

CONCEPT OF BALANCED DIET AND IT'S ROLE IN MAINTAINING HEALTHY LIFE

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ABSTRACT

A healthy balanced diet is a diet that helps to maintain or improve overall health. A healthy diet provides the body with essential nutrition, fluid, macronutrients and micronutrients. When we take food in this manner it is known as balanced diet. A balanced diet is important because our organ and tissue need proper nutrition to work effectively, without good nutrition our body is more prone to disease, infection and fatigue. Person's specific daily calorie intake can vary depending on their age, gender and physical activity level. Man generally needs more calories than woman and people who exercise need more calorie than people who don't. In Ayurveda the balanced diet has been explained in various *Samhitas* in scattered form. It defines the balanced diet as *Samyak Ahara Matra* which depends on various factors such as *Panchmahabut* as 'Sarvam drayvam panch-mahabautiks, the body and food are mutual to each other'. *Guru –Laghu Ahara, Nitya Sevaniya- Asevaniya Ahara, Hitkara Ahara and Ahitkara Ahara* etc. This review article is just an attempt to explore the *Ahara* its *Panchbhautika* and to understand that how *Panchbhautika Ahara* is considered as balance and healthy diet ,which can nourish the body, also how it balances the *Tridosha* and how it maintains the harmony of the body.

Keywords: Balanced Diet, *Ahara*, *Panchbhauta*, Nutrition.

INTRODUCTION: Healthy balanced diet plays an important role in our life. A balanced diet is one which provides all the nutrient in required amounts and proper proportion. Nutrition is vital for our body and all of its systems to function properly, by having good nutrition it will help to maintain a healthy weight, reduce body fat, provide our body with energy, promote good sleep and generally make us better. Acharya says that food and drinks partaken in a proper manner only, are helpful for satisfying the senses and bestowing long life. On it, depends the valour, growth, nourishment, intelligence and health. It is the fuel for the internal fire and this fire is the chief support of the body². In Ayurveda most health problems are attributed to

wrong eating habits and faulty cooking methods. Ayurveda deals with *pathya-vyavastha* (planning of diet:dietetics) in a scientific and holistic way, based on certain principles with an emphasis on certain important aspects.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1. To discuss and elaborate healthy balanced diet.
2. To evaluate the concept of healthy balanced diet according to Ayurveda.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Classical text books of Ayurveda like- Caraka Samhita, Astanga Samgraha, Vaidya Jivana (Lolimbraja) and also from Published articles and authentic website.

OBSERVATION: Ayurveda asserts that every root is a medicine so there is no

good or bad food and provides a logical approach to designing balanced food for optimal nutrition by formulating food groups that work in harmony, induce proper digestion and promote maximum absorption of essential nutrient.

'SARVAM - DRAVYAM PANCHABHOUTIKAM':All the substances are composed of the *Pancha Maha Bhutas* only, so also the article of food and even the human body. The nature and properties of substances are according to the predominance of *mahabhutas* present in it. *Tejas* is the *Bhuta* responsible for heat and activities of heat. Food materials which possess this *Bhuta* undergo easy and quick digestion because of identical prop-

erties. The *Prthvi* and *Ap bhutas* possess properties opposite of *Tejas* and food materials which possess these two *bhutas*, do not undergo easy and quick digestion. In this way food materials are of two kinds viz. *Laghu* - which are easily digestible and *Guru*- which are not easily digestible. Between them *laghu* foods do not cause much trouble to the body while *guru* foods cause many disturbances and diseases, occasional over eating of *laghu* foods may not cause trouble to the body but *guru* foods taken even slightly less than the usual quantity sometimes causes indigestion, so it is better to avoid taking *guru* foods in more quantities.

