

REVIEW ARTICLE

# Role of Ayurveda in Lifestyle Disorder

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## ABSTRACT

Ayurveda are considered as major components of Vedic knowledge which describe its depth and versatility towards modern life. Ayurveda provides a well organised system of traditional health care, both to maintain the health and prevent the diseases. Lifestyle disorders are the diseases associated with the way a person or group of people lives. Sedentary lifestyle, faulty dietary habits, busy daily schedule, stress due to workload, physical inactivity, wrong body posture, and disturbed biological clock has invited many type of disorders like Hypertension, Diabetes, Arthritis, Obesity, Insomnia, Stress, Cancer, Metabolic syndrome, Thyroid disorders, Heart Attack, Asthma, Stroke etc. which come under life style disorder because the lifestyle have significant role in all these diseases. *Ayurveda* offers various methods to manage lifestyle disorders by following *Dincharya*, *Ritucharya*, *Rasayanas* or by following *Sadvritta*. All the regimens are followed to achieve the homeostasis and not just counter the specific symptom.

**Key Words** *Ayurveda, Lifestyle Diseases, Ahara, Vyayam, Ritucharya, Rasayana, Sadvritta, Daivavyapashraya Chikitsa, Satvavajaya Chikitsa*

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## INTRODUCTION

People are predisposed to various diseases based on their way of living and occupational habits. They are preventable, and can be lowered with changes in diet, lifestyle, and environment. Lifestyle diseases characterize those diseases whose occurrence is primarily based on daily habits of people and are a result of an inappropriate relationship of people with their environment. The onset of these lifestyle diseases is insidious, they take years to develop, and once encountered do not lend themselves easily to cure. The main factors contributing to the

lifestyle diseases include bad food habits, physical inactivity, wrong body posture, and disturbed biological clock<sup>1-3</sup>.

## LIFESTYLE DISORDERS

- Hypertension
- Diabetes
- Arthritis
- Obesity
- Insomnia
- Stress
- Cancer
- Thyroid disorder
- Stroke

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### CAUSES OF LIFESTYLE DISORDERS

- Disturbed biological clock
- Improper eating habits
- Inactiveness or improper exercises
- Bad habits [smoking, alcohol, etc.]
- Lack of social approach
- Wrong ergonomics
- Psychological imbalance [depression]

Nowadays the term Lifestyle disorders have become a common currency in the field of healthcare. LSDs are those conditions usually attributed to dramatic shifts in the way humans live their lives, often due to advancement in a society or its scientific progress. Modern medicine deals with these diseases through the heavy usage of steroids. The continuous use of steroids and the lifestyle related discrepancies make these diseases chronic in nature and decrease the immunity levels of the patients<sup>4</sup>.

*Ayurveda* believes that there are three causes of disease which have a direct correlation with our influence from our personal choices and our environment. These three causes – *Prajnaparadha*, *Asatmendriyartham* *Samyoga* and *Parinama* are three factors that, when not taken into consideration, will be the cause for dis-ease in life. According to *Ayurveda* treatment of the disease does not treat the symptoms but brings the person back to their true nature. The body will then be able to rid itself of the disease. The *Charaka Samhita* states, “So the unwholesome conjunction of the sense organs with their objects, intellectual blasphemy (*prajnaparadha*) and transformation (*parinama*) – these are the

threefold cause of diseases. Proper utilization of the objects, action and time is beneficial to the maintenance of normal health”<sup>5</sup>.

*Ayurveda* considers the factors affecting all diseases as *Heena yoga*, *Mithya yoga* or *Ati yoga* of *kala*, *artha* and *karma*.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

1. Literatures of *Ayurveda* textbooks.
2. Modern text books and net surfing.
3. Research papers and articles from journals

### ROLE OF AYURVEDA

*Ayurveda* suggests simple lifestyle routines for a healthy and disease free life. Lifestyle disorders have a unique approach in *Ayurveda*, called ‘Swasthavritta’. It refers to abiding naturally to one’s own nature. In simple words, it is following the healthy regime for healthy life with appropriate activities. Swasthavritta focuses on individual hygiene and public health too<sup>5</sup>.

According to Swasthavritta two main goals of *Ayurveda* is to maintain the health of healthy person and treat the diseased one. I.e. “*Swasthasya swasthya Rakshnam*” that is conservation of health. In prevention of lifestyle disorders, *Ayurveda* is having individual and holistic approach.

The most effective method to manage or prevent the progression of these diseases is through making some simple changes in the lifestyle by *Ayurveda* Regimen.

### PREVENTIVE MEASURES

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In *Ayurveda* good conduct is called *Sadvritta* (code of good conduct). It describes the rules that are to be followed by which we can acquire good health and contest the senses. The rules of good conduct have been prescribed in authoritative *Ayurvedic* texts out of which some of them are related to social, emotional, psychological and ethical aspects of life. *Sadvritta* can be classified as Personal, Social, Psychological, Emotional, Religious and Occupational conduct<sup>6</sup>.

