



Review Article

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A REVIEW ON *AHARA VIDHI* AND ITS RELEVANCE IN MODERN DIETARY PRACTICES

*Dr. Prateek Khatana¹, Dr. Manisha², Dr. Sourabh³

¹Assistant Professor, Department of Swasthavritta and Yoga, Bhartiya Ayurvedic Medical College, Gajraula, UP.

²MD Swasthavritta & Yoga, IAS&R Kurukshetra, Haryana.

Email id - sheokandmanisha0510@gmail.com, Mob -9468144601

³Medical Officer, CYGNUS Hospital Kurukshetra, Haryana.

Email id - sourabhain001@gmail.com, Mob -8396826510

*Corresponding Author - Dr. Prateek Khatana, Assistant Professor, Department of Swasthavritta and Yoga, Bhartiya Ayurvedic Medical College, Gajraula, UP.

Email id - Prateek.khatana100@gmail.com, Mob -9056721832

ABSTRACT

Background *Ahara* is considered one of the three main pillars of life in *Ayurveda*, along with *Nidra* and *Brahmacharya*. The concept of *Ahara Vidhi* explains the proper rules, methods, quantity, timing, sequence, and mental state required for food intake. In modern times, irregular eating habits, fast food culture, emotional eating, overeating, late-night meals, screen-based eating, and lack of attention during meals have become common. These dietary errors disturb digestion, metabolism, gut health, and mental well-being. Therefore, the classical principles of *Ahara Vidhi* have strong relevance in present-day dietary practices.

Aim To review the concept of *Ahara Vidhi* and evaluate its relevance in modern dietary practices. **Objectives** To study the classical description of *Ahara Vidhi* in *Ayurvedic* texts. To understand the role of *Ahara Vidhi* in maintaining *Agni*, *Dosha*, and *Dhatu* balance. To correlate *Ahara Vidhi* with modern concepts of dietetics and nutrition. To assess the importance of proper dietary practices in prevention of lifestyle disorders. To present a

conceptual understanding of dietary errors and their role in disease formation. **Material and Methods** Classical *Ayurvedic* texts such as *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, and *Ashtanga Hridaya* were reviewed. Modern literature related to diet, digestion, nutrition, mindful eating, circadian rhythm, and lifestyle disorders was studied. The collected information was analyzed conceptually and presented in a structured review format. **Discussion** The principles of *Ahara Vidhi* are preventive, promotive, and curative in nature. They can be effectively applied in modern dietary counselling for better digestion, metabolism, and lifestyle disease prevention. **Conclusion** *Ahara Vidhi* is a practical and scientific dietary guideline described in *Ayurveda*. Its integration with modern dietary practices can improve digestive health, metabolic balance, and overall quality of life.

Keywords *Ahara Vidhi*, *Agni*, *Ama*, *Pathya Ahara*, Mindful eating, Modern dietetics

Introduction

Ahara has been given prime importance in *Ayurveda* because it nourishes the body, supports strength, maintains immunity, promotes longevity, and sustains life. Properly consumed food supports the formation of healthy *Dhatu*, maintains normal function of *Dosha*, and preserves physical as well as mental health. In *Ayurveda*, food is not viewed only as a source of calories, proteins, fats, and carbohydrates, but as a complete biological factor that directly influences digestion, metabolism, tissue formation, immunity, and consciousness.¹

The concept of *Ahara Vidhi* explains the correct method of food intake. It includes rules related to freshness of food, warm food, proper quantity, compatible food combinations, eating after digestion of previous meal, eating with concentration, and avoiding excessive fast or slow eating. These principles are described mainly to maintain the strength of *Agni*, prevent formation of *Ama*, and promote proper nourishment of the body.²

In the present era, faulty food habits have become very common. People often consume processed food, junk food, excessive sugar, fried food, cold beverages, incompatible food combinations, and late-night meals. Many people eat while watching television, using mobile phones, working on laptops, or under stress. These habits reduce awareness during eating and may disturb satiety signals, digestion, metabolism, and gut health.³ Modern nutritional science is now giving importance to concepts like mindful eating, circadian nutrition, meal timing, gut microbiota, portion control, balanced diet, and avoidance of ultra-processed

foods. These ideas are closely related to the classical principles of *Ahara Vidhi*. Therefore, a review of *Ahara Vidhi* is useful to understand how ancient dietary wisdom can guide modern dietary practices and prevent lifestyle-related disorders.⁴

Aim and Objectives

Aim

To review the concept of *Ahara Vidhi* and evaluate its relevance in modern dietary practices.

