



Review Article

ADDRESSING THE AGING PROCESS THROUGH THE AYURVEDA LIFESTYLE INTERVENTIONS
AND ADAPTATIONS

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ABSTRACT

The elderly population is growing worldwide, leading to an increased focus on geriatric care and promoting healthy aging. Ayurveda, an ancient Indian system of medicine, offers a holistic approach to healthcare that can be beneficial for addressing the unique needs of older adults. This research article explores the integration of geriatrics and Ayurveda, highlighting the potential benefits of Ayurvedic principles, lifestyle adaptations, and herbal remedies in geriatric care. By combining the wisdom of Ayurveda with modern geriatric practices, healthcare providers can offer comprehensive and personalized care to elderly individuals, enhancing their quality of life and promoting healthy aging. The field of geriatrics focuses on the healthcare needs of older adults, aiming to promote physical, mental, and emotional well-being in the elderly population. This study focus on enhancing the concept of geriatrics through the principle of Ayurveda related to lifestyle management. To minimize the functional decline and to enhance the quality of life in geriatric age group through the incorporation of Ayurveda lifestyle adaptation is the main goal of this paper. Lifestyle diseases are related with the people's way of living. This is generally caused by lack of physical activity and unhealthy food habits. A healthy lifestyle must be adapted to fight the various age related disorders and diseases. Ayurvedic principles of health and disease focus on the concept of three *Doshas: Vata, Pitta and Kapha*. These are the three forces that determine the functioning of the body and mind. Although every person has all three *Doshas*, we will each inherit them differently. This is responsible for the differences in our characters, likes, dislikes, attitudes and behaviours.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda recognizes aging as a natural process influenced by various factors such as diet, lifestyle, and environmental influences. According to Ayurvedic principles, each individual has a unique constitution, or *Dosha*, which plays a significant role in determining health and well-being. By understanding an elderly person's *Dosha* and addressing imbalances through diet, lifestyle modifications, and herbal remedies, Ayurvedic practitioners can help promote healthy aging and manage age-related conditions [1,2].

The concept of aging (*Jara*) is solved by considering *Tridosh, Saptadhatus, Malas, Srotas, Indriya, Agni* and *Ojas*. The body functions best when all of these are in homeostasis. However, as a result of old age, the increase in *Vata*, damage to *Pitta*, and decrease in *Kapha* affect various parts of the body, making aging permanent. All aspects of aging are addressed within the framework of Ayurveda.

Geriatrics and Agni [4]

There are 13 types of *Agni* mentioned in Ayurveda, representing digestive and metabolic fires in the body. It consists of digestive juices, enzymes, etc participates in metabolism. *Caraka Chikitsa* 15/3 says *Agni* is responsible for *Ayu, Bala, Svasthya, Utsdha, Upacaya, Prabha, Ojas, Agni, Prana* etc. According to *Bala, Agni* is also of 4 types: *Tiksnagni, Samagni, Visamigni* and *Mandigni*. In old age, due to predominance of *Vata dosa, Visamagni* becomes dominant and leads to *Visamagnijanya* diseases like

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Ajeerna. Adhmiina, Sula, Udavarta, Atisiira, Antrakuja, Pravahana etc. In young adults, the capacity of the stomach will be larger due to increased *Pitta* activity. The healthy activity of *Agni* is responsible for the growth and development of the body and maintains the energy and strength of the person. In old age, due to *Visamagni*, a defective metabolism occurs in the body, which leads to involuntary changes such as *Ksaya Sequential Ksaya* in old age as described in Ayurveda. *Vagbhaata* and *Sharangdhar* have exhibited an interesting pattern of losing aspects of their lives over the last few decades as a sign of aging^[4].

