

Ayurvedic Dietary Interventions and Nutritional Approaches in Haemorrhoids Management W.S.R. to Arshas

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Abstract

Background: Haemorrhoids, affecting 20-50% of the global population, significantly impact healthcare systems. In India, the prevalence is nearly 75%, exacerbated by inadequate preventive measures. This study explores the efficacy of *Ayurvedic* management for haemorrhoids, integrating dietary and herbal interventions to reduce incidence and severity.

Material: *Ayurvedic* texts such as *Charaka Samhita* and *Sushruta Samhita* recommend dietary modifications and herbal remedies, emphasizing high-fiber foods and avoidance of vitiating factors.

Result: The research evaluates a standardized dietary regimen incorporating *Ayurvedic* and modern nutritional principles, focusing on fiber intake, hydration, and the role of herbs like *Amalaki*, *Surana*, *Punarnava* and *Triphala*. Methodology includes a review of dietary articles and development of a master chart for clinical and household use, aligned with *Ayurvedic* principles.

Conclusion: Findings suggest that a holistic dietary approach, combining *Ayurvedic* practices with modern nutrition, offers an effective strategy for managing haemorrhoids.

Keywords: *Ayurveda*; Haemorrhoids; Nutrition.

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INTRODUCTION

Haemorrhoids, a prevalent anorectal disorder nearly affects 20–50% of the global population. In India, haemorrhoidal disease impacts nearly 75% of the population, despite awareness, largely due to insufficient prioritization of preventive care. Haemorrhoids are classified into internal and external types, often resulting from factors such as prolonged straining, constipation, low-fibre diets, and aging. Additionally, pregnancy and sedentary lifestyles exacerbate the condition.

Ayurveda, an Indian medical system, has long addressed haemorrhoidal disease under the classification of *Arshas*.^{1,4} Ayurvedic texts like *Charaka Samhita* and *Sushruta Samhita* provide comprehensive approaches to prevention and treatment, emphasizing dietary and lifestyle modifications. The core Ayurvedic principle of *pathya* (recommended practices) and *apathya* (prohibited practices) highlights the importance of dietary regulation. Herbal remedies, including *amalaki*, *punarnava*, *surana*, *triphala* and aloe vera, and lifestyle adjustments are central to managing haemorrhoids in Ayurveda.

This study aims to explore the efficacy of *Ayurvedic* management in the prevention and treatment of haemorrhoids, focusing on dietary interventions and herbal therapies, with the goal of reducing the incidence and severity of this condition.

METHODOLOGY

The study focuses on dietary management in preventing and treating haemorrhoids. A comprehensive assessment of various dietary articles was performed to identify foods that contribute to the onset, prevention, and treatment of haemorrhoids. A standardized dietary regimen, based on both *Ayurvedic* and modern nutritional principles, was formulated to incorporate preventive (*pathya*) and harmful (*apathya*) dietary components. This regimen aims to reduce haemorrhoid recurrence post-surgery and improve overall patient outcomes.

The methodology involved reviewing relevant literature, followed by developing a detailed analysis with nutritional values of *pathya-apathya* foods. Nutritional analysis was aligned with recommended dietary allowances (RDA) and *Ayurvedic* principles such as *dinacharya* (daily routines) and *ritucharya* (seasonal variations).

The approach emphasizes dietary fiber intake, hydration, and avoidance of irritants like spicy food and alcohol. The study also explored the role of *Ayurvedic* herbs in promoting digestive health and preventing haemorrhoids. This holistic strategy provides a preventive and therapeutic framework for managing haemorrhoids through diet and lifestyle adjustments.

ANALYSIS OF DIETARY ARTICLES

A balanced dietary regimen, referred to as *pathya-apathya*, is crucial in the prevention and management of haemorrhoids, complementing medical interventions. Classical *Ayurvedic* texts, including *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita* and *Ashtanga Hridayam* emphasize the importance of consuming foods that promote digestive health and regular bowel movements. Wholesome dietary articles (*pathya*) recommended for haemorrhoid patients include high-fiber foods such as horse gram (*Kulattha*), barley (*Yava*), and wheat (*Godhuma*). Additionally, vegetables like *Punarnava Shaka* (*Boerhavia diffusa*) and *Surana Kanda* (Elephant Foot Yam), as well as fermented preparations like buttermilk (*Takra*) and specialized *Ayurvedic* preparations like *Kanji* (fermented rice water), are advised to alleviate symptoms and prevent recurrence. *Ayurvedic* herbs, such as *Amalaki* (Indian Gooseberry) and lean meat (*Mriga Mamsa*), further support digestive function and reduce inflammation.¹⁻⁵