Objectives

1. To study the classical description of *Ahara Vidhi* in *Ayurvedic* texts.
2. To understand the role of *Ahara Vidhi* in maintaining *Agni*, *Dosha*, and *Dhatu* balance.
3. To correlate *Ahara Vidhi* with modern concepts of dietetics and nutrition.
4. To assess the importance of proper dietary practices in prevention of lifestyle disorders.
5. To present a conceptual understanding of dietary errors and their role in disease formation.

Material and Methods

This is a conceptual review study based on classical *Ayurvedic* literature and modern scientific understanding of dietary practices. Classical texts including *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Ashtanga Hridaya*, and related commentaries were reviewed for the concept of *Ahara*, *Ahara Vidhi*, *Agni*, *Ama*, *Pathya*, and *Apathya*. Modern literature related to nutrition, digestion, mindful eating, meal timing, circadian rhythm, gut health, and lifestyle disorders was also studied. The collected information was analyzed and presented in a structured manner to explain the relevance of *Ahara Vidhi* in present-day dietary habits.

AYURVEDIC REVIEW

AHARA

Ahara means food or diet which is taken for nourishment and maintenance of life. In *Ayurveda*, *Ahara* is considered one of the main supporting pillars of life. It provides strength, complexion, happiness, satisfaction, growth, immunity, and longevity. Proper *Ahara* maintains the balance of *Dosha*, supports normal function of *Agni*, and helps in proper formation of *Rasa Dhatu* and other *Dhatu*. The importance of *Ahara* is not limited to physical nourishment. It also affects the mind. Food with good quality, proper preparation, and

suitable intake supports mental clarity, stability, and positive emotions. On the other hand, improper food habits may cause heaviness, laziness, irritability, dullness, and disturbed mental function.⁵

AHARA VIDHI⁶

Ahara Vidhi means the rules and methods of taking food. It explains not only what should be eaten, but also how, when, where, how much, and in what mental condition food should be consumed. This makes the concept more complete than ordinary diet planning. The main purpose of *Ahara Vidhi* is to protect *Agni*. When food is consumed properly, *Agni* digests it completely and converts it into useful nutrients. When food is taken improperly, even good-quality food may not be digested properly and may produce *Ama*. Therefore, *Ahara Vidhi* is important for both health maintenance and disease prevention.

Ahara Vidhi Vidhana

Charaka Samhita explains important rules for food intake under *Ahara Vidhi Vidhana*. These rules are practical and can be followed in daily life.⁷

Ushnam Ashniyat

Food should be taken warm and fresh. Warm food improves taste, stimulates *Agni*, supports proper digestion, and helps normal movement of *Vata*. Cold food may slow digestion and produce heaviness, bloating, and indigestion. In modern understanding, warm freshly prepared food is usually easier to digest than stale or refrigerated food. It also improves palatability and may stimulate digestive secretions.⁸

Snigdham Ashniyat

Food should contain proper unctuousness. *Snigdha Ahara* supports lubrication, softness, strength, and satisfaction. It pacifies excessive *Vata* and supports proper movement of food through the digestive tract. This does not mean excessive oily food. It means the proper use of healthy fats in suitable quantity. Modern nutrition also accepts the role of good fats in hormone production, satiety, absorption of fat-soluble vitamins, and cell health.

Matravat Ashniyat

Food should be taken in proper quantity. Quantity depends on digestive capacity, age, body constitution, season, physical activity, and type of food. Eating less than required causes

weakness and poor nourishment. Eating more than required causes heaviness, indigestion, obesity, and metabolic disturbance. Modern dietetics also supports portion control and calorie balance. Overeating is associated with obesity, insulin resistance, dyslipidemia, and other lifestyle disorders.