With aging, physiological changes occur in all systems. Cardiac output decreases, blood pressure increases and arteriosclerosis develops. The lungs exhibit gas fluctuations, decreased dynamic capacity, and high flow rates. Although serum creatinine levels remain constant due to age-related decreases in creatinine production, creinine production decreases with age. Functional changes occur in the gastrointestinal tract, often associated with altered function, and atrophic gastritis and metabolic abnormalities are more common in the elderly. A slow increase in blood sugar occurs with age, and osteoporosis becomes more common after the age of forty due to decreased bone density. With age, the skin's epidermis shrinks and changes in collagen and elastin cause the skin to lose firmness and elasticity. Body fat decreases with age, mainly due to loss and atrophy of muscle cells. Degenerative changes occur in many tissues and are accompanied by muscle wasting, which prevents elderly patients from working. These changes that occur with age bring important recommendations for the medical treatment of elderly patients: Metabolism is changing, changes in the response to the usual medications require the use of different medications, and effective diet and exercise programs are needed to reverse or reduce the problems, slowdown these changes.^[5]

Most Common Geriatric Problems

1. Decline in Cognitive functions^[7]
2. Bladder control problems^[6]
3. Sleep problems^[6]
4. Dementia & Delirium^[6]
5. Falls^[6]
6. Osteoporosis^[6]
7. Weight loss^[6]

Finger Study on Geriatrics^[7] (from LANCET)

The Gynecological Intervention Trial to Prevent Cognitive Impairment and Disability (FINGER) is the first randomized controlled trial (RCT) to demonstrate the feasibility of preventing cognitive decline using multiple lifestyle interventions among at-risk adults^[8].

Lifestyle Adaptations and Ayurveda^[9,10,11]

Ayurveda describes many ways to treat and prevent aging. *Pancha Karma* is one of the most popular practices for renewal and destruction. It consists of three stages: *Purva Karma* (pre-treatment), *Pradhana Karma* (basic treatment) and *Paschat Karma* (post-treatment). *Snehana* (oleation) and Sweden (sudation) are two forms of *Purva Karma*. The *Pradhana Karma* includes *Vamana* (medical vomiting), *Virechana* (purification), *Nasya* (nasal application), *Basti* (enema).

Sushruta school of thought also considers *Rakta-mokshana* (bloodshed) as one of the *Pancha Karma*. *Paschat Karma* (post-treatment) mainly relates to the *Ahar* (diet), *Vihar* (exercise) program and the use of health-promoting *Rasayana* and other medicines.

There are few studies showing the practical benefits of *Panchakarma*. Ayurveda describes a variety of rejuvenation treatments using a special class of herbs called *Rasayana*, which are believed to strengthen the body and mind, prevent damage, and slow down aging, or rather reverse the aging process.

Charaka has described two methods of *Rasayana karma*, the first method- intramural (*Kutipravesika*) required the individual to remain inside a chamber in isolation and second method which was less rigorous and was carried out in open air extramural (*Vatatapika*).

Lifestyle Adaptations for Healthy Aging^[10]

Ayurveda prescribes specific lifestyle adaptations to support healthy aging and vitality in older adults. These adaptations may include:

1. **Proper diet:** Ayurveda emphasizes the importance of a balanced diet tailored to an individual's *Dosha* type. For elderly individuals, incorporating warm, easy-to-digest foods and herbal supplements can support digestion, immunity, and overall well-being.
2. **Regular exercise:** Gentle exercises, such as yoga and tai chi, can help improve flexibility, strength, and balance in older adults, reducing the risk of falls and promoting mobility.
3. **Stress management:** Ayurvedic practices, including meditation, mindfulness, and *Pranayama* (breathwork), can help older adults manage stress, anxiety, and cognitive function.
4. **Rest and Relaxation:** Adequate rest, sleep, and relaxation are essential for supporting the body's natural healing processes and promoting overall health in the elderly.
5. **Sleep is vitalizer:** Poor sleep disrupts circadian rhythms and can trigger depression, chronic inflammation, and metabolic disorders like diabetes, obesity, and cardiovascular diseases.

Meditation and Yoga, *Pranayam* are recommended for sound sleep.

