



ISSN 2456-3110

Vol 1 · Issue 3

Sep-Oct 2016

Journal of
**Ayurveda and Integrated
Medical Sciences**

www.jaims.in

JAIMS



Charaka
Publications

Indexed

A Life Style Disorder - Hypertension

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ABSTRACT

Life style diseases are also called as the diseases of longevity or diseases of civilization. Once bacteria and virus were the prime killers in human society. But, now the studies shows that 17 million people die prematurely each year as a result of the global epidemic of largely preventable diseases or life style diseases which proves that we humans only are the killers of ourselves. Today more than 5 of 10 biggest killing diseases are caused by carelessness, ignorance and irregularities of our own. According to WHO, world deaths from life style diseases will double by 2015 unless all out efforts are taken to combat them. So it is mandatory to develop a health oriented life style than to give deep concern about our works. The scope almost fully lies on *Ayurvedic* concepts, because of its references of preventive measures. A report jointly prepared by the World Health Organization and the World Economic Forum says India will incur an accumulated loss of \$236.6 billion by 2015 on account of unhealthy life styles and faulty diet. As we all know, hypertension is called a silent killer, because it rarely exhibits symptoms before it damages the heart, brain or kidney. Hypertension is an important worldwide public health challenge and remains a major cause of morbidity and mortality worldwide.

Key words: Life style disorders, *Mithyaahara*, *Mithyavihara*, *Vata disorder*, Hypertension.

INTRODUCTION

According to science, human bodies on an average are made up of 63% of water, 22% protein, 15% fat, vitamins and minerals. Ideally our diet should include about 65% carbohydrate, 15% protein and 20% fat. Over 50 years the food pattern changed considerably which changed our diet by the use of lots of processed foods, foods with saturated fats, foods with sugar content, less and less fruits and vegetables. The result is drastic change which shows 28%

carbohydrates, 12% protein, 40% fats and 20% sugar, though the requirement remains almost the same, which can be understood as the *Mithyaahara* practices in Ayurveda. When this initiation, control, and co-ordination are disturbed, it leads to the derangement of lifestyle and results in any lifestyle disorder. Ayurveda narrated this phenomenon as '*Prajnaparadha*'^[1]

In 2008, United Nations American National Health Interview Survey, 36% of adults were considered inactive. 59% of adult respondents never participated in vigorous physical activity lasting more than 10 minutes per week. It is a shocking news which can be co-related with the *Mithyaviharas* in Ayurveda perspective.

How the life styles leads to diseases?

We can understand that almost all the diseases are caused by the *Mithyaaharas* and *Viharas* which we follow. Though everyone knows that how much we have to pay if we are not giving importance to our health, in this mechanic century all are treating the body too as a machine and are leading a mechanical life without considering their physical, mental,

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Submission Date : 09/10/2016 Accepted Date: 29/10/2016

Access this article online

Quick Response Code



Website: www.jaims.in

DOI: 10.21760/jaims.v1i3.4421

spiritual, social well being. So are suffering later with chronic and incurable disease which is nothing but a product of their ignorance.

In fast developing countries there is increase of the diseases which can be called as prosperity diseases because of the sedentary life style which the people are following. In India, it turns out that the race to join the middle class is also a race toward health risks usually associated with wealth, not poverty. Increasing globalization brings nothing but the changing life style ignorance of health by sticking to the strict pattern of jobs.

The arousal of such crisis is just because of inappropriate relationship of people with the environment. If we do well to the nature and our body, we get good only. And it is to be noted that there is not even a chance for good after going bad. The specialty of the life style diseases is that, it takes years to develop and if occurred once, is not easy to cure. Here we can understand the importance of preventive measures.

There is an interesting point to be understood about our *Shareera* (body). It is right that our body is a machine. But, it is a machine in which chemical transformations takes places without heating or cooling of the reactants and also is a working machine till the death of the person. As it is having the property of adaptation, it will also try to adjust to the environments to which we are putting it. But, beyond a limit, it too can't afford to any of the changes as it needs proper attention to its needs for working. Beyond the limits there arises the symptoms that can be considered as signals which is to make us alert. If even after that the person is not giving any concern for prevention, it will definitely develop diseases which come under the category of *Yapya* (manageable) or *Anupakrama* (irremediable) according to Ayurveda. In other prevailing systems of medicine too there is no treatment measure other than adopting a better daily and seasonal regimen.

It is proven that only preventive measures can play a major role in cure of these problems. All the practitioners claim that in most cases, natural health

as a form of complementary medicine with some conventional medicine can be adopted to treat and manage chronic health problems.

