



Understanding Clinical Nutrition of Skin Disease through the Lens of Ayurveda

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Abstract

There is a general statement that goes as "We are what we eat". Our diet and way of living have a significant impact on our bodies and minds. Understanding the significance of clinical nutrition is thus crucial today. Ayurveda has accorded equal priority to food and its preparation, storage, utensils, regulations for consumption, unsuitable diet (Viruddha Ahara), and other factors that affect skin health because nutrition is a significant indicator of development. The core principle of pathya Ahara-Vihara serves as the foundation for both the preventive and therapeutic components of Ayurveda.

Keywords: Kushta; Ahara; Clinical Nutrition

Introduction

Nutrition is increasingly being admitted as an important indicator of development at national and international level. The focus of *Ayurveda* is on good health, which includes a balance of physical, mental, social, moral, and spiritual wellness. The primary methods of therapy in *Ayurveda* are prevention (*Swasthavritta*) and the treatment of pre-existing conditions through the sensible and rational application of *Ahara* (diet), *Vihara* (lifestyle adjustment), and *Aushadha* (medications and therapies). When determining an individual's susceptibility to disease, their daily routine and way of life are both crucial factors. Clinical nutrition is concerned with the diagnosis and treatment of diseases that affect the intake of dietary constituent and with the promotion of health through the prevention of diet related to diseases [1]. Normally, individuals obtain the necessary nutrients their bodies require through normal daily diet that process the food, accordingly within the body [2]. There are some circumstances such as distress, diseases, stress and so

on that they may prevent the body from getting sufficient nutrients through diet alone. To replace the gap left by the particular disease in such cases, nutritional supplements especially designed for their unique condition may be necessary. This can come in form of medical nutrition. Chemicals called nutrients are present in food. Numerous nutrients are necessary for life, and a proper intake of each is required for various metabolic processes, constructing and maintaining body organs, and supplying energy. When proper nutrition is given, the skin operates normally. For instance, it has been demonstrated that a lack of essential fatty acids increases transepidermal water loss and epidermal permeability [3]. Any dietary imbalance, such as a nutritional deficit, an insufficient intake of a particular nutrient, or an overabundance of hazardous substances, can upset the skin's equilibrium.

Skin diseases have been primarily described in Ayurvedic literature under the general heading of *Kusta*, which has the literary connotation of causing disfigurement [4]. The list of

etiological causes explained by *Ayurveda* includes physical, physiological, psychological, genetic, and *papakarma* (sinful activities) [5]. *Kushta* is generally described as *Tridoshaja Vyadhi*, but type of *Kushta* ascertained upon the predominance of particular *Dosha* and is generally classified into *Maha* and *Kshudra Kushta*. Etiological factors for *kusta* include:

Aharaja Nidana [6]

- Excessive intake of salty and sour foods (*Ati Lavana, Ati Amla Rasa Sevana*)
- Incompatible foods (*Viruddhahara*): consumption of milk after fish, consuming Milk and *Lavana Padarthas* together, *Gramya and Anoopamamsa* along with milk etc.
- Excessive heavy, oily and liquid foods (*Guru-Snigdha-Atidrava Annapana*)
- Unwholesome foods (*Asatmya Ahara*)
- Consumption of food before the digestion of previous meal (*Ajeernaahara*)
- Consumption of hot and cold food together (*Sheeta-Ushna Akrama Sevana*)
- Excessive consumption of honey (*Madhu*)-jaggery (*Phanita*)-fish (*Matsya*)-sour fruits (*Lakucha*)-curd (*Dadhi*)-black grams (*Masha*)-raddish (*Mulaka*)-protein-carbohydrate rich food (*Pishtanna*) -sesame seeds (*Tila*)-Alcoholic preparations (*Madyapana*)-green leafy vegetables (*Harita Shaka*)-putrefied food (*Praklinna Anna*)-dairy products like paneer etc (*kurchika* and *Kilata*).

Viharaja Nidana [7]

- Suppressing the urge of vomiting
- Irregular or improper practice of Panchakarma procedures
- Entering into cold or drinking cold water after one is exposed to fear, exhaustion and grief
- Habit of day sleeping
- Sinful activities (*Papakarma*)

Hence, *Kusta* can be triggered by multiple factors which can primarily initiate *Agni Vaishamyā* and *Raktadushti* thus leading to the involvement of deeper *Dhatu*s.

