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Ahara Vidhi - Dietary guidelines in Ayurveda

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ABSTRACT

Ahara (Food) has been given the prime importance since from veda period. Ahara is considered as one of the key pillars of life in Ayurveda. Ahara enhances vitality, strength, enthusiasm, memory, digestive fire, life span, lusture and immunity. The basic need for Healthy life is to know the proper Diet and Dietary guidelines. In today's generation, an altered habits of food consumption become as major cause for various diseases. Many guidelines were explained in Ayurveda classical texts, where the laws of do's and don'ts about diet are given. There is extensive scope for testing the dietary guidelines in Ayurveda for present era. Acharya Vagbhata in Astanga Hrudayam Sutrastana in Matrashitiya Adhyaya emphasised the Aharavidhi which will be reviewed in this article.

Key words: Ahara Vidhi, Ahara, Food, Dietary guidelines.

INTRODUCTION

Ahara is considered as one of the Trayopastambha in Ayurveda. Vriddha Jivaka in kashayapa Samhita given name for ahara as "Mahabhaisajya" (supreme medicine). In present world diet and lifestyle are major factors thought to influence susceptibility to many diseases. Altered habits of food consumption like eating when not hungry, overeating, emotional eating, drinking cold or chilled beverages and water, preserved and stale food, frozen food, too spicy, sour and salty foods may lead to various diseases.

Ayurveda emphasis on ahara and believes that healthy nutrition nourishes the body, mind and soul. So many guidelines are explained in Ayurveda texts which are entitled as Aharavidhi. Laws of do's and

don'ts about diet & drinks are given. Diet and dietary rules are major factors to influence the susceptibility to many diseases. Practices of good principles of diet as mentioned by Acharya Vagbhat in matrashitiyaadhaya may help to prevent many diseases. Such few principles were reviewed in this article.

Aharamatra Apeksha:

Proper quantity of food is essential for maintenance of Health. One should always consume proper quantity of food. Proper quantity of food is that which activates Agni – digestion power (which is compared to fire, in Ayurveda). Food that are light to digest (laghu) and those that are hard to digest (guru) both require a specified quantity for proper digestion.

Hina-Atimaatra – Bad effects of insufficient and excess food

As a general rule, if the food is heavy to digest (such as oily food, non veg, sweets etc.), It should be consumed till half of the satiation level is achieved. (Ardhasauhitya). If the food is light to digest, it should be consumed till one is not overly satiated (Naatitruptata). The right amount of food is that, which undergoes digestion easily.

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Effect of taking more or less amount of quantity of food

Consuming less quantity of food does not increase strength, ojus (immunity). The body will not be nourished properly. Over a period of time, it leads to vata imbalance disorders. Excess quantity of food is again not desirable. It causes quick increase of doshas.

Effects of over eating

Due to eating excess quantity of food, vata and other doshas suddenly get increased together and associating with the undigested and vitiated food (ama) produces diseases. It causes alasaka disease by blocking the movement of food inside the alimentary tract and visuchika (gastro enteritis) by expelling out the undigested food in both downward and upward directions (diarrhoea and vomiting) simultaneously. This is seen in persons who are not self-controlled and who cannot control their craze for eating.

Ahara Vidhi - Regimen of diet

1. Kale satmyam - food should be consumed at the proper time.
2. Shuchihitam - it should be the accustomed, clean, suited to health.
3. Snigdha, ushna, laghu - unctuous, hot and easily digestible.
4. Tanmanaa - consuming food with due attention.
5. Shadrasa, madhurapraayam - should contain all the six tastes with predominance of sweet taste.
6. Na atidruta, Na vilambitam - partaken neither very quickly nor very slowly.
7. Snataha - after taking bath.
8. Kshutvaan - after having good hunger.
9. Viviktastha - sitting in solitude.
10. Dhautapadakaraananaha - after washing the feet, hands and face.
11. Tarpayitvapitrun, Devan, Atitheen, Balakaan, Guroon - after satisfying the pitrus (manes), gods, guests, children and guru.

12. After satisfying even the dependents maintained in the house (such as servants, horses and other animals for receiving service, parrots and other pets etc.).
13. After carefully considering one's own constitution, likes and dislikes.
14. Without scolding / abusing the food.
15. Without too much of talk.
16. Should partake more of liquid food.
17. That which is liked.
18. In the company of the liked persons, and
19. Served by those who are clean and faithful to him.

Food that should not be consumed habitually

Kilata (dairy product – sweet in taste), dadhi – curds, kuchika (solid part of curds), kshara (alkalies), sukta (fermented gruel), amamulaka – uncooked radish, meat of animals which are emaciated, dry meat, meat of the boar, sheep, cow, fish and buffalo, masha (black gram), nishpavasaluka, bisa, pista (powdery, starchy), germinated grains, dried vegetables, yavaka (small barley), phanita (half cooked molasses) - those should not be consumed habitually.

Pathya - food that can be consumed habitually (on daily basis, for a long time)

Shali (rice), godhuma (wheat), yava – barley – hordeum vulgare, shashtika (rice maturing in sixty days), jangala (meat of animals of desert like lands), sunisannaka, jivanti – leptadenia reticulata, balamulaka (young radish), pathya (haritaki), amalaka (amla – indian gooseberry), mridwika – dry grapes, patola – pointed gourd, mudga – green gram, sarkara (sugar), ghrita (ghee), divyodaka (rain water or pure water), ksheera (milk), kshoudra (honey), dadima – pomegranate - punica granatum and saindhava – rock salt (salt) can be consumed habitually.

Food that should be consumed at the beginning of meal.

Foods which are not easily digestible, which are unctuous – fatty, sweet, slow and hard such as bisa, ikshu (sugarcane), mocha, coca, amra (mango),

modaka (sweet meat ball), utkarika (sweet dish) etc., should be consumed at the commencement of the meal. foods of opposite qualities, at the end of the meal, and those which are predominantly sour and salt, in the middle of the meal. Two parts of the stomach (half of its capacity) should be filled with solid foods, one part by liquids and the remaining one part should be kept vacant for accommodating air etc.

Anupana – (After Drink)

Cold water is the ideal after-drink (Anupana), After meals containing/ prepared from yava – (barley) and godhuma – wheat, after consuming dadhi – curds / yoghurt, wine, poison and honey. Warm water is ideal after-drink for foods which are starchy, mastu – supernatant liquid of curds (whey), takra (diluted buttermilk) amlakanjika (fermented gruel); dishes prepared from vegetables and mudga (green gram) and other legumes :sura (beer) is the ideal after drink for lean person. Honey mixed water is the ideal after drink for obese person. Meat soup is good after drink for the emaciated, wines are ideal after a meal of meat and to those who have poor digestive capacity; Milk is best suited just as nectar for those who are debilitated by diseases, medicines (and therapies), walking long distances, speaking, sexual intercourse, fasting, exposure to sun and such other tire some activities; for the emaciated, the aged and children.

Anupana Benefits

Invigorates, gives contentment, helps proper movement of food inside, stability of the body parts; loosening of hard masses of food, their proper liquefaction (moistening) and digestion. Drinking liquids should be avoided by those who are over-

hydrated, who are suffering from polyuria, diseases of the eyes and throat, and wounds (ulcers).

CONCLUSION

Our classics are store house of valuable thoughts as like dietary habits. In the present modern life style we don't take care of the consequences of our eating and drinking habits. We were surrounded with junk foods and drinks which may leads to diseased condition. Proper understanding and practicing the principles of diet and dietary guidelines which were explained by Acharya Vagbhata we can restore good health. Healthier dietary habit helps to lower the risk of many health problems.

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