

**AYURVEDIC PRINCIPLES OF WATER CONSUMPTION
(AMBUPANA VIDHI): A CRITICAL REVIEW OF TRADITIONAL
CONCEPTS AND CONTEMPORARY EVIDENCE**

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ABSTRACT

Water consumption practices play an important role in Ayurveda under the concept of Ambupana Vidhi. This concept outlines the Ayurvedic perspective of timing, quantity, temperature, and method of intake of water. The present review looks critically at the traditional Ayurvedic hydration principles and contemporary biomedical evidence. A narrative review method was adopted using observational studies, protocol-based investigations, narrative reviews, and physiological literature related to hydration science. The main principle of Ayurvedic literature emphasizes the individualized hydration practices according to Prakriti, Agni, environmental conditions, and disease state. Based on contemporary evidence, it is suggested that hydration behavior may affect gastrointestinal comfort, satiety regulation, and behavioral health patterns; however, most available studies are still predominantly

observational and methodologically limited. The intent of warm water intake and conscious drinking behavior shows partial physiological plausibility through thermo-sensory and behavioral mechanisms, although robust clinical evidence is still insufficient. Major limitations in existing literature include reliance on self-reported behavioral data, lack of randomized controlled trials, and absence of objective hydration markers. Ayurvedic hydration practices may contribute to preventive lifestyle awareness and behavioral regulation, but further interdisciplinary research is needed to establish clear clinical relevance.

ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Meaning
Agni	Digestive and metabolic capacity
Prakriti	Constitutional body type
Ambupana Vidhi	Ayurvedic principles of water consumption

KEYWORDS: Ayurveda; Ambupana Vidhi; Hydration; Water Consumption; Integrative Medicine; Digestive Physiology; Preventive Health.

INTRODUCTION

Water is crucial for human survival and physiological homeostasis. It plays a significant role in thermoregulation, cellular metabolism, nutrient transport, gastrointestinal function, renal physiology, and elimination of metabolic waste products. Disturbances in hydration status can contribute to impaired cognitive performance, digestive discomfort, metabolic dysfunction, and renal abnormalities.^[1-4]

According to contemporary biomedical science, hydration is generally assessed using quantitative physiological parameters, including fluid balance, osmolarity, electrolyte regulation, and thermoregulatory homeostasis.^[1-3]

In contrast to contemporary quantitative hydration assessment, Ayurveda approaches hydration through behavioral, constitutional, and qualitative frameworks.

According to the traditional medical system, Ayurveda provides a detailed framework for hydration practices under the concept of Ambupana Vidhi. The recommendations according to classical Ayurvedic literature describe the timing, quantity, temperature, posture, and method of water intake. These practices are related to broader Ayurvedic concepts, which

include Agni, i.e., digestive and metabolic capacity, Dosha balance, seasonal adaptation, and constitutional variability, i.e., Prakriti.^[5-7]

Some practices for water consumption, such as using warm water, avoiding excessive water intake after meals, and drinking water while sitting, are discussed in various wellness communities, social media platforms, and digital health platforms.^[8-10] Even though many of these practices are culturally familiar and followed and are somewhat behaviorally sound, their scientific validation remains incomplete.

Many contemporary publications have attempted to evaluate Ayurvedic hydration concepts through observational studies and narrative reviews.^[8-10]

However, the currently available literature is still methodologically heterogeneous and scientifically limited. Most of the studies rely on observational designs, self-reported behavioral assessment, and theoretical interpretation of classical Ayurvedic texts.

Despite these limitations, certain traditional hydration practices show partial physiological justification when interpreted through contemporary biomedical frameworks. Warm water intake may improve subjective throat comfort and mucus clearance.^[11] While conscious hydration behavior may influence satiety feeling and behavioral regulation.^[18]

Considering the increasing public interest in traditional wellness practices and the limited availability of critically evaluated evidence, this review was undertaken to evaluate Ayurvedic principles of water consumption in relation to contemporary physiological evidence and public health relevance.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Design

The present study was conducted as a narrative critical review focusing on Ayurvedic principles of water consumption and their interpretation within contemporary biomedical literature. The narrative review method was selected because the current evidence primarily comprises observational studies, protocol-based investigations, and conceptual review articles.

Review of Literature and Search Strategy

Relevant literature was searched for reviews on biomedical databases such as PubMed and Google Scholar. Search terms included “Ayurveda,” “Ambupana Vidhi,” “Hydration,” “water intake,” “Prakriti,” “digestive physiology,” and “integrative medicine.”

Publications were screened and selected, and the screening of references added in selected publications was additionally performed to find conceptually relevant biomedical literature related to hydration physiology, gastrointestinal function, behavioral medicine, and thermoregulation.^[1-4,12-15]

Inclusion Criteria

- ❖ Articles discussing Ayurvedic principles of water consumption
- ❖ English language publications
- ❖ Literature discussing timing, quantity, temperature, and behavioral aspects of water intake
- ❖ Studies addressing hydration and digestive physiology

Exclusion Criteria

- ❖ Non-English publications without accessible translation
- ❖ Non-academic wellness content
- ❖ Articles unrelated to Ayurvedic hydration concepts
- ❖ Duplicate literature

Comparative Analytical Framework

The selected literature was compared across multiple domains, including study design, methodological quality, statistical analysis, and public health relevance.