Role of Diet in Skin Diseases

Panchamahabhutas make up all living and non-living things in the universe. These *Panchamahabhutas* make up the food that is consumed, which in turn nourishes the body's many tissue elements [8]. *Ahara* is regarded as one of the *Upastambha* and is the greatest medication of all. *Pathya* refers to the *Ahara* and *Vihara* that are compatible with a person's channels, constitution, and strength, while *Apathya* refers to those that are not [9]. Preventive and curative

aspects of *Ayurveda* revolve around the central theme of *Pathya Ahara* and *Vihara*. *Ayurveda* emphasizes basic dietary guidelines in terms of consumption of appropriate food based on *Ritus*, Rules of dieting, combination of food items, methods of cooking, storage, eating atmosphere, hygiene and etiquettes.

Ahara Vidhi Vidhana [10]

As per *Acharya Vagbhata*

- Eating at the proper time (*Kale Bhojana*)
- Eating what is suitable for oneself (*Satmya Bhojana*)
- Eating in accordance with one's *Prakriti* (*Hita Bhojana*)
- Food cooked in a hygienic manner (*Shuchi Bhojana*)
- Consumption of spicy, delectable, and easily digestible food (*Ushna-Snigdha-Laghu Bhojana*).
- Eat whenever there is a desire for food, paying attention to both the food and the act of eating (*Tanmana Bhunjita*), and consume foods that share all the *Rasas*.
- Eating while calm and not moving too quickly or slowly (*natidruta-vilambita*);
- Eating after taking a bath (*Snatah*).
- Only eating when one is sufficiently hungry (*Kshudhavan*)
- Before eating, one should wash their hands, feet, and faces properly (*Dhaatha kara-pada-anana*).
- After offering prayers and paying to Gods and forefathers (*Pitru-devata Tarpana*)
- After offering food to guests, teachers and children (*Athiti-Bala-Guru Tarpana*)
- Without disgracing food (*Anindana Bhojana*)
- Silently (*Mouna*)

Astavidha Ahara Vidhi Visheshā Ayatana [11]

Ayurveda mentioned 8 specific food conventions that include compatibility of dietary articles which are determinant factor for maintained health.

- *Prakriti*-Nature of qualitative factors of the food
- *Karana*-Proper processing of the food
- *Samyoga*-Mixing/combination of food items with other items
- *Rashi*-Quantity of food consumed as a whole and as an individual
- *Desha*-Natural habitat of person
- *Kala*-Time and seasonal variation
- *Upayoga samstha*-Variable digestibility of different food articles
- *Upayokta*-The person who consumes food

Skin conditions are primarily brought on by poor dietary habits and practices in addition to being contagious diseases. Therefore, all areas of food planning for the treatment of illnesses and the preservation of health should be given the careful thought as recommended by *ayurveda*.

When it comes to dietetics, *Ayurveda* has given careful consideration to kitchen and tool use. The kitchen should be tidy, roomy, open, and free of dust and debris. Food that has been prepared should be adequately covered and thoroughly protected from insects, animals, dirt, and dust.

Ahara Matra [12]

The amount of food and nourishment needed depends on the individual's *Agni*, *Sharira Prakriti*, *Vaya* and other conditions. According to *Sushruta* and *Vagbhata*, if the stomach's capacity were hypothetically divided into four equal parts based on how full it was, one should eat two portions of solid food, one portion of liquid food, and one portion should be left empty to allow for simple *Vata Dosha* movement.

Viruddha Ahara-Incompatible Diet [13]

Foods with contradictory or incompatible properties have a harmful effect on the body, aggravating the *Tridosha* and causing a host of illnesses, including allergic dermatitis, eczema, abscesses, and other skin conditions. Along with loss of power, vitality, memory, immunity, etc. (A. H Su 7/44)

Few incompatible food items that can lead to skin diseases are:

- Fish or its soup along with milk
- Milk or milk products along with salty/sour food items like milk with Namkeen, milk after having citrus fruits
- Processed food/cereals with milk as they contain high level of salt in them
- Consuming *Ushna* and *Sheeta* items together etc.