Unwholesome Dietary Articles

In contrast, certain foods and lifestyle habits are considered unwholesome (*apathya*) for individuals with haemorrhoids. These include fatty meats (*Anoopa Desh Mamsa*), fish (*Matsya*), and heavy-to-digest foods such as curd (*Dadhi*) and tubers (*Shalooka*), which can exacerbate constipation and worsen symptoms. Excessive exposure to sunlight, excessive water intake, and suppression of natural urges are also discouraged as they can aggravate digestive disturbances. Foods like ripened mango (*Pakva Amra*) and sesame (*Tila Pinyaka*) are similarly avoided for their potential to increase heat and inflammation in the body.¹⁻⁵

Nutritional Analysis of Wholesome Dietary Articles in *Arshas* (Haemorrhoids)⁶

The nutritional analysis of wholesome dietary

articles to be consumed to manage and prevent *Arshas* (haemorrhoids) has been dealt in the

Table 1 with dietary article and factor that help in management in *Arshas*.

Table 1: Nutritional Analysis of Dietary Articles For *Arshas* (Haemorrhoids)⁶

S. no.	Dietary Article	Utilization in <i>Arshas</i> (Haemorrhoids)
1	<i>Kulattha</i> (Horse Gram)	• High Fiber Content: Horse gram (<i>Macrotyloma uniflorum</i>) is rich in dietary fiber, which aids in softening stools and promoting regular bowel movements, potentially reducing strain during defecation, beneficial for haemorrhoid management. • Anti-inflammatory Properties: Horse gram contains compounds with potential anti-inflammatory effects, which may help alleviate symptoms associated with the inflammation of haemorrhoids. • Nutritional and Circulatory Benefits: As a good source of protein, vitamins, and minerals, horse gram supports overall health. Traditional medicine also suggests it may improve blood circulation, potentially reducing haemorrhoid discomfort.
2	<i>Yava</i> (Barley)	• Cooling Properties: Barley, recognized for its cooling effects in Ayurveda, helps soothe inflammation and discomfort associated with haemorrhoids. • High Fiber Content: Rich in dietary fiber, barley aids in softening stools and promoting regular bowel movements, reducing strain and alleviating haemorrhoid symptoms. • Easy Digestibility: Barley is easily digestible, making it suitable for individuals with haemorrhoids or other digestive sensitivities, and is less likely to aggravate the condition.
3	<i>Godhuma</i> (Wheat)	• Fiber Benefits: Wheat bran, shredded wheat, and other high-fiber grains like quinoa, barley, and oats enhance stool bulk, increase moisture, and improve bowel movement frequency, thus relieving constipation and alleviating piles symptoms. • Clinical Trial Findings: A study involving 60 patients with second or third-grade internal haemorrhoids assessed the efficacy of wheat cellulose particles combined with Diosmin tablets versus Diosmin alone. Results showed that the combination therapy significantly improved symptom relief, including reduced bleeding, pain, and prolapse, compared to single treatment. • Dietary Recommendations: Based on the trial outcomes, incorporating wheat products and other high-fiber foods into the diet is recommended for the effective management of haemorrhoids, offering a safe and well-tolerated therapeutic option.
4	<i>Rakta-Shali</i> (Red Rice)	• Cooling and Digestive Ease: <i>Rakta Shali</i> provides a cooling effect on the body, helping to alleviate inflammation associated with haemorrhoids. Additionally, its easy digestibility makes it suitable for individuals with digestive sensitivities. • High Fiber Content: The high dietary fiber in red rice promotes regular bowel movements, reduces constipation, and minimizes straining during defecation, all of which are crucial for preventing and managing haemorrhoids. • Nutrient Density: Rich in essential vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants, red rice supports overall health and aids in the healing and repair of affected anal tissues, contributing to better management of haemorrhoid symptoms.
5	<i>Punarnava Shaka</i> (<i>Boerhavia Diffusa</i>)	• Anti-inflammatory and Swelling Reduction: <i>Punarnava</i> has anti-inflammatory properties that help reduce swelling and discomfort associated with haemorrhoids. • Digestive and Laxative Support: It supports digestive health and provides a mild laxative effect, aiding in regular bowel movements and preventing straining, which can aggravate haemorrhoids. • Improved Circulation and Detoxification: <i>Punarnava</i> promotes better blood circulation and detoxifies the body, which may alleviate congestion in the anal region and support overall haemorrhoid management.
6	<i>Surana Kanda</i> (Elephant Foot Yam)	• Fiber Content: <i>Surana Kanda</i>, a starchy tuber, is high in dietary fiber (approximately 4 grams), which helps soften stool and ease bowel movements, reducing strain on haemorrhoids. • Improved Digestion: The fiber in <i>Surana Kanda</i> supports regular, smooth digestion, mitigating constipation—a common exacerbator of haemorrhoids. • Prevention: Consuming fiber-rich foods like <i>Surana Kanda</i> helps prevent haemorrhoids by reducing the risk of constipation and promoting overall digestive health, and is specially mentioned in <i>Arshas</i> management as medicine and food.

