



## A Review on Pathya-Apathya in Amlapitta: Key to Holistic Healing

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Amlapitta (Hyperacidity or Acid dyspepsia), a prevalent gastrointestinal condition described in Ayurvedic literature, presents with symptoms such as acid regurgitation, nausea, burning sensation, and indigestion, closely resembling hyperacidity in modern medicine. Its pathogenesis primarily involves the vitiation of Pitta Dosha and impaired Agni, often triggered by improper dietary and lifestyle practices. The Ayurvedic principle of Pathya-Apathya - wholesome and unwholesome food and behaviour - forms a cornerstone in the prevention and management of Amlapitta. This review explores the classical and contemporary understanding of dietary and lifestyle recommendations in Amlapitta, emphasizing their role in disease prevention, palliation, and recurrence control. Pathya includes the intake of cooling, light, non-spicy, and easily digestible foods, along with regular meals, adequate rest, and stress reduction. In contrast, Apathya consists of spicy, sour, fermented, and oily foods, erratic eating habits, and excessive mental stress, all of which aggravate Pitta and weaken digestive function. Ayurvedic texts advocate individualized dietary regimens based on factors such as Prakriti (constitution), Agni (digestive capacity), Ritu (season), and Roga-Avastha (disease stage). Integrating this personalized Pathya-Apathya framework can significantly enhance the efficacy of therapeutic interventions. This paper highlights the preventive, promotive, and therapeutic relevance of dietary discipline in managing Amlapitta, supported by textual references and recent clinical observations.

**Keywords:** Amlapitta, Pathya, Apathya, Pitta, Agni

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## Introduction

*Amlapitta* is a frequently diagnosed gastrointestinal condition in *Ayurvedic* practice, characterized by symptoms such as acid eructation, nausea, epigastric burning, and indigestion. In the contemporary era, it has been observed that approximately 50.8% of individuals in developing nations and 34.7% in developed nations are affected by this condition.[1] While it shares clinical similarities with conditions like hyperacidity and functional dyspepsia in modern medicine, its pathogenesis in *Ayurveda* is rooted in the vitiation of *Pitta dosha* and the derangement of *Agni* (digestive fire). These disturbances are often precipitated by unsuitable dietary habits, irregular lifestyle practices, and unresolved psychological stressors. *Ayurvedic* classics recognize these etiological factors under the categories of *Āhāraja* (dietary), *Vihāraja* (behavioral), and *Mānasika* (mental), highlighting the multifactorial nature of the disease. Among the foundational principles of *Ayurvedic* management is *Pathya-Apathya* - the regulation of food and conduct that promotes health or contributes to disease. In the context of *Amlapitta*, this concept gains particular relevance, as dietary indiscretions and behavioural imbalances directly influence the pathophysiology of the condition. Classical texts provide comprehensive dietary guidelines emphasizing light, cooling, and easily digestible foods while discouraging the intake of spicy, sour, fermented, and heavy items that provoke *Pitta*. Additionally, lifestyle measures such as adequate rest, meal timing, and emotional regulation are advocated as essential to restoring digestive harmony.

## Aim and Objectives

This review aims to critically examine the classical references and contemporary relevance of *Pathya-Apathya* in the prevention and management of *Amlapitta*. By integrating textual citations with recent clinical perspectives, it underscores the enduring value of dietary and behavioural regulation as both a preventive and therapeutic tool in *Ayurvedic* gastroenterology.

## Materials and Methods

Literature has been studied from various *Samhitas* and previously published articles.

The word *Amla Pitta* consists of two words-“*Amla*” and “*Pitta*.”[2]

As per *Acharya Charaka*, *Pitta Dosha* inherently possesses both sour (*Amla*) and pungent (*Katu*) tastes.[3] In contrast, *Acharya Sushruta* identifies *Katu* as the primary taste of *Pitta*, and notes that when *Pitta* becomes vitiated (*Vidagdha*), it adopts a sour nature.[4]

### Samprapti

The onset of *Amlapitta* is linked to several causative factors categorized into dietary (*Āhāraja*), behavioural (*Vihāraja*), and psychological (*Mānasika*) origins. These factors enhance the sourness (*Amla*) and liquidity (*Drava Guna*) of *Pitta*, thereby impairing the digestive fire (*Agni*). As a result, food is improperly digested, leading to its fermentation (*Vidagdha*) and acidification (*Shukti Bhāva*) within the stomach (*Āmāśaya*), ultimately giving rise to the condition known as *Amlapitta*. [5]

