

**IMPORTANCE OF AHARA IN LIFESTYLE RELATED DISORDERS WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS TO ASHTVIDH AHAR VIDHIVISHESHYATANA****Dr. Rahul Sunil Jagtap^{*1}, Dr. Swati Pawar-Jagtap²**¹Associate Professor, Swasthavritta-Yoga Department, SSPK, Ayurved College, Kolapewadi, Taluka - Kopargaon, Dist- Ahilyanagar, 423602, Maharashtra, India.²Associate Professor, Rognidan Avum Vikritivigyan, P.V. Belhekar Ayurvedic Medical College, Sarve No.316 Bhanashiwari, Tal-Newasa, Dist- Ahilyanagar, 414609, Maharashtra, India.

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ABSTRACT

The essential elements of Ayurveda include comprehensive methods for preventing lifestyle-related disorders, which are mostly caused by unhealthy patterns of lifestyle, such as poor eating habits, smoking, lack of exercise, sleep disturbances and stress, etc. In Ayurveda, *Ahara Dravya* is classified as *Dravyabhuta Aushadhi* and the methods of preparing and eating *Ahara* are classified as *Upaya/Aadravyabhuta Aushadhi*. *Ahara* is called *Mahabhaishajya* therefore it is considered as cornerstone of health. Most of the disease process from faulty dietary habits can be eliminated simply by making wise food choices and using a disciplined method to eat. In addition, Ayurveda stresses that food choices should be based on an individual's *Prakriti*. In this regards Ayurveda described concepts of *Ashta Ahara Vidhi Visheshyatana* which refers to the particular guidelines controlling dietary intake as well as the elements that determine the healthful and unhealthy impacts of food. *Prakriti, Karana, Samyoga, Rashi, Desha, Kala, Upayoga Samstha*, and *Upyokta* are some of these which affect quality and health benefits of *Ahara*. One should follow these guidelines to acquire maximum benefits of consumed foods.

KEYWORDS: *Ayurveda, Ahara, Foods, Ashtvidh, Prakriti.***INTRODUCTION**

In modern scenario an increase in lifestyle related diseases has occurred due to the increased incidence of individuals not understanding how to eat correctly, irregularity of their times for meals, improper preparation of food, imbalanced diets and disregarding dietary discipline. Ayurveda, provides detailed guidelines for preventing these diseases that are caused by living an unhealthy lifestyle as it primarily relates to diet, but also is compounded with the lack of physical activity, smoking, drinking an excess amount of alcohol, staying awake at night and working excessively under mental stress and eating an increased amount of unhealthy foods.^[1-3]

Ahara is considered the root of energy, complexion, health and vitality, and both health and illness are dependent on what we eat. Therefore, a complete diet, when correctly consumed, promotes health; whereas an incomplete diet or incorrect eating habits will cause imbalance and lead to somewhere between health and illness. Ayurveda's approach to health and wellness places great emphasis on what we eat, thus dietary factors known as *Pathya* and *Apathya* are critical components of health.

Ahaar (foods) is known to be the most important healing agent in Ayurveda. Food plays an important role in the prevention and treatment of lifestyle diseases such as diabetes, obesity, and high blood pressure by supporting proper functioning of *Agni* and keeping *Dhatusamyata*.

The *Ashtavidha Ahara Visheshayatana* is a framework for developing eight dietary guidelines, and these guidelines ensure that food is healthy by promoting proper food selection, combination of foods, and how foods should be consumed, thereby reducing the production of *Ama*.^[4-6]

Ashtavidha Ahara Visheshayatana

According to contemporary Ayurveda, food is the essence of life, vitality, health and well-being. It is composed of the six *Rasas*, which represent the inherent qualities or attributes found within food. Additionally, *Ahara Dravyas* are classified within *Dravyabhuta Aushadhi* and dietary guidelines for each individual represent *Upaya* or *Adravyabhuta Aushadhi* to *Vikaraprasamana* (the alleviation of disease). There are eight factors related to diet that impacts an individual's health and disease process, and they are referred to as *Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatana*.

The main components of the *Ashtavidha Ahara Visheshayatana* to prevent lifestyle diseases are the following.

