

AN AYURVEDIC FRAMEWORK FOR ADDRESSING LIFESTYLE-RELATED PATHOLOGIES: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Background: Modern lifestyles, characterized by hectic schedules and poor dietary choices, have led to a significant increase in lifestyle-related illnesses, including heart disease, obesity, diabetes, and mental health issues. **Objective:** This narrative review aims to examine the rising prevalence of these conditions and explore the role of Ayurvedic principles in their prevention and management. **Methods:** A comprehensive manual literature search was performed using multiple databases, including PubMed, Google Scholar, and various national health databases, focusing on key Ayurvedic concepts such as *Ahara* (diet), *Vihara* (lifestyle), *Dincharya* (daily regimen), *Ritucharya* (seasonal regimen), *Sadvritta* (ethical living), and *Achara Rasayana* (behavioral rejuvenation). **Results:** The evidence confirms that lifestyle diseases are largely driven by chronic stress, sedentary habits, irregular sleep patterns, and the consumption of unhealthy substances. Ayurveda offers a holistic and integrative management

approach, emphasizing the restoration of balance through customized diets, lifestyle adjustments, detoxification therapies, and rejuvenation techniques. **Conclusion:** In contrast to conventional treatments which may have side effects, Ayurvedic interventions provide holistic healing by nurturing the physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects of well-being. This review highlights the significant potential of incorporating Ayurvedic practices into

mainstream healthcare systems to more effectively manage the growing burden of lifestyle-related disorders.

KEYWORDS: *Ayurveda*, *Dinacharya*, Lifestyle disorders, *Ratricharya*, *Ritucharya*, *Sadvritta*.

Key Messages

What is already known about the topic

- Lifestyle disorders dominance in the present scenario.
- Benefits of *Ayurvedic* regimes.
- Side effects that chemical drugs may cause while alleviating symptoms of any diseases.

What this paper adds

- Importance of *Ayurvedic* regimes to manage lifestyle disorders.
- Holistic approach including regimes for *Ahara*, *Vihara*, and *Sadvritta*.
- Prospects and advantages of integrating *Ayurvedic* regimes into mainstream medical practice for the management of lifestyle diseases.

1. INTRODUCTION

Lifestyle and diet play a major role in the predisposition of various lifestyle diseases including obesity, hypertension, cardiovascular diseases (CVDs), diabetes, chronic pulmonary diseases, osteoporosis and cancer.^[1] These are also known as non-communicable diseases (NCDs). These diseases grow gradually and once encountered cannot be cured easily. The most common causes attributed to these diseases are unhealthy eating habits, consumption of preserved foods, artificial sweeteners, poor sleep, and a sedentary lifestyle.^[2] [Figure 1]. These problems have been further aggravated by poor exposure to fresh air and sunlight.

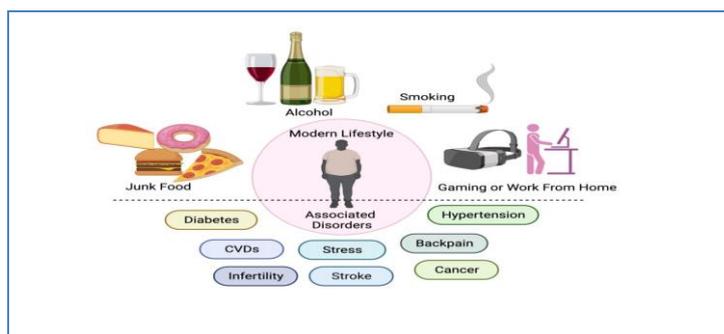


Figure 1: Key risk factors of a modern lifestyle and their associated disorders.

In India, non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are rising at a concerning rate, with the World Health Organization (WHO) predicting that the country will soon rank among the top nations affected by lifestyle-related illnesses.^[3] A survey by the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) found that over 66% of those affected by NCDs are within the 26–59 age group—the nation’s most economically productive segment. This is particularly troubling, given that 65% of India’s population is under 35 years old. The occurrence of NCDs begins to rise after the age of 18 and increases sharply after 35.^[4] Diabetes prevalence has surged dramatically from 2% in 1970 to between 10–20% in 2020. Similarly, neurological disorders have escalated, with stroke incidence increasing fourfold over the past three decades. Additionally, life expectancy in India has improved from 47 years in the 1970s to around 70 years today, further straining the healthcare system as the aging population becomes more susceptible to chronic NCDs.^[5]

However, most genetic, and epidemiologic research has concluded that lowering occupational hazards, changing eating habits, changing lifestyle-risk factors, uptake of multivitamins, regular medical checkups, and stress management techniques can prevent the majority of these NCDs.

