Role of Ahara in the Management of Lifestyle Disorders

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Abstract

In this era of modernization, the lifestyle of people is changed significantly leading to lifestyle disorders. The popularity of fast foods, canned foods as increased and violation of food habits is been done because of busy schedules. Factors like high calorie food, stress, irregular dietary habits etc contribute to lifestyle disorders. A report, jointly prepared by the W.H.O. and the world economic forum, says India will incur an accumulated loss of $236.6 billion by 2016 on account of unhealthy lifestyles and faulty diet. Ayurveda, “The science of life” is a holistic approach to health that is designed to help people live long, healthy and balanced lives. The main motto of Ayurveda is to maintain the health of a healthy individual and cure of diseased persons. This is achieved by appropriate use of AHARA, VIHARA and ACHARA. Among these three ahara is given prime importance, appropriate use of ahara is responsible for sustaining of body and at the same time it’s inappropriate use leads to many diseases via doshic imbalance. The ayurvedic dietary regimen is designed in such a way that it provides energy not only for body but also for mind and soul.

Keywords: Ayurveda, Ahara, Lifestyle Disorders.

Introduction

In the recent times, there is an increasing incidence of diseases such as hypertension, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, behavioral problems, high cholesterol, obesity affecting even the younger people mainly in cities. The changed living habits due to increasing job requirement, sedentary lifestyle and competitive living are the main culprits coming in the way of golden rules of good living.

A report, jointly prepared by the W.H.O. and the world economic forum, says India will incur an accumulated loss of $236.6 billion by 2016 on account of unhealthy lifestyles and faulty diet.

Definition

The diseases which are associated with the people those who adopt unhealthy and inappropriate lifestyles are called lifestyle disorders.

Causes

- High calorie food
- Stress
- Irregular dietary habits
- Sedentary life style
- Over dependence on processed foods, energy drinks, artificial sweeteners fast foo
- Smoking & drinking alcohol
- Poor sleeping habits which are all attributed etc contribute to lifestyle disorders.

Lifestyle disorders are a group of diseases.

The most common lifestyle disorders are cardiovascular disease such as hypertension, heart attack and stroke. Cancer, Alzheimer’s disease, asthma, chronic liver disease, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Diseases (COPD), diabetes and osteoporosis also fall under this category. Obesity is yet another lifestyle problem.
• Asthma, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary diseases and lung cancer have direct correlation with smoking.
• Chronic liver diseases are linked to alcoholism and eating food with less protein and vitamins.
• Oral cancer is attributed to smoking and tobacco chewing.
• Though there are various causative factors for Diabetes, the major attributing factor is over eating starchy food containing sugar and carbohydrate, stress and inadequate physical exercise. Obesity is another lifestyle problem due to same causes.
• Osteoporosis is another major health hazard these days. It is due to inadequate exposure to sun and eating food with less vitamins and minerals.
• Lastly, stress is a common cause of sleep disorders and conditions like Anxiety.

Management
• The good thing is most of the lifestyle disorders are reversible by fine tuning the lifestyle.
• As lifestyle disorders are slow in onset and progression, it may not be possible to detect them early. Once detected, long continued medication may become necessary.
• An expert consultation, early diagnosis, change in lifestyle include quitting smoking, avoiding alcohol, having a balanced diet, regular physical activity, leading a stress-free life and medication specific to the underlying diseases are very important in lifestyle disorders.

Prevention is the better way to maintain good health in this busy world.

The Golden Rules of Preventing Lifestyle Disorders
Lifestyle disorders are preventable and even reversible, if appropriate lifestyle modifications are made well in time.
• Healthy diet which includes fresh vegetables, fruits, minerals, proteins and vitamins.
• Quit smoking, alcohol & tobacco chewing.
• Regular physical activity, Brisk walking on a daily basis
• Long sitting at work place results in back and neck pain. Correct your sitting posture and take breaks from long sitting.
• Practice of yoga, meditation and spiritual pursuits are found to enhance positive health.
• Lifestyle disorders are treatable if detected early. Go for periodic medical checkups and avoid self medication.

Ayurveda, “The science of life” is a holistic approach to health that is designed to help people live long, healthy and balanced lives. The main motto of Ayurveda is to maintain the health of a healthy individual and cure of diseased persons.[1].

This is achieved by appropriate use of AHARA, VIHARA and ACHARA. Among these three ahara is given prime importance, appropriate use of ahara is responsible for sustaining of body and at the same time it’s inappropriate use leads to many diseases via doshic imbalance.