TABLE.1 Relation between Rasa, Dosha and Mahabhutas

Rasa	Mahabhutas	Dosha Samana	Dosha Kopana
<i>Madhur</i>	<i>Jala+Prithvi</i>	<i>Vata-Pitta</i>	<i>Kapha</i>
<i>Amala</i>	<i>Prithvi+Agni</i>	<i>Vata</i>	<i>Pitta-Kapha</i>
<i>Lavana</i>	<i>Jala+Agni</i>	<i>Vata</i>	<i>Pitta-Kapha</i>
<i>Katu</i>	<i>Vayu+Agni</i>	<i>Kapha</i>	<i>Pitta-Vata</i>
<i>Tikt</i>	<i>Vayu+Aakash</i>	<i>Pitta-Kapha</i>	<i>Vata</i>
<i>Kashaya</i>	<i>Vayu+Prithvi</i>	<i>Pitta-Kapha</i>	<i>Vata</i>

Matra: The consumer of food should make room for the food in belly in 3 portions – such as one portion of the space for solid food items, one for liquids and one for *Vata Pitta* and *Kapha*. While taking food in such quantity, one is not inflicted with any harmful effect caused by food taken in appropriate quantity³. Food taken in proper quantity provides strength, vigour, good complexion and nurtures the health of tissues that should be known as the proper measure of food which, when taken is digested in due time without impairing one's health. If the quantity is either excess or less result in impairment of health. The characters of food taken in appropriate quantity are no obstruction in heart, no pain in sides, no excessive heavi-

ness in abdomen, saturation of sense organs, cessation of hunger and thirst, easy in standing, sitting, lying down, movement, inspiration, expiration, laughing and gossiping, easy digestion of food and in evening and morning, promotion of strength, complexion, and development⁴

Nitya sevaniya Ahara(Wholesome daily food): The daily use of following should be cultivated for maintaining health— *shashtikashali*(rice), *mudga*(greengram), *Sai ndhava*(rock salt), *amlaka*(Indian Gooseberry), *yava*(barley), *antariksha jala*(rain water), *paya*(milk), *sarpi*(ghee), *jangalama msa*(meat of animals of arid, desert like land), *madhu*(honey). This not only maintain health but also help in preventing diseases⁵

Specialty of practicing wholesome diet for the patient- There is no need of practicing medicament if a man suffering from disease lives agreeing with wholesome diet. Of course a patient agreeing with wholesome diet removes his disease by only using wholesome diet and he does not require taking any medicine. So the importance of wholesome diet is more than from any medicine⁶

Anityasevaniya ahara (Unwholesome daily food)

The following should not be used daily-
valluram(sushkamamsam-

*driedmeat),sushka saakam(dried vegetables) shalukam(lotus tuber), bisam(lotus stem),krsha mamsa(meat of emaciated animals),koorchika,kilata(milk products),mamsa of shoukara(pork meat),gavya,(beef),mahisha(buffalo meat),matsya(fish),dadhi(curd),masha(black gram) and yavaka*⁷

- Diet plays an important role in keeping our mind healthy and happy. Psycho-pharmacological effect of food led to classification of food into following three category⁸.

Table 2.

<i>Satvik diet</i>	<i>Rajsik diet</i>	<i>Tamasik diet</i>
Diet containing vegetarian diet, non-oily, non spicy articles which are congenial to the body and mind.	too spicy, hot, sour, salty which excites the mental faculties .	too oily, heavy food which reduce mental competence.

- Our diet must provide all essential nutrients in the required amounts. Requirements of essential nutrients vary with age, gender, physiological status and physical activities. Dietary intakes lower or higher than the body requirements can lead to under nutrition (deficiency diseases) or over nutrition (diseases of affluence) respectively. Balanced diet is defined as one which contains a variety of food in such quantities and proportions that the need for energy, amino acids, vitamins, minerals, fats, carbohydrates and nutrients. Carbohydrates, fats and proteins are macro nutrients, which are needed in large amounts. Vitamins and minerals constitute the micro nutrients and are required in small amounts. These nutrients are necessary for physiological and biochemical processes by which the human body acquires, assimilates and utilizes food to maintain health and activity.

It should provide—

- 50-60% of total calories from carbohydrates .