Jirne Ashniyat

Food should be taken only after the previous meal is digested. Signs of proper digestion include lightness of body, clear belching, hunger, proper evacuation, enthusiasm, and absence of heaviness. Eating before digestion of the previous meal disturbs *Agni* and leads to *Ama* formation. In modern terms, frequent eating without hunger may overload digestion, disturb metabolic rhythm, and contribute to weight gain.⁹

Virya Aviruddham Ashniyat

Food substances with opposite potency should not be taken together. Such wrong combinations are called *Viruddha Ahara*. Examples include incompatible combinations that disturb digestion and metabolism. The modern correlation may be seen in food intolerance, poor digestion, allergic responses, acidity, bloating, and metabolic stress caused by unsuitable food combinations or highly processed food mixtures.

Ishta Deshe Ishta Sarvopakaranam Ashniyat

Food should be taken in a clean, comfortable, pleasant place with proper utensils and arrangements. The surrounding environment affects the mind and digestion. Modern science also supports the role of environment in eating behavior. Eating in a calm place improves awareness, chewing, satiety, and digestion. Eating in a disturbed environment may promote overeating and poor digestion.

Na Atidrutam Ashniyat

Food should not be eaten too fast. Eating too fast causes improper chewing, overeating, bloating, and poor digestion. It may also reduce awareness of taste and satiety. Modern studies also suggest that fast eating is associated with obesity and poor metabolic health because satiety signals require time to develop.¹⁰

Na Ativilambitam Ashniyat

Food should not be eaten too slowly. Eating too slowly may make food cold and less palatable. It may also disturb the natural flow of digestion. A balanced pace of eating is ideal. Food should be chewed properly and consumed with attention, but not delayed unnecessarily.

Ajalpan Ahasan Tanmana Bhunjita

Food should be taken without excessive talking, laughing, distraction, or emotional disturbance. The mind should be focused on food. This principle is very close to the modern concept of mindful eating. Eating with full attention improves chewing, digestion, satisfaction, and portion control. Eating while using mobile phones, watching television, or working may lead to overeating and poor digestion.

Atmanam Abhisamikshya Bhunjita

One should eat after considering personal suitability. Food should be selected according to *Prakriti*, *Agni*, age, season, disease condition, occupation, and digestive capacity. This principle is similar to personalized nutrition in modern science. Diet should not be the same for everyone. It should be planned according to individual needs, health status, activity level, and metabolic capacity.

Role of Agni in Ahara Vidhi

Agni is the digestive and metabolic power of the body. It transforms food into absorbable and useful form. Proper *Agni* leads to good digestion, energy, immunity, strength, and healthy *Dhatu* formation. When *Agni* is balanced, food is digested properly. When *Agni* is weak, irregular, or excessive, digestion becomes disturbed. This may result in heaviness, acidity, gas, constipation, loose stools, weakness, or metabolic disorders. Therefore, *Ahara Vidhi* mainly aims to protect and regulate *Agni*.

Concept of Ama

Ama is an improperly digested toxic metabolic product formed due to weak *Agni* and improper food habits. It is heavy, sticky, obstructive, and disease-producing in nature. *Ama* blocks *Srotas*, disturbs *Dosha*, and becomes a major factor in disease formation. Improper food timing, overeating, incompatible food, stale food, heavy food, emotional eating, and eating without hunger may lead to *Ama* formation. In modern correlation, *Ama* may be

understood conceptually as incomplete digestion, metabolic toxins, inflammatory load, gut dysbiosis, and accumulation of harmful metabolites.¹¹

Pathya and Apathya

Pathya means suitable diet and lifestyle which supports health and helps in disease management. *Apathya* means unsuitable diet and lifestyle which disturb health and aggravate disease. In daily practice, *Pathya Ahara* includes fresh, warm, digestible, balanced, seasonal, and suitable food. *Apathya Ahara* includes stale food, processed food, excessive fried food, incompatible food, overeating, irregular meals, and eating under stress.

