

## REVIEW ARTICLE

# Mitigating Lifestyle Disorders through *Ayurveda*

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### ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** The rising prevalence of lifestyle diseases such as hypertension, diabetes, dyslipidemia, and obesity is alarming, particularly regarding cardiovascular health, which accounts for about 30% of global deaths. In India, the incidence of these disorders has surged due to rapid economic growth and Westernized lifestyles. Ayurveda, a holistic life science, offers effective strategies for preventing and managing these conditions through comprehensive dietary management, lifestyle modifications, detoxification methods like *Panchakarma*, and rejuvenation therapies.

**Material and methods:** Material related is collected from Ayurvedic text including Bahatriye, Laghutrye,. The available commentaries of Ayurvedic samhitas has also been referred to collect relevant matter. Ayurveda addresses physical, psychological, and spiritual health, making it particularly relevant for lifestyle-related issues. Cardiovascular problems, categorized under Hridroga, highlight the connection between heart health and psychological well-being, illustrating how stress negatively impacts cardiac function. Unlike conventional Western medicine, which often focuses solely on physical symptoms, Ayurveda emphasizes identifying and treating root causes to promote overall wellness. A person's lifestyle reflects their psychological influences and early experiences, and disruptions in this balance lead to lifestyle disorders, which Ayurveda attributes to *Prajnaparadha*; (intellectual error).

**Discussion:** By advocating for healthier habits through regimens like *Dinacharya* (daily routines) and *Ritucharya* (seasonal practices), Ayurveda supports detoxification and overall well-being.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Lifestyle disorders refer to a range of diseases or health conditions that are the product of unhealthy lifestyle choices. Most common examples of such diseases include hypertension, diabetes, arthritis, obesity, and insomnia, which are now among the leading causes of mortality around the world. These conditions affect physical and mental health but overall well-being. While lifestyle disorders were once more prevalent in developed countries but now, the situation has changed drastically.<sup>[1]</sup> Developing countries, such as India are projected to become hotspot center of lifestyle-related health issues in the next decade. Ayurveda, one of the oldest and most comprehensive systems of medicine, offers valuable ways in preventing and managing these conditions. It's emphasizing approach on, a balanced diet, lifestyle adjustments, *Panchakarma* detoxification, herbal remedies, and rejuvenation therapies, has gained global attention for its effectiveness. Ayurveda

focuses on the person as a whole, addressing not just physical health, but also mental and spiritual well-being and treating the disease by dismantling its roots to prevent their recurrence.<sup>[2]</sup> This integrated approach makes Ayurveda a powerful and promising solution for managing lifestyle disorders.

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The primary causes of lifestyle disorders are unhealthy eating habits such as overeating, excessive reliance on processed and packaged foods, energy drinks, artificial sweeteners, and fast foods. Other contributing factors include stress, sedentary lifestyles, smoking, alcohol consumption, and poor sleep patterns. These issues are mostly driven by modern living habits and urbanization, further exacerbated by altered eating behaviors. Another major concern in today's world is inadequate exposure to sunlight and fresh air. Diet and lifestyle are key factors that influence the probability of developing lifestyle diseases. Aspects, such as occupation nature and culture, the time dedicated to exercise and leisure, family interactions, stress levels, and physical activity determine the risk of falling victim to these disorders.<sup>[3]</sup> The

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old adage “all work and no play” illustrates how a lack of recreation increases susceptibility to disease. While factors, such as heredity, age, and gender are beyond control, others – such as drug abuse, tobacco use, and alcohol consumption – can be avoided, controlled, and managed. The rising prevalence of lifestyle diseases means that one in four Indians is at risk of suffering from non-communicable diseases (NCDs), such as diabetes, cardiovascular conditions, or cancer before the age of 70. According to global and domestic health organizations, NCDs are responsible for nearly 60% of total mortality in India. The World Health Organization’s 2014 NCD country profiles revealed that cancer, chronic respiratory diseases, and cardiovascular diseases are the leading global causes of death, accounting for 38 million deaths annually, with 28 million of those occurring in low and middle-income and developing countries, including India.

