emotions effectively.
- Strive to communicate with kindness and warmth.
- Meditate daily to cultivate inner peace.
- Maintain cleanliness in all aspects of life.
- Practice self-discipline.
- Dedicate time to serving God, the wise, the deserving, or the elderly whenever feasible. Share knowledge, offer meaningful advice, and assist others.
- Be honest and respectful in your interactions.
- Keep your daily habits consistent and avoid unpredictable behavior.
- Refrain from overindulgence in food, drink, intimacy, and sleep imbalances.
- Adapt your actions to suit the circumstances of your surroundings.

- Always conduct yourself with grace and politeness.
- Maintain control over your senses.
- Cultivate a habit of performing good deeds and avoiding harmful actions.

Preventive Regimen: *Dharniya* and *Adharniya Vega*

Adhering to Ayurvedic guidelines - both recommended practices and restrictions—is essential for preserving overall health, including physical, mental, and spiritual well-being.

There are thirteen innate urges that should not be suppressed, as doing so may lead to various health issues:

- Resisting urge to urinate can result in irritation of urinary tract, weakened bladder function, formation of stones, & difficulty in urination.
- Holding back bowel movements can cause severe abdominal pain, indigestion, excessive gas, and headaches.
- Suppressing flatulence may lead to abdominal discomfort, indigestion, heart problems, constipation, or diarrhea.
- Avoiding ejaculation can result in testicular pain, the formation of spermatoliths (stones), and sexual difficulties.
- Holding back vomit may contribute to ailments such as urticaria, dizziness, anemia, increased acidity, skin disorders, and fever.
- Resisting yawns can trigger complications in the nose, ears, throat, and eyes.
- Ignoring hunger and thirst may cause nutritional deficiencies and physical weakness.
- Suppressing tears can lead to chest pain, dizziness, psych. distress, & digestive issues.
- Holding back breath after exertion may cause breathing difficulties, cardiac problems, and, in severe cases, suffocation or death.
- Depriving oneself of sleep can result in insomnia, mental health disturbances, digestive troubles, and sensory-related illnesses.

Suppressible Urges

Greed, grief, fear, rage, pride, shamelessness, envy & extr. desire are all urges that should be repressed.

Keep your cool and always tell the truth. One ought to act politely at all times and refrain from hurting other people and courteous attitude.

Good things should be progressively incorporated into unhealthy behavioral and dietary habits. If an intelligent person wants to be happy, they should put a lot of effort into finding good company and avoiding undesirable ones.

Concept of Skin Disorders and Their Causes

Since ancient times, skin has been highly valued due to its aesthetic importance in society, particularly concerning skin tone, beauty, and appearance. Skin disorders can arise from various factors, including internal imbalances, external influences, and environmental conditions. These disorders may manifest as changes in skin texture, colour, or function and can be caused by factors such as genetics, lifestyle, diet, stress, and exposure to harmful elements. *Ayurveda* focuses on balancing the body's internal energies (doshas) to prevent and treat skin disorders effectively.

Ayurveda places a strong emphasis on *Ahara* and *Vihara* in the preservation of health and sickness avoidance. The relationship between nutrition and skin conditions has been well-established in recent times. modern medicine. Skin illnesses have mostly been described in Ayurvedic literature under the category of *Kushta*, which means "that which causes disfiguration" in literature. The Ayurvedic medical system identifies various etiological factors for dermatological diseases. These factors include imbalances in the body's doshas (*Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*), improper diet, lifestyle choices, environmental influences, and psychological stress, all of which can contribute to skin disorders. *Ayurveda* emphasizes the importance of maintaining harmony within the body and mind to prevent and treat these conditions.

Physical, physiological, psychological, psychosocial, genetic, and *Papakarma* (sinful activities) are among the etiological elements. These are categorized into two categories based on the closeness of the causes: *Sannikrishta* (proximal cause) and *Viprakrishta Nidana* (distant cause).

The Causes of Skin Disorders

Skin disorders are typically caused by various factors, which are generally classified as *Aharaja*, *Viharaja*, *Manasika*, and *Agantuka*.