Ahara Vidhi and Dinacharya

Dinacharya means daily regimen. Food intake is an important part of *Dinacharya*. Meals should be taken at proper time, according to hunger and digestive capacity. Daytime routine, sleep, exercise, and mental state also influence digestion. Modern lifestyle often disturbs this rhythm. Skipping breakfast, late-night dinner, irregular eating, and lack of sleep disturb biological rhythm. *Ahara Vidhi* helps to restore dietary discipline and daily metabolic rhythm.

Ahara Vidhi and Ritucharya

Ritucharya means seasonal regimen. Food should be modified according to season. Digestive strength varies in different seasons. Heavy food may be tolerated in winter due to strong *Agni*, while light and cooling food is preferred in summer. Modern nutritional advice also accepts seasonal eating, hydration, and changes in diet according to climate, activity, and environmental conditions.¹²

Viruddha Ahara

Viruddha Ahara means incompatible food. It may be incompatible by combination, processing, quantity, time, place, season, or individual suitability. Regular intake of *Viruddha Ahara* may disturb *Dosha*, produce *Ama*, and cause skin disorders, digestive problems, metabolic disturbance, and other diseases. In modern dietary practice, frequent intake of incompatible, processed, chemically preserved, reheated, and poorly combined food may disturb gut health, immunity, and metabolism.

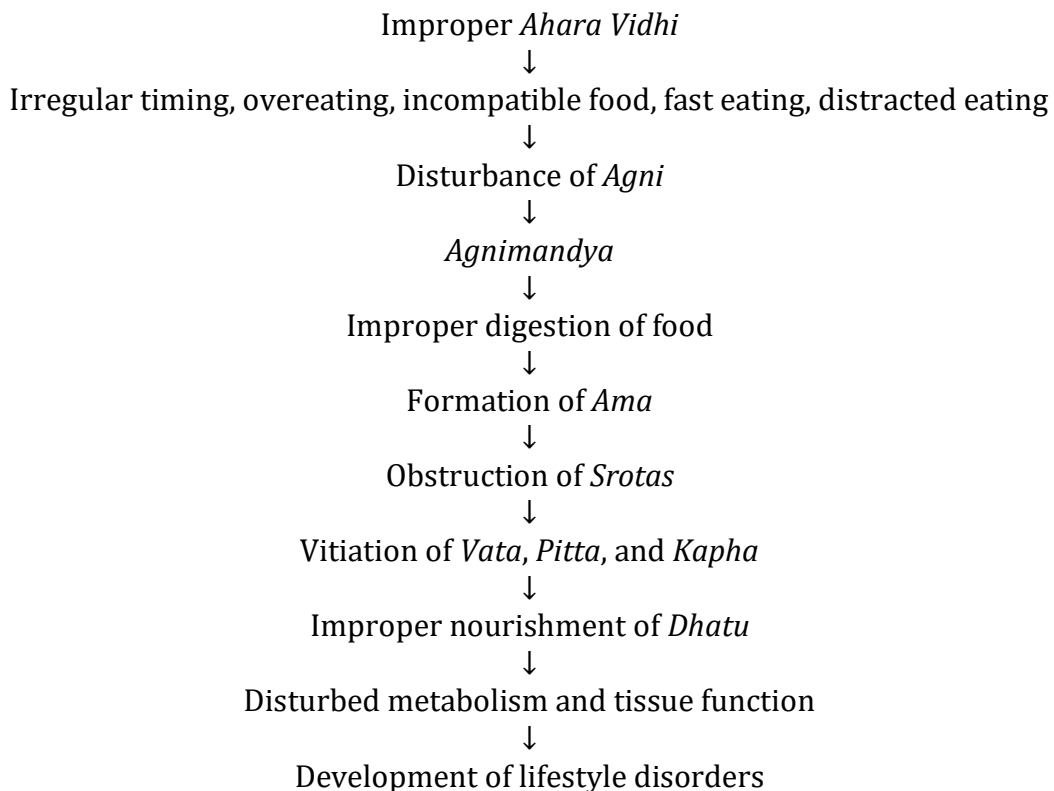
Relevance of *Ahara Vidhi* in Prevention of Lifestyle Disorders