According to Ayurveda, all these NCDs occur because of Kaphadosha, dushitarasadhatu, agnidushti and amapradosha, Mamsa, Medadhatushaithilya.^[6] Suggestive of the fact that most of the diseases are related to defective metabolism and can be reversed by following trusted age-old practice like Ayurveda and the principles that come with it including dincharya, ritucharya, sadvritta, ahara, nidra, panchakarma, medicaments, and rejuvenation therapies [Figure 2]. This review focuses on the impact of lifestyle disorders and their management using a holistic approach of Ayurveda.

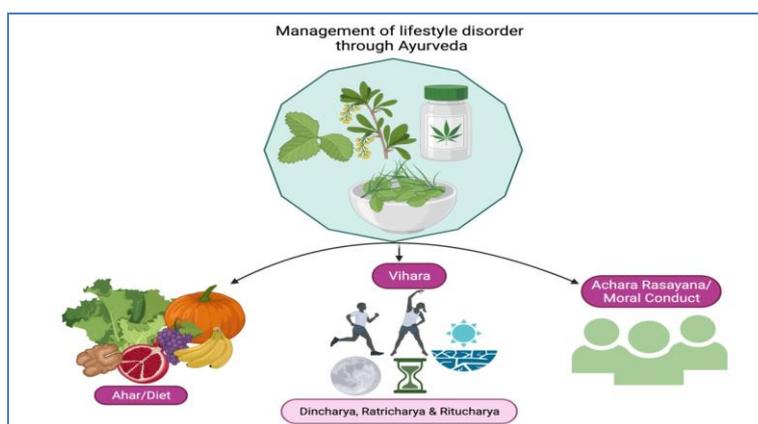


Figure 2: Conceptual framework for the Ayurvedic management of lifestyle disorders.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study is conducted to provide a critical review of the benefits of *Ayurveda* in managing lifestyle disorders. Manuscripts and commentaries published based on classical Ayurvedic texts like *Charak Samhita*, *Ashtang Hridaya* have been searched and summarized. A manual search was done on PubMed, Google Scholar, and other national search engines to obtain published literature relating to terms, 'Ahara', 'Vihara', 'Lifestyledisorders', 'Dincharya', 'Ritucharya', 'Ratricharya', 'Sadvritta', 'Achara Rasayana'.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Concept of 'Ahara' (diet) in Ayurveda

Many lifestyle disorders such as diabetes, obesity, infertility issues, CVDs, and obesity are mediated by improper feeding habits. It is evident from extensive research that food and dietary practices play a crucial role in both bringing about healthy and diseased conditions. According to Ayurveda, *Ahara* i.e., a balanced diet is the best medicine (*Mahabhaishajya*) and is considered as the foremost of the three pillars of life (*Trayo-upasthambha*).^[7] *Ahara* is preventive and provides all the required nutrients including carbohydrates, fats, proteins, vitamins, and minerals in the right proportion. According to Ayurveda, the Universe is made up of 5 elements namely *Akash*, *Vayu*, *Teja*, *Jala*, and *Prithvi* (*Panchamahabhutas*), and accordingly *Ahara* is also described as *Akashiya*, *Vayavya*, *Agneya*, *Apya*, and *Parthiva*, which if consumed in right proportion provides nourishment, help in growth and development. Further, adjusting diet and habits, and consuming food/*Ahara* according to the *Prakriti*, *Tridosha*, and *satmyaasatmya* of an individual helps in preventing all major lifestyle diseases. According to Sushruta and Vagbhata. It is recommended to consume two parts solid food, one part liquid, and leave one part of the stomach empty to facilitate the proper functioning of *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha doshas*.^[8] According to *Charak Samhita*, a few rules should be followed to get the maximum benefit from food which includes having food that is 1) warm, 2) unctuous, 3) easy to digest, 4) according to one's prakriti (Body constitution). Further one should have food 5) after washing hands 6) when previous food is digested 7) and after offering prayers. One should eat food 8) in time, 9) right quantity and 9) at the proper place.^[9]

