



Short Review Paper

Ayurveda's comprehensive approach for illness prevention and health enhancement

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Abstract

Ayurveda is more than just a medical system, as it does not only deal with medicine and the cure of ailments, but it deal with all aspects of life and can be literally translated as the knowledge or science of life. The rationale for the acceptance of Ayurveda worldwide is because of its role in promotion of health, prevention of diseases and mitigation of diseases. Taking excellent care of one's body, psyche, and soul promotes corporal, psychological, and ethereal development, which can be achieved by adhering to various Ayurvedic principles such as Dinacharya (a daily regimen), Rutucharya (a seasonal regimen), and so on. Ayurveda's holistic strategy, which treats the patient as a whole (i.e., with interventions aimed at overall corporal, psychological, and ethereal well-being), makes it an excellent preference for lifestyle diseases. To combat emerging challenges of healthcare like cancer, diabetes, hypertension, rheumatoid arthritis, skin diseases, lifestyle disorders etc, there is a need for functional integration of Ayurveda and allied medicinal systems.

Keywords: Ayurveda, Dinacharya (daily regimen), Rutucharya (seasonal regimen), Health.

Introduction

Ayurveda is more than just a medical system, as it does not only deal with medicine and the cure of ailments, but it deals with all aspects of life and can be literally translated as the life study or knowledge. Ayurveda's two primary goals are Swasthasya swastya rakshana which means preserving the health in healthy people and Aturasya vikara prashamana which means curing the diseases in diseased¹. Healthy living is a prerequisite for achieving dharma (morality), artha (prosperity), kama (pleasure), and moksha. (Liberation)¹. Therefore, Ayurveda gives massive prominence on illness prevention and health enhancement which is accomplished through organized lifestyle. Many texts are available in Ayurveda which explain the basic principles for illness prevention and health enhancement.

According to Ayurveda, the living human being is a combination of the body, Indriya (sensory and motor organs), Manas (mind) and Atma (soul)¹. The term "health" refers to a condition of balance between dosa (body's regulatory functional elements), dhatu (body's main structural apparatus), mala (wastes), agni (digestive and metabolic variables), healthy state of Indriya (Organs of perception and movement), psyche and soul². The unhealthy state is defined as loss of symmetry in vital body components. Treatment aims at bringing back the equilibrium of these components through lifestyle management, curative therapies etc.

The illness prevention and health enhancement is attained by cautious dinacharya practise (regimen followed daily), rutucharya (regimen followed according to seasons) etc. which maintains the normalcy of the dosha (body's regulatory functional elements), dhatu (body's main structural apparatus), mala (wastes) etc.

Dinacharya (Daily regimen)

Dina means day and charya means regimen, so dinacharya means regimen followed daily³. The routine practiced in daily life has a profound influence on our health. Daily regimen followed according to ayurvedic principles helps in maintaining balance and concord in our body and nature by regulating our biological clock.

Daily regimen which must be followed for illness prevention and health enhancement are –

Pratarutthanam (waking up early in the morning): Ayurveda advises waking up early in the morning i.e. in *Brahma Muhurta*⁴ which is around one and half hours before sunrise. It is the purest time of the day when the mind will be attentive, alert and calm. It is the best time to study and to obtain knowledge.

Ushapana (Drinking of water in the morning): After waking up, wash hands and feet and drink water of quantity 4 Anjali (a cup formed by joining two palms of the hand) which cleanses the body by increasing the removal of toxic wastes.

Malamutravisarjan (Voiding of natural urges)²: After waking up, the urge for urination and defecation is felt naturally. Vega vidharan (suppression of natural urges) and vega udirana (obstructing natural impulses) – both can contribute to a variety of diseases. As a result, one should never suppress or forcibly eliminate one's natural urges instead defecate and urinate according to the urge which helps to maintain health and prevention of diseases.

Dantadhavana (Cleaning teeth)^{1,2,4}: Ayurveda recommends usage of twigs of plants or trees which have bitter, pungent, astringent taste for brushing teeth. Twigs should be straight, devoid of knots, and should be fresh. Most frequently used twigs are from the Neem tree (*Azadirachta indica*), Mango tree (*Mangifera indica*), and the peepal tree (*Ficus religiosa*), Khadira (Cutch tree), etc which hold anti-microbial properties. Chewing it releases their anti-bacterial agents which mix with saliva, and this prevents buildup of bacteria on the teeth. The medicinal qualities of the herbs contained in the twigs are adequate to prevent caries, plaque forming, and maintaining oral hygiene.