6. **Follow a routine:** [10] Researchers have found that circadian rhythms like with *Dinacharya* (daily rhythms) and *Ritucharya* (seasonal guidelines) improves longevity. Ayurveda accords high importance to a routine for healthy aging. Stay grounded but avoid inertia with creative hobbies and learn new things that challenge the mind.
7. **Oil massages:** [10] *Snehana* in Sanskrit also means self-love and helps fight *Vata*- triggered dryness, oil *Abhyanga* [10] (massage)- Self-massage with luke-warm oil improves circulation, skin and joint health, balances the three bodily forces (*Doshas*)
8. **Yoga** [10]- *Yoga* is a great way of stimulation for elderly people. Researchers at Duke found that long-term yoga practitioners (who practiced 45 minutes 3-4 a week) had protective effects on the aging brain and greater gray matter in parts related to emotional regulation and stress.
9. **Meditation** [10] - Ayurveda recommends meditation to shield and improve the *Ojas*. There are multiple studies about how meditation delays the process of aging through stress reduction, physical and mental benefits, improved cerebral function, improved neuron activity, and counteracting age-related decline in brain activity.
10. **Panchakarma** [10]- *Panchakarma* is a powerful rejuvenating, detoxifying treatment in Ayurveda, individualized to help chronic and degenerative disorders. It aids circulation, cerebral blood flow, lymphatic drainage and helps check the recurrence of ailments. *Panchakarma* involves a pretreatment, primary treatment, and most importantly, post-treatment rejuvenation with herbs, dietary, and lifestyle changes.
11. **Rasayana herbs:** Formulations like *Chyawanprash* (named after Sage Chyavana who is said taken *Chyawanprash* to restore vitality after marrying a young damsel).
12. **Herbal remedies in geriatric care:** Ayurvedic herbs and formulations have been used for centuries to support healthy aging and manage age-related conditions. Some common herbs used in geriatric care include *Ashwagandha* for stress relief, *Shatavari* for hormonal balance, and *Guduchi* for immune support. These herbs are believed to offer antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and rejuvenative properties that can benefit older adults.
13. **Protect sense organs:** Attend to senses organs in your daily regimen through practices like splashing the eyes with water, an eye-care routine, tongue cleaning, oil pulling, and oiling ears and nostrils (*Nasya*). Schedule break from internet and mobile

phones in order to escape from sensory burden. [10]

14. **Socializing with family and friends or same age groups:** Foster social connections with your community or spiritual group. Connect with yourself through nature walks, meditation, and creative pursuits. Ayurvedic code of conduct *Sadvritta* can be practiced. Connect with a higher purpose (*Brahmacharya*), one of the pillars of health in Ayurveda that lends resilience. [10]

DISCUSSION

The consequences of social change vary from person to person depending on race. A basic understanding of body type helps one know the best health, right foods, herbs, exercise methods, medicines, medications and the right occupation that will maintain one's health and longevity. Ayurveda offers various methods to solve health problems using a daily regimen, a seasonal regimen, herbal medicine, *Panchakarma* (detox medicine) or *Rasayana* (tonic). Taking into account specific aspects of the situation, a standard or general protocol can be developed based on various criteria for conducting the study. There are many preventive measures against aging in traditional Indian health science. It has a main wing called *Rasayana*, which mainly deals with the problems of the elderly. Preventing and managing health problems can help seniors improve their quality of life and remain as dependent on their daily activities as possible.

The need, therefore, is to minimize the aging process and promote healthy aging through lifestyle changes and adjustments mentioned in Ayurveda.

CONCLUSION

Integrating geriatrics and Ayurveda offers a holistic and personalized approach to elderly care, focusing on promoting healthy aging, managing age-related conditions, and enhancing overall well-being in older adults. By combining the wisdom of Ayurveda with modern geriatric practices, healthcare providers can offer comprehensive care that addresses the unique needs of elderly individuals. Further research and collaboration between Ayurvedic practitioners and geriatric is needed.

This paper can be torch bearer for researchers who want to carry multi-domain Ayurveda lifestyle adaptation randomized control clinical trial in Ayurveda and geriatrics.

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