

**A REVIEW ARTICLE ON APANA VAYU AND ITS ROLE IN  
MAINTAINING HEALTH****Dr. Mohit Kumar<sup>1\*</sup>, Prof. (Dr.) Srikanta Kumar Panda<sup>2</sup>**

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Article Received on  
30 July 2025,

Revised on 21 August 2025,  
Accepted on 10 Sept. 2025

DOI: 10.20959/wjpr202518-38318



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**ABSTRACT**

In Ayurveda, *Apana Vayu* is one of the five principal *Vayus* responsible for maintaining vital bodily functions. Derived from the Sanskrit root *apa* (downward) and *ana* (movement), *Apana Vayu* governs all downward and outward movements of energy in the body. It primarily operates in the pelvic region and influences the processes of reproduction, elimination, and childbirth. The classical Ayurvedic texts describe its role in the elimination of *Sukra* (semen), *Mutra* (urine), *mala* (stool), *ārtava* (menstrual blood), and *garbha* (fetus), underscoring its importance in sustaining reproductive health and systemic balance. Modern physiology provides a complementary understanding of these processes. Ejaculation (*ukra Niṣkramana*) is explained as a two-phase reflex involving sympathetic and somatic control; urination (*Mutra Niṣkramana*) is mediated by parasympathetic reflexes and voluntary sphincter control; defecation (*Mala Niṣkramana*) is governed by intrinsic enteric and parasympathetic

reflexes; menstruation (*Artava Niṣkramana*) results from hormonal withdrawal and prostaglandin-mediated uterine contractions; and childbirth (*Garbha Niṣkramana*) involves estrogen, oxytocin, and prostaglandin-driven uterine activity. These mechanisms correspond with the Ayurvedic concept of *Apana Vayu*'s downward-moving force. Imbalance of *Apana Vayu* may manifest as menstrual irregularities, infertility, urinary retention or incontinence, constipation, or obstructed labor, emphasizing its crucial role in maintaining health. Preventive and therapeutic approaches to balance *Apana Vayu* include appropriate diet,

hydration, fiber-rich foods, yoga postures targeting the pelvic region, breathing techniques such as diaphragmatic breathing, and mindful awareness of natural urges. Thus, *Apana Vayu* represents an integrative concept that bridges Ayurvedic philosophy with modern physiological understanding. Recognizing its multidimensional functions offers a holistic framework for reproductive and excretory health, supporting both preventive care and therapeutic strategies in contemporary practice.

**KEYWORDS:** *Apana vayu*, Menstrual Health, *Artava*, defecation, *Garbha*, *Sakrut niskramana*.

## INTRODUCTION

In the ancient medical science i.e Ayurveda, *Apana Vayu* is considered one of the five primary *Vayus* or vital life forces. The word *Apana* comes from the Sanskrit root *apa*, meaning “away” or “down,” and *ana*, meaning “breathing” or “moving.” True to its name, *Apana Vayu* governs all downward and outward movements of energy in the body. It is located in the pelvic region and is intrinsically linked to the reproductive organs, colon, and excretory system. A balanced and free-flowing *Apana Vayu* is crucial for maintaining reproductive health and overall vitality.<sup>[1]</sup>

The Functions of *Apana Vayu* in Reproduction- *Apana Vayu*’s downward-moving energy is essential for several key reproductive processes in both men and women.

### In Women

- **Menstruation (*Artava Niskramana*):** *Apana Vayu* directs the downward flow of menstrual blood, ensuring a complete and timely release. Menstruation physiologically occurs due to the withdrawal of estrogen and progesterone, leading to vasospasm of endometrial vessels, prostaglandin release, and uterine contractions that shed the endometrium. This natural downward movement is supported by *Apana Vayu*, and its imbalance may lead to dysmenorrhea, irregular cycles, or excessive bleeding.<sup>[2]</sup>
- **Fertility and Conception:** It supports the downward journey of the ovum from the fallopian tube to the uterus for implantation. A weak *Apana Vayu* can hinder this process, potentially contributing to fertility issues.<sup>[3]</sup>
- **Childbirth (*Garbha Niskramana*):** This Vayu is the primary force behind labor. Modern physiology describes that increased estrogen, prostaglandins, and oxytocin receptor activity in late pregnancy stimulate strong uterine contractions. These contractions, reinforced by

oxytocin and prostaglandins, dilate the cervix and expel the fetus. *Apana Vayu* provides the downward energy required for delivery. Its disturbance may cause miscarriage, delayed labor, or obstructed childbirth.<sup>[4]</sup>

