

Ayurveda Dietetic and Yoga Intervention During Covid-19 Days

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Abstract

Covid-19 is one among the newly emerged infection of the world and has become a global health emergency. Even though all the health authorities are constantly working to control the spread, the new cases are increasing day by day. Irrespective of respiratory etiquettes like regular washing of hands with soap and water or using alcohol-based sanitizers, wearing masks, avoiding touching of hands to eyes, nose and ears and social distancing, mortality rate is said to be very high irrespective of treatment provided. Considering the current need based scenario, prevention of the disease by improving the immune system is the best and ultimate way to combat this dreadful situation. In order to boost our immunity, samatolitaahara (balanced diet) always plays an important role to upgrade the present state of health of an individual and by practicing therapeutically proven yogasana, pranayama and breathing exercises helps to increase the capacity of the lungs in turn providing good amount of oxygen to the bodily system. So, keeping all these aspects in the mind, here an attempt has been made to understand the importance, properties and potential health benefits of ahara, yogasana and breathing exercises effective during Covid-19 condition.

Keywords: Covid-19; Ayurveda; Ahara; Nutrition; Immunity; Yogasana; Breathing exercises.

How to cite this article:

Sanjeev S Tonni/ Ayurveda Dietetic and Yoga Intervention During Covid-19 Days/ Indian J Ancient Med Yog. 2021;14(2): 59-63.

Introduction

Ayurveda considered ahara (food) as an important factor to maintain health as well as to treat the disease hence ahara has been called as Mahabhaishajya¹ (great medicament). Food is considered as one among the three pillars (trayopastambha) explained in Ayurveda.² Basically, Ayurveda tells that both the health and disease are the outcome of Ahara (food).³ According to Acharya Charaka, ideal diet is that, which builds the body systems, nourishes the tissues and maintains the equilibrium state of the body constituents. Hence the right food plays a vital role in determining the well-being and immunity. The risk of acute respiratory infection increases due to the poor mental health conditions like stress and depression.⁴ Feelings of loneliness and depression

are probably due to the mandatory social distancing measures and the increasing numbers of Covid-19 cases and deaths raising stress and anxiety. According to the researchers, certain yogasanas and pranayama practices may possibly be effective in treating or preventing Covid-19 infection. Diet prepared according to the Ayurveda principles when combined with therapeutic yogasana, pranayama, dhyana (meditation) and breathing exercises shown the good results in treating covid-19. Lung function is known to improve by the practice of pranayama⁵. Meditation helps to reduce inflammatory bio-markers⁶. Due to this process healing will speed up and accelerate.

Dietary principles: During Covid-19 days, ahara should possessing santarpanaguna (nourishing property) and laghu in nature (Heavy food



consumption leads to indigestion and un-digested food become burden to the metabolism require high oxygen demand to digest it).

- Ahara rasa (food taste) should be: Shad-rasayuktaahara (one should consume foods which are Madhura, amla, lavana, katu, tikta, kashaya rasa to enhance the strength. One should not practice eka rasa ie, only the particular food which is having single taste and Apararpanaaharaie, non-nourishing food).
- Aharaguna (Quality of the food) should be:

Laghu, Snigdha, Ushna, Drava, Sthira, Sara and Teekshnaguna.

- Ahara Pravichaarana (planning/serving of food): Laghuahara (light food), Ushnaahara (food served should be hot) & Maatrayuktaahara (quantity sufficient) is to be provided based on his/her digestive power.
- The ahara which are Picchila, Khara and Abhishyandhiguna which causes aggravation of kapha are to be avoided.

