

Research Article

Implications of Changed Dietary and Lifestyle Attitudes and Their Association with Diseases, Including Yoga and Ayurveda

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A B S T R A C T

The study explores the implications of changing dietary and lifestyle attitudes, focusing on the connection between these shifts and the rise of various diseases. It emphasizes the importance of a balanced diet and active lifestyle in maintaining overall health, referencing the traditional Indian systems of Yoga and Ayurveda. The investigation contrasts the dietary habits of previous generations with contemporary trends, highlighting the adverse effects of processed foods and sedentary behavior. It suggests that returning to traditional practices, including whole grains, homemade meals, and mindful physical activities, can mitigate health issues like obesity, heart disease, and mental health disorders. Yoga and Ayurveda offer holistic solutions to modern health challenges by promoting mindfulness, physical well-being, and mental clarity. The paper underscores the need for a comprehensive approach, integrating both ancient practices and modern health science, to address the global rise in lifestyle-related diseases.

Keywords: Dietary Attitudes, Lifestyle Changes, Yoga, Ayurveda, Processed Foods, Obesity, Cardiovascular Diseases, Mental Health, Holistic Health Practices, Traditional Diet

Introduction

Diet

In simple words, we say "habitually take food and drink," but the word diet was used in another sense too in the middle and early modern period to mean "WAY OF LIVING". Diet is the sum of food consumed by a person. The word diet often implies the use of a specific intake of nutrition for health or weight management reasons. Both what you eat and how much you eat — have a dramatic impact on your health. A balanced diet is one that provides at least 50% energy from carbohydrates, 35% from fat, and 15% from protein. The quantity of nutrition will vary with age,

health status and activity. According to Ayurveda, our body is made up of three *Dosha*, the three *Doshas* (*Tridoshas*) are *vata*, *pitta* and *kapha*. The inactivity of *Dosha* or the wrong disease process leads to loss of taste and appetite which can be corrected by a wholesome diet and activity or a change in the previously advised diet.

Lifestyle

"The way that a person lives "or the typical way of life of an individual, group and culture. A lifestyle typically reflects an individual's attitudes, way of life, values or worldview. The lifestyle of a particular person or group of people is the living conditions, behaviour, and habits that are typical

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of them or are chosen by them. Lifestyle refers to the characteristics of inhabitants of a region in a special time and place. It includes day-to-day behaviours and functions of individuals in jobs, activities, fun and diet.

Understanding Changes in Dietetic and Lifestyle Altitudes

The world has undoubtedly progressed in many ways, but this advancement has come hand-in-hand with a plethora of health issues. In contrast, the times when our grandparents were young seem far simpler and healthier. They were more connected with nature, consumed fewer processed foods, and regularly cooked vegetables and fruits that grew in their own backyard. This lifestyle, now often referred to as the 'slow life', was their norm. They didn't need to consciously incorporate these practices; it was simply how they lived.

Dietary Modification

The kitchen was the heart of their home, serving not only as a space to nourish the soul but also as a medicine cabinet with answers to various illnesses. Our grandparents may not have had access to the modern comforts of life, but they certainly enjoyed happy and healthy lives. They exemplified a lifestyle that prioritised simplicity, natural foods, and a strong connection to the earth—a lifestyle that we now often strive to emulate in our fast-paced world. Today, most of us want to try out that lifestyle, but we don't know how to begin! However, we all know that the life we live in this period of time is so hectic and busy because of work pressure, overthinking, fear of competition and many more think. That's why the graph of mental health issues, depression and suicide is increasing day by day.

The diet of our grandparents' era was notably different from the dietary habits prevalent today, particularly in terms of the types of carbohydrates consumed. One significant contrast lies in the reliance on whole grains back then, where grains retained all their nutrients. The most prominent disparity between foods from a century ago and today is the extensive processing and addition of additives. In the early 1900s, most meals were freshly prepared from raw ingredients. However, in contemporary times, even home-cooked meals often incorporate pre-made bread, sauces, or other processed ingredients. Today, younger generations predominantly consume fast food, junk food, and street food, which typically feature refined flour (maida) as a primary ingredient.