*Nidanasevana*

↓

*Doshadhushti* especially *Pitta*

↓

*Rasadhatu Dhushti*

↓

*Mandagni*

↓

*Ajeerna* (If *Apathya* is taken regularly)

↓

*Annavisha* (*Vidagdha* and attains *Shukti Bhava*)

↓

Increased *Amla* and *Drava Guna* of *Pitta* in *Amashaya*

↓

*Amlapitta*

Common dietary triggers include foods such as *Kulattha* (horse gram), *Pulāka* (fermented rice preparations), heavy and oily meals (*Guru* and *Abhishyandi Āhāra*), along with sweet products like *Phanita* (sugarcane juice derivatives) and *Ikṣuvikāra* (sugarcane byproducts). Contributing lifestyle habits involve suppressing natural bodily urges (*Vega Vidhāraṇa*), sleeping during the day after eating (*Divasvapna*), and bathing immediately after meals (*Avagāhana*). Emotional factors like jealousy (*Īrṣyā*), grief (*Śoka*), and fear (*Bhaya*) are also recognized as psychological contributors to the imbalance of *Pitta*. [6]

According to *Madhava Nidāna*, key symptoms of *Amlapitta* include indigestion (*Avipāka*), fatigue (*Klama*), nausea (*Utkleśa*), bitter-sour belching (*Tiktāmla Udgāra*), heaviness (*Gaurava*), burning sensation in the chest and throat (*Hṛd-Kāṇṭha Daha*), and loss of appetite (*Aruchi*).<sup>[7]</sup> *Amlapitta* is categorized into two main types based on the direction of its manifestation - *Ūrdhvaga* (upward-moving) and *Adhoga* (downward-moving). According to *Acharya Bhāvaprakāśa*, *Vamana* (emetic therapy) is suitable for managing *Ūrdhvaga Amlapitta*, while *Virechana* (purgation) is recommended for *Adhoga Amlapitta*.<sup>[8]</sup> Depending on the clinical presentation, treatment may involve either *Śodhana* (detoxification) or *Śamana* (palliative care) approaches. Regardless of the treatment chosen, strict adherence to *Pathya* - a regulated diet and lifestyle - is considered indispensable for achieving effective and sustained relief from *Amlapitta*.

### Dietary Guidelines from Classical Ayurvedic Literature

*Kashyapa Samhita* outlines a wholesome dietary regimen that emphasizes easily digestible and soothing foods. These include aged rice (*Purana Shali*), various pulses such as green gram (*Mudga*, *Harenu*) and lentils (*Masura*), as well as nourishing items like ghee (*Ghrita*) and milk (*Paya*). It also highlights the consumption of lean meat from animals inhabiting arid regions (*Jangala Mamsa*), certain vegetables like *Kalaya Shaka*, *Pouthika*, and the flowers of *Vasa* (*Vasa Pushpa*). Leafy greens that are bitter in taste and light to digest (*Tikta-Laghu Shaka*) are also recommended.

Overall, the text advises the intake of foods that do not provoke burning sensations, thus supporting a balanced internal environment.<sup>[9]</sup>

*Bhava Prakash*, another authoritative text, recommends nourishing preparations such as soups and gruels (*Yusha* and *Yavagu*) made from barley (*Yava*) and wheat (*Godhuma*). Additionally, it advocates the use of puffed grain powder (*Laja Saktu*), sweetened naturally with honey and sugar, to provide gentle nourishment and energy.<sup>[10]</sup>

*Bhaiṣajya Ratnāvali* outlines a specific diet beneficial for individuals suffering from *Amlapitta*, focusing on ingredients that help balance both *Pitta* and *Kapha Doshas*. The suggested foods include grains like red rice (*Rakta Shālī*), barley (*Yava*), wheat (*Godhuma*), and green gram (*Mudga*), all of which are light and easy to digest. Nutrient-rich yet mild options such as soups made from animals of dry regions (*Jāṅgala Rasa*) and cooled boiled water (*Taptashīta Jala*) are also recommended.<sup>[11]</sup>

Other supportive dietary components include natural sweeteners and soothing agents like sugar (*Shakarā*) and honey (*Madhu*). Vegetables and fruits with cooling and bitter properties such as spiny gourd (*Karkotaka*), bitter gourd (*Karavellaka*), pointed gourd leaves (*Patola*), *Banana* flower (*Kadalīpuṣpa*), mature winter melon (*Vṛddha Kuṣmāṇḍa*), wood apple (*Kapitta*), pomegranate (*Dādimā*), and Indian gooseberry (*Āmalakī*) are encouraged. Additionally, bitter vegetables (*Tikta Shāka*) and herbs like *Himlochikā*, *Vetrāgrāma*, and *Vāstukā* support digestive health and help pacify the aggravated *Doshas*.<sup>[12]</sup>

