

## AN AYURVEDIC PERSPECTIVE ON SEASONAL DIETARY REGIMEN FOR CHILDREN

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### ABSTRACT

*Aahar* (diet) is considered as the primary source of health, energy, and longevity. It is one of the three pillars of life (*Trayopasthambha*), along with *Nidra* (sleep) and *Brahmacharya* (balanced lifestyle).<sup>[1]</sup> A well-balanced diet supports *Agni* (digestive fire), strengthens *Ojas* (vital energy), and maintains harmony between *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*. According to *Ayurvedic* principles, the concept of *Aahar* is closely related to the seasonal variations, as it is believed that our body is deeply connected to the rhythms of nature, *Ritus* influence our *Doshas* (*Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*), and a proper seasonal diet helps maintaining health. Dietary regimens change according to the seasons to maintain balance (*Dosha* harmony) and prevent seasonal illnesses. For children, whose bodies are still developing and are more sensitive to external changes, following a seasonal diet (*Ritucharya*) is essential for optimal

growth, immunity, and digestion. *Ritucharya* (Seasonal Regimen) is a key concept that describes dietary and lifestyle changes according to the six seasons (*Ritus*) to maintain *dosha* balance, enhance immunity, and prevent seasonal diseases.

**KEYWORDS:** *Aahar*, *Ayurveda*, *Ritucharya*, *Ritu*, *Dosha*.

### INTRODUCTION

In *Ayurveda*, the concept of *Ritu* (season) plays a crucial role in maintaining health and preventing diseases. The year is divided into six seasons (*Shat Ritu*), each influencing the body, mind, and environment in unique ways. These seasonal changes impact the balance of *Tridosha* (*Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*), digestion (*Agni*), and overall immunity (*Ojas*). To adapt to these natural shifts, *Ayurveda* prescribes *Ritucharya* (seasonal regimen), which includes

specific dietary (*Aahar*) and lifestyle (*Vihara*) modifications. By following *Ritucharya*, individuals can maintain internal harmony, enhance disease resistance, and align with nature's rhythms.

The *Shat Ritus* are *Shishira* (late winter), *Vasanta* (spring), *Grishma* (summer), *Varsha* (monsoon), *Sharad* (autumn) and *Hemanta* (early winter).<sup>[2][26]</sup> Each season has distinct climatic conditions that influence bodily functions. For example, winter strengthens digestion, requiring warm and nourishing foods, while summer increases heat, demanding cooling and hydrating diets. Similarly, monsoon weakens digestion, necessitating light and easily digestible meals. Year is divided into six seasons, in which three seasons *Shishira*, *Vasanta* and *Grishma* categorized as *Aadana Kaal* (*Uttarayana*).<sup>[4][17][18][27]</sup> and other three *Varsha*, *Sharada* and *Hemanta* are considered as *Visarga* (*Dakshinayana*).<sup>[3][28]</sup> *Ayurveda* also emphasizes *Ritusandhi*<sup>[25][36]</sup> (seasonal transition periods), recommending a gradual shift in diet and routine to prevent seasonal imbalances. Understanding and practicing *Ritucharya* helps in sustaining optimal health, immunity, and longevity throughout the year.

### Seasonal Dietary Regimen for Children

#### 1. *Hemanta & Shishira Ritu* (Winter – December to February)<sup>[5][6][13][19][20][29]</sup>

**Dominant Dosha:** *Vata* and *Kapha* increase.

**Dietary Focus:** Warm, nourishing, and strengthening foods

= **Recommended Diet.**

- Warm, heavy foods like dairy, nuts, seeds, and healthy fats (ghee, sesame oil)
- Root vegetables (sweet potato, carrots, beets)
- Whole grains (wheat, rice, millets)
- Warming spices (ginger, cinnamon, black pepper)
- Herbal teas and soups to keep the body warm

= **Restricted Diet**

- Cold, raw, or dry foods (excess salads, ice creams, cold drinks)
- Too much bitter or astringent foods (which increase *Vata*)

= **Lifestyle Tip:** Encourage oil massages and warm clothing to keep children protected from colds and flu.