Lifestyle disorders such as obesity, diabetes mellitus, hypertension, dyslipidemia, fatty liver, acidity, constipation, irritable bowel symptoms, and sleep disturbance are strongly related

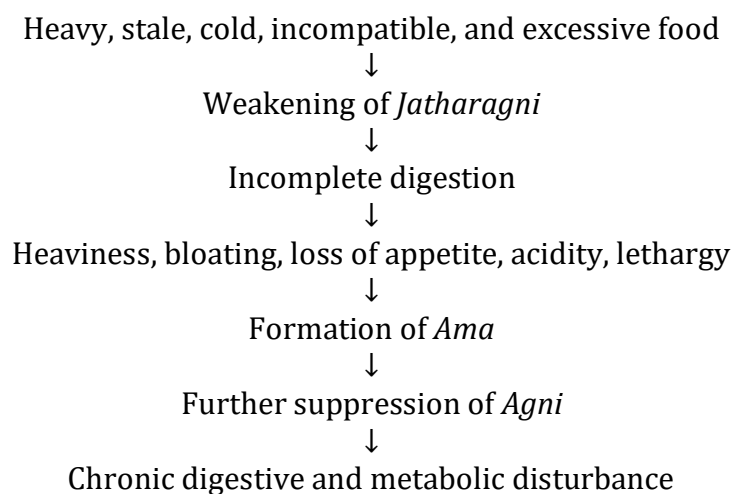
to faulty diet and routine. *Ahara Vidhi* provides practical preventive guidelines. By following proper meal timing, portion control, mindful eating, freshly prepared food, suitable food combinations, and eating according to digestive capacity, many lifestyle-related disorders may be prevented or controlled.¹³

Samprapti

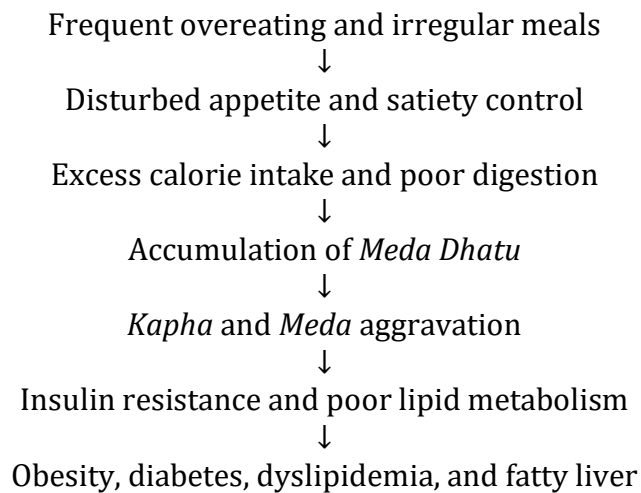
Samprapti of Disease Formation Due to Improper Ahara Vidhi



Samprapti of Agnimandya Due to Faulty Diet



Samprapti of Metabolic Disorder Due to Ahara Vidhi Violation



Modern Review

Concept of Diet and Nutrition

Modern nutrition explains food in terms of macronutrients, micronutrients, calories, fiber, water, and bioactive compounds. Carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins, minerals, and water are essential for normal body function. A balanced diet provides energy, supports growth, repairs tissues, maintains immunity, and prevents nutritional deficiencies. However, modern nutrition is now moving beyond nutrient counting. It also considers meal timing, food quality, food processing, gut microbiota, eating behavior, and metabolic response. This wider view is very similar to the *Ayurvedic* concept of *Ahara Vidhi*.¹⁴

Meal Timing and Circadian Rhythm

The body follows a biological clock known as circadian rhythm. Digestion, hormone secretion, insulin sensitivity, body temperature, sleep, and metabolism are influenced by this rhythm. Eating at irregular times, especially late at night, may disturb metabolism and increase the risk of obesity, diabetes, acidity, and sleep problems. *Ayurveda* also emphasizes eating after digestion of the previous meal and according to hunger. This shows that meal timing is important for maintaining digestive and metabolic balance.