According to Acharya Charaka, an ideal or wholesome diet (*Pathya*) should rebuild the worn-out system, nourish dhatus and equilibrate body constituents. Whereas an unwholesome (*Apathya*) diet produces diseases. Further, following and customizing diet as per the ritus has

been specified to reinstate the ahara and vihara relation. Bitter, hot, and astringent foods are recommended in the spring season, whereas salty, sour, and sweet foods should be avoided. Pitta exacerbation happens in the summer due to the hot climate. Therefore, a pitta-calming diet consisting of cold, liquid, sweet, and greasy foods is recommended and a diet that is very hot, spicy, sour, and salty should be avoided. Vata is aggravated during the rainy season, hence sweet, sour, and salty foods and drinks are advised. A hot, dry, greasy, and easily digestible meal is ideal. The cold, dry, chilly atmosphere aggravates Vatadosha in the pre-winter and winter seasons, hence a vataghna, pittavardhaka diet is recommended. Foods that are hot, sweet, sour, and salty, as well as milk, sugarcane, rice, oils, and fats, are recommended, and Pitta dosha is aggravated during the autumn season. Purgation, bloodletting, cooling, and a light diet are recommended as well as ghee treated with bitter medications.^[10]

3.2 Concept of 'Vihara' - The Ayurvedic lifestyle

The word *Vihara* is derived from 'Hru' *Dhatu* with 'Vi' *Upasarga* and 'Ghan' *Pratyaya*. It means 'lifestyle'. According to *Ayurveda*, to maintain a healthy body/aarogya, one should have *Hita Sevana* (conducive regimen) relating to *Ahara* (diet), *Vihara* (lifestyle), and *Acharya* (Actions). One should follow certain lifestyle/*vihara* daily which include *Dincharya* (daily regime), *Ritucharya* (seasonal regime), and *Ratricharya* (night regime). Recent studies have shown that lifestyle intervention is important to manage several chronic diseases.

3.2.1 *Dincharya* (daily regime)

Code of conducts described in *Ayurveda* which are to be followed in daily life is known as *Dincharya*. These have been explained to make an individual healthy and happy. It includes 1) *Utthana*/waking up at *brahammuhurta* (2 hrs before sunrise), 2) *Dantdhavan*/Toothbrushing- toothbrushes made up of herbal sticks including *Arka* (*Calotropis procera*), *Khadir* (*Acacia cateceua*), *Karaveera* (*Nerium indicum*), or *Neem* (*Azhadirecta indica*), 3) *Jihvanirlekhana*/ cleaning of tongue reduces inflammation and provides freshness, 4) *Gandusha* and *Kavala*/Gargling helps remove *kapha* and *vata*, prevent throat infections, and cleanses oral cavity 5) *Anjana*/collyrium application in the eyes and eyewash for removing excess *kapha*, 6) *Nasya*/administration of oil /medicines in nostrils to prevent greying of hairs, the health of neck and chest 7) *Dhoomapana*- Inhalation of medicated smokes which helps in removing *kapha* and *vata*, prevents infection 8)

Abyanga/body massage: It helps in relieving stress and strain of muscles and prevents aging and adds longevity to life, 9) *Churna* massage/Body scrub to balance *vata* and *kapha*, 10) *Vyayama*/Exercise provides strength, energy, aids digestion, and helps to burn fats, 11) *Udvaartana* or massage using medicated herbal powders, 12) *Snana*/bathing increases longevity and *agni* 13) *Chankramana* (walking), 14) Lunch(10- 12am) 15) Dinner(6-8 pm) 16) *Ratricharya* (early to bed), 17)Yoga.^[11,14]

Our daily routine shapes our way of life. Fast modernization in recent years has changed our lifestyle in a way leading to NCDs or chronic lifestyle disorders. With the rising westernization of lifestyle, the frequency of various lifestyle disorders has reached alarming proportions in recent decades. These lifestyle disorders can be very well managed by following daily routine practices/*dincharya* explained in Ayurveda. The main principle of *Dincharya* is the harmonization of the human body with the environment and balancing the doshas to keep us healthy. For example, waking up early controls the cortisol in the body which is released when we sleep late and leads to high blood pressure, headache, and loss of concentration. Similarly, walking, yoga and exercises help in improving blood circulation and digestion, controls obesity, LDL, HDL, and sugar levels, provide flexibility, and manage problems like spondylitis, back pain, neck pain arising due to a sedentary lifestyle.