### = Recommended Procedures

- ✚ *Abhyanga* (massage with medicated/ natural oil), *Utsadana*, and *Murdhni Taila* (*Shiro Dhara*, *Shiro Pichu*, *Shiro Abhyanga*, *Shiro Basti*)<sup>[5]</sup> are advisable.
- ✚ *Abhyanga* offers natural moisture to the skin and helps prevent dryness-related skin disorders. Additionally, it contributes to enhancing strength and complexion.
- ✚ *Swedana* (hot fomentation), especially through *Atapa Sevana* (sunlight exposure), is advantageous as it protects against cold and provides a natural source of Vitamin D.<sup>[5]</sup>

## 2. *Vasanta Ritu* (Spring – March to May)<sup>[7][14][21][31]</sup>

**Dominant Dosha:** *Kapha* increases

**Dietary Focus:** Light, warm, and easily digestible foods

### = Recommended Diet

- Warm herbal drinks like *tulsi* or ginger-infused water
- Light grains (barley, millet, quinoa, and moong dal)
- Bitter and astringent vegetables (bitter melon, fenugreek, spinach)
- Seasonal fruits (pomegranate, apples, pears)
- Honey in moderation (helps balance *Kapha*)

### = Restricted Diet

- Heavy, oily, and cold foods (dairy, sweets, deep-fried foods)
- Excess wheat, rice, and sugar (which increase *Kapha*)

= **Lifestyle Tip:** Encourage outdoor play to keep *Kapha* balanced and prevent respiratory issues.

### = Recommended Procedures

- ✚ In pediatric practice, *Mridu* or *Sadhyo Vamana* should be planned.
- ✚ For these, child should be advised to consume unctuous diet during night. Next morning, warm salty water should be offered to child up to satiety.
- ✚ Then *Vamana* should be advised. *Vamaka* or *Vamanaopaga* medicine should be given in low dose if required.
- ✚ *Yashtimadhu Phanta* or *Vacha Churna* are suitable for the same.

### 3. *Grishma Ritu* (Summer – June to August)<sup>[8][15][22][33]</sup>

**Dominant Dosha:** *Pitta* increases

**Dietary Focus:** Cooling and hydrating foods

#### = Recommended Diet

- Cooling fruits (watermelon, coconut, cucumber, sweet grapes)
- Dairy in moderation (buttermilk, fresh yogurt, ghee)
- Whole grains (rice, wheat, oats)
- Light dals and cooling herbs (mint, coriander, fennel)
- Sweet, cooling drinks (fresh fruit juices, coconut water, barley water)

#### = Restricted Diet

- Spicy, fried, and acidic foods (chili, pickles, excessive salt)
- Fermented foods (sour curd, old cheese)
- Excess protein-heavy foods (meat, heavy legumes)

= **Lifestyle Tip:** Encourage drinking plenty of fluids and avoid excessive sun exposure.

#### = Recommended Procedures

- Excessive physical activity is not recommended during summer.
- Children should participate in indoor games, while outdoor activities should be restricted to a duration of 20 to 40 minutes per day.

### 4. *Varsha Ritu* (Monsoon – August to October)<sup>[9][23][34]</sup>

**Dominant Dosha:** *Vata* and *Agni* (digestive fire) is weak.

**Dietary Focus:** Warm, easily digestible, immune-boosting foods.

#### = Recommended Diet

- Warm soups, herbal teas (ginger, cumin, *tulsi*)
- Ghee and warm milk to strengthen digestion
- Seasonal fruits (mango, papaya, pomegranate)
- Cooked vegetables (bottle gourd, ash gourd, ridge gourd)
- Grains like rice and moong dal (light on digestion)

#### = Restricted Diet

- Raw foods, leafy greens (may carry microbes)

- Heavy, oily, and cold foods (fried snacks, ice creams)
- Excess salty, sour, or fermented foods

= **Lifestyle Tip:** Keep children dry and warm to prevent infections. Use turmeric and black pepper in cooking for immunity.

#### = Recommended Procedures

- ✚ Practices such as *Pragharshana*, *Udvartana* and regular bathing should be practiced.
- ✚ These measures will assist in maintaining hygiene and preventing infectious diseases during the rainy season.
- ✚ It is advisable to wear light and clean clothing.