- ✓ **Prakriti:** the diet must be based on the individual's constitution type (*Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*), to prevent metabolic disturbances.
- ✓ **Karana:** food must be cooked and prepared properly to ensure that the food retains its nutrients and is digestible.
- ✓ **Samyoga:** individuals need to avoid *Viruddha Ahara*, since these combinations are significant contributors to the development of obesity as well as certain skin diseases.
- ✓ **Rashi:** individuals should consume the appropriate amount of food, both in total (*Sarvagraha*) and in terms of the proportion of each type of food they eat (*Parigraha*); when individuals eat too much food, they are likely to become obese.
- ✓ **Desha:** foods should be selected to be compatible with the climate and environment in which the individual lives in order to maintain metabolic balance.
- ✓ **Kala:** The concept of *kala* emphasizes that eating in accordance with the time of year or day will assist in maintaining health.
- ✓ **Upayoga Sanstha:** The eating regimen or *Upayoga Sanstha* teaches that maintaining proper eating habits this help to maintain good digestive health.
- ✓ **Upayokta:** The point of the *Upayokta* is about the relationship between the mental and physical states of a person and how this affects digestion/assimilating food into the body, and therefore that one should mindfully consume food.

Importance Ashtavidha Ahara Visheshayatana

Ahara is integral to everyday life, taking into account the quality, quantity, and taste of the food and following the recommended methods of eating and eating patterns listed in the Ayurvedic texts will increase chances of achieving optimal health. Many people suffer from

health problems because of poor dietary habits and research has shown that many health complications can be traced back to poor dietary habits. For this reason, the concept of *Ashta Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatana* is very relevant and appropriate in today's world.^[5-7]

Most diseases can be traced back to poor eating habits. In that light, the *Ashta Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatana* approach to food is one that will be extremely beneficial in today's world.

The *Ashta Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatana* is an eight-factor approach to health and wellness that involves specific components of what you eat, when you eat, how much you eat, and where you eat, as well as who you eat with. Each component of this system gives insight into how to eat in a healthy manner and avoid unhealthy eating habits. **Figure 1**; depicted how *Ashta Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatana* helps to prevent life style disorders.^[6-8]

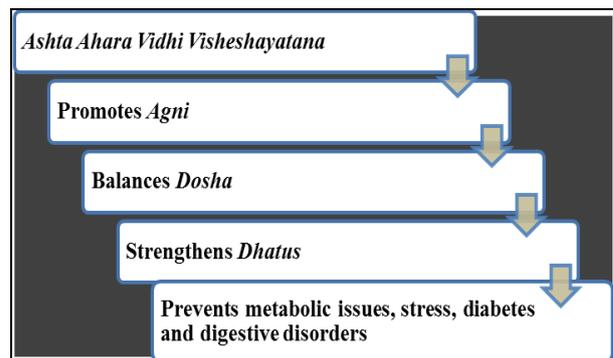


Figure 1: Role of Ashta Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatana in preventing life style disorders.

Significance of Ashtavidha Ahara Visheshayatana in balancing Dosha

By properly following the *Ashta Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatana* guidelines one can effectively address diseases related to the imbalance of *Pitta*, *Vata*, and *Kapha* *Doshas*.

- ✓ An example would be a diet that reduces the impact of *Pitta dosha* can be helpful in cases of diarrhea, indigestion, and hyperacidity.
- ✓ A diet that helps to balance the effects of *Kapha dosha* has the ability to help with prevention of excess heaviness, improvement of cold and cough symptoms, and the improvement of a lack of appetite (anorexia).
- ✓ Diet that helps to balance the effects of *Vata dosha* may provide support to maintain the proper functions within the body and a stable state of balance.

When considering *Balya Awastha* it is suggested to eat foods that help to balance *Kapha*; when in middle age (*Madhyama Awastha*), it is suggested to consume diets that provide support to balance *Pitta*; and when in old age (*Vridhdha Awastha*), it is suggested to consume foods that is recommended for *Vata*.^[7-10]

CONCLUSION

Ahara is critical to maintaining life and also helps us achieve *Bala*, *Varna*, *Upachaya* and overall vitality. The best way to avoid or reduce the chance of developing digestive disorders is to gain knowledge about the principles of *Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatana*. The knowledge provided by *Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatana* assist in determining types of foods one should eat, properly combine foods, how to cook food correctly and to eat the proper quality and quantity of food. Therefore, *Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatana* has a great impact on preventing and treating life style related disorders. Ayurveda states that poor dietary habits cause life style disorders. Healthier eating habits can prevent diabetes, heart disease/stroke/cancer, infertility and obesity, etc. The concept of *Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatana* not only resists pathogenesis of these life style related disorders but also potentiates health benefits of consumed foods.

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