According to Ayurveda, the root cause of lifestyle disorders is *Prajnaparadha*, or “intellectual misconduct.” This concept reflects the idea that an individual’s lifestyle is the result of their physical capacity, psychological functions, and the habits, behaviors, and patterns of living formed through childhood experiences and social influences, such as family and peers. Ayurveda suggests that these factors are deeply intertwined, where psychological control governs physical and sensory actions. When this balance is disrupted, it leads to an imbalance in lifestyle, giving rise to various disorders. *Prajnaparadha* is considered one of the three main causes of disease in Ayurveda, often manifesting as improper actions that lead to health issues.<sup>[4]</sup> For instance, suppressing natural urges, a consequence of *Prajnaparadha*, is cited as a major cause of numerous health problems. Ayurveda emphasizes that the suppression of these urges may lead to the accumulation of toxins (ama) due to improper removal of waste products during metabolism is a fundamental cause of disease. Therefore, Ayurveda advocates the elimination of these toxins as the first step in treatment.<sup>[5]</sup>

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To manage lifestyle disorders, Ayurveda offers several regimens including *Nidana parivarjana Ahara* (diet), *Vihara* (lifestyle practices), *Dinacharya* (daily regimen), *Ritucharya* (seasonal regimen), *Panchakarma* (detoxification therapies), and *Rasayana* (rejuvenation therapies). Adhering to the principles of *Sadvritta* (ideal conduct) and *Achara Rasayana* (codes of conduct) is crucial for maintaining mental health and well-being.

#### 3.1. Nidana Parivarjana

To avoid the disease-causing factors in diet and lifestyle to inhibit the development of disease.<sup>[6]</sup> For example, restriction of excessive intake of newly harvested grains, pulses, meat of marshy and aquatic animals, milk, new wine, and immature curd with doing more physical exercise and avoiding excessive sleep, bed rest, and sedentary habits can reduce the probability of diabetes.

#### 3.2. Ahara and Vihara

In Ayurveda, Ahara (diet) and Vihara (lifestyle practices) play a central role in health and wellness. Ayurveda places particular importance on Ahara, not only for its biological benefits but also for its emotional and spiritual significance. It is also one of the *trayopstambha* aka the three subsidiary pillars of life.<sup>[7]</sup> Food is considered the “Prana” or life force, essential for health and longevity.<sup>[8]</sup> Ayurveda teaches that *hita-ahara* (wholesome food) promotes well-being, while *ahita-ahara* (unwholesome food) leads to various disorders. In the modern era, however, the principles of the *hita-ahara* are often ignored,

contributing to the rise of lifestyle diseases. Ayurveda also highlights the importance of refraining from the use of *Viruddha Ahara* (dietary incompatibilities), which can lead to various imbalances and health problems. Eighteen types of dietary incompatibilities have been described in detail, which should be avoided to maintain health and longevity. Furthermore, ayurveda explains different do’s and don’ts regarding diet and dietary supplements such as *pathyapathya*, which definitely help in the prevention and management of various lifestyle disorders. It also describes *ashta ahar vidhi vishesaytan* to determine the utility of food that are *prakrati, karan, sanyog, rashi, desh, kal, upyog sanstha, and upyokta*.

#### 3.3. Daivavyapashraya Chikitsa

This therapeutic approach incorporates spiritual practices such as chanting mantras, using herbs and gems, performing rituals, and fasting.<sup>[9]</sup> These practices have a positive effect on the mind and can help manage psychosomatic health, reduce stress, and improve emotional well-being. Research shows that approximately 90% of the global population engages in some form of spiritual or religious activity, which plays a significant role in coping with stress and preventing lifestyle disorders.