Life style according to Ayurveda

"Prakshalanadhi Pankasya Dooratha Sparsam Sukham"^[2]

'Prevention is better than cure'. The famous words which all of us know. It is an advice to make the people alert about their life style strategies.

Hridaya has been referred to be the site of psyche. Any kind of psychological disturbance will lead to a disturbed patho-physiology of heart. Hence, it has been told to protect the heart from every kind of stressor (*Pariharya Visheshena Manaso Dukkhahetavah*)^[3]

Which means we must avoid the factors which cause imbalance and there must be regular use of factors which maintain balance. It is said that by observance of this rule unbalanced condition of *Doshas, Dhatus* does not pursue and balance is restored.

Ayurveda treats the vitiation of *Doshas* and *Panchamahabhutas (Dosa Dusya Sammurchana)* and considers the diseases of mind and body. It also tells to follow; *Dinacharya, Ritucharya, Rathricharya, Thrayopasthambha Palana, Sadvritha, Acharya Rasayana, Ashtanga Yoga, Dharma*, To suppress the *Dharaniya Vegas*, Not to suppress the *Adharaniya Vegas*, Not to consume *Virudhahara*, Not to indulge in *Mithyaahara* and *Vihara*, Not to do *Hina, Mithya* and *Atiyoga* of *Indriya, Kaya, Vak* and *Mana*, Not to do *Prajnaparadha*, Not to consume *Guna, Mathra, Desa, Kala* and *Virudha Aharas*. Following all these a person will be able to stay healthy.

In *Sushruta Chikitsa* 14th chapter there is explanation of the regimens (like *Danthadhavana, Anjana, Snana, Vyayama, Udwarthana, Snana* etc.) in order to be followed to prevent the diseases and to remain healthy. The chapter name itself is the prevention of future diseases. Thus it is interesting to know that Ayurveda *Acharyas* have mentioned earlier that in the future there will be increase in number of the Life

Style diseases, so one who likes to maintain good health should be aware of his life style.

Importance of Ayurvedic Treatment in Life Style Diseases

- Ayurveda treats the body as a whole and not only the affected part where deformation is visible.
- Ayurveda has answers for physical, mental, social and spiritual illness of a person.
- Ayurvedic system has same importance to the preventive as well as to the curative aspects.
- As all the disease development due to life style changes are purely individual based, no other system can provide a clear prediction of what disease this patient can develop. But, in Ayurveda by considering his *Prakruthi* and the life style (*Ahara* and *Vihara*) physicians can easily tell the further developments the person can experience.
- Ayurveda has cure according to the severity of the disease. In other systems, there is no much distinction of treatment on the basis of the severity other than dosage.
- For diseases Ayurveda have types like *Kaphaja*, *Pittaja*, *Vataja*, *Rakthaja*, *Sannipataja* etc. with their symptomatic and treatment differences explained in well manner.
- In the system of Ayurveda, there is difference in treatment on the basis of *Desha*, *Kala* and *Vaya*.
- Though some treatments in Ayurveda are not easy to follow, there are a lot of remedies mentioned which can be practiced easily and are cheap in cost.

Measures to be adopted for Preventing Life Style Diseases

As per Ayurveda *Tri-doshas* are the building blocks of life. Though plenty of disorders have come because of Life style that are not mentioned in our classics but *Acharya Charaka* has clearly mentioned about the innumerability of the diseases.

“*Vikara Punah Aparisankhyeyah Prakruti Adhistan Lingayatana Vikalpa Visheshah Aparisankhyetava*”^[4]

In nutshell, to treat any of the life style disorder we need to find out *Doshik* involvement in respective disease.

“*Nagari Nagarasyeva Radhasyeva Yadha Swashareerasya Medhavikruthyeshu Avavahithobhavath*”^[5]

We should give importance to our body as a king who protects his kingdom and also like a driver of the chariot who gives conscious concern about his chariot.

Some important and easy changes that we can impart in our life style are;

- Can analyze the *Dinacharya* and adopt those which are possible. More concentration should be given to the *Charyas* which will help us to balance the unhealthy life style which we follow.
- Can adopt the *Rithucharya* (seasonal regimen) that can be followed by giving proper awareness about the changes that will take place during a *Rithu*.
- Taking care while a *Rithusandhi*.
- Daily practice of some *Yogas* like *Surya Namaskaram*.
- *Yoga* practices can also be oriented on the prevention of disease involved.
- Practice of *Pranayama*.
- Chanting of some *Manthras* daily.
- Reading of the religious books daily.
- Decreasing the usage of mobile phones, computers and smart phones.
- Making both mind and body feel comfortable by the *Sadvrithas*.
- Reducing the consumption of alcohol and smoking. Use of medicated smoke and other *Paniyas* instead of that.
- Further extension of anti-tobacco measure including higher taxes, smoking bans in public places etc.
- Practicing meditation.