Eating small meals, taking the next meal when the first meal is digested, taking dinner before 2-3 hours of sleeping helps in managing problems related to the digestive system, obesity, and diabetes. Further, one should offer prayer to God before having food and eat with a good mindset for good health.

3.2.2 *Ritucharya* (seasonal regime)

Ritucharya is made up of two words ‘*Ritu*’ meaning season and ‘*Charya*’ meaning routine. According to *Ayurveda*, following regimes/routine according to seasonal variation helps a person remain healthy in all the seasons. As per Ayurvedic scriptures, *Ritucharya* is very important for overall wellbeing and has been discussed thoroughly in most of the *samhitas*. According to *Charaka Samhita*, it is said that; “*Tasya Shitadiya Ahaar balam Varnascha Vardhate. Tasyartusatmayam Vaditam Chestaharvyapasrayam,*” which means when a person follows a suitable diet and regime for every season, his strength and complexion are enhanced accordingly.

According to *Ayurveda*, a year is divided into *Uttarayana/Adanakala* (Northern solstice) and *Dakshinayana/Visargkala* (Southern solstice) depending on the direction of the movement of the sun. *Uttarayana/Adanakala* has a further 3 ritus namely, *Shishira* (winter), *Vasanta* (spring), and *Grishma* (summer). Sun and wind are very strong during *uttarayana*. Because of which earth become dry and weak during this period and in turn *bala* or the energy of humans decreases day by day.^[10,15]

Visargakala has the next 3 ritus (Seasons) namely *Varsha* (monsoon), *Sharata* (autumn), and *Hemanta* (late autumn) in *Dakshinayana*. During this period sun moves towards the south, the moon becomes stronger than the sun and the sun starts giving energy to the sun. Thus in turn during *Dakshinayana/Visargkala*, energy of humans increases gradually.^[10,15]

According to the change of ritus, there occurs a change in the doshas (*Vata*, *pitta*, and *kapha*) of the body and their disharmony leads to diseases. For instance, *Vatadosha* accumulates in *Grishmaritu*/summer, aggravates during *Varsharitu* (monsoon), and weakens *agni*. Whereas, *pittadosha* accumulates during *Varsharitu* and aggravates during autumn. Similarly, *Kaphadosha* accumulates during winter and aggravates during spring.

According to ritus, there is the dominance of rasas. For instance, *Tikta* (Bitter), *Kashaya* (Astringent), *Katu* (Pungent) tastes dominates in *Sisira*, *Vasanta*, and *Grishma* ritu respectively. Similarly, *Amla* (Sour), *Lavana* (Salty), and *Madhura* (Sweet) taste become dominant in *Varsha*, *Sharat*, and *Hemanta* ritu, respectively. Therefore, as per *Ayurveda*, Ahara (Diet) should be consumed as per specific *Rasa* and *ritu* to avoid *Dosha dushti*.^[16,19]

Ritucharya is based on the theory of *Dosha* and *Panchamahabhuta* and can be analyzed by *Ayurveda* experts to design diets according to different ritus/seasons based on these principles.

[Table 1].

Table 1: Summary of different Ritus, Dosha, and Rasa predominance and status of bala during the year.

<i>Kala</i> (time)	Season	<i>Dosha</i> situation	<i>Rasa</i> (taste)	<i>Bala</i> (strength)
<i>Adana kala</i>	<i>Shishira</i> (winter)	<i>Kapha</i> accumulation	<i>Tikta</i>	<i>Bala</i> decreases day by day.
	<i>Vasanta</i> (spring)	<i>Kapha</i> vitiation	<i>Kashaya</i>	
	<i>Grishma</i> (summer)	<i>Vata</i> accumulation & <i>Kapha</i> pacification	<i>Katu</i>	
<i>Visarga kala</i>	<i>Varsha</i> (monsoon)	<i>Vata</i> vitiation	<i>Amla</i>	<i>Bala</i> increases

		& <i>Pitta</i> accumulation		day by day.
	<i>Sharad</i> (autumn)	<i>Pitta</i> vitiation & <i>Vata</i> pacification	<i>Lavana</i>	
	<i>Hemanta</i> (late autumn)	<i>Pitta</i> pacification	<i>Madhura</i>	

Figures

Figure 1: Key risk factors of a modern lifestyle and their associated disorders: The schematic illustrates major lifestyle factors, including the consumption of junk food and alcohol, smoking, and sedentary behavior (e.g., gaming, working from home). These contribute to a range of associated non-communicable diseases.