#### 3.4. Satvavajaya Chikitsa

Ayurveda defines the person’s *swasthya* as healthy not only when his *dosha, dhātu, mala, and agni* are in equilibrium condition but also his *manas* (*prasannnatmendriya manah*) should be in normal condition. *Satvavajaya* refers to the method of controlling the mind by detaching it from unwholesome desires and distractions. This practice helps in managing emotional stress and mental disturbances. By controlling mental desires, one can achieve greater psychological stability and prevent mental health issues, which are often linked to lifestyle diseases. The term *sattvavajaya* pertains winning or control over the mind (*sattva*), which is usually unstable and always running after different *vishayas and arthas*. This particular modality is therapeutic for mental and emotional disturbances as it works by restraining the mind from going after unwholesome desires.

#### 3.5. Dinacharya

Ayurveda stresses the importance of adhering to daily routines aligned with natural circadian rhythms.<sup>[10]</sup> The day should begin with mindfulness, early rising, and the elimination of natural urges without suppression. Practices such as daily bathing, oil massage (*Abhyanga*), and maintaining proper hygiene help balance the body and promote longevity. Ayurveda also advises avoiding late-night sleep, stale food, excessive exertion, and misuse of the senses, as these can disrupt the biological clock and increase susceptibility to lifestyle diseases.

#### 3.6. Ritucharya

Ritu(seasons) are classified by different features that expresses different effects on the body as well as the environment. As we know adaptation to the changes is the key for survival therefore the knowledge of *ritucharya* is important.

*Ritucharya* refers to adjusting diet and lifestyle according to the changing seasons to maintain balance in the body. Ayurveda’s preventive approach emphasizes modifying lifestyle habits to acclimatize to seasonal changes without disturbing the body’s homeostasis. Seasonal cleansing, through regular purification practices, such as *Panchakarma*, is recommended to maintain both physical and mental health.

### 3.7. Panchakarma

*Panchakarma* consists of five main detoxification therapies designed to cleanse the body of toxins and restore balance among the bio-humors (*Vata*, *Pitta*, *Kapha*) and mental doshas (*Raja* and *Tama*). These therapies include *Vaman* (therapeutic vomiting), *Virechan* (therapeutic purgation), *Asthapan Basti* (decoction enema), *Anuvasana Basti* (oil enema), and *Nasya* (nasal therapies). *Panchakarma* not only detoxifies the body but also rejuvenates it, strengthens the immune system, and enhances the effectiveness of subsequent treatments. It is particularly emphasized as a preventive and restorative practice. In *Sushruta Samhita raktamokshan* bloodletting by *siravedh*, leech therapy (for toxic blood mainly *pittaj* and *raktaj* disorders) is mentioned.<sup>[11]</sup> *Panchkarma* is used to cleanse the body channels to eliminate toxins (*aam* formation) out of the body and achieve homeostasis of *tridosha* (*vata*, *pitta*, *kapha*) or three bio humors and *manas doshas* (*raja* and *tama*) to attain beneficial psychosomatic effect which further leads to normal chemical and electric balancing inside the biosystem in all over body system, such as the circulatory system, digestive system, and lymphatic system, and ultimately restoring the *dosha-dhatu samyata*. When executed properly *panchkarma* rejuvenates the body and increases the longevity of healthy life.

### 3.8. Rasayana

In addition to diet, Ayurveda also promotes *Rasayana* (rejuvenation) therapies to restore vitality. *Rasayanas* are considered medicinal dietary supplements that nourish the body and rejuvenate tissues. These therapies help improve the body's metabolism, nutritional status, and overall tissue health, contributing to the prevention of lifestyle diseases. *Rasayan* has a comprehensive scope to generate positive immunomodulation, longevity and sustenance of mental and sensorial competence. Specific *Rasayanas* are designed to target different organs, such as *Medhya Rasayana* for the brain, *Hridya Rasayana* for the heart, and *Twachya Rasayana* for the skin. *Rasayan* also has a preventive role against lifestyle disorders through improved metabolism, immunity, endocrine and exocrine secretion, antioxidant action, hemopoietic effect, adaptogenic action, anabolic action, and neuroprotective action at a molecular level.<sup>[12]</sup>

