

Dietary Principles to Attain Holistic Health in Present Era

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Abstract

Holistic health is a way of living. In India, this time-honored practice is at least 5000 years old. According to the holistic perspective on health, it is possible to understand a person as a whole and take into account all of their physical, emotional, social, mental, and spiritual qualities in order to achieve overall outstanding health and well-being. While a holistic health journey often involves a lot more around the food, it's hard to deny how what we consume impacts both our body and mind. Food is the most important factor for both preventing and treating disease as well as for sustaining good health. It has the best chance of reversing the global health crisis, making it the best option for boosting public health. This paper briefly reviews the parallels in Ayurveda and dietetic principles that draws attention to the need for a deeper engagement with traditional knowledge systems, to attain holistic health.

Diet plays an important role in the maintenance of good health and the prevention and cure of the disease; properly balanced food is the most important factor in the promotion of positive health. The foundation of Ayurvedic nutrition is based on the idea that the human being is the result of what, when, where, how, and why they eat. Diet plays an important role in the maintenance of good health and the prevention and cure of the disease; properly balanced food is the most important factor in the promotion of positive health. The foundation of Ayurvedic nutrition is based on the idea that the human being is the result of what, when, where, how, and why they eat

Keywords: Ayurveda, holistic approach, health, diseases, food, public health

Introduction

Individuals are shifting to holistic health, as they have become aware that modern drugs can be healing but also powerfully dangerous. Every medicine has negative effects, some of which can outweigh the advantages. Holistic health is a way of living; the word "holos" implies entirely or completely. According to the holistic health approach, achieving comprehensive good health and well-being requires viewing each individual from their physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual perspectives. India is well-known for its Ayurvedic medicine. Ayurveda is a holistic system with roots in traditional medicine that promotes long, healthy, and balanced lives for its patients. In Ayurveda, the primary aim is "Swasthasya Swasthya Rakshanam" i.e preserving the health of healthy persons, and "Aturashya Vikar Prasamanam" i.e curing the diseases of the diseased^[1].

India is a nation with a rich history of traditional Indian medicine, which has been used for thousands of years. Being a comprehensive science of life, ayurveda promotes utilizing nature's resources to live a long and happy life. "Preservation of health in healthy individuals and elimination of sickness in affected individuals" is the primary goal. According to Ayurveda, Diet is a key component to consider in both healthy and disease-related states. Over the world, nutrition is becoming more and more acknowledged as a crucial indication of development. As the population's nutritional health is viewed as an economic asset and a requirement for national development, it is essential to both individual and community health. Food is regarded as one of the fundamental requirements for good health since it plays a crucial role in both the prevention and treatment of disease.

AIM

To explain how Ayurvedic dietary principles helps to attain holistic health in this contemporary scenario.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The primary sources for this study were classical Ayurvedic texts, including Charak Samhita and Sushruta Samhita. English translations of these texts were consulted to ensure accurate interpretation. Relevant research papers and review articles were identified based on their alignment with the research objectives.

The Influence of Ayurveda

The primary concept of Ayurveda aims to keep the body, mind, and awareness in harmony by providing enough water to drink, nutritious food, healthy lifestyle choices, and herbal medicines. As the first form of integrative medicine or holistic therapy, it views food as medicine. Indian food particularly spices, and herbs, are used in Ayurvedic and traditional medicine.

Eat According to Your Dosha Type

The Ayurvedic diet, an ancient wellness practice originating from India, revolves around the principles of balance, harmony, and individualization. At the core of this dietary approach are the doshas - Vata, Pitta, and Kapha - representing distinct energetic forces within the body. Each person typically possesses a unique dosha constitution or a combination, influencing their physical, mental, and emotional characteristics.

The Ayurvedic diet is tailored to an individual's specific dosha type, aiming to achieve equilibrium and optimal health by aligning food choices with their inherent energies. Understanding one's dosha constitution helps guide dietary decisions, allowing individuals to select foods that harmonize with their internal balance.