### 5. *Sharad Ritu* (Autumn – October to December)<sup>[10][12][24][35]</sup>

**Dominant Dosh:** *Pitta* reduces, *Vata* may increase.

**Dietary Focus:** Mildly cooling, nourishing, and strengthening foods.

#### = Recommended Diet

- Sweet fruits (pomegranate, dates, figs)
- Dairy (fresh milk, homemade butter, ghee)
- Mild spices (cardamom, turmeric, fennel)
- Rice, wheat, moong dal, and warm soups
- Nuts and seeds in moderation (almonds, walnuts)

#### = Restricted Diet

- Excessively hot, sour, and spicy foods
- Fried, fermented, or processed foods

= **Lifestyle Tip:** Maintain hydration and oil massage (*Abhyanga*) for *Vata* balance.

#### = Recommended Procedures

- ✚ *Virechana* (medicated purgation) and *Raktamokshana* (bloodletting) should be scheduled during the *Sharada Ritu*.
- ✚ In childhood, *Virechana* should be substituted with *Basti* (medicated enema) unless it is an emergency situation.

- ✚ If *Virechana* is deemed necessary, *Mridu* or *Sadhyo Virechana* should be considered. The following substances should be utilized as *Virechaka Dravya*: *Draksha Siddha Jala*, *Aragvadha Phala Majja Kwatha* and *Avipattikara Choorna*.
- ✚ Bloodletting is not recommended for children; if it is essential, *Jalauka Avacharana* (leech therapy) should be planned. *Dhatu* and *Bala* are *Asampurna* during childhood, it is advisable to refrain from bloodletting unless there is a specific illness.

## 6. *Pravritta Ritu* (Mid July to Mid-September)<sup>[16]</sup>

**Dominant *Dosha*:** *Pitta* reduces, *Vata* may increase.

**Dietary Focus:** Mildly cooling, nourishing, and strengthening foods.

### ✚ Recommended Diet

- Sweet, Sour, salty, unctuous food in moderation to pacify *Vata*.
- Administration of *Mandoshna Dugdha*, *Mamsarasa*, *Taila* & *Ghrita*.
- *Brimhana* & *Abhishyandi* foods and drinks.
- *Yusha* (soups of pulses like *Mudga*/green gram).
- Old rice, barley, wheat in small quantity.
- *Takra* (buttermilk) spiced with *Saindhava* (rock salt), *Pippali* etc.

### ✚ Restricted Diet & Habits

- Dry and warm foods, *Udmantha*, *Naveen Anna* (food not more than a year)
- Excess cold food & drinks.
- Stale or contaminated food (risk of worms, indigestion in rains).
- Protect from rain & wind and use clean, dry clothing.
- Avoid exercise, *Divaswapana* (increases *Kapha*) and *Ratrijagrana* (increases *Vata*).
- Avoid stagnant water, dampness.

### ✚ Lifestyle Tip

- Light exercise, yoga but avoid excessive exertion.
- *Abhyanga* (oil massage) and *Snana* (bath) with lukewarm water to balance *Vata*.
- Clean environment.

### = Recommended Procedures

- Use *Dhumapana* (medicated smoke) and *Aguru*, *Guggulu* fumigation to purify air.

- *Basti (Niruha & Anuvasana)* for *Vata* management.
- *Snehana, Swedana* and other *Vata* pacifying procedures.
- Use *Madhu, Shunthi, Maricha, Trikatu* in small amounts for *Kapha-Vata* balance.

### 🌈 Overview of *Pravritta Ritu*

- *Pravritta Ritu: Sandhi* between *Grishma & Varsha Ritu*. During this *Sandhi*, *Agni* is weak, *Vata* is aggravated and *Kapha* tends to accumulate.
- During *Grishma*(summer): *Vata* begins to aggravate due to dryness & heat.
- At the onset of *Varsha*(rain): weakened *Agni* (digestive fire) + accumulation of *Vata* + *Kapha*.
- In this *Sandhikala*, body is fragile: immunity is low.

### 🌈 Key Principles for Seasonal Eating

- Fresh and Seasonal: Choose foods that are local and seasonal. *Ayurveda* places great emphasis on eating what is naturally available at any given time of the year.
- Balance the *Doshas*: Pay attention to how each season influences your *doshas* and adjust your diet accordingly.
- Eating with the Rhythms of Nature: *Ayurveda* recommends eating foods that harmonize with the natural qualities of the environment-warming foods in winter, cooling foods in summer, and light foods in spring.
- Digestive *Agni*: Your digestive fire (*Agni*) is influenced by the seasons. *Ayurveda* emphasizes eating foods that are easy to digest and compatible with your body's internal balance during different seasons.