Jihva nirlekhana (Tongue scraping)^{1,2}: After cleaning teeth, the tongue should be scrapped using flexible strip of metal or plant twig which removes toxins or dirt accumulated on the tongue, bad taste, improves oral hygiene, taste sensation etc.

Nasyakarma (Nasal drops)^{1,2,4}: It is recommended to put two drops of sesame oil, mustard oil, ghee, or Anu Talia (an Ayurvedic medicine if available) into each nostril on a regular basis to avoid premature greying of the hair and hair loss and to promote sound sleep. It helps in the prevention of diseases of eyes, ears and nose and is also useful in the prevention and treatment of headache, facial paralysis, lockjaw, rhinitis, hemicrania and tremors.

Gandusha (Gargling)^{1,2,4}: Filling the mouth with decoction of Triphala (fruits of *Terminalia chebula*, *Terminalia Bellirica* and *Emblica officinalis*) or other medicated oils or with lukewarm water till the tears come out of eyes and nostrils or gargling with these liquids helps in improving taste and maintains oral hygiene, enhances the efficiency of sense organs.

Anjana (Collyrium)^{1,2,4}: Application of Collyrium daily to eyes helps in prevention of eye disorders and keeps vision perfect.

Abhyanga (Oil massage)^{1,2,4}: Massaging the whole body regularly with oil provides softness, unctuousness of skin, easy movement of joints, improves blood circulation, promotes strength, helps in getting sound sleep, delays aging, reduces tiredness. Oil which can be used are TilaTaila (Sesame oil), sarshapa taila (mustard oil) or coconut oil.

Vyayama (Exercise)^{1,2,4}: Regular exercise is crucial for maintaining health and management of various ailments. It increases blood circulation, enhances efficiency of body organs, promotes appetite and digestion, and prevents obesity.

Exercising should be done until sweat drips from the neck, forehead, and other areas. Duration of exercise is different for different individuals according to their physical capacity.

Udvardana (Massage of herbal powder)^{1,2,4}: Whole body massage with dry powders of barley, horsegram etc is advised every day which reduces fat, cleanses the skin, and imparts stability to the limbs, improves complexion etc.

Snana (Bath)^{1,2,4}: After udvardana, one should take bath with neither very hot nor very cold water. Bathing boosts energy, stamina, and appetite and also cleanses the body dirt, perspiration, and other impurities.

Nidra (Sleep)^{1,2}: Excess or little sleep, both are not good for health, hence adequate sleep is advised which provides health and longevity, which helps to improve complexion and glow. In general, day sleeping is not advised but in summer season, one can take a short nap during the day.

Sadvrutta (code of good conduct)¹: Meditating for a few minutes to an hour where one can be quiet for some time or offering prayers with hymns, worship gods, cow, elderly and teachers, performing religious sacrifices, donating to needy etc helps in self-awareness, relaxation of mind etc.

Rutucharya (Seasonal regimen)¹

Rutu means season and charya means regimen, so rutucharya means regimen followed according to season³. Ayurveda places a strong emphasis on the effects of seasons on the body and instructs us to adjust our routine accordingly. The entire year is separated into six seasons i. Shishira rutu (winter season)- From the middle of January to the middle of March ii. Vasanta rutu (spring season)- From the middle of March to the middle of May, iii. Greeshma rutu (summer season)- From the middle of May to the middle of July, iv. Varsha rutu (rainy season)- From the middle of July to the middle of September v. Sharat rutu (autumn season)- From the middle of September to the middle of November, vi. Hemanta rutu (early winter season)- From the middle of November to the middle of January.

The first three seasons form Uttarayana (northern solstice) where the sun and wind are very strong, dominant which strips away all the cooling qualities of the earth and consequently the strength of human is relatively low and next three seasons form Dakshinayana (southern solstice) where the moon is more prominent, and the earth has been cooled by clouds, rain, and cold breeze and consequently the strength of human will be relatively high.