Figure 2: Conceptual framework for the Ayurvedic management of lifestyle disorders
The management approach is based on the three core principles of *Ahar* (diet), *Vihara* (lifestyle regimens including *Dincharya*, *Ratricharya*, & *Ritucharya*), and *Achara Rasayana* (moral conduct). These lifestyle modifications are complemented by specific therapeutic interventions, represented centrally.

List of Tables

Table 1: Summary of different *Ritus*, *Dosha*, and *Rasa* predominance and status of *bala* during the year.

<i>Kala</i> (time)	Season	<i>Dosha</i> situation	<i>Rasa</i> (taste)	<i>Bala</i> (strength)
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	<i>Hemanta</i> (late autumn)	<i>Pitta</i> pacification	<i>Madhura</i>	

3.2.3 *Ratricharya*(night regimen)

In Ayurveda, the concept of *Ratricharya* is very important for the promotion of good health. *Ratricharya* is composed of 2 words: ‘*Ratri*’ and ‘*Charya*’ which means regime, which is to be followed from dusk, through the night upto the dawn. *Ratricharya* has 3 main regimes namely *Ahara* (food), *Shayana* (sleep), and *Maithuna* (sexual life).^[20] According to Ayurveda, food should be consumed in the first part of the night so that it gets digested properly. Smaller and lighter meals should be taken at night as digestion is heavy food can

lead to obesity and other metabolic disorders. Modern research has proved that heavy food intake during bedtime can lead to obesity and other metabolic disorders, whereas taking light foods and low calories have proven to be beneficial.^[22] Night snacking has been reported to disturb sleep, poor dietary control, increase chances of obesity. Further, it is suggested to have an undisturbed sleep of at least 6 hours. Therefore, we should sleep at right time, right place, in a comfortable place. Good sleep helps in nourishing the body, equilibrates the *dhatu*s (tissues), alleviates lethargy, helps digestion, provides strength (*Bala*), wisdom (*Jnana*), and Longevity (*Jeevana*). It also pacifies *Kapha* and eliminates toxins from the body. Further, it has been reported by many authors that sleeping for less than six hours increases the risk of CVDs, whereas a sound sleep of 7-8 hours decreases the incidence of CVDs and other metabolic disorders.^[23] Whereas, sleeping during the daytime has been reported to cause an imbalance of *Kapha-pitta*. Other factors which have shown an impact on the quality of sleep are modern technology devices that hinder individuals from falling asleep and maintaining sleep. Apart from sleep, healthy sex life has been reported to be essential for both males and females to maintain excellent health.^[24]

3.3 *Sadvritta* and *Achara Rasayana*

Achara Rasayana means *achara* or customs working in the form of *rasayana* (several medicines used for rejuvenation) for the overall wellbeing of an individual. So, when these customs, deeds, and diets are followed, it acts as *rasayana* and helps rejuvenation of our body. In the present scenario when so many misdeeds are reported, the customs or activities mentioned as '*Sadvritta*' play an important role. It has been explained in *Charak Samhita Chikitsasthana Rasayanadhyaya* which means behavioral conduct i.e. *Sadvritta* following it acts as *rasayana* on our body & mind. It helps in improving personality, social relations, physical health, mental health, longevity, and psycho-neuro-immunity. It further, helps the individual in getting awareness about the society and to acknowledge the role of an individual in society. According to Ayurveda, those individuals who do not follow good conduct or become ignorant of his deeds i.e. *Prajnaparadha*, his conduct becomes a causative factor of many of the diseases.^[25] The special rules which have been laid in Ayurveda for good conduct for mental health and social behavior, are known as *sadvritta*. *Sadvritta* is derived from two words: '*sad*' and '*vritta*' which means 'good conduct' or 'behavior' in daily routine. According to *Charak samhita*, the following principles of *Sadvritta* helps person live a healthy life without suffering from any type of disease.^[26] These conducts have been divided into 5 categories including *Vyavaharikasadvritta* (Ethical codes of conduct),