<i>Ritus</i>	Months	Digestive capacity	Body Strength	Predominance of <i>Rasa</i>	Preponderance of <i>Dosha</i>
<i>Shishira</i>	15 <sup>th</sup> Jan to 14 <sup>th</sup> March	Excellent	Maximum	<i>Tikta</i> (Bitter)	<i>Kapha Sanchya</i>
<i>Vasanta</i>	15 <sup>th</sup> March to 14 <sup>th</sup> May	Moderate	Moderate	<i>Kashaya</i> (Astringent)	<i>Kapha Prakopa</i>
<i>Grishma</i>	15 <sup>th</sup> May to 14 <sup>th</sup> July	Weak	Minimum	<i>Katu</i> (Pungent)	<i>Vata Sanchya</i> <i>Kapha Shamana</i>
<i>Varsha</i>	15 <sup>th</sup> July to 14 <sup>th</sup> Sept	Weak	Minimum	<i>Amla</i> (Sour)	<i>Vata Prakopa</i> <i>Pitta Sanchya</i>
<i>Sharada</i>	15 <sup>th</sup> Sept to 14 <sup>th</sup> Nov	Moderate	Moderate	<i>Lavana</i> (Salt)	<i>Pitta Prakopa</i> <i>Vata Shamana</i>
<i>Hemanta</i>	15 <sup>th</sup> Nov to 14 <sup>th</sup> Jan	Excellent	Maximum	<i>Madhura</i> (Sweet)	<i>Pitta Shamana</i> <i>Kapha Sanchya</i>



## DISCUSSION

Eating according to *Ritucharya*, the seasonal regimen prescribed by *Ayurveda*, is a profound way to align the body with nature's rhythms and maintain optimal health throughout the year. Each season affects the balance of the body's three *Doshas*-*Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha* in different ways. By adjusting children's diet and lifestyle to the qualities of each season, one can naturally balance these *Doshas* and prevent their aggravation, which is the root cause of most illnesses in *Ayurveda*.

One of the key benefits of following *Ritucharya* is the enhancement of digestion and metabolism. As the digestive fire (*Agni*) fluctuates with the seasons, eating appropriate seasonal foods supports optimal digestion and nutrient absorption. This strengthens immunity by keeping the body resilient and adaptable to seasonal changes, reducing the likelihood of falling ill during transitions such as the monsoon or winter. Moreover, it helps prevent the accumulation of *Ama*-toxins that result from undigested food-by ensuring that the body is nourished with foods it can easily process during each time of year.

*Ritucharya* also contributes to the mental well-being. When the body is in harmony with nature, sleep, mood, and energy levels tend to stabilize, reducing stress and seasonal mood disorders. This promotes mindfulness by encouraging individuals to eat consciously and pay attention to seasonal produce, fostering a deeper connection with their environment. In a modern world where people often eat processed, unseasonal foods without regard for natural cycles, *Ritucharya* serves as a timeless guide to intentional living. By embracing this *Ayurvedic* wisdom, one can experience greater vitality, balanced energy, and a more harmonious life in sync with nature.

## CONCLUSION

Eating according to the seasons as guided by the principles of *Ritucharya* offers a holistic and time-honoured path in maintaining health, vitality, and inner balance. By aligning our diet with the natural rhythms of each *ritu* (season), we support the body's innate intelligence, balance the doshas, and strengthen both physical and mental resilience. In today's fast-paced world, where disconnection from nature has become common, *Ritucharya* serves as a gentle reminder to live in harmony with our environment. Embracing this approach not only enhances overall well-being but also fosters a deeper awareness of our body's needs and the cyclical wisdom of nature.



*Ayurveda* classifies food not just by nutrients but by its effect on body, mind, digestion, and doshas. A balanced diet follows principles of taste, qualities, season, digestion, and compatibility to promote long-term health.

The benefits of eating according to *Ritus* (seasons) are deeply rooted in the science of maintaining balance between the body, mind, and the environment. Health is a dynamic equilibrium of the three *doshas* *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha* which are influenced by seasonal changes. By adapting our diet to align with each season, we can protect this balance and promote overall well-being.

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