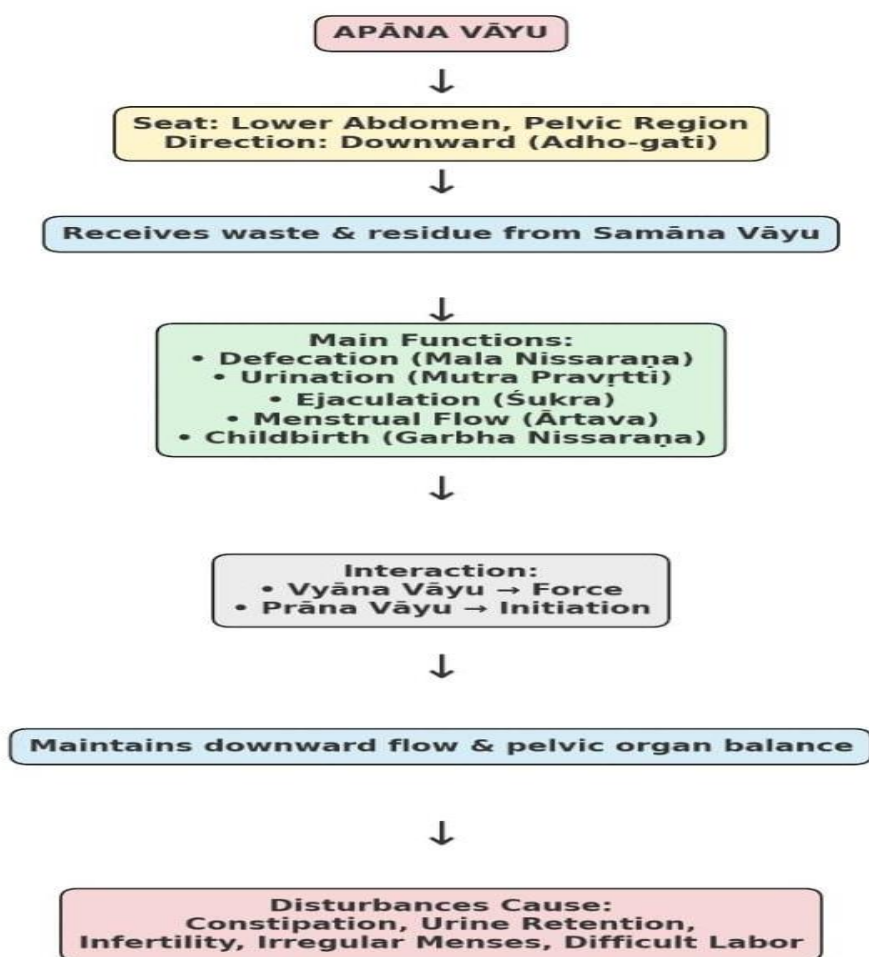
- **Postpartum Health:** Following childbirth, *Apana Vayu* helps the body eliminate waste and return the reproductive organs to their pre-pregnancy state.

### In Men

- **Ejaculation (*Sukra Niṣkramana*):** *Apana Vayu* is responsible for the downward and outward movement of seminal fluid during ejaculation. Physiologically, ejaculation is a two-phase spinal reflex: emission (semen entering the urethra under sympathetic control) and expulsion (propulsion by contraction of the bulbocavernosus muscle under somatic sacral control). Disturbance in *Apana Vayu* may lead to dysfunctions like premature ejaculation, retention, or infertility.<sup>[5]</sup>
- **Urination (*Mutra Niṣkramana*):** Proper elimination of urine is governed by *Apana Vayu*. In physiology, bladder filling activates stretch receptors that trigger parasympathetic reflexes through the pelvic nerves, causing detrusor contractions and relaxation of sphincters. Balanced *Apana Vayu* ensures timely micturition, while its vitiation leads to retention or incontinence.<sup>[6]</sup>
- **Bowel Movements (*Mala Niṣkramana*):** Elimination of feces is another key function of *Apana Vayu*. Physiologically, rectal distension activates intrinsic enteric reflexes and parasympathetic sacral reflexes that intensify peristalsis and relax sphincters. Conscious relaxation of the external sphincter completes defecation. A healthy *Apana Vayu* ensures proper downward elimination, while imbalance manifests as constipation, incomplete evacuation, or uncontrolled passage.<sup>[7]</sup>

Acharya	Sthana (Location)	Karma (Function)
Charak	<i>Vrashana, Vasti, Medra, Nabhi, Uru, Vanshana, Guda, Aantra</i>	Eliminates <i>Sukra, mutra, mala, artava</i> and <i>garbha</i> in a definite time.
Susruta	<i>Pakvasaya</i>	Eliminates <i>mala, sukra, garbha, artava</i> from the lower part of the body.
Ashtanga Sangraha	<i>Apana Pradesh (Sroni, Vasti, Medra, Vrashana, Uru)</i>	Circulates in pelvis and eliminates <i>sukra, artava, mala, mutra, garbha</i> .
Ashtanga Hridaya	<i>Guda, Vasti, Medra, Sroni, Uru</i>	Circulates and eliminates <i>sukra, artava, mala, mutra, garbha</i> .
Bhavaprakasha	<i>Malasaya (Pakvasaya)</i>	Eliminates <i>mala, mutra, Sukra, Garbha, raja</i> outside the body.

