



Review Article

PREVENTIVE PRINCIPLES OF DISEASES ACCORDING TO AYURVEDA

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda the most ancient science of life, practiced in India for thousands of years based on its own unique fundamental principles such as prevention of disease, maintenance of health and promotion of longevity of life. Ayurvedic classics give special emphasis on preventive aspects like practicing *Dinacarya*, *Nishacharya*, *Rithucharya*, *Nithya sevaniya ahara*, *Varjana of Nidhana sevan* and *Pragnaparadha*, undergoing regular *Rithu shodhana* etc., these are the important points which have been considered as the most conducive factors for maintenance of life and health. *Trayopasthamba* consists of *Ahara* (food), *Nidra* (Sleep) and *Brahmacarya* (Good conduct). Each *Upasthamba* has its own importance in prevention of disease. *Ahara* (diet) has been considered as the first one which shows its prime importance. Intake of wholesome and unwholesome diet is responsible for prevention and production of various diseases respectively including life style disorders. *Acharya Charaka* has clearly stated, that a daily diet should be (of such quality), which not only helps to maintain present well-being but serves as a prophylactic against coming diseases. This is a very important aspect of preventive medicine as mentioned in Ayurveda classics. Lifestyle disorders are a big problem for our society today. Such diseases mainly result from life style related factors such as unhealthy diet and dietary habits, lack of physical activity and lack of awareness regarding the preventive aspects of diseases etc. In this article, we are mainly concerned with the various principles of prevention of diseases and maintenance of healthy life is discussed as mentioned in the Ayurveda.

KEYWORDS: Prevention, Ayurveda, *Dinacarya*, *Ritucarya*, *Trayopsthamba*.

INTRODUCTION

According to classics it is stated that no creature in this universe is immortal, it is impossible to prevent the death, but it is possible to prevent disease, so one should try for that which are preventable.¹ A wise person should perform such actions which are good for his body / health as the officer in charge of the city and charioteer, in charge of the chariot protect city and chariot respectively² For further maintenance of health, one should take care of his body by neglecting all other things because if body is not healthy then nothing is existing.³

Content of the Paper

The regimens to be followed after awakening from sleep to maintain health routinely and helps in prevention of diseases are mentioned in *Swasthavritta*.

These are of two types.

A) ***Vaiyakthika Swasthavritta***: The principles that are to be followed by the individual to prevent diseases.

B) ***Samajika Swasthavritta***: Principles to be followed by the community for the maintenance of health of the society.⁴

- 1) Man should always follow those procedures which keep him healthy always, as health is always desired.⁵
- 2) Daily regimen, night regimen, seasonal regimens should be followed as mentioned to maintain health no other wise.⁶
- 3) The person who always consumes wholesome food, practices wholesome habits, who is not interested in worldly matters, sacrifices, is always balanced towards all beings, forgives, speaks

truth and follows words of *Apta (Aptha Vachana)* does not develop any disease.⁷

- 4) **Food:** *Charaka* emphasizes on food which are wholesome to the body like rice, green gram, rock salt, goose berry, barley, rain water, milk, ghee, meat and honey. These should be consumed regularly for maintenance of health and prevention of diseases. The above reference can be taken as definition of balanced diet in Ayurveda, rice and barley as carbohydrate sources. Green gram, meat as source of protein. Ghee as fats. Honey as source of sugar. Rock salt as source of mineral, milk and goose berries as vitamin and mineral source which make the components of balanced diet.⁸
- 5) **Regimen:** One should avoid *Prajnaparadha* (intellectual errors), take care of sense organs, by avoiding under utilization, wrong utilization over utilization of sense organs, one should have good memory, knowledge about place, time and one self and should follow rules of *Sadvritta* to prevent diseases.⁹
- 6) **Purification of Body:** The diseases due to variations in the climate can be prevented by following purification in respective seasons. The *Kapha dosha* produced due to effects of cold during *Hemanta* and *Sisira ritu* should be expelled out in the beginning of *Vasantha Ritu* through emesis, *Vata* accumulated during *Grishma Ritu* should be expelled in *Varsha Ritu* through *Asthapana Basthi* and *Pitta* accumulated during *Varsa Ritu* should be expelled in the beginning of *Sharath ritu* by purgation (*Virechana*) and bloodletting (*Raktha Mokshana*).¹⁰ These purification procedures prevent seasonal diseases. Similarly, purification of *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha* accumulated in *Grishma*, *Varsa* and *Hemanta* should be done in the month of *Sravana*, *Karthika* and *Chaitra* respectively.
- 7) All the diseases are produced by creation of unmanifested urges or suppression of natural urges. So one should always avoid both to maintain the health.¹¹
- 8) One, who is desirous of his own well being, should take appropriate treatment while disease is in initial stages.