### PROMOTIVE MEASURES

In the management of lifestyle diseases, *Ayurveda* offers various regimens including *Ahara* and *Vihara* (dietary habits and daily routine), *Dinacharya* (daily regimen), *Ritucharya* (seasonal regimen), *Vyayama* (daily exercise), *Panchakarma* (five detoxification and bio-purification therapies) and *Rasayana* (rejuvenation) therapies. The *Sadvritta* (ideal routines) and *Aachara Rasayana* (code of conduct), are utmost important to maintain a healthy and happy psychological perspective<sup>6</sup>.

### AHARA -

*Ahara* and *Vihara* play a central role in life according to *Ayurvedic* understanding. *Ayurveda* places special emphasis on *Ahara* and *Vihara* as measures for better living, health and wellness. *Ayurveda* emphasizes more on *Ahara* in comparison to other systems of medicine and also explores its emotional and spiritual significance, in addition to its material and biological attributes. *Ahara* is considered as *Prana* (basis of life) in *Ayurveda*<sup>7</sup>.

*Aharahas* are described as one of the *Trayopastambha* (three subsidiary pillars) of life which are *Ahara*, *Nidra* (sleep) and *Brahmacharaya* (celibacy)<sup>8</sup>. Diet is considered as vital for a human body as it provides the basic nutrients and promotes longevity. *Ayurveda* always emphasizes on consuming a healthy and nutritious diet for maintaining good health. As per the view point of *Ayurveda*, both the living human body and the diseases afflicting it are the products of *Ahara*. Use of *hita-ahara* (wholesome diet) promotes health and longevity and *ahita-ahara* (unwholesome diet) promotes manifestation of different disorders. Unfortunately, in the modern era the concept of *hita-ahara* is continuously being ignored leading to the emergence of lifestyle disorders<sup>9</sup>.

*Ayurveda* also described eighteen types of dietary incompatibilities (*ViruddhaAhara*)<sup>10</sup>, which should be avoided to maintain health and longevity. In this way *Ayurveda* offers different *Pathayapathya Ahara* and *vihar* (dietary habits and daily routine) *Ahara* and *vihar* (dietary habits and daily routine) (do's & don'ts) regarding diet/dietary supplementations which definitely help in the prevention and management of a wide range of lifestyle disorders and will improve improper eating habits.

### DINCHARYA -

Normal circadian rhythms are very important in day-to-day life to maintain a biological clock. *Ayurveda* suggests to begin daily habits with awareness, early rising, avoid suppression of natural urges and eliminate wastes as per urge,

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keep the teeth & skin cleaned, regular use of massage (*Abhyanga*), regular daily bathing (bathing enhances the appetite and promotes longevity), consume suitable and wholesome diet according to the appetite and metabolic needs, since it is the basis of life and important for day to day promotion of health. *Ayurveda* has also suggested avoiding late night sleep and eating stale foods. These might lead to imbalance in the circadian rhythms and thus long-term imbalance predisposes to lifestyle disorders. Therefore, one has to stay aware about this daily regimen for day-to-day promotion of health, boost immunity and prevention from lifestyle disorders<sup>11</sup>.

### **VYAYAMA -**

An ancient *Ayurvedic* authority, *Acharya Charak* defined *vyayama* as any physical activity, which is desirable and is capable of bringing about bodily stability and increases the strength of body<sup>12</sup>. Always *vyayama* (Physical exercise) has to be done in proper manner. *Vyayama* brings about a feeling of lightness of the body, increases capacity to do work, stability, ability to withstand all types of pain and alleviation of three *doshas* (especially *kapha dosha*). It increases the power of *Agni* (power of the digestion)<sup>13</sup>. In all *rutus*, *vyayama* should be performed by persons as per their *sharir bala* i.e. (half of total body strength). The performance of daily *vyayama* (exercise) can reduce lifestyle disorders but improper *vyayama* or heavy exercise can be harmful, it may even cause the death of a person.

### **RITUCHARYA -**

*Ritu* (season) classified by different features expresses different effects on the body as well as on the environment. *Ayurveda* has depicted various rules and regimens (*Charya*), regarding diet and lifestyle to acclimatize seasonal enforcement easily without altering body homeostasis. The prime objective of the *Ayurvedic* system of medicine is the preventive aspect, which can be achieved by the modification in diet and lifestyle in response to change in climatic condition. *Ritucharya* represents a very important aspect of preventive measures for various illnesses including lifestyle disorders as mentioned in *Ayurvedic* texts<sup>14</sup>. It is the only system of medicine in the world which proposes the need of regular purification of the human biological system from gross level to the molecular level to render it suitable for self-recovery and therapeutic responsiveness. The human biological system continuously undergoes wear and tear and needs to be cleansed and rejuvenated regularly. Therefore, *Ayurveda* advises seasonal *Panchakarma* as a preventive measure for maintenance and promotion of physical as well as mental health.