Hemanta rutu (early winter season): In this season, there is cold wind. Digestive power is excellent in this season as heat gets obstructed from flowing out due to external cold environment. Food gets digested easily; hence one should consume food which is heavy to digest which depends on individual digestive capacity. Reside in houses which are kept

warm by fire, wear sweaters, thick clothes, oil massage is advised to combat dryness of skin and other regimens which prevent disease due to cold and dryness.

Shishira rutu (winter season): The regimen advised in hemanta rutu is advised in shishira rutu also with more intensity as the coldness and dryness is more in this season. Kapha dosha (Dosha in charge of regulating bodily fluids and maintaining body components cohesive) gets accumulated in this season because of excess cold environment.

Vasanta rutu (spring season): In this season, coldness start decreasing and hotness start increasing in the environment, because of which kapha dosha (Dosha in charge of regulating bodily fluids and maintaining body components cohesive) which has accumulated in shishira rutu gets aggravated in vasanta rutu, hence it has to be eliminated from the body through therapeutic emesis procedure. Digestive power is diminished in this season hence easily digestible foods are advised.

Greeshma rutu (summer season): In this season the sunrays are more powerful, hence avoid heavy physical exercises and exposure to sunlight. Food which is easy to digest, cold food is advised along with excess liquid food. Anointment of candana (*Santalum album*) is advised to combat heat. Vaata dosha (dosha accountable for movement and perception) gets accumulated in this season.

Varsha rutu (rainy season): During this season, the digestive power is weak and due to heavy rain, coldness etc vaata dosha (dosha accountable for movement and perception) gets aggravated, hence regimen which increases digestive power should be adapted along with procedure of therapeutic enema.

Sharat rutu (autumn season): Pitta dosha (dosha responsible for regulating body temperature and metabolic activities) gets aggravated in this season which got accumulated in varsha rutu, hence purgation therapy is advised which eliminates pitta dosha.

Integrated development

In January 2016, AYUSH (Ayurveda) was integrated with the National Programme for the Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases, and Stroke (NPCDCS)⁵ and is ongoing in 3 Districts i.e Bhilwara (Rajasthan), Surendranagar (Gujarat), Gaya (Bihar) with the objective to lesser the distress of Non communicable diseases by amalgamation of Ayurvedic intervention, Lifestyle alteration and Yoga guidance.

After incorporating the intervention of Ayurvedic remedy, lifestyle alteration, and yoga guidance in patients with diabetes, hypertension, and dyslipidemia, a provisional analysis revealed that the dosage or components of conventional remedy or prescriptions were either reduced or discontinued in

consultation with and under the control of contemporary physicians.

Integration of Ayurveda in RCH (reproductive child health) program⁵: The Ayurvedic health care system was integrated into the conventional system for prenatal, postnatal, and neonatal care, with technical assistance from the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), Government of India, in several Himachal Pradesh districts. The study found significant improvements in several outcome pointers such as Hb%, minor problems such as vomiting, edema, etc. throughout pregnancy; full-term pregnancy was accomplished. In the study, no stillbirths or neonatal deaths were detected.

Osteoarthritis (Knee)⁵: In 2007, the WHO Council, India Country Office, performed an operational research to examine the viability of combining Ayurveda with a modern medical system in a tertiary care facility (Safdarjung hospital, New Delhi) for the treatment of knee osteoarthritis.

The Ayurvedic remedy provided to 201 patients was found to be successful in the management of knee osteoarthritis in terms of dropping symptoms, enhancing superiority of life, and lowering the need for analgesics.

Integration of Ayurveda is nothing but implementing ayurvedic principles of prevention of disease and curative therapies in the above studies which have exhibited a superior result.

Conclusion

Imbalance in our routine like faulty dietary habits, lack of exercise, stressful life etc is the reason for lifestyle/chronic non communicable disorders. Lifestyle intervention is a crucial part in the treatment of chronic diseases which is as effective as medication. Ayurveda suggests dinacharya and rutucharya which help to maintain life, prevent diseases and promote health. Daily regimen and seasonal regimen include small practices which offer noteworthy benefits for the achievement of a long, healthy life. Integrative wellbeing services provided by Ayurveda and contemporary medicine appear to be successful practical amalgamation efforts in the circumstance of illnesses that are not contagious with beneficial outcomes.

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