table cont....

S. no.	Dietary Article	Utilization in <i>Arshas</i> (Haemorrhoids)
7	<i>Takra</i> (Butter Milk)	• Digestive Health: Buttermilk is rich in probiotics, such as lactic acid bacteria, which promote a healthy gut flora and aid in digestion. This helps alleviate constipation—a common aggravating factor for haemorrhoids. • Soothing and Low-Fat: Buttermilk provides a cooling effect on the digestive system, offering relief from inflammation and discomfort associated with haemorrhoids. Its low-fat content makes it a suitable dietary choice, as high-fat foods can exacerbate symptoms. • Nutrient-Rich and Hydrating: Buttermilk is a good source of essential nutrients, including calcium, vitamin D, and protein, which support overall health and recovery. Additionally, it contributes to daily fluid intake, aiding in hydration and bowel regularity.
8	<i>Amalaki</i> (Indian Gooseberry)	• Astringent and Cooling Properties of <i>Amla</i>: <i>Amla</i> (Indian gooseberry) exhibits astringent properties that reduce swelling and inflammation in Haemorrhoids. Its cooling effect soothes discomfort and irritation. • High Fiber and Antioxidant Content: Rich in dietary fiber, <i>amla</i> promotes regular bowel movements and prevents constipation. Additionally, its high antioxidant content reduces oxidative stress and inflammation in the rectal area. • Nutritional and Anti-inflammatory Benefits: <i>Amla</i> provides essential nutrients and vitamin C, which strengthen blood vessels and reduce inflammation, contributing to haemorrhoids relief. Its mild laxative properties further aid in bowel regulation. • Benefits of <i>Triphala Churna</i>: Comprising <i>amalaki</i>, <i>vibhitaki</i>, and <i>haritaki</i>, <i>Triphala Churna</i> aids in curing constipation, reducing congestion in intestinal veins, and providing flexibility to blood vessels. It functions as a natural laxative with antioxidant and anti-inflammatory effects, supporting overall bowel health.
9	<i>Bilwa</i> (Wood Apple)	• Botanical and Nutritional Profile: Wood apple from the Rutaceae family, is rich in phytochemicals including polyphenols, vitamins A, B1, and B2, saponins, coumarins, amino acids, triterpenoids, phytosterols, and tannins. It is a significant source of antioxidants, contributing to its potential in scavenging free radicals. • Ayurvedic Medicinal Properties: In <i>Ayurveda</i>, <i>Bael</i> fruit (wood apple) is valued for its medicinal properties, particularly in treating haemorrhoids. It offers benefits through its cooling effect, anti-inflammatory properties, astringency, and mild laxative effect, all of which help in alleviating the discomfort and inflammation associated with haemorrhoids. • Dietary Benefits for Haemorrhoids: The high fiber content of <i>Bael</i> fruit aids in regulating bowel movements and preventing constipation, a key factor in haemorrhoid management. Additionally, its high-water content supports hydration, further assisting in softening stools and easing bowel movements. • Health Support: <i>Bael</i> fruit provides essential vitamins and minerals, such as vitamin C, calcium, and iron, which support overall health and healing. Its antioxidant-rich composition, including tannic and phenolic compounds, benefits conditions like piles, ulcers, diarrhoea, and dysentery.
10	<i>Navaneeta</i> and <i>Ghrita</i> (Butter and Ghee)	• Lubrication and Softening: Ghee's lubricating properties help reduce dryness and friction in the anal area, easing stool passage and alleviating discomfort. It also softens stools, reducing strain on haemorrhoidal veins. • Cooling Properties: Ghee's cooling effects can mitigate inflammation and heat associated with Haemorrhoids, providing symptomatic relief. • Nutrient Absorption: Ghee aids in the absorption of nutrients, supporting digestive health and potentially mitigating gastrointestinal issues that could worsen Haemorrhoids. • Dosha-Specific Benefits: • <i>Vata Dosha:</i> Ghee helps counteract dryness and constipation common in <i>Vata</i> imbalances. • <i>Pitta Dosha:</i> Its cooling properties soothe inflammation and heat. • <i>Kapha Dosha:</i> Ghee aids in improving sluggish digestion and alleviating constipation.
11	<i>Vastuka Shaka</i> (<i>Cheopodium Album</i>)	• Balancing <i>Vata Dosha</i>: <i>Vastuka Shaka</i> helps pacify the aggravated <i>Vata dosha</i>, addressing symptoms such as dryness, pain, and constipation associated with Haemorrhoids. • Local Relief: Medicated enemas with drugs like <i>Vastuka</i> provide targeted relief by soothing the rectal area and reducing inflammation, pain, and itching. • Improving Bowel Movements: <i>Vastuka</i> aids in softening stool and preventing constipation, a common aggravating factor for Haemorrhoids. • Reducing Congestion: By enhancing waste elimination, <i>Vastuka</i> helps reduce anal region congestion, which benefits Haemorrhoids management.