### **PANCHAKARMA -**

*Panchakarma* is a collective term used to address the five principal procedures or technologies of bio-purification. These procedures are used in order to cleanse the body channels, to eliminate toxins out of the body and bring about the harmony of bio-humour (*Tridosha* i.e, *Vata*, *Pitta*, *Kapha*, and *Manasa Dosha* i.e, *Raja* and *Tama*). *Panchakarma* include *Vaman*

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(therapeutic emesis), *Virechan* (therapeutics purgation), *Asthapan Basti* (therapeutics decoction enema), *Anuvasana Basti* (therapeutics oil enema) and *Nasya Karma* (nasal medication). *Ayurveda* emphasizes more on the preventive aspect of the *Panchakarma* and also restores mental health, reduces the stress and therefore, helps in the prevention as well as management of many lifestyle disorders.

### **RASAYANA -**

In addition to food and diet, *Ayurveda* propounds a separate concept of medicinal dietary supplements in the context of *Rasayana* (rejuvenative measures). *Rasayanas* can be used as a nutritional supplement as well as medicine depending upon its various types. Most *Rasayanas* produce their nourishing and rejuvenating effect by promoting the *Agni, Bala*, acting as direct nutrients and by way of *Srotoprasadan* (purification of body channels), resulting in an improved nutritional status which further leads to an improved quality of *Dhatu*s or body tissues. Although the *Rasayanas* are a generic class of restorative and rejuvenative supplements, many *Rasayanas* could be tissue and organ specific such as *Medhya Rasayana* for the brain, *Hridya Rasayana* for the heart, *Twachya Rasayana* for the skin, and so on<sup>15</sup>.

### **SADVRITTA AND ACHARARASAYANA -**

*Ayurveda* offers some code of good conduct under the heading of *Sadvritta* and *AcharaRasayana*. The conducts under *Sadvritta* and *AcharaRasayana* can be categorized into personal (early sleeping and awakening, avoid

excess exertion, avoid suppression of natural urges, regime of bathing, keeping skin clean), avoid bad habit (smoking etc), social (keep mercy on others, telling truth, avoid alcoholism, be soft hearted, always use cleaned and washed clothes), psychological and emotional (try to be in a steady mental state i.e. avoid height of emotions, try to avoid to memorize if being insulted by anyone, keep patience, etc). Such type of lifestyle adaptation is always helpful in the prevention and management of a wide range of lifestyle disorders<sup>16</sup>.

### **DAIVAVYAPASHRAYA CHIKITSA -**

*Daivavyapashraya chikitsa* includes chanting *Mantras, Aushadhi* and *Mani Dharana* (spiritual use of herbs and gems) *Mangal Karma* (propitiatory), *Bali* (offering oblations), *Homa, Prayashchita* (ceremonial penances), *Upavasa* (fasting), *Swastyayana* (rituals for social wellbeing) etc. Some 90% of the world's population engaged in religious or spiritual practices. These practices are major means of coping with stress, depression and for prevention and management of lifestyle disorders<sup>17</sup>.

### **SATVAVAJAYA CHIKITSA -**

The author of the foremost classic on internal medicine, *Charaka Samhita* defines it as a method of restraining the mind from desire for unwholesome objects. All these measures help in developing control over the *Manas* or mind, which is usually unstable<sup>18</sup>.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

"Lifestyle disorder" known internationally as 'non-communicable diseases' (NCD's) or  
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'chronic diseases of lifestyle' (CDL) emerge from inappropriate relationships of people with their environment. These are a group of diseases that share similar risk factors, which may be due to exposure over many decades, unhealthy diets, smoking, lack of exercise, and stress. The major risk factors are high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, diabetes and obesity. These result in various long-term disease processes, culminating in high mortality rates attributable to stroke, heart attack, cancers, chronic bronchitis, emphysema, renal failure, and many others.

From the history of treatment and preventive measures given to the persons suffering from lifestyle diseases, *Ayurveda* has proven its role and importance in this area. Also, as the nutritional food (*Ahara*) and physical activity (*vyayama*) are well described in *Ayurveda*. Most *Rasayanas* produce their nourishing effect by promoting the *Agni, Bala*, which provide direct nutrients and by way of *Sroto-prasadan* (purification of body channels), which improves nutritional status which further improves the quality of *Dhatus* or body tissues.

*Ayurveda* offers some code of good conduct under the heading of *Sadvritta* and *AcharaRasayana*. Which can be categorized into personal, social, psychological and emotional. *Daivavyapashraya Chikitsa* includes chanting *Mantras*, which practices are major means of coping with stress, depression and for prevention and management of lifestyle disorders.

Such type of lifestyle adaptation is always helpful in the prevention and management of a Lifestyle disorder.

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