Samajikasadvritta (Social codes of conduct), *Manasikasadvritta* (Mental codes of conduct), *Dharmikasadvritta* (Moral codes of conduct), *SharirikaSadvritta* (Physical codes of conduct).^[27] A few of these conducts include always speaking the truth, controlling your anger, being kind and helpful, speaking pleasant words, do not harm others, observing cleanliness, self-control, and regularity in tasks, and respecting elders. Practicing these conducts of Sadvritta aids in the dominance of satvaguna over rajas and tamas, resulting in good mental health. This practice is akin to *Yama* and *Niyama* which have been explained in *Astang Yoga*.^[28]

4. DISCUSSION

Ayurveda is a recognized and ancient system that describes the various way to make a healthy life. The main aim of *Ayurveda* is “*SwasthasyaSwasthyaRakshanam*” (Prevention and maintenance of the health of human beings) and “*AtursyaVikarPrashamanam*” (To cure the diseases developed in the body of a human). To achieve this aim, it has laid down certain principles which are to be followed on daily basis to maintain a healthy state and prevent diseases. However, in the present time, modern lifestyle has disrupted eating habits, sleep cycle and increasing workload has increased stress in life. Further, sedentary lifestyle, seasonal changes, repressed emotions along consumption of unhealthy and preserved food leads to *Dosha-dhatuvaishamyata*, *Agni Balavasamyata* (impaired digestion and metabolism), *Srotodusti* (Dysfunction of body channels), harassment of *Sattva* (impaired mental condition) causing various types of lifestyle disorders like dyslipidemia, hyperacidity, acne, hypertension, paralysis, Stroke, CVDs, diabetes, hemorrhoids, infertility and cancer. If we review the factors involved in the *Ayurveda* pathogenesis of these disorders, they are mainly vitiated *Kaphadosha*, *Rasadhatu*, *Agnidushti* (Impaired metabolism) and *Amapradosha* (Accumulation of toxins), *MamsaMedadhatushaithilya* (Looseness of muscle mass and excess fat accumulation).

According to classical *Ayurveda* texts, good intervention can help in prevention as well as management of *Doshadhatuvaishamyata*, *Dhatudusti* (vitiation of tissues) by practicing the principles mentioned in *Swasthavritta* like *Ahara-vihara*, *Panchakarma*, *Rasayana*, *Dincharya*, *Ritucharya*, *Sadvrita*, and *Achara Rasayana*.^[11] Adjustments in diet and lifestyle based on factors such as age, seasonal changes, and geographic location, along with honoring natural bodily urges (*Vega*), managing harmful emotions, and incorporating specific *Rasayana* (antioxidant) substances into daily habits, play a crucial role in alleviating the

impact of lifestyle-related diseases.^[29,30] Among these factors, diet (*Ahara*) is regarded as the most vital. Individuals should consume *Pathya* (wholesome and suitable) food that matches their bodily constitution, appetite, and digestive strength. Additionally, improper cooking methods, erratic eating schedules, the intake of incompatible or nutritionally unbalanced food, and neglect of recommended practices for preparing, storing, and consuming food can disrupt health and lead to imbalances. Therefore, due consideration should be given to all aspects of diet—planning for the treatment of diseases and maintaining health, according to Ayurveda. Further, *Vihara* (lifestyle) regimes also play equal importance in maintaining a healthy body and preventing diseases. It has been said that individuals who do not follow *Dinacharya* (daily regimen), including *Sandhyacharya* (evening regimen) and *Ratricharya* (night regimen), fall prey to diseases. Therefore, individuals must make efforts to practice these regimes of *Ahara* and *Vihara* along with *Yoga* and *Panchakarma* to attain the highest state of wellbeing.^[30] Now it is scientifically proved that adapting Ayurvedic guidelines in daily life helps in the reduction of the inflammatory state of the body and makes it more pathogen-resistant and immunologically strong. Further, this will provide a long, healthy, and active life which is free of pain and disease.^[31]

5. CONCLUSION

Ayurveda has always focused on disease prevention over disease treatment. Therefore, this approach can be used in conjunction with modern disease-oriented therapy to treat lifestyle diseases. Furthermore, this non-pharmacological, cost-effective method emphasizes adhering to diet (*Ahara*) and lifestyle (*Vihara*) routines and code of conduct (*AcharaRasayana*) to adopt a healthy lifestyle and live a healthy life. Thus, it can reduce the burden on the healthcare system while avoiding the adverse effects of modern medicines.

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