Portion Control and Energy Balance

Excess food intake leads to positive energy balance, weight gain, and metabolic disorders. Portion control is an important principle in modern dietetics. Eating in proper quantity supports digestion and prevents obesity. The *Ayurvedic* principle of *Matravat Ashniyat* clearly

explains the same concept. Food should be taken according to digestive capacity. Even healthy food may become harmful if taken in excess.

Mindful Eating

Mindful eating means eating with full attention, awareness, and calmness. It includes observing hunger, chewing properly, enjoying taste, recognizing fullness, and avoiding distractions. The *Ayurvedic* rule *Ajalpan Ahasan Tanmana Bhunjita* explains that one should eat with concentration and avoid talking, laughing, or distraction during meals. This is highly relevant today because many people eat while using mobile phones or watching screens.¹⁵

Fast Eating and Poor Chewing

Fast eating reduces chewing and increases the chance of overeating. Proper chewing mixes food with saliva and starts carbohydrate digestion. Poor chewing may cause bloating, heaviness, and indigestion. Modern studies suggest that slow and mindful eating may improve satiety and reduce excess calorie intake. This supports the classical principle that food should not be eaten too fast.

Ultra-Processed Foods

Ultra-processed foods are commonly high in sugar, salt, unhealthy fats, preservatives, artificial colors, and refined carbohydrates. Regular consumption of such foods is associated with obesity, diabetes, hypertension, fatty liver, and gut health problems. From an *Ayurvedic* viewpoint, such foods may be considered heavy, stale, incompatible, *Apathya*, and *Agni* disturbing. They may contribute to *Ama* formation and *Dosha* imbalance.

Gut Health and Microbiota

The gut microbiota plays an important role in digestion, immunity, metabolism, and mental health. Poor diet, excessive processed food, low fiber intake, irregular meals, antibiotics, and stress can disturb gut microbiota. The concept of *Agni*, *Ama*, and *Srotas* can be correlated with digestion, gut metabolism, inflammatory load, and nutrient transport. Proper *Ahara Vidhi* may help maintain healthy digestion and gut balance.¹⁶

Emotional Eating and Stress

Stress, anxiety, sadness, and emotional imbalance can affect food choices and digestion. Many people eat more during stress or choose unhealthy comfort food. Stress may also cause

acidity, irritable bowel symptoms, constipation, or loose stools. *Ayurveda* clearly mentions the importance of mental state during food intake. Eating with calmness, attention, and satisfaction supports proper digestion. Disturbed mental state during eating may impair digestion and cause disease.

Personalized Nutrition

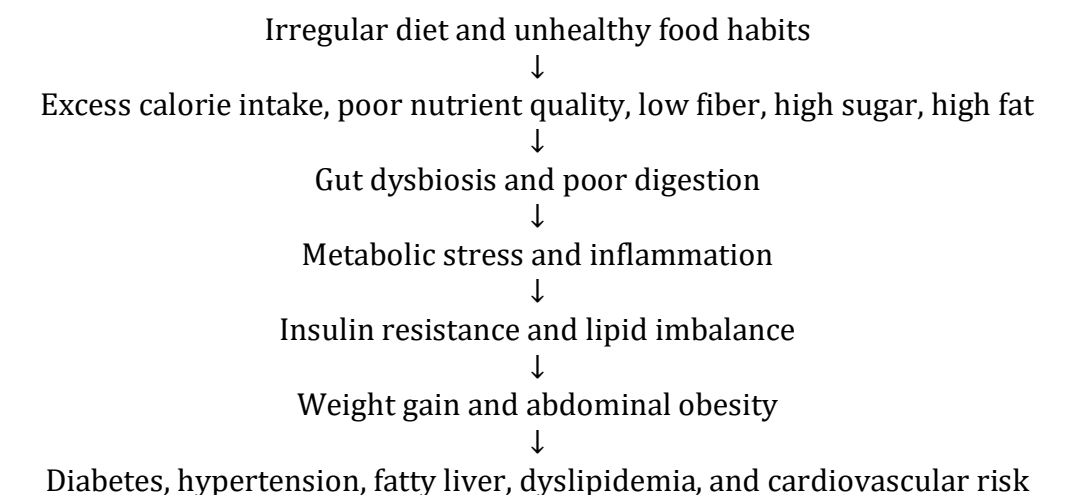
Modern science now supports personalized nutrition based on age, body weight, activity level, genetics, metabolic health, disease condition, and gut microbiota. The same concept is already present in *Ayurveda* through *Prakriti*, *Agni*, *Satmya*, *Desha*, *Kala*, *Vaya*, and *Vyadhi Avastha*. Thus, *Atmanam Abhisamikshya Bhunjita* is a classical rule of personalized diet planning. One should eat after considering personal suitability.