- 10-15% from proteins
- 20-30% from both visible and invisible fat

In addition provide other non nutrients such as-

Dietary fibre, antioxidant, phytochemicals
The quantities of foods meet the nutrient requirement with respect to age, gender, physiological status and physical activity. During recent years nutritionists have worked out what is known as the “basic seven” food groups. If these foods are included in the diet each day, they will meet the need of the whole family very well. One does not have to bother with all the endless details of a complicated diet. Just follow this basic plan.

The “Basic Seven” Foods

- 1.) **Green and yellow leafy vegetables-**
These may be used either cooked or raw, fresh or frozen. They include cabbage, lettuce, broccoli, sprouts, asparagus, spinach, celery, and similar greens. These provide vitamin A to protect eyes and skin and to

guard against infection. They also provide iron for the blood and roughage for elimination.

2.) Fruits– At least two each day. Citrus fruit(orange),banana,tomato,apple,pear,peach,a bunch of grapes or some tropical fruit etc. These fruits provide vitamin C, which is essential for strong blood vessels and healthy gums and teeth.

3.) Potatoes and other vegetables-

Two or more servings should be eaten each day. These include irish potatoes,sweet potatoes,yams,beets,carrots,lentils,onions,peas,beans,soyabeans and many more.Vitamins and minerals are present in all vegetables.Vegetables provide bulk,which aids digestion.

4.) Milk and dairy products-

The very minimum for an adult should be a pint a day or more and a quart a day for each growing child or pregnant mother.Nursing mother need even more.It also provides minerals,vitamins and especially calcium,which is needed for bones,teeth, nerves and muscles.

5.) Protein foods
beans,peas,soyabean,nuts,peanuts,eggs,meat or fish.Soyabeans are the richest source of protein. Dried peas,beans,lentils, and peanuts are all similar to meat in food value.

6.) Whole- grain breads and cereals-

At least two or three slices of bread and dish of cooked cereal each day.Whole grains include wheat rice,barley,corn and other grains,“Enriched white flour” is better than ordinary white flour, but it is still lacking in certain essential elements.Grains and cereals provide calories for energy,as well as vitamins,minerals and roughage.Whole grains,freshly ground, are best.

7.) Butter,cream,fortified margarine-

A certain amount of fat is essential in every diet. Salad oils,olive oil,corn oil and similar products may be substituted to meet the daily requirements for fat in the diet. Fat provide calories for heat and energy.

These are the “basic seven” food groups. One or two from each group should be included in the diet of the whole family every day. The quantities need not be large⁹.

DISCUSSION:Nutrition is vital for our body and all of its systems to function properly. By having good nutrition it will help to maintain a healthy weight, reduce body fat, provide our body with energy, promote good sleep and generally make us feel better. Balanced diet maintains health,vitality and general wellbeing and also makes a small provision for extra nutrients to withstand short duration of leanness.This has been proven through many scientific studies and is now well documented. By having good nutrition it has been proven that we are less likely to develop many of the present-day diseases. Food taken in proper quantity provides strength, vigour, good complexion and nurtures the health of tissues that should be known as the proper measure of food which, when taken is digested in due time without impairing one's health.*Nitya Sevaniya Ahara* not only maintain health but also help in preventing diseases. Wholesome food described as the class of which help the harmonised body elements to return their state of equilibrium and the discordant body elements to gain equilibrium.The different dimension of Panchamahabutas concept and tridosa theory emphasize the vital link between nature and man and highly individualised approach in achieving nutritional balance.

Diet plays an important role in keeping our mind healthy and happy.

CONCLUSION: Rapid changes in diet and life style have lead to a major shift towards non communicable disease such as life style related disorders eg: Diabetes,obesity, arthritis, mental illness, cardiac diseases,cancer etc and Ayurvedic principles certainly play an important role in their prevention and management. Health promoting regime (pathya vyavastha) is the hallmark of Ayurvedic therapeutics; specific diet and life style guidelines are always prescribed along with the drugs and therapies to facilitate restoration of homoeostatic mechanism (*dhatu saamyata*) and wellbeing. Therefore, emphasis on diet planning based Ayurvedic principles would certainly help in health promotion,prevention of diseases and their management.

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