The specific focus was on identifying methodological limitations associated with self-reported behavioral assessment and the interpretation of observational findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Ayurvedic literature considers water not just as a physiological requirement but as an important determinant of digestive balance, metabolism, tissue nourishment, and systemic regulation. Classical texts describe the hydration-related recommendations under Ambupana Vidhi.^[5-7]

Ayurveda focuses on individualized hydration practices based on constitutional type, i.e., prakriti, digestive capacity, i.e., Agni, seasonal variation, environmental conditions, age, and disease status, also majorly focusing on place, season, time, and person.

Water intake and Agni

One of the central Ayurvedic concepts associated with hydration is Agni, interpreted as digestive and metabolic capacity. Classical texts indicate that excessive and improperly timed water intake may weaken digestive functioning.^[5-7]

Contemporary physiology suggests that meal-related fluid intake can influence gastric distention, satiety signaling^[16,17], gastric sensation, and subjective digestive comfort.^[1-4,12]

However, currently available biomedical evidence does not conclusively support the claim that moderate water intake significantly impairs digestion in healthy individuals.

Warm water consumption

Warm water (Ushanodaka) is traditionally recommended in Ayurveda to be used in taking any kind of medicine, as it increases the efficacy of that medicine. Moreover, it is also recommended in Ayurveda for respiratory disorders, impaired digestion, and kapha-dominant conditions.^[5-7]

Contemporary physiological evidence suggests that warm fluids may improve subjective throat comfort, mucus clearance, and respiratory symptom relief^[11]. These effects are likely mediated through thermo-sensory mechanisms rather than direct disease-modifying physiological actions.

Although such findings provide partial physiological plausibility for selected traditional recommendations, robust evidence supporting major metabolic enhancement or therapeutic disease modification through warm water intake is still insufficient.

Cold-water consumption

Cold water has been discouraged since the traditional era in selected digestive and respiratory conditions because of its proposed influence on weakening digestive efficiency.^[5-7]

Modern biomedical evidence on the harmful effects of moderate cold-water intake remains limited. While cold beverages may influence subjective gastric sensation and thermal

comfort, convincing evidence showing major adverse physiological effects in healthy individuals is lacking.

Behavioral and lifestyle perspective

Several Ayurvedic hydration practices may derive practical importance primarily through behavioral regulation rather than direct physiological mechanisms. Practices such as meal awareness, slow drinking, careful consumption, and regular hydration routines may positively influence satiety feeling, eating behavior, and preventive lifestyle structuring.

Behavioral medicine research increasingly recognizes the role of structured lifestyle rituals and careful eating practices in long-term preventive healthcare.^[18]

Table 1: Comparative interpretation of Ayurvedic hydration principles.

Ayurvedic Principle	Traditional Interpretation	Contemporary Physiological interpretation	Current Evidence Strength
Warm water intake	Supports digestion and Kapha balance	Thermo- sensory symptom relief	Moderate
Avoid excessive water after meals	Protects Agni	Satiety modulation hypothesis	Limited
Conscious drinking behavior	Supports digestive regulation	Behavioral regulation effect	Moderate
Individualized hydration	Prakriti-based personalization	Personalized medicine analogy	Conceptual
Sitting posture while drinking	Maintains physiological balance	Limited physiological evidence	Weak

Several methodological limitations were found consistently across the reviewed literature. These limitations included a lack of randomized controlled trials, reliance on self-reported behavioral data, minimal inferential statistical analysis, a lack of objective hydration biomarkers, and limited external validity.

Consequently, the current evidence available should be interpreted cautiously and should be considered primarily exploratory rather than conclusive evidence supporting the therapeutic efficacy of Ayurvedic hydration practices.

As for the public's interest in hydration practices, it has increased substantially via social media and digital wellness platforms.^[8-10] Moreover, these practices may encourage preventive lifestyle awareness and behavioral mindfulness. Exaggerated therapeutic claims

without adequate scientific support may contribute to misinformation and unrealistic expectations.

Integrative public health communication should be scientifically balanced, culturally sensitive, and evidence informed.

CONCLUSION

The principles of Ayurveda for water consumption represent a historically significant and behaviorally structured framework for hydration and preventive healthcare. Classical Ayurvedic literature provides detailed recommendations on timing, temperature, posture, quantity, and individualization of water intake under the concept of Ambupana Vidhi.^[5-7]

The current scientific evidence here demonstrates partial physiological credibility for selected practices such as warm water intake and careful hydration practices. However, the available literature is still predominantly observational and methodologically limited.

Many potential benefits associated with Ayurvedic hydration practices may derive more strongly from behavioral regulation, preventive lifestyle structuring, and health awareness rather than direct disease-modifying physiological effects.

Further interdisciplinary research integrating Ayurveda, physiology, behavioral medicine, and public health science is necessary for a scientifically rigorous evaluation of traditional hydration practices.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

Ethical Approval

Ethical approval was not needed because the study involved an analysis of previously published literature.

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