Definition of Ahara
The diet is regarded as Brahman as it holds such supreme importance.

“Annam Brahma Vyajanaat”(taittariyopanishad)

In general terms food includes all the edible substances.

The original source of living beings and their strength, complexion and ojas is diet which consists of 6 rasas and those again depend on substances[2].

Ahara in Trayopastambha
Human life is supported by three pillars- Ahara, Nidra, Brahma Charya. The first among the three, Ahara has given importance to the culinary section of Ayurveda. The Ayurvedic cuisine is designed in such a way that it provides energy not only for body, but also for mind and soul.

Relation between Ahara and Disease
The causes of the diseases are mentioned as

Asatmyaendriyarthasamyoga,
Pragnaparadha
Parinama
Improper Ahara, Vihara (food habits and lifestyles).
"Ahara sambavam vasthu rogascha ahara sambava
hita ahitha visheshascha vishesha sukhadukhayo"

The body as well as disease are caused by food. Wholesome and unwholesome foods are responsible for health and disease respectively[3].

**Trividha chikitsa:**

Among the three types of chikitsa administration of proper diet and medicinal drugs comes under the yuktivyapasraya chikitsa[4].

**Definition of wholesome and unwholesome food:**

The food articles which maintain the equilibrium of bodily dhatus and help in eliminating the disturbance of their equilibrium are to be regarded as wholesome, otherwise they are unwholesome.

**Agra dravya:**

-अन्नं वृत्तिकराणां श्रेष्ठम्

The most wholesome, unwholesome dietic articles also mentioned in 152 agra dravya[5]. Most wholesome, unwholesome dietic articles also mentioned in Charaka Samhita.

Wholesome ones mentioned in Charaka Samhita[6]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Wholesome ones</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rice</td>
<td>Red shali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pulses</td>
<td>Mudga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salts</td>
<td>Saindhava</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish</td>
<td>Rohita</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghee</td>
<td>Cow ghee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk</td>
<td>Cow's milk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetable fats</td>
<td>Til tail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish fat</td>
<td>Fat of chuluki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhizomes and roots</td>
<td>Zinger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruits</td>
<td>Grapes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat of animals</td>
<td>Ena</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat of birds</td>
<td>Lava</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pot herbs</td>
<td>Jeevanti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animals living in wholes</td>
<td>Godha</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Un wholesome ones in Charaka Samhita[7] (ch.su. 25/39)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Un wholesome ones</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pulses</td>
<td>Masa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salts</td>
<td>Usara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pot herbs</td>
<td>Mustard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat of animals</td>
<td>Beef</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat of birds</td>
<td>Young dove</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghee</td>
<td>Ghee of sheep milk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk</td>
<td>Sheep milk</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Rules for Taking Food**

Healthy individuals as well as patients should observe the following, even while using such of the food articles as are most wholesome by nature, one should eat only that food in proper quantity which is hot,
unctuous and not contradictory in potency and that too, after the digestion of the previous meal. Food should be taken in proper place equipped with all the accessories, without talking and laughing, with concentration of mind and paying due regard to oneself.

The stomach capacity should be divided into 3 parts for the purpose of taking food.

One part—solid food
Second part—liquids
Third part—for vata, pitta, kapha.

One who takes food with due regard to this principle, does not fall a victim to any of the harmful effects which arise out of food taken in improper quantity.

Management

By taking some foods there is improvement in some diseases. That means food plays major role in getting and decreasing the diseases. Few among them are

Hypertension
- Avoid high sodium foods include processed meats, salted snackfoods, cheeses & canned foods
- Eat Good dietary sources of potassium include bananas, potatoes, avocados, tomato juice & grape juice.
- Eat magnesium rich foods include any legumes and seeds, such as navy beans
  - and sunflower seeds

Asthma
- The vitamin C contained in hot chilli peppers can be good for health and asthma
- Fresh fruits and vegetables have anti-inflammatory properties that can help reduce swelling and inflammation in the lungs.

So lifestyle disorders can be managed by changing the diet.

Conclusion
- According to the motto of ayurveda it is not only for diseased but also for healthy persons. So by following the rules for taking ahara, Quantity of ahara, Wholesome food as mentioned in ayurveda one can be devoid of lifestyle disorders.
- Sadrvittas like doing physical exercises (yoga), daily diet and daily activity regimens will keep us away from diseases.

References

2. Yadavji Trikamji Sushruta Samhita of Sushruta Varanasi; Chaukhamba Surabharti Prakashana; Sutra Sthana 46/3. p-214