

AN EXAMINATION OF THE CONCEPTS IN AYURVEDA TO REGULATE THE  
IMMUNE SYSTEM: AN OVERVIEW

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## ABSTRACT

The field of Ayurveda, an ancient system of medicine from India, has a unique perspective on the idea of immunity. According to Ayurveda, the body's ability to fend off illness and maintain wellness is referred to as Vyadhi Kshamatva. The Ayurvedic approach emphasizes prevention and a holistic approach, by implementing various practices such as Dinacharya, Ritucharya, Sadvrutta, Pathya Apathya, Rasayana, Ahara Vidhi Vidhana, and Panchakarma. These techniques serve to regulate the immune system and promote overall health, preventing the onset of immune disorders that have become increasingly common due to the demands of modern life and unhealthy dietary habits. The goal of this study is to examine the Ayurvedic approach to regulating the immune system, using both traditional Ayurvedic texts and current academic research.

**KEYWORDS:** Immunity booster techniques, Immunomodulation in Ayurveda.

## INTRODUCTION

In Ayurveda, the concept of immunity is known as Vyadhikshamatva. Acharya Chakrapani defined this term as the ability to counteract the strength and virulence of diseases and prevent the factors that cause illness. The goal of Ayurveda is to maintain health and prevent disease by promoting certain principles and guidelines that enhance immunity. Currently, immunomodulators are highly valued in modern medicine for maintaining health and treating various diseases. However, more research is needed to fully understand their role. It has recently been discovered that factors such as diet, exercise, environment, and psychology can significantly affect the immune system and overall health, which aligns with Ayurvedic concepts such as Vyadhikshamatva, Ojas, and Bala.<sup>[1]</sup>

According to Ayurvedic principles, the foundation of a strong immune system begins with proper prenatal care, known as Garbhini Paricharya, which aims to ensure the birth of a healthy child. This is followed by Shishu Paricharya, which focuses on the care of the newborn to further boost their immunity. Daily routines like Dinacharya and seasonal routines like Ritucharya, as well as adhering to dietary guidelines such as Pathya Apathya, using rejuvenating treatments like Rasayana, and undergoing cleansing therapies like Panchakarma, all play a crucial role in regulating and strengthening the immune system.

## Garbhini Paricharya

**Garbhini Paricharya** is a regimen designed for pregnant women during pregnancy, aimed at ensuring the healthy development of the fetus. The ancient Indian medical text Charaka states that by following this regimen, the pregnant woman will remain healthy and give birth to a child with good health, energy, voice, and superiority over others. Further, Charaka and Vagbhata explain that this regimen, followed from the first to the ninth month of pregnancy, leads to softness in the fetal membrane, abdomen, sacral region, flanks, and back. It ensures that Vayu, the body's vital air, flows properly and waste products such as feces, urine, and placenta are easily expelled. The regimen also results in soft skin and nails, improved strength and complexion, and leads to an easy delivery of a healthy, desired child with all the desired qualities and a long life.

It is evident that following Garbhini Paricharya can enhance the immune system of a pregnant woman, thus reducing the risk of infections. Additionally, the immunity gained by the mother is also transferred to the fetus through the placenta, providing protection from infections and establishing a strong immune system from the prenatal stage.<sup>[2]</sup>

## Swarna Prashan

**Swarna Prashan** is a significant Ayurvedic practice that is performed on children as part of the 16 Jatakarma

Samskara ceremonies. The practice involves administering processed gold to the child.

According to the Ayurvedic expert Kashyapa, Swarna Prashan has several benefits. It has the ability to enhance one's mental ability (Medha) by improving their cognitive function and memory. This also includes improving digestion (Agni), as the digestive system is directly linked to overall mental and physical health.

Swarna Prashan helps in strengthening the body (Bala) by enhancing the child's physical strength, endurance and vitality. It also helps in increasing the lifespan (Ayuvardhana) of the child by promoting good health and longevity.

Additionally, Swarna Prashan is considered auspicious (Mangalakra) and has purifying properties (Punyam) that help in maintaining good health. It is also believed to enhance one's character and personality (Vrushyam) by making them kind and virtuous.

This practice is also believed to improve skin color and complexion (Varnyam) and protect the child from evil spirits and harmful microorganisms (Grahapaham). These benefits make Swarna Prashan a crucial aspect of Ayurvedic care for children.

Consuming gold is believed to enhance intelligence, improve digestion and metabolism, increase strength, and promote longevity. It is considered to be lucky, boost sexual desire, enhance complexion, and counteract the negative effects of certain astrological influences. It is said that giving a child gold for a month will make them highly intelligent and prevent illness, and consuming it for six months will help them retain information better. Therefore, the practice of consuming gold, known as Suvarna Prashana, is thought to have a positive impact on a child's immune system.<sup>[3]</sup>

### Ritucharya

**Ritucharya** refers to the dietary and lifestyle recommendations that correspond to the changing seasons. This regimen takes into account the effect of weather changes like heat, cold, and rain on the body.

As the seasons change, the environment around us also changes, and these changes can have a significant impact on our bodies. There are various biological rhythms, both internal and external, that are interconnected and influence each other. If the body is unable to adapt to the changes in the seasons, it may lead to imbalances in the bodily humors (Dosha Vaishamya), making it more susceptible to various health issues.

The ability to adapt to change is crucial for survival, making it important to have an understanding and practice of Ritucharya, which helps regulate the immune system.

### Dinacharya

**Dinacharya** means appropriate daily regimens. Ayurvedic explanations of daily regimens begin with getting up from the bed till one goes to his bed in the night.