### Mechanism of APĀNA VĀYU



### Signs of *Apana Vayu* Imbalance

An imbalance in *Apana Vayu* can manifest as either an excess of downward energy, causing exhaustion, or a lack of downward energy, leading to stagnation. Common signs of imbalance include

- Menstrual problems: Irregular periods, painful cramps, and premenstrual syndrome (PMS).
- Fertility challenges: Difficulty conceiving.
- Digestive issues: Constipation, bloating, and irritable bowel syndrome (IBS).<sup>1</sup>
- General weakness: A feeling of being drained or having low energy.

### Practices to Balance *Apana Vayu*

Fortunately, several simple yet effective practices can help restore the balance of *Apana Vayu*.

- **Yoga Poses (Asanas):** Poses that focus on the lower body and pelvis are particularly beneficial.
- Forward Folds: (e.g., *Pascimottanasana* or Seated Forward Bend) help to release tension in the lower back and calm the nervous system.
- Hip Openers: (e.g., *Baddha Konasana* or Bound Angle Pose) and squats (*Malasana* or Garland Pose) are excellent for stimulating the pelvic area and encouraging downward energy flow.
- **Breathing Techniques (Pranayama)**
- Diaphragmatic Breathing: Practicing deep, abdominal breaths help to gently massage the internal organs and encourages downward movement.
- **Lifestyle and Diet**
- Stay Hydrated: Drinking enough water helps with elimination.
- Fiber-Rich Diet: Eating fruits, vegetables, and whole grains supports healthy digestion.
- Regular Exercise: Gentle, consistent movement prevents stagnation.
- Mindful Awareness: Paying attention to the body's natural urges and not suppressing them.

## DISCUSSION

Apana Vayu governs several eliminatory and reproductive functions, many of which can be correlated with modern physiological processes. Ejaculation (*Shukra Nishkramana*) occurs through the coordinated action of parasympathetic and sympathetic systems—parasympathetic stimulation initiating erection and sympathetic discharge driving ejaculation. Thus, it reflects the controlled function of Apana Vayu supported by autonomic balance.

Menstruation (*Artava Nishkramana*) results from a decline in estrogen and progesterone following corpus luteum involution, leading to endometrial shedding aided by prostaglandins. Here, Vyana Vayu facilitates uterine contractions while Apana Vayu executes the expulsion of menstrual blood and tissue.

Excretory processes, such as *Mutra Nishkramana* (urination) and *Sakrit Nishkramana* (defecation), also involve multiple *Vayus*. Samana Vayu regulates separation of waste, Prana controls higher neural centers, Vyana supports muscular activity, and Apana enables final elimination. Reflex pathways through the spinal cord and brainstem align with the Ayurvedic concept of Vayu as the activator of sensory and motor functions.

Parturition is another vital role of Apana Vayu. Toward term, increased estrogen-to-progesterone ratio and oxytocin secretion initiate uterine contractions. Prana Vayu governs oxytocin release, Vyana carries out muscular contractions, and Apana ensures expulsion of the fetus and placenta.

Finally, elimination of flatus (*Samirana Nishkramana*) demonstrates coordination between Apana, Samana, Prana, and Vyana Vayu. Gas accumulation stimulates the myenteric plexus, inducing peristaltic contractions, a function attributed to Vyana, while expulsion is facilitated by Apana.

Collectively, these processes highlight the central role of *Apana Vayu* in maintaining reproductive and excretory physiology, with supportive functions from other *Vayus*. The correlation between Ayurvedic principles and modern physiology provides a comprehensive framework for understanding these vital functions.

## CONCLUSION

*Apana Vayu* is the guardian of our body's downward energy. Its balanced flow is not just important for health but for overall well-being. By integrating Ayurvedic wisdom with modern physiology—such as its role in menstruation, ejaculation, urination, defecation, and childbirth—we can appreciate the holistic importance of this vital force. Practices like yoga, mindful breathing, and a healthy lifestyle honor *Apana Vayu*, ensuring our body's natural cycles are supported and our reproductive system thrives.

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