One of Ayurveda's core ideas is that no two people are alike, and hence no two people's dietary demands are the same. As a result, there is no such thing as a "one-size-fits-all" Ayurvedic diet. The optimum diet in Ayurveda is determined by an individual's constitution, often known as their "dosha type" or "mind-body type." Dosha means "fault." Vata, Pitta, and Kapha are the three doshas and are positive qualities in the body that may alter and negatively harm. A healthy Ayurvedic diet can be utilized to either reduce or raise one or more of a person's body's doshas. For example, if a person has too much pitta or fire, it may appear as an irritable red rash that is hot or irritating. One can choose a cooling herb, food, or combination of herbs and foods to lessen the quantity of pitta or fire in a person's body.

The wisdom of Ayurvedic dietary principles extends beyond a mere culinary guide; it represents a way of life that encourages individuals to connect with the rhythms of nature and their own bodies. By aligning our diets with our dosha types, we strive to achieve a sense of holistic well-being, vitality, and harmony with the world around us. Join us as we unravel the wisdom of the Ayurvedic diet and discover how we can eat in line with our unique dosha type to nourish our bodies, minds, and spirits.

Ayurvedic dietetic principles

Ayurveda provides a stronger emphasis on quality, quantity, processing, compatibility, and consumption rules. Ayurvedic dietetics can be divided into three categories: food selection, meal timing, and consumption rules^[3].

Selection of food

- **Eat primarily vegetarian food**

The Ayurvedic diet is whole food which are fresh, seasonal, organic vegetables, whole grains, legumes, dairy foods such as milk, yogurt, and soft cheeses such as paneer (if permitted), seeds, herbs, nuts, and spices. Fruits and vegetables (often cooked) are highly regarded in Ayurveda not just for their nutritional content, but also for their natural internal cleaning properties. The Vata, Pitta, and Kapha dosha dietary recommendations aim to help with selecting a variety of fruits and vegetables that are appropriate for your metabolism and the season.

- **Limit your intake of processed and leftovers foods**

Whole foods encourage ojas. Whereas foods that are highly processed, frozen, canned, and high in chemicals and sugar are more difficult for your body to break down into nutrients. This also includes leftovers. As a result, it's advisable to avoid "junk foods" like these and instead emphasize whole foods. Due to our hectic daily schedules, we frequently prefer to order takeout or eat snacks to save our hunger. This has led to an increase in our dependence on daily junk food consumption. We frequently want to eat meals that are quick to prepare while also satisfying our taste buds. Today, we prefer to eat more junk food because it is so simple to find it with just a click on our phone. But we must keep in mind that these have a negative impact on our bodies over time and result in a number of health issues.

- **Integrate all Six Tastes into Every Meal**

The Ayurvedic diet, deeply rooted in ancient Indian wisdom, is a holistic approach to nourishment that emphasizes the integration of the six tastes in every meal. In Ayurveda, the six tastes—sweet, sour, salty, bitter, pungent, and astringent—are essential components that provide a comprehensive and balanced approach to nutrition. Each taste holds unique properties and influences the doshas—Vata, Pitta, and Kapha—within the body. The concept of incorporating all six tastes in every meal is derived from the fundamental principle of Ayurveda that a well-rounded and balanced diet is crucial for maintaining harmony in the body and mind. Each taste corresponds to specific elements and doshas, and their inclusion in our meals helps maintain dosha balance and promotes optimal digestion, assimilation, and overall well-being.

Taste is important in Ayurvedic food selection because varied flavours alter the doshas. Sweet, sour, salty, bitter, astringent, and pungent are the six tastes. A balanced meal, according to Ayurveda, combines all six flavours, thereby balancing the doshas.

Quantity of food

Dietary guidelines suggest eating per energy needs based on age, gender, physiological situations such as pregnancy, lactation, and degree of physical activity. The objective is to keep your weight and nutritional condition at a healthy level. Food must be consumed in sufficient quantities. The amount of food consumed by an individual is determined by the strength of the individual's Agni. (Digestive power). The appropriate amount of food is digested on time without disrupting the equilibrium.

The correct quantity is always determined by the substance itself. Up to one-third of the stomach capacity should be occupied by heavy-to-digest items, and the remaining portion should be filled with light meals. To preserve Agni strength, neither heavy nor light foods should be consumed in excess^[4].