Modern Lifestyle and Dietary Disorders

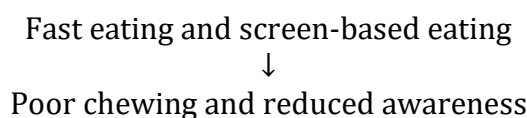
Modern lifestyle has increased the burden of diet-related disorders. Common causes include late-night eating, skipping meals, overeating, junk food, low fiber diet, excess sugar, lack of exercise, stress, poor sleep, and screen-based eating. These factors disturb digestion and metabolism. They are also comparable with *Apathya Ahara*, *Viruddha Ahara*, *Agnimandya*, and *Ama* formation described in *Ayurveda*.¹⁷

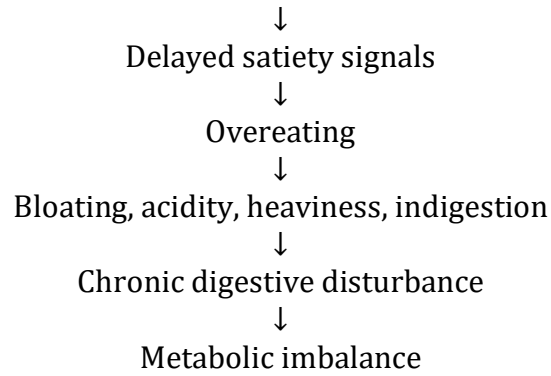
Pathogenesis

Modern Pathogenesis of Lifestyle Disorders Due to Faulty Diet

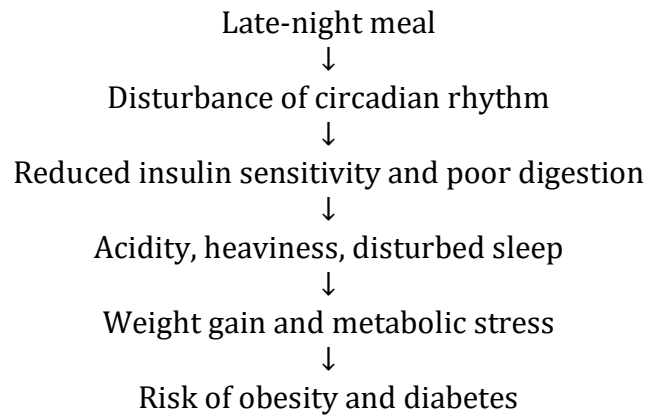


Pathogenesis of Digestive Disturbance Due to Fast and Distracted Eating

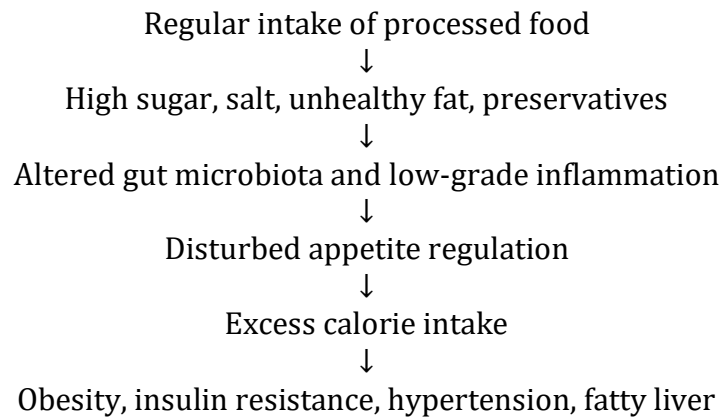




Pathogenesis of Late-Night Eating



Pathogenesis of Ultra-Processed Food Intake



Result and Findings

- *Ahara Vidhi* provides a complete dietary code including food quality, quantity, timing, compatibility, place, pace, and mental state during eating.
- The main purpose of *Ahara Vidhi* is to maintain proper *Agni* and prevent formation of *Ama*.
- Faulty dietary habits such as overeating, irregular meals, fast eating, incompatible food, stale food, and distracted eating may lead to *Agnimandya*.

- *Agnimandya* causes improper digestion and produces *Ama*, which is an important factor in disease formation.
- The principle of *Matravat Ashniyat* is closely related to modern portion control and calorie balance.
- The principle of *Jirne Ashniyat* supports the modern concept of eating according to hunger and maintaining proper meal intervals.
- The rule of avoiding fast eating is relevant in prevention of overeating, obesity, and indigestion.
- The rule of eating with concentration is similar to mindful eating, which is useful for better digestion and satiety.
- *Viruddha Ahara* can be correlated with unsuitable food combinations, food intolerance, and harmful processed food patterns.
- Modern concepts such as circadian nutrition, gut microbiota, mindful eating, and personalized nutrition support the practical value of *Ahara Vidhi*.
- Following *Ahara Vidhi* may help prevent lifestyle disorders such as obesity, diabetes, hypertension, acidity, constipation, fatty liver, and dyslipidemia.
- *Ahara Vidhi* is not only a dietary rule but also a preventive health approach.

Discussion