These are the measures in short which help in prevention and cure of *Nija* and *Aganthuja* variety of disease. The above mentioned 7 points can be taken as aspects of primary prevention dealt in Ayurveda. 8th point can be related to secondary prevention.

The rejuvenation therapy (*Rasayana chikitsa*) is used in the prevention and cure of disease as well as prevention of old age. *Kashyapa* has mentioned about concept of *Bala Rasayana* to enhance the immunity.

If we compare the same concept in modern, the concepts of prevention as enunciated by Leavell and Clark have stood the test of time. The basic framework worked out by them has practical utility even today. The four phases of prevention are:

1. **Primordial prevention**
2. **Primary prevention**
3. **Secondary prevention**
4. **Tertiary prevention**

These phases are further categorized into five levels of prevention as follows:

Primary prevention- Health promotion and Specific protection.

Secondary prevention- Early diagnosis and treatment.

Tertiary prevention- Disability limitation and Rehabilitation.

Primordial Prevention- It has come from a Latin word 'primordium' means beginning. It means prevention at a stage, when the risk factors have not yet developed. Primordial prevention is aimed to eliminate the development of risk factors, while primary prevention is aimed to reduce the risk of exposure. Primordial prevention is achieved by health education. Example being, information is imparted to school children for adopting and maintaining healthy lifestyles.

Primary Prevention- The process of primary prevention is limited to the period before the onset of clinical disease in an individual. Thus activities directed to prevent the occurrence of disease in human population fall in this category. These activities are related to health promotion and specific protection

Health promotion: Health promotion is an all embracing entity which goes much beyond prevention of only specific disease. It is the means to attain a state of "positive health", or, at least, "freedom from disease". Health promotion concerns activities within as well as outside the health sector.

Examples of activities within the health sector are: Health education to increase awareness of health problems so that populations identify their health needs and become familiar with preventive strategies and the health facilities available. This is the only component which has a long-term and lasting benefit.

- a. Health education can also improve compliance with advice, medication and follow-up.
- b. Improved protected water supply systems.
- c. These again have a long-term impact.
- d. Improvement of environmental sanitation.
- e. Inculcation of healthy habits.
- f. Family life education.

Specific protection: Specific protection has benefitted to a great extent by improved modern day medical technology. Technological break-through has provided adequate and appropriate tools for prevention. However, specific protection dates back to 1753 when James Lind advocated the use of citrus fruits to seamen in order to prevent scurvy. Jenner's discovery of the smallpox vaccine in 1796 gave a further boost to strategies for specific protection. Mass chemoprophylaxis is also a modern tool of specific protection. Other examples of specific protection are as follows:

- Active immunization by vaccines against measles, polio, diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, hepatitis B, etc.
- Passive immunization by gamma globulins for tetanus, rabies, viral hepatitis, etc.
- Nutritional supplementation in mid-day school meal program; ICDS program, etc. to prevent against PEM.

Secondary Prevention- Secondary prevention comes into play after the disease process has been initiated in the human host. The aim of such an approach is to minimize the spread of disease and to reduce the serious consequences. This is achieved through early diagnosis and treatment. Early diagnosis and prompt initiation of treatment can be undertaken at various levels:

- In the general population or in an age specific population.
- In captive groups, such as school children, jail inmates and industrial workers.
- In a hospital or clinical setting.