table cont....

S. no.	Dietary Article	Utilization in <i>Arshas</i> (Haemorrhoids)
12	<i>Maricha</i> (Black Pepper)	• Digestive Aid: Black pepper enhances digestion, which may reduce rectal strain and alleviate Haemorrhoids symptoms. • Anti-Inflammatory Properties: Piperine in black pepper has potential anti-inflammatory effects, helping to mitigate inflammation associated with Haemorrhoids. • Analgesic and Circulatory Benefits: Black pepper may provide mild pain relief and improve blood circulation, potentially reducing congestion and swelling in haemorrhoidal veins. • Purgative Effect: Its mild laxative properties can prevent constipation, a contributing factor to Haemorrhoids development.
13	<i>Mrig-Mamsa</i> (Lean Meat)	• Low Fat Content: Lean meats, such as skinless poultry, are low in saturated fats, which helps avoid exacerbating Haemorrhoids. • High-Quality Protein: Lean meat provides essential protein for tissue repair and overall health, supporting the healing process of Haemorrhoids. • Iron-Rich: Lean meats are a good source of easily absorbed iron, which is crucial for preventing or addressing iron deficiency anemia in patients with bleeding Haemorrhoids. • Digestibility: Lean meats are easier to digest compared to high-fat or spicy foods, reducing irritation during Haemorrhoid flare-ups and supporting digestive health.
14	<i>Ajaksheera</i> (Goat's Milk)	• Prebiotic Benefits: Goat milk contains oligosaccharides that act as prebiotics, promoting beneficial bifidobacterial growth in the gut. This can enhance digestive health, boost immunity, and aid in lowering cholesterol and improving lactose digestion. • Cholesterol Management: Goat milk helps reduce cholesterol levels, potentially mitigating one of the contributing factors to haemorrhoids. • Anti-Inflammatory and Antioxidant Properties: The anti-inflammatory compounds in goat milk may alleviate inflammation associated with haemorrhoids, while its antioxidants help protect cells from oxidative damage, supporting tissue repair. • Digestive and Metabolic Support: Goat milk's A2 casein is less likely to cause inflammation, and its high vitamin C content supports blood vessel health. Additionally, its role as a metabolic agent aids in relieving constipation and bloating, which are key issues in haemorrhoids management.
15	<i>Vrintaka</i> (Eggplant)	• Nutritional Composition: Eggplant (<i>Solanum melongena L.</i>), rich in fiber (3 g per 100 g) and low in calories (25 Kcal), supports digestive health and regular bowel movements, which is beneficial for managing haemorrhoids. • Anti-Inflammatory and Antioxidant Properties: The methanolic extract of eggplant demonstrates significant anti-inflammatory effects, attributed to chlorogenic acid, which can reduce inflammation and improve vascular health. • Ayurvedic Benefits: In Ayurveda, eggplant is valued for its cooling effect and ability to alleviate discomfort associated with haemorrhoids, enhancing overall digestive health.
16	<i>Patola</i> (Pointed Gourd)	• High Fiber Content: Pointed gourd (<i>Trichosanthes dioica</i>) is a good source of dietary fiber (14 g per 100 g), aiding in stool softening and promoting regular bowel movements. • Hydration and Nutritional Value: Rich in water content and essential nutrients, pointed gourd supports hydration and overall digestive health, crucial for managing haemorrhoids. • Anti-Inflammatory Effects: It contains anti-inflammatory compounds that may reduce swelling and provide relief from haemorrhoidal discomfort.
17	<i>Kanji</i> (Dhanyamla)	• Hydration and Digestion: <i>Kanji</i>, a rice-based porridge, is hydrating and easy to digest, making it suitable for haemorrhoids management by preventing constipation and soothing the digestive system. • Cooling and Soothing Effects: Its cooling properties help alleviate inflammation and discomfort, while its soft texture minimizes strain during bowel movements. • Nutritional Benefits: <i>Kanji's</i> fiber content supports stool softening and regular bowel movements, reducing the risk of haemorrhoid aggravation.