- Consumption of low energy dense foods which are fewer in calories per unit volume. Thus one can eat large volumes of it.
- Avoiding processed foods with saturated fats, trans-fats, cholesterol, salt (Na) and added sugars.
- Utilization of more physical and mental power than the usage of machines.
- Taking holidays and practice of *Panchakarma* as a *Sukha Chikitsa*.
- Making a happy environment at home, to be calm from the hectic load at the work place.
- Taking small breaks from the work by some nourishing foods which are suitable according to *Desha, Kala* and *Vaya*.
- Making a routine in children and making them interested to follow that.
- Individuals have right to indulge in occasional excesses of food, drink and smoking with strict consideration given to health. Also they have more responsibilities when their actions inflict the costs on the rest of the society through avoidable medical treatment by troubling with passive smoking, alcohol-fuelled violence, road accidents etc.
- For all these measures, there is necessity of awareness programs to make rural and urban people aware. But, that should contain the methods which will help them on the basis of their life style.
- Practice of *Rasayana Chikitsa* (Rejuvenation therapy). It is the treatment by which one gets the excellence of *Rasa* (nourishing fluid which is produced immediately after digestion etc).

Hypertension is one of the major causes of disability and death all over the world. Hypertension causes heart attacks, strokes, kidney failures and other disorder, if it is neglected and remains untreated. In many cases, hypertension does not cause any symptoms until it causes complications such as heart attack and stroke and plays a role of silent killer in the body. So it is important to realize that you may have

high blood pressure and only way to find it out that get your blood pressure checked at regular intervals. Blood pressure is high when arterial blood pressure is elevated above the normal ranges. The normal blood pressure reading is systolic 120 over diastolic 80.

Symptoms of Hypertension

- Pain experienced at the back of the head and neck on waking up, which soon disappears.
- Heart pain
- Frequent urination
- Nervous tension
- Fatigue
- Difficulty in Breathing

Causes of Hypertension

- Vitiation of *Vata*
- Smoking and an excessive intake of intoxicants
- Hardening of the arteries
- Obesity
- Metabolic disorders
- Excessive intake of common table salt
- Overloading of fast food
- Stress and hectic life-style.

Ayurvedic approach to Hypertension

According to Ayurveda, high blood pressure involves all the *Doshas*, the heart and the blood vessels. We can see signs and symptoms of derangement of *Vata Dasha* mainly that of '*Vyanavayu*' in high blood pressure. The treatment is to correct the balance of *Vata Dasha*. *Pitta* vitiation is also seen often and should be treated. People with *Pitta-Vata* predominant constitution and *Pitta-Vata* imbalance are more prone to hypertension than any other.

Salt (*Lavana*), one of the major cause as well as to increase the blood pressure due to its hygroscopic quality. *Lavana* has an ability to hold water in the blood and consequently increase its volume; volume of the blood is directly proportional to the blood

pressure hence for the *Shonita Dusti, Lavana* is one of the leading causes.^[6]

Modern science also affirms this fact; *Sharira* and *Satva (Mana)* have been designated as the habitats of *Vyadhi* by *Acharya Charaka*.^[7]

Unprocessed anger, frustration, irritability, anxiety and fear leads to mal-adaptation of the endocrine system, which then leads to conditions like hypertension. Treatment is based on bringing these imbalances back to normal. In the treatment of hypertension; nutrition, exercise, breathing exercises (*Pranayama*), *Yoga*, meditation, behavioural modification along with various herbs and minerals are prescribed.

Ayurvedic Life Style for Hypertension

If you master the techniques of keeping your blood pressure down, you have much less chance of having hypertension later and you are less likelihood of having fatty -cholesterol deposits in your arteries. Even though you have normal blood pressure, you can benefit yourself with simple adjustment in lifestyle. Regular Exercise is one of the best ways to lower blood pressure. Exercise has to be of right kind. A good exercise program, particularly endurance exercises such as jogging or athletics will cause the peripheral resistance to decrease. Exercise helps to eliminate body fat, lower total cholesterol and raise HDL cholesterol that prevents fatty - cholesterol deposits.