### 3.9. Vajikaran

*Vajikaran* or *Vrishya Chikitsa* is one of the eight key specialties in *Astanga Ayurveda*.<sup>[13]</sup> It focuses on enhancing sexual health, vitality, and improving reproductive health.<sup>[14]</sup> According to the *Charak Samhita*, the proper use of these treatments can result in a well-developed and attractive physique, increased strength, better complexion, and sexual potency. These therapies are beneficial in treating common sexual issues such as infertility, erectile dysfunction, and premature ejaculation. *Vajikaran* drugs are also used to enhance the quality of sperm and ovum, promoting healthy procreation and the birth of strong, healthy children, especially after detoxifying the body.

### 3.10. Sadvratta and Achara Rasayana

#### 3.10.1. Sadvratta

Ayurveda is an ancient science that holds many valuable insights for a fulfilling life. It includes a dedicated section on ethical conduct or moral regimen, which helps maintain balance in life and prevent various lifestyle-related disorders. These simple moral principles and guidelines are relevant to all people, regardless of time or place. Ignoring or violating these principles leads to suffering in the long run. In essence, *Sadvrat* encompasses good mental, social, personal, moral,

and religious conduct. It fosters "*arogya indriyavijay*," meaning the achievement of good health and self-control.

#### 3.10.2. Achara rasayana

In Ayurveda, there is a unique concept that emphasizes moral, ethical, and behavioral conduct. This includes truthfulness, non-violence, personal and public cleanliness, mental and personal hygiene, compassion, and a yogic lifestyle. Such behaviors promote the rejuvenation of the body and mind.<sup>[15]</sup> Key practices include being truthful, free from anger, avoiding alcohol, embracing non-violence, maintaining calmness, speaking kindly, engaging in meditation, staying clean, practicing charity and religion, showing respect and love, balancing wakefulness and sleep, consuming ghee regularly, being mindful of time and place, controlling the senses, associating with elders, maintaining a positive attitude, and being devoted to Vedic scriptures. Those who adopt these practices benefit from the effects of *Achar Rasayan* therapy. Behavioral *Rasayan* is especially significant for modern life.

## 4. CONCLUSION

Ayurveda's holistic approach, which focuses on the root causes of lifestyle diseases, offers a comprehensive framework for promoting health and preventing illness. Through a combination of proper diet, lifestyle practices, detoxification, rejuvenation therapies, and mental well-being techniques, Ayurveda provides a sustainable path to managing and preventing lifestyle disorders. By emphasizing prevention and the balance of mind, body, and spirit, Ayurveda offers a profound solution for achieving long-term health and happiness in an increasingly ailing society.

Lifestyle diseases, also referred to as NCDs or chronic diseases of lifestyle, arise from an unhealthy relationship between individuals and their environment. These conditions share common risk factors, such as poor diet, smoking, lack of physical activity, and chronic stress. Major contributors to these diseases include high blood pressure, tobacco use, high cholesterol, diabetes, and obesity. Over time, these factors lead to long-term health issues, resulting in high mortality from conditions, such as stroke, heart attacks, cancer (due to tobacco use and poor nutrition), chronic respiratory diseases, renal failure, and others.

In terms of treatment and prevention, Ayurveda has proven to be highly effective in addressing lifestyle diseases. While other medical systems primarily focus on providing nutritional food and encouraging physical activity, Ayurveda goes beyond these basic measures. It offers a comprehensive approach to nutrition and physical activity, making it clear that Ayurveda holds significant potential in both the prevention and management of lifestyle diseases.

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All the authors contributed equally in design and execution of the article.

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## 9. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Nil.

## 10. DATA AVAILABILITY

This is an original manuscript and all data are available for only review purposes from principal investigators.

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