Early diagnosis and prompt treatment offers benefits to the affected individuals as well as to their families and the community. It helps to reduce the transmission of infection and, hence, is considered as a method of prevention. As a preventive strategy, it is most useful for diseases with long incubation period or long latent period since sufficient time is available to prevent further progression of disease and to improve further progression of disease and to improve prognosis. In non-communicable diseases, sufficient lead time should be available.

Tertiary Prevention-Tertiary prevention acts at the stage where disease has got established in the individual. It is a costly venture, though recent efforts at community based rehabilitation have tried to bring down the costs. Tertiary prevention can be applied at the last two levels of prevention. These are:

Disability limitation: Here the disease has progressed significantly and has caused some loss of function of a temporary or permanent nature. The idea is to provide relief to the affected individual so that a total handicap can be prevented. This mode of

prevention can be illustrated by the example of leprosy. Leprosy can lead to irreversible ocular damage and blindness when left untreated. If multidrug therapy is instituted even after some ocular damage has occurred, total blindness can still be prevented.

Rehabilitation: Rehabilitation can be considered as a preventive measure in that if effectively utilized, it can prevent further social drift of the affected individual. Social drift is the phenomenon of going down the social ladder due to loss of ability to generate income caused by disease. Rehabilitation is an extremely costly venture. The aim of rehabilitation is to integrate the affected individual in the community by optimizing his functional ability. It involves psychological, vocational and social and educational intervention.

DISCUSSION

Main Aim of Ayurveda is to attain *Purusharthas* i.e., *Dharma* (pious acts), *Artha* (wealth), *Kama* (desire), *Moksha* (Salvation) by health. Ill health takes away the health and happiness from life.¹²

Hence, it is suggested that one should always follow the procedures which makes him healthy and maintains a healthy life style as health is always desired. One has to regularly follow the *Dinacharya* procedures explained in classics like *Brahma muhurthe uthiste* (Waking up early morning), *Achamana* (sipping of holy water), *Ushna pana* (Drinking luke warm water), *Soucha karma* (Evacuating bowels) *Dantha davana* (Brushing teeth), *Jihwa nirlekha* (Scraping of tongue), *Gandusha* (Gargling), *Kavala* (Mouth wash), *Anjana* (Collyrium), *Dhumapana* (Medicated Smoking), *Nasya* (Nasal drops), *Vyayama* (physical exercise), *Abhyanga* (Massage), *Shiro Abyanga* (Head massage), *Padha Abhyanga* (Foot massage), *Udwarthana* (Powder massage), *Snana* (Bathing) etc. can be regularly practised in order to attain *Suchitha* (Maintenance of Hygiene), *Su prassanendriyatha* (to brighten the *indriyas*), *Bala labha* (Strengthen the body), *Ayusho Labha* (Promote the health and longevity), *Soumanasyatha* (Keep the mind at peace and harmony).¹³

One has to practice the *Rathri charya* as explained in classics like actions contra indicated during evening time are Intake of food, Sexual intercourse, sleep, reading and walking these five things are contra indicated in evening time because intake of food produces diseases, sexual acts leads to deformities in the fetus, sleep produces poverty, reading leads to loss of life span and long walk leads to fear¹⁴. Various things like time for consumption of food, sexual intercourse, sleep and time for reading

are specifically mentioned in classics should follow in order to avoid various diseases.

Various Seasonal regimens should be practiced like *Shishira ritu charya* (Late winter seasonal regimen), *Vasantha Ritu charya* (Spring seasonal regimen), *Grishma Ritu charya* (Summer seasonal regimen), *Varsha Ritu charya* (Rainy seasonal regimen), *Sharath Ritu charya* (Autumn seasonal regimen), *Hemantha Ritu charya* (Early winter seasonal regimen) according to particular *Ritus* one has to follow the *Ritu charya* practices in order to avoid Various diseases caused because of accumulation and aggravation of specific *Dosha* in particular *Ritus*, one should go for regular practices of *Rithu shodana* in order to evacuate the accumulated and aggravated morbid *Doshas* in the body through proper channels.¹⁵

One has to consume wholesome food in a required dose and practice of wholesome habits which improve the health status by improving the immunity of the body, good thinking also helpful for good thoughts to maintain healthy life, one should not get indulged in worldly matters which may intern leads to causing disease, one should develop the nature of sacrifice in order to develop the positive attitude and to avoid negative thoughts which may cause diseases.¹⁶ One has to develop forgiveness and feel free with the colleagues and family members, one has to speak truth always to avoid the miss understandings regarding oneself, and always listen towards elderly (efficient) person's words in order to take care regarding prevention of disease and improving the health status of an individual.