Aharavarga (Food group)	Pathyaahara (Food to be consumed)	Apathyaahara (Food not to be consumed)
Shookadhaanya (Cereals)	Puraanadhaanya (More than one year old stored cereals will not increase the kapha and it is light for the digestion) such as Shaali (Rice), Yava (Barley), Godhuma (Wheat)	Finely processed flour of rice (Pishtanna), maida; Naveenadhaanya (Consumption of newly harvested cereals increases the kleda&kapha. So, these are not to be consumed)
Truna (Siri) dhaanya (Millets)	Raagi (Finger millet), Navane (Foxtail millet), Sajje (Pearl millet), Kodrava (Kodo millet), Saame (Little millet), Oodalu (Barnyard millet), Jawar (Graet millet), Baragu (Proso millet). With these millets, one can prepare recipes like upma, idli, dosa, roti and also used in place of rice.	
Shimbi & Shamidhaanya (Pulses)	Kulattha (Horse gram), Mudga (Green gram), Masoora (Lentils), Makushtaka (Mothbean), Aadhaki (Red gram), Chanaka (Chik pea), Groundnut. Soup can be prepared from these pulses.	Harenu (Green Pea), Field bean, Soyabean, Raja masha (Kidney bean), Masha (Black gram), Nishpava (Cow pea).
Shaakavarga (Vegetables)	Patrashaaka: Sheegrupatra & phala (Drum stick leaves), Methika (Methi leaves), Shefu/Sabbasige leaves, Baala-Moolakapatra (Radish leaves), Knolkol leaves, Tanduleeyakapatra (Red Amaranthus/lalbhaaji), Cabbage, Upodika\Paalak (Spinach), Basalesoppu (Jeevanti), Vastukashaka (Chenopodium album). Soup can be prepared from these vegetables. Phalashaaka: Sheegruphala (Drum stick fruit), Kaaravellaka (Bitter gourd), Patola (Snake gourd), Tomato, Brinjal, Koshaataki (Ridge gourd), Chavali or gorikaayi (cluster beans), Broccoli, Green chilli, Bimbiphala (Ivy gourd), Kushmanda (Ashgourd). Kanda shaaka (tuber): Moolaka (Radish tuber), Knolkol, Red beetroot, Garjara (Carrot), Grunjanaka (shallot) Naalashaaka (stalk): Palandunaala (onion stalk)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bhindika (Lady's finger) • Aaluka (Potato) • Cauliflower • Urvaaruka/Trpusha (Cucumber) • Boodugumbala (Pumpkin) • Soorana • Sweet potato • Bottle gourd • Pumpkin Consumption of these will increase kapha in the body.

Phalavarga (Fruits)	<p>Madhuraphala: Amra (Mango fruit), Draaksha (Dry Grapes), Pakwamadhu-karkati (Papaya), Sapota (Chikku), Watermelon.</p> <p>Madhura-amlaphala: Daadima (Pomegranate), PakwaKapittha (Wood apple), PakwaChinchaa (Tamarind), Pineapple</p> <p>Kashaya-madhuraphala: Sincheetika (Apple), Jambu (Jamun fruit), Dates (dry), Kharjura, ApakwaAmrutaphala (Un-ripened Guava fruit).</p> <p>Amlaphala: Amalaki, Naaranga (Orange), Mosambi, Nimbu (lemon), Gajalimbe or Citrus lemon, Maatulunga (Citrus medica)</p> <p>Shushkaphala:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vaatama (Almond), Abhishuka (Cashew nut), Akshota (Akhrota), Phalgu (Anjeera), Udumbara (Figs). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PakwaAmrutaphala (Ripened Guava fruit) Pakwaka daliphala (Ripened Banana) Panasa (Jack fruit) Kola/badara (Jujuba fruit) Muskmelon Mridwika (wet Grapes) Seetaphala Ramphala <p>These fruits will increase the kapha in the body.</p>
Ksheera & Go-rasa varga (Milk & Milk products)	Toned milk, Pasteurized milk; Milk should be boiled before its consumption; Ghee, Butter, Samskaaritakra (Buttermilk processed with garlic, jeeraka, sanidhavalavana, curry leaves).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raw milk, thick buttermilk & Lassi Sweet dishes made out of dairy products such as pedhaa, kundaa, burfi etc should be better avoided.
Aharopayogivarga (Spices/Condiments)	Rasona (Garlic), Aardraka (Ginger), Haridra (Turmeric), Kaidaryapatra (Curry leaves), Jeeraka (Cumin seeds), Ajamoda, Twak (Cinnamomum), Lavanga (Clove), Palaandu (Onion), Hingu (Asfoetida). These are having agnideepana & high ORAC (Oxygen Radical Absorbance Capacity) values. Higher ORAC value, better will be oxygen carrying capacity of blood & lung oxygen capacity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Too salty Too spicy food articles Artificial colouring agents & sweeteners better to be avoided.
Tailavarga (Oils & Fats)	As per the area of practice: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ground nut oil, Safflower oil, Sunflower oil, Olive oil, Coconut oil (Habituated at coastal area) 	Palm oil, Rice bran oil, Vanaspati (Daalda) should not be used
Mamsavarga (Non-vegetarian foods)	Chicken & its soup, boiled egg, soup (mamsa rasa) and meat of goat, sheep; Fish.	
Madyavarga (Alcohol)	Wine, Whisky, Rum, Vodka These are to be consumed in yuktamaatra (Appropriate quantity)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100% concentrated liquor/Spirit Beer (cold and chilled)
Krutaannavarga	Ashtaganamanda, Panchakolapeya, KrutaYoosha, Krushara, Mamsa rasa, Saktu (roasted flour);	Mantha (cold infusion of dry fruits), Yavagu (thick gruel), Vilepi (lickable rice porridge). Too much animal protein and fat should not be consumed.
Sweets	Madhu (Honey), Ikshu rasa (Sugar cane juice), Guda (Jaggery).	Ati-Sharkara (too much sugar intake), Paayasa, Milk /ghee based sweets, Chocolates.
Various rice preparations	Haridraanna (Turmeric added rice), Gudaannam (Jaggery added rice), Rasodanam (Meat soup with rice), Siridhaanya (millets) anna.	
Jala (water)	Ushnajala (Boiled water), Sukhoshnajala (luke warm water)	Sheetajala (Cold water), old beverages; Ice creams, drinkables kept in freeze.
Various Yoosha preparations	Pancha-mushtikayoosha, Navaangayoosha, Mudgayoosha.	