According to Ayurveda exercise improves the body, depletes excess fats, brings lightness of the body. Improving your lifestyle by adoption of ethical elements mentioned in '*Achara Rasayana*' is must if you really want to stay away from mental and physical stress and from eventual hypertension. It is certain that stress can cause hypertension. Anxiety, secondary to acute stage can cause rise in your blood pressure. Relaxation and removal of stress will help to lower mildly elevated levels of blood pressure. Nurture love and affection. Love, affection and affectionate touch can significantly drop your blood pressure. Speak truth. Lying has been found to boost blood pressure, because it require a lot of mental

exercise. The more you lie, more you add tension, hence you are likely to get more stress, speak gently; don't get annoyed, speaking loudly and rapidly can significantly raise your blood pressure during conversation. Sudden risk can shoot up your blood pressure higher. Chronic anger produces elevation in blood pressure and it can be a serious risk factor for coronary - heart - disease. So be cool, speak softly and even if it is event of extreme displeasure.

Laughter is the best medicine.

Laughter is as good as relaxation therapy, exercise or other methods used to overcome stress. Study shows that laughter decreases adrenaline and cortisol production. Laughter can help you if you are having high blood pressure. If you are frustrated, unhappy, angry, just laugh and find yourself away from rage. It is of the effective medicine you always have with you, without spending a penny for it.

Yoga and Breath Therapy for Hypertension

For complete tranquility of mind, meditate in Corpse Pose. First, concentrate on the incoming and outgoing breath, focusing on the temperature of the breath as it flows in and out. You may notice the exhaled air is slightly warmer than the inhaled air. If you focus the mind on the breath for 10 minutes, mental disturbance gets diminished and blood pressure normalizes. Then you can meditate. Research has now shown that regular practice of Corpse Pose controls high blood pressure. Meditating and practicing breathing exercises regularly are essential to establishing a new relaxation response in place of the hypertensive reflex to stress. Chanting the mantra '*OM*' or listening to a recording of it in the early morning and evening is also beneficial.

Herbs for Hypertension

***Sarpagandha*:** For centuries *Rauwolfia serpentina* has been used to treat hypertension. '*Rasagandha*' is a product used for effective treatment of hypertension. Main Ingredients: *Sootshekhara*, *Jatamansi* and *Sarpagandha*.

***Arjuna*:** *Terminalia arjuna* produced dose-dependent hypotension in anaesthetized dogs. Action of

mechanism for this particular herb is that it acts like a beta-blocker and is a powerful antioxidant, liver protectant and contains cardio-protective, hypolipidemic, anti-angina and anti-atheroma properties.

Gokshuru: treats many diseases including hypertension. It has shown to be diuretic and an ACE inhibitor.

Ashwagandha: is a useful in leucoderma, constipation, insomnia, lumbar pain, nervous disorders, asthma and cardiac disorders.^[8]

Jatamansi: Jatamansone is one of the main sesquiterpene found in *Nardostachys jatamansi* which has been reported as antihypertensive through animal studies.^[9]

Home Remedies

Garlic or *Rasona* is most important substance helpful in alleviating *Vata Dosh* and controlling blood pressure. Garlic lowers cholesterol and triglyceride that have impact on heart disease. A paste made of about 1 gm of garlic should be mixed with a glass of buttermilk. Drink this buttermilk twice a day. It will bring your blood pressure down, Eating 2-3 raw clove of garlic (prior to soaking it in buttermilk) on empty stomach in the morning will correct any vitiation of *Vatadosha* and will help to lower your blood pressure.

Powder of '*Triphala*' should be taken regularly at night with warm water. This will help maintain constipation and bowels will remain clear. Soak 1tsp fenugreek seed in water for a night and munch them early in the morning on empty stomach. It will reduce your cholesterol and excess fats.

Panchakarma

Niruhabasti Chikitsa (non unctuous enema) will be beneficial in hypertension and should be given by experienced physician.

Dhara therapy is also helpful in treating obstinate cases of hypertension. Oil processed with *Bala* (*Sidacordifolia*) and milk is allowed to drop in small droplets on the forehead of the patient.

Approach according to *Dosha* predominance in Hypertension

When *Vata* predominates, an increase in blood pressure will be followed by worry, strain, overwork, anxiety or insomnia. It frequently associated with nervous system disorders, anxiety, worry, stress, and strain, are usually the main factors, therefore, treat the psychological conditions.

Vata Treatment - Take 125 mg. of *Sarpagandha* (*Rauwolfia serpentina*) and *Jatamansi* 3 times daily for 2– 3 months.