Wholesome and Unwholesome Diet in Skin Diseases [14]

Varga	Pathya in Kusta	Apathya in Kusta
Shuka Dhanya (corns with bristels)	Old brown rice (Shashtika Shali, Rakta shali), barley (yava), wheat (Godhuma), millets (Kudhanya)	Newly harvested rice wheat are generally avoided as they are heavy in nature
Shami Dhanya (Pulses)	Green grams (Mudga), red lentils (Masoor)	Black grams (Masha, Raja Masha), horse gram (Kulattha), sesame (Tila), chickpeas (Chanaka)
Mamsa Varga (meat)	Generally contraindicated; Jangala Mamsa can be consumed	Meat of Aquatic animals, fish (Anoopa mamsa)
Shaka Varga (vegetables)	Patha, Vatsuka, Kakamachi, karavellaka, Nimba, Kushmanda, Nyagrodha etc. (Tikta rasa Pradhana Shaaka preferred)	Vartaka, Kusumbha, Moolaka Avoid-Greeny leafy vegetables (Hrita Shaaka)
Phala Varga (fruits)	Dadima, Amalaki	Sour, tangy fruits are avoided
Harita Varga (Raw vegetables)	Ardraka, Jambeera, Tulsi, Shighru	Lashuna, palandu
Madya varga (fermented drinks)	Old fermented products can be taken like Souveeraka, Tushodaka	Generally avoided as they are Amla Rasa Pradhana
Ambu varga (water)	River water from Malaya mountain Ranges	River water from Vindya, Sahya and pariyatra regions, River water in rainy season, Samudra Jala
Gorasa Varga (milk and milk products)	Takra, Grita	Milk is generally avoided, Dahi, Kilata and Kurchaka
Ikshu Varga (products of Sugarcane)	Madhu	Guda, phanita
Kritanna Varga (food preparations)	Yusha, Peya, Manda, Laja Manda	Pishtanna, Praklinna Anna (stale food)

Table 1: Ayurveda classifies food into 12 basic *vargas* based on sources, method of preparation and utility.

Nutritional Psychiatry in Skin Disease [15]

Diet and mental health are intimately intertwined. Our diet has a significant impact on maintaining a healthy mind, and this allows for the classification of food into;

- **Satvic diet** is the ideal diet, consisting of vegetarian, non-oily, non-spicy, sweet foods that are good for the body and the mind.
- Rajasika diet is overly hot, sour, salty, and spicy; stimulates the mind.
- Tamasika diet is too much oil and heavy meals; lowers mental acuity.

Disease Specific Diet

Psoriasis: A chronic condition affecting skin that causes spontaneous regression followed by relapses. In addition to immunological mechanisms, genetic and environmental variables also contribute to the disease's etiology. Unfortunately, there are currently no well-established nutritional therapy regimens for psoriasis in contemporary medicine. Saturated fatty acids, which are found in fatty meats and animal fats like butter and cream, and trans fats, which are found in highly processed foods and confectionery products, are to be limited. Omega 3 fatty acids, which are found in marine fish at the highest concentrations, are to be increased. Consumption of uncooked fruit and vegetables are advised and is not recommended to drink alcohol.

Ayurveda explains *nidana parivarjana* as the main treatment modality and avoiding incompatible food items (*viruddha ahara*) can be considered as first step in treating the skin disease. Old wheat, old barley, pulses like moong or green gram, masoor or red lentils, split pigeon peas, honey, Luffa cylindrical, a vegetable from the gourd family also known as snake gourd, Neem (leaf), garlic, Purana Ghrita (Old ghee), and Tikta Rasa (herbs and food with a bitter taste), it is better to avoid dairy products and nuts are all included in the recommended diet. Additionally, *Triphala*-a dried and powdered mixture of the three fruits *Amalaki* (*Phyllanthus Emblica*), *Haritaki* (*Terminalia chebula*), and *Bibhitaki* (*Terminalia bellirica*)-is crucial.

Vitiligo: Mango, cashew, pistachio, oak, cassava, areca nut, red chillies, cherry, raspberry, cranberry, blackberry and tea contain naturally occurring plant phenol and polyphenolic compounds (tannins), which may aggravate vitiligo.

Eczema: Tomatoes, olive oil, green leafy vegetables, such as spinach, kale, and collards nuts like almonds and walnuts, fatty fish like salmon, mackerel, tuna, and sardines, fruits such as strawberries, blueberries, cherries, and oranges.

Fungal infection: Cane sugar, honey, maple syrup to be avoided. Fruits like bananas, grapes, mangoes to be avoided. Wheat, rye, barley to be avoided. Potato, carrots to be also

lessened.

Conclusion

Even *Ahara-Vihara*, in contrast to the prescription of pharmaceuticals, is crucial in the treatment of disease. Following *Ayurvedic* principles is undoubtedly helpful in the prevention and management of different ailments caused by the current generation's rapid changes in diet and lifestyle. Since the skin is one of the most presentable organs and a reflection of the individual, skin problems should be treated with the utmost caution. One can prevent skin conditions by adhering to the rules outlined in our classical books.

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