Ahara Vidhi is a highly practical concept of *Ayurveda* that gives importance to both food and the method of food intake. Modern dietary advice usually focuses on nutrient composition, calories, and food groups. However, *Ayurveda* gives equal importance to digestion, compatibility, quantity, timing, and mental state. This makes *Ahara Vidhi* more holistic and suitable for daily life. The concept clearly indicates that even nutritious food can become harmful when taken in improper quantity, wrong combination, wrong time, or disturbed mental condition.¹⁸

The present lifestyle has created many dietary errors. People commonly eat fast, skip meals, eat late at night, consume processed food, and eat while using screens. These habits disturb digestion and metabolism. In *Ayurvedic* terms, they weaken *Agni*, produce *Ama*, obstruct

Srotas, and disturb *Dosha*. In modern terms, they may cause gut dysbiosis, inflammation, insulin resistance, obesity, and metabolic disorders. Thus, both systems accept that improper food habits are major causes of disease.¹⁹

The relevance of *Ahara Vidhi* is very strong in modern dietary counselling. Simple instructions such as eating warm and fresh food, eating only when hungry, avoiding overeating, chewing properly, avoiding distractions, maintaining regular meal timing, and selecting food according to individual suitability can improve digestive health. These principles are affordable, practical, and preventive. Therefore, integration of *Ahara Vidhi* with modern nutrition can provide better dietary guidance for maintaining health and preventing lifestyle disorders.²⁰

Conclusion

Ahara Vidhi is a scientific and practical dietary discipline described in *Ayurveda*. It explains that health depends not only on the type of food consumed but also on its quantity, timing, compatibility, freshness, method of intake, and mental state during eating. Faulty dietary practices disturb *Agni*, produce *Ama*, vitiate *Dosha*, and lead to digestive and metabolic disorders. Modern concepts such as mindful eating, portion control, circadian nutrition, gut health, and personalized nutrition support the relevance of *Ahara Vidhi*. Therefore, adopting *Ahara Vidhi* in modern dietary practices can help improve digestion, prevent lifestyle disorders, and promote overall health.

Conflict of Interest Nil.

Source of Support None.

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