These factors primarily lead to *Agni Vaisamya* (digestive imbalance) and *Raktadushti* (impurities in the blood), setting the stage for the deeper involvement of the body's tissues (*Dhatus*).

The *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha* vitiated humours in turn vitiate the lymph, muscle, skin, and blood. When combined, these make up the seven-fold pathogenic components that are responsible for the genesis of eighteen skin diseases: Seven Major (*Maha Kushta*) and Eleven Lesser (*Kshudra Kushta*). Skin illnesses are caused by a combination of all seven elements; no one component causes the disease on its own.

Sannikrishta Nidana: The pathophysiology of skin diseases is influenced by four *Dushyas* - *Tvak* (*Rasa*), *Rakta*, *Mansa*, and *Ambu* or *Lasika* - and three *Doshas* - *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*. This combination is referred to as *Sannikrista Nidana*, which is considered the primary causative factor for skin disorders.

Viprakrista Nidana: These pathogenic factors do not directly contribute to the pathogenesis; however, they make the body more susceptible to the actual causes of the disease (*Sannikrishta Nidana*). These causes include *Kulaja* factors and *Janmottara Kalaja* (*Ahara*, *Vihara*, and *Manasika* factors).

Janmottarakalaja: The causes of the current condition can be classified into three categories: *Aharaja* (diet and dietary patterns), *Viharaja* (lifestyle-related), and *Manasika* (psychological factors).

Kulaja Nidana: It is said that *Kushta*, an *Adibala Pravrtta Roga*, originates on the day of conception by *Sukra* and *Artava* conjugation with *Bijabhaga Avayava Dushti*. It is believed that ill effects are transmigrated from previous lifetimes (*Poorva Janmakrata*).

Acharya Sushruta states that a person who has suffered from *Kushtha* in a past life will experience *Kushtha* again in their current life. Furthermore, the aetiology of *Kushtha* is associated with sinful actions (*Papakarma*) and is considered a contagious disease.

The *Kushtha* is commonly characterized as According to *Tridoshaja Vyadhi*, the kind of *Kushtha* depends on the dominance of a specific *Dosha* and is typically divided into *Mahakushta* and *Ksudra Kushta*.

The classical Ayurvedic literature categorizes *Nidana*, or the etiological factors closely linked to the onset, spread, and progression of disease, into the following general categories:

- 1. Aharaja Nidana:** Reasons connected to food
- 2. Viharaja Nidana:** Related reasons for the regimen
- 3. Manasika Nidana:** Mental factors.
- 4. Vishesha Nidana:** This etiology acts as *Hetu* in some diseases, although it is not frequent in all diseases.
- 5. Sahaja Nidana:** These are the elements that lead to *Beeja Bhaga Avayava Dushti* - related diseases. Thus, Diet, Lifestyle, and psychological variables may be linked to the aetiology of skin

Discussion

In this Modern life people don't choose food by their nutritional property but by the taste. They combine various types of ingredients which are incompatible to each other and can produce harmful effect to the body thus causing skin disorders. So, we should combine the ingredients in such a way that they should be compatible to each other. The concept of opposite food material (*Viruddha Aahar*) which are well explained in Ayurveda that talks about the incompatible food and their bad effects on body.

Conclusion

The Ancient classical texts says that the reason of all the diseases lies with our digestive process of being. In today's era we all are more interested in eating tasty, ready to eat meal and not focusing the Quality, Nutritional values and ingredients of the food which our body require. Due to these bad dietary habits many lifestyle disorders of unknown cause are arising. Diet and lifestyle are the fundamental pillars upon which an individual's life is built. Most people believe that there is no connection between diet and illness.

However, according to Ayurveda, lifestyle and nutrition are the primary causes of all illnesses. The importance of dietary components in the etiology has not received as much attention in modern medicine. Dietary factors that are related to nutrition, metabolism, and biochemistry undoubtedly have a significant impact on preserving the skin's natural integrity and enhancing its immune function.

Maintaining a strict diet and lifestyle can help prevent significant systemic diseases as well as skin disorders, as many lifestyle choices can cause these conditions.

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