Garlic is very good for this condition. Eat an entire crushed clove (with honey) once or twice a week. Take nutmeg or *Saraswat* powder in warm milk. Also *Ashwagandha* preparations can be taken.

When *Pitta* predominates, anger, nose bleed, irritability and violent headaches, sensitivity to light contribute to high blood pressure.

Pitta treatment - Use tranquilizing herbs that have cold potency. For example, take 250 mg. of *Brahmi* at night. *Brahmi Rasayana* and *Saraswat* powder can be taken in combination. To purify *Pitta*, take 1 gram each of *Indian sarsaparilla* (*Sariva*) for 15 days.

When *Kapha* is prominent, there may be dull headache, edema and lethargy with obesity. Blood pressure remains continually high (no fluctuation as in *Pitta* hypertension).

Kapha Treatment - Avoid dairy, butter, eggs and high fat foods. 1 gm. of *Guggulu* or *Arjuna* twice daily or 250 mg. of *Shilajit* 3 times daily for 3 months can be taken.

Kapha type of hypertension is almost due to arteriosclerosis (deposition of fat inside the arteries making their lumen narrow- causing hypertension). All the above herbs remove arteriosclerosis. Optimal mixture is *Triphala Guggulu* 1 gm. daily for 3 months. 100 mg. of Cardamom and Cinnamon 3 times daily is beneficial. Take these mixtures for 3 months. Regularly check blood pressure.

Ayurvedic diet for Hypertension

Avoid meat, eggs and salt. Reduce protein intake and follow the following vegetarian diet.

Vegetables: Garlic, lemon, parsley.

Fruits: Indian Gooseberry, Grape fruit, watermelon.

Dairy: Milk, Cottage cheese, clarified butter.

Coffee, which contains caffeine, enhances the action of adrenaline and nor adrenaline and both are factors in increasing blood pressure levels. So avoid coffee. Limit sodium in the diet. Cigarette smokers tend to have high blood pressure. Nicotine increases the resting heart rate and increases the release of the adrenaline.

Correct your diet and control your weight. One important thing to do is lose any excess amount of body fat you have. One of the good reasons to be slim (lean) is to keep your blood pressure low, losing body fat will lower the pressure enough that a person need not take medicine to control blood pressure. Either you have normal blood pressure or you have hypertension with high cholesterol levels your diet should definitely be of low fat, low saturated fat, and low cholesterol diet. With practice of dietary measures recommended in Ayurveda while elaborating '*Medoroga Chikitsa*' will definitely beneficial in weight reduction. It will be helpful to minimize the risk of fatty cholesterol deposits and will prevent complication of high blood pressure.

Why there is Scope of Ayurveda in Management of Life Style Diseases?

From the history of treatment and preventive measures given to the persons suffering from life style diseases, Ayurveda has proven its role and importance in this area. The other systems do not have any other answers than the supply of nutritional food and physical activities in this respect. Also as the nutritional food and physical activity are well defined in *Ayurvedic* system, it can be considered that there is much scope in Ayurveda only.

There are a lot of interesting facts which can be taken into consideration, while understanding the scope of Ayurveda in Life style disease management. These facts can be summarized as:

- *Ayurvedic* System is now getting recognition and fame worldwide because of its unique therapeutic procedures.
- In western countries a lot of people are being attracted to Ayurveda for the cure of long standing diseases. By understanding this, Indians also gets a view of the importance and greatness of this indigenous system.
- Almost all the persons are practicing cycling, walking, dancing etc nowadays as a cure for the life style disease which already started affecting the individual.
- These persons can be given the awareness of the Yoga, Meditation, *Pranayama*. Thus can get the knowledge that how much it is useful than simply doing cycling, walking, dancing etc.
- The individuals who are going through hectic patterns in their work needs preventive measures which not being explained by any other practitioner satisfactorily. But, an *Ayurvedic* Physician can give list of suitable regimens that an individual can follow.
- There is much scope in following Naturopathy, Yoga, Polarity Therapy, Acupressure and Aroma Therapy in these areas.
- An *Ayurvedic* Physician can be confident in his treatment. Because the years passed has proved that what is predicted by the *Acharyas* in *Ayurvedic* classics before thousands of years ago is correct.
- There must be wholesome activities which have basis on behavioral, health and attitude aspects of the individual.

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How to cite this article: Jambla Neha, Saroch Vikas, Kundailia Neetika. A Life Style Disorder - Hypertension. J Ayurveda Integr Med Sci 2016;3:69-76. <http://dx.doi.org/10.21760/jaims.v1i3.4421>

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