Various Ksheerapaka (medicated milk) preparations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Haridra-ksheerapak (Turmeric or Golden milk) • Lashuna-ksheerapak (Garlic milk) • Pippali-ksheerapak (Long pepper milk) • Shunthi-ksheerapak (Ginger milk)
Various Medicated Tea preparations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Herbal tea • Dry ginger + Ela tea • Cinnamomum tea • Tulasi + ela tea
Medicated water	Shunthijala (Ginger water), Jeerakajala (Jeera water), Saarodaka (water boiled with khadira), Madhudaka (water mixed with honey), Triphala rasa (juice or decoction of triphala).
Prebiotics & Probiotics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jawar/Raagiambali with Trikatuchoorna; • Pickles (less oily), Curd with Amalaki / Pippalichoorna
Apathyaahara	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kshipraahara (Fast food), Apakwaanna (uncooked food), Ati-tailabhrashtaahara (too much oily food / deep fried food), Guru ahara (Heavy food), Medoja / kledajaahara (fatty food), Viruddhaaharaabhyasa (such as eating milk & radish together; milk & egg together). These will produce more free radicals in the body. Hence these are not supposed to be practice.
Apathyavihara	Late rise during the morning, sedentary habits and cold water bath should not be done.
Mental health enhancing activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Morning wake-up at 6 am • 6-7 hours good sleep • Mindful Yoga/Physical exercise • Practicing Dhyana & Yoganidra • One should not undergo anxiety/depression and should not afraid about the Covid-19 situation.

Yoga and Breathing Exercises

- Lung function and oxygen demand enhancing Yogic activities to be done daily.
- Prone position is a body position in which person lies flat with the chest down and the back-up.
- Medically, it is observed that the expiratory reserve volume measured at relaxation will be increased from the supine to prone position.
- The following yogasana, pranayama & breathing exercises will strengthen the Lungs, Enhances the Lung Capacity & Helps to obtain more oxygen to the cells.

Practice of Suryanamaskara: Daily one has to practice at least 5 to 6 rounds of Suryanamaskara during the (praathakkaal) sun rise time.

Practice of Yogasana: Daily one can practice the following yogasanas in the morning time in a clean room with yoga mat.

- Saashtanganamskaraasana
- Makarasana
- Bhujangasana
- Dhanurasana
- Ushtrasana
- Setubandhasana
- Maarjari asana

Practice of Pranayama

- Anuloma-viloma pranayama
- Suryabhedana pranayama
- Ujjayi pranayama
- Bhramari pranayama
- Kapalabhati pranayama

Breathing Exercises

- Simhakriya (Lion's breath)
- Diaphragmatic breathing
- Pursed-Lip breathing
- Rib stretch

Chanting of mantras

- OMKAR Chanting
- Gayatri mantra
- Maha-mrutyunjaya mantra

(Note: One should wash their both the hands with soap and water before performing pranayama & breathing exercises in order to avoid the infection.)

Discussion

As per Hippocrates saying "Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food" and also according to Ayurveda when hita-ahara⁷(good quality) is

consumed then no medicines are required. As ahara is the prime reason for formation of saptadhatu, Acharya Sushruta explains that Ojaessence of saptadhatu and represents bala (immunity/ strength) of an individual⁸. It builds resistance in human body against disease causing agents which can be considered as Vyadhikshamatva.⁹ The dietetic rules can be considered also as an Upaya for Vikaraprashamana. So, one should consume balanced diet that should nourish both body and mind. As ahara is considered as Mahabhaishajya even in the present days of pandemic of COVID-19, diet has a major role as decreased immunity is the prime cause, consuming proper food would help in recovering from the disease and also in post-covid recovery period, diet plays major role to improve the health.

Conclusion

Ayurveda dietetic intervention optimizes the function of the immune system and is a modifiable contributor to the development of chronic disease. To fight this fatal coronavirus, it is important to eat a well-balanced diet and disciplined lifestyle with the practice of yogasana and pranayama is the need of ours to boost immune system. Therapeutic utility of yoga and pranayama has a potential role in creating more positive health environment in the community.

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