Arogyam bojanadhinam which means health depends on the food which we consume so one has to consume *Nithya sevaniya Ahara* as explained in classics like rice (*Shastika shali*), green gram (*mudga*), rock salt (*Saindhava lavana*), goose berry (*Amalaki*), barley (*Yava*), rain water (*Anthariksha jala*), milk (*Kshera*), ghee (*Go Gritha*), meat (*Jangala mamsa*) and honey (*Madhu*). These should be consumed regularly for maintenance of health and prevention of diseases. As these are correlated with the balanced diet in modern concept of nutrition, as nutrition plays a major role in maintenance of health and prevention of diseases, hence *Nithya sevaniya ahara* given a prime importance.¹⁷

Avoiding various *Viharas* like *Prajnaparadha* (intellectual errors) which are the prime cause of many diseases e.g., over eating leads to obesity, excess fat intake leads to Cardio vascular diseases, excess smoking leads to lung cancer, excess salt intake causes hypertension etc as these all can be considered under intellectual errors, one has to take care of sense organs even sense organs also plays its

own role in causation of disease as excessive or low / wrong utilization of sense organs is harmful to body which may leads to many diseases, one should have good memory/knowledge regarding the causative factors of any disease such that we can avoid the cause and also have the knowledge of place like *Jangala/Anupa/Sadharana desha*, as well as one should have good knowledge of time (*Rithu* and time in a day) behave accordingly with respect to time, place and *Rithu* to prevent disease.¹⁸

One should follow the rules mentioned in *Sadvritta* like words of noble persons are considered as best among the adoptable behaviors. Happiness is best among nourishing things. Detachment is best among enhancers of nourishment. So these have been mentioned in *Sadvritta*. The person who does not believe in god should be boycotted. Greed is primary among trouble makers. Words of the wicked are prime among the factors leading to harmful effects. So these have to be abandoned. *Sadvritta* not only includes mental faculties, but also rules related with general hygiene, religion, food consumption, sexual intercourse exercises. Following which leads to prevention of psychological, physical and psychosomatic disorders. Similar principles are mentioned in *Achara Rasayana* and *Dharaniya vegas*. *Ayurveda* believes that mind, soul body are like the pillars of life. The combination of these three is responsible for *Purusha* as well as the world. Even the diseases occur either in the body or mind¹⁹.

One should undergo regular *Rithu Shodhana* (bio purification procedures) which are mentioned in classics in order to maintain proper nourishment of *Dathu*, healthiness of *Dosha*, proper evacuation of *Mala* from the body according to respective *Rithus*.

Mainly two major reasons can cause many diseases like *Vega Dharana* (suppression of natural urges which are well manifested) and *Vega Dheerana* (forcefully inducing *Vega* or manifesting the *Vega* which is not yet manifested), these two are given a prime importance in manifestation of many diseases hence one should not forcefully manifest the un manifested *Vega* and one should not suppress the already manifested *Vega* and have to attend it in order to prevent production of further complications because of it.²⁰

CONCLUSION

In order to conclude one who desires for healthy and happy life, one has to follow regular preventive principles like *Dinacharya*, *Ritu charya* etc, mentioned in Ayurveda as well as modern principles for the prevention of diseases. One has to take care of disease in its initial stages itself to prevent further propagation of disease to limit

disability and appropriate preventive aspects have to be followed.

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Cite this article as:

Mahesh Raju. B, Gurubasavaraj Yalgachin, Durga Bhavani. Preventive Principles of Diseases According to Ayurveda. International Journal of Ayurveda and Pharma Research. 2018;6(6):72-76.

Source of support: Nil, Conflict of interest: None Declared

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