DISCUSSION

Haemorrhoids, or *Arshas* in *Ayurveda*, affect a significant portion of the global population, causing discomfort and impacting quality of life. Despite

advancements in contemporary medicine, *Ayurveda* offers a complementary perspective that combines ancient wisdom with modern knowledge. Globally, haemorrhoids affect 20-50% of the population, with higher prevalence between ages 45 and 65.

Historically, haemorrhoids have been documented in ancient texts, including the Old Testament and Egyptian scriptures. *Ayurvedic* texts, notably *Charaka Samhita* and *Sushruta Samhita*, describe haemorrhoids as a result of imbalanced *dosha* (*Vata*, *Pitta*, *Kapha*), prescribing dietary, lifestyle, and herbal interventions. *Sushruta* predominantly describe the four types of management methodology for *Arshas* as *Bheshaja* (food and medicine), *Kshara karma* (*ksharalepa* and *Ksharasutra*), *Agni karma* (thermal cauterization), and *Shastra karma* (surgical procedures).³

Since, food (*ahara*) is the best medicine (*bheshaja*), the role of diet in managing haemorrhoids is central in *Ayurvedic* treatment. High-fiber foods, adequate hydration, and a low-fat diet are recommended to prevent constipation and reduce strain during bowel movements. Dietary guidelines also advise avoiding spicy foods and caffeine, which can worsen symptoms. Weight management is emphasized as a preventive measure to decrease rectal pressure. The concept of *Pathya* (wholesome diet) includes foods like horse gram, aloe vera, and butter, which support digestion. In contrast, *Apathya* (unwholesome diet) involves foods such as fatty meats and fish that aggravate haemorrhoids. The major objective of dietary articles to be partaken in haemorrhoids is to clear the bowel with no or less difficulty, prevent constipation and bloating, improve digestion, strengthen the digestive fire (*agni*) and reduce the complaints associated with the haemorrhoidal mass like itching, pain, discharge, prolapse, bleeding etc. Thus, this review highlights the importance of developing a standardized dietary regimen to complement haemorrhoid management.

Since the *pathya* mentioned in classical texts of *Ayurveda* (*samhitas*) fit into the domain of modern-day nutritional science and dietetics for haemorrhoid management, backed by evidences, integrating *Ayurvedic* principles with modern dietary insights can offer a holistic approach, combining preventive strategies with therapeutic interventions to improve patient outcomes.

CONCLUSION

Haemorrhoids, affecting a large of the population, present a significant health issue, with both *Ayurvedic* and modern medical perspectives offering valuable insights. *Ayurveda*, with its rich history in managing such conditions under the term *Arshas*, provides a comprehensive approach that integrates dietary, lifestyle, and medical management. Recognizing haemorrhoids as a consequence of sedentary lifestyles, obesity, and chronic inflammation, the *Ayurvedic* framework emphasizes a balanced diet rich in fiber and adequate hydration. Avoiding pressure inducing activities and adhering to the principles of *Pathya* and *Apathya* enhances therapeutic outcomes. Integrating these practices offers a holistic strategy for managing and preventing haemorrhoids.

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