Ultimately, the quantity of food in Ayurveda is about finding a harmonious balance that supports the body's needs while considering individual constitution, digestive capacity, and the larger context of one's lifestyle and environment. Consulting an Ayurvedic practitioner for personalized guidance is advisable to tailor portion sizes according to one's unique constitution and circumstances.

Timing of food

In Ayurveda, the timing of food intake is considered a crucial aspect of maintaining balance and promoting optimal digestion, metabolism, and overall well-being. The ancient system of Ayurveda emphasizes aligning our meals with the body's natural daily and seasonal rhythms to support proper digestion and assimilation of nutrients. Ayurveda divides the day and night into six four-hour periods, each associated with a specific dosha. Aligning meals with these periods can help balance the respective doshas and optimize digestion.

Food intake time should be fixed depending on the particular requirements of the person and can vary between individuals. The indicators of appropriate digestion of previously consumed food and the attainment of excellent hunger are factors to consider when determining the time of meal intake. Maintaining the balance of dosha, regular digestion and metabolism, and hunger requires eating after the digestion of prior meals^[5].

Eating According to the Ayurvedic Clock (Dinacharya):

Ayurveda suggests adhering to a daily routine (Dinacharya) that aligns with the natural cycles of the day:

Brahma Muhurta (Pre-Dawn): Ideally, the day should begin with waking up during Brahma Muhurta (around 4:30 a.m. to 6:00 a.m.), followed by practices like meditation and self-care to start the day on a positive note.

Morning Routine: After self-care practices, the first meal of the day, breakfast, should be consumed within the first few hours of waking, typically around 6:30 a.m. to 8:00 a.m.

Midday Meal (Lunch): The main meal of the day, lunch, should be eaten during midday, around 12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. This is when digestive fire (agni) is strongest, optimizing digestion and absorption.

Evening Routine: Dinner should ideally be eaten early, around 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., as the digestive fire tends to decline in the evening.

Fasting and Intermittent Eating:

Fasting: Fasting on specific days or during auspicious times is a common practice in Ayurveda. Fasting helps to cleanse the digestive system, rest the organs, and enhance digestive fire (agni).

Intermittent Eating: Ayurveda often recommends intermittent fasting, where individuals have longer gaps between meals to aid digestion and detoxification.

Meal Gaps:

Ayurveda suggests maintaining a minimum of 3-4 hours between meals, allowing the previous meal to be properly digested before consuming the next.

By aligning our meal timings with these Ayurvedic principles, we can optimize digestion, support overall health, and enhance our well-being in harmony with the natural rhythms of the day and seasons. It's important to tailor these guidelines to individual needs and seek guidance from an Ayurvedic practitioner for personalized recommendations.

Rules of consumption

The way of consuming foods is dependent on how well the digestive factors (Agni) and post-digestive effects (vipaka) of the food are functioning. Sweet foods are typically difficult to stomach, but they are simple to process when consumed at first when digestive power is at its strongest. (agni). After eating, the sweet flavour (madhuraavasthapaka) dominates the first phase of digestion, which is then followed by the sour taste (amlaavasthapaka), and finally the pungent taste. (katuavasthapaka). Only those with a normal ability for digestion can use this sequence. (agni). The order can be altered based on the stage of the disease in instances involving abnormal digestion ^[6].

Conclusion

In the present era, achieving holistic health through dietary practices involves a comprehensive approach that nurtures not only the physical body but also the mind, emotions, and overall well-being. By integrating these dietary principles into your lifestyle, you can strive towards holistic health, encompassing not only physical vitality but also mental clarity, emotional balance, and spiritual well-being. In the rapidly evolving modern world, where sedentary lifestyles, processed foods, and chronic stress have become prevalent, adopting these dietary principles provides a pathway to revitalizing our well-being. By embracing a holistic approach to nutrition that addresses the diverse aspects of health, we pave the way towards a more fulfilling and balanced life.

As we conclude this research paper, we affirm that achieving holistic health through dietary practices is an ongoing journey, emphasizing the importance of self-awareness, conscious choices, and an ever-evolving understanding of our individual needs. Embracing these dietary principles not only enhances our physical health but also nourishes our mind, emotions, and spirit, ultimately leading us towards a harmonious and enriched state of well-being in the present era.

Conflicts of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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