According to Ayurveda these daily regimens are indicated for the following reasons;  
Shuchita (maintainance of hygiene)  
Suprasannendriyata (brighten the Indriyas)  
Bala labha (strengthen the body)  
Ayusho labha (promote the health and longevity)  
Soumanasyata (keep the mind at peace and harmony)  
Acharya Vagbata says,  
Those who follow this will attain longevity, health, prosperity, fame and heavenly abode at the end.<sup>[6]</sup>

### Ahara Vidhi Vidhana (Dietetics and Food Habits)

Ayurvedic dietetics forms the important component of life as it is included in the Tri - Upasthambha (3 Pillars of life). Each food article has Dosha aggravating action or pacifying action or balancing action on human body to keep homeostasis of Doshas (health).

Beside prescribing the medicines, Ayurveda also recommends prophylactic and interventional diet which also plays a major role in the prevention and management of the disease.

Ayurveda has classified food articles into different groups and also described qualities and effects of different food on human body.

Ayurveda has described the various dietic principles like Ahara Vidivisheshayatanani (special rules and guidelines for intake of food), Satmya (conduciveness) Asatmya (non-conduciveness), Pathya (wholesome diet), Apathya (unwholesome diet) Viruddahara (in compatibility of diet), etc. which are very important in maintaining health and to promote immunity.

The body as well as diseases are formed by food, wholesome and unwholesome food responsible for happiness and misery respectively. No medicine is equivalent to food; it is possible to make a person disease free with just proper diet.

Acharya Sushuta says,

The food enhances Preenana (vitality), Sadhyobalakrut (strength), Deha dharaka (makes the body sturdy), Utsaha (enthusiasm), Smruti (memory), Agni (metabolism), Ayu (life span), Teja (luster) and Ojas (immunity).<sup>[7]</sup>

Thus, Ayurvedic diet plays a major role in modulating immunity.

**Panchakarma:** Panchakarma therapy is one of the purification and detoxification treatment in Ayurveda. It also nourishes the body tissue, Rejuvenates all body Dhatus and prevent the process of premature aging.

Highlighting the effect of Samshodhana therapy Acharya Charaka has mentioned that.

The person who has undergone the purification regimen, the digestive power increases, his disorders disappears and his health returns to normal, senses, mind, understanding and complexion become clear and individual acquires strength, vigor and virility and also prevent the process of premature aging.<sup>[8]</sup>

Panchakarma therapy is effective against treatment of majority of diseases on the other hand this therapy improves the body resistance (immunity) and there by checks the pathogenesis of the disease confirming its preventive effect also.

**Rasayana:** Rasayana is one among the 8 branches of the Ayurveda that is concerned with the immunomodulation.

Rasayana is a treatment in which the body constituents are prepared to its optimum quality which is nothing but the enhancement of immune system with immunomodulating agents of plants origin.

Rasayana Chikitsa used properly will ultimately lead to the achievement of the ultimate effect as stated by Charaka

Long life, memory, intellect, freedom from disease, youthfulness, excellence of complexion, luster and voice, optimum strength of physical body and the senses, fulfillment of whatever is spoken, reverence of all people - all these are obtain by proper use of Rasayanas. These Rasayanas are so called because they replenish the vital fluids in the body.<sup>[9]</sup>

The concept of Rasayana mentioned in Ayurveda is a holistic approach for the protection and promotion of health and to cure the disease by increasing the natural immunity. Thus, Rasayana formulations are having tremendous potential in immunomodulating activity.

#### **Sadvritt and Achara Rasayana**

According to Ayurveda, the mind, body, and soul are essential components of life, and any imbalance in these elements can result in physical or mental health issues. Sadvritt involves adopting good conduct and behavior, including being morally and socially responsible, as well as engaging in religious and personal practices. Meanwhile, Achara Rasayana focuses on promoting psychological and spiritual well-being through following a specific code of conduct that values honesty, trust, faith, love, and truth.

Maintaining a healthy lifestyle by adhering to guidelines related to eating, sleeping, and celibacy can lead to rejuvenation. Eating a Satvik diet, speaking truthfully, practicing nonviolence, living in harmony with nature, and following social ethics and conduct are all ways to promote overall well-being.

By following these principles, individuals can control their minds and prevent and cure psychological disturbances. The ultimate goal of these practices is to achieve mental peace and worry-free living, which in turn contributes to good physical, social, and spiritual health and leads to the formation of high-quality bodily tissues and increased levels of Ojas, a vital component of health and immunity.

#### **CONCLUSION**

The concept of "Vyadhikshamatva" in Ayurveda encompasses a wider scope than the term "immunity" used in modern medicine. Ayurveda has a long history of utilizing principles and practices aimed at maintaining and improving the health, strength, and longevity of individuals. These principles, which are aimed at preserving the health of the healthy and treating the sick, also serve as valuable tools for naturally regulating the immune system.

In fact, the basic idea of immunomodulation has been present in Ayurveda for centuries, and has been consistently practiced by Ayurvedic practitioners. These practices, based on the ancient wisdom of Ayurveda, offer a holistic and natural approach to regulating the immune system.

However, there is a need for further scientific research to fully understand the immune-modulating effects of these practices. In the modern world, where advances in medical science are constantly being made, it is important to approach the concept of Vyadhikshamatva in a scientific manner. This would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the ways in which the principles and practices of Ayurveda can be utilized to enhance the immune system in a natural and effective manner.

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