### List of Apathya Dravya found in various Ayurvedic Samhita<sup>[13]</sup>

Varga	Ahara Dravya	Karma
Anna Varga	Purana Shali (Old Variety of Rice)	Vatashamaka, Laghu
	Yava (Barley)	Agni Deepana, Madhura Vipaki
	Godhuma (Wheat)	Laghu, Sheetavirya
	Mudga (Green Gram)	Laghu, Sheetavirya, Madhura Rasa
Ksheera Varga	Godugdha (Cow Milk)	Tridosahara, Shothahara
Shaka Varga	Patola (Bottleguard)	Agni Deepana, Kapthapittahara
	Kushmanda (Pumpkin)	Madhura Vipaka Sheetavirya.
Mamsa Varga	Jangala Mamsa (Forest meat)	Laghu, Agni Deepana
Phala Varga	Dadima (Pomegranate)	Madhuraras, Sheetavirya
	Amalaki (Gooseberry)	Tridosahara, Nityasevaniya
Miscellaneous	Go Ghrita (Cow's Ghee)	Tridosha Shamaka
	Narikelodaka (Coconut water)	Sheetavirya, Madhura Vipaka
	Purana Madhu (Old Honey)	Madhura Rasa
	Khanda Sharkara (Stone Sugar)	Sheetavirya

**List of Apathya Dravya found in various Ayurvedic Samhita[14]**

Varga	Ahara Dravya	Karma
Anna Varga	Navanna (New Rice)	Guru, Ushnavirya, Kaphakara
	Masha (Black Gram)	Kashayrasa, Kaphakara
	Kulattha (Horsegram)	Ushnavirya, Pittakara
	Taila (Oil)	Snigdha, Kapthakara
Jala Varga	Dushitjala (Polluted Water)	Vatakphakara
	Sheetajala (Cold Water)	Vatakphakara
Madya Varga	Nava Madya (New Wine)	Ushnavirya, Vatakara
Kanda Varga	Aluka (Potato)	Vatakphakara
Ksheera Varga	Dadhi (Curd)	Kapthapittakara, Guru
	Aviksheera (Goat Milk)	Snigdha, Kapthakara
	Nava Guda (Jaggery)	Kapthakara, Ushnavirya
Mamsa Varga	Matsya (Fish)	Abhishyandi, Guru
	Anupa Mamsa (Meat of Marshy Land animals)	Kaphakara, Guru

## Discussion

In modern era, our departure from traditional dietary habits & lifestyle practices of our ancestors has led to emergence of various health disorders. *Amlapitta* is one such condition that stems from improper diet, erratic lifestyle, & unhealthy habits. Condition known as *Amlapitta* in *Ayurveda* is often associated with modern gastrointestinal disorders such as hyperacidity, gastritis, & GERD (gastroesophageal reflux disease). In allopathic treatment, antacids are frequently used to manage these ailments. However, prolonged use of antacids - especially those that contain aluminum - can lead to side effects such as constipation. Over time, this may contribute to more serious complications, including intestinal blockages, haemorrhoids, & anal fissures. Therefore, adopting healthier lifestyle practices stands out as more effective & sustainable approach to managing such conditions. Adherence to *Pathya* - prescribed wholesome routine - can play crucial role in preventing & controlling this ailment. Daily Consumption of *Yava*, *Godhuma*, *Purana Shali*, *Mudga Yusha*, *Lajasaktu* & substances possessing qualities like *Deepana*, *Laghu*, *Pittahara*, & *Vatanulomana* - which counteract nature of *Ama* & aggravated *Pitta*. [15]

Hence, *Ahara* can be made *Aushadha* to prevent and treat *Amlapitta*

## Conclusion

Managing *Amlapitta* effectively requires more than just symptomatic relief - it demands a disciplined lifestyle and dietary approach.

Adopting *Pathya* (wholesome diet) such as light, easily digestible, non-spicy, & cooling foods, along with timely meals & adequate hydration, helps to pacify aggravated *Pitta*. Avoiding *Apathya* (unwholesome practices) like excessive consumption of spicy, oily, fermented foods, irregular eating habits, late-night meals, & stress-inducing activities is equally crucial. When followed diligently, these guidelines not only alleviate symptoms but also prevent recurrence, offering holistic & sustainable path to digestive health.

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