Consuming refined flour (maida) can be harmful to digestion and overall health. Maida lacks nutrients and Fiber, causing digestive issues and spikes in blood sugar levels. It can raise bad cholesterol (LDL), contribute to weight gain, clog arteries, and increase blood pressure. Regular consumption may lead to cravings and mood swings and may impact overall health and relationships negatively. Usages of whole grains are useful for better health outcomes.

Ahara, Nidra, and Brahmacharya are the three supports of life termed as Trayopasthambha and these provide Bala (strength), Varna (complexion), and Upachaya (growth for the whole life span).

Table I.Harmful Foods and Their Healthier
Alternatives

Harmful Foods	Healthy Foods
Fried foods (e.g., French fries, fried chicken)	Baked or grilled alternatives (e.g., baked sweet potato fries, grilled chicken)
Processed meats (e.g., hot dogs, bacon, deli meats)	Lean proteins (e.g., skinless poultry, fish, tofu)
Sugary snacks and desserts (e.g., candy, pastries, ice cream)	Fresh fruits (e.g., apples, berries, oranges) or homemade treats with natural sweeteners
Sugary drinks (e.g., soda, sweetened juices)	Water, herbal teas, or unsweetened beverages like sparkling water
White bread and refined grains (e.g., white rice, white pasta)	Whole grains (e.g., brown rice, quinoa, whole wheat pasta)
High-sodium foods (e.g., processed foods, canned soups, fast food)	Low-sodium alternatives, fresh vegetables, homemade meals with minimal added salt

Difference in Lifestyles of Old and Young Generation

We live in a time where many of us struggle to find time for ourselves, let alone for our parents or children. This issue is compounded by the prevalence of technology, which has transformed the way we communicate and interact. Unlike older generations who grew up without modern technology, today's generation is highly connected but faces challenges in connecting with older generations due to differences in attitudes and perspectives. It's important to address this disconnect and prioritise meaningful relationships with our elders, fostering understanding and empathy despite generational differences. The new generation engages in fewer physical activities, spends more time on screens, communicates less with others, and predominantly plays online games. These factors contribute to increased sensitivity among the new generation towards various aspects of life.

Regular physical activity offers numerous health benefits, including improved brain health, weight management, reduced disease risk, stronger bones and muscles, and enhanced daily functionality. Adults who incorporate even small amounts of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity into their routines can experience these advantages.

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It's also crucial to prioritise healthy eating and physical activity in our daily lives. Including millet in our diet is especially important in today's context.

In the upcoming slides, we will explore traditional food items from our countries that are highly beneficial for health. These foods have contributed to the robust health of our older generation across various aspects of life.

Yoga

Yoga plays a significant role in understanding changed dietary and lifestyle attitudes and their association with diseases. In the context of modern lifestyles characterised by sedentary habits, stress, and poor dietary choices, yoga offers a holistic approach to improving health and well-being.

- **Stress Reduction:** Yoga techniques such as *asanas* (postures), *pranayama* (breathing exercises), and *dhyana* (meditation) are effective in reducing stress levels. Chronic stress is a major contributor to various diseases, including cardiovascular disorders, digestive issues, and mental health problems. By practising yoga regularly, individuals can manage stress more effectively, thus reducing the risk of associated health conditions.
- Mindful Eating: Yoga encourages mindfulness, which can extend to eating habits. Practising yoga cultivates awareness of the body's signals of hunger and fullness, leading to more mindful eating choices. This can prevent overeating and promote healthier dietary habits
- Improving Digestion: Certain yoga poses are specifically beneficial for improving digestion and addressing digestive disorders. Poses like twists and gentle inversions stimulate the digestive organs, aiding in better nutrient absorption and elimination of toxins.
- Promoting Physical Activity: Yoga is a form of physical activity that improves flexibility, strength, and balance. In today's sedentary lifestyle, where many people spend long hours sitting, incorporating yoga into daily routines can counteract the negative effects of inactivity and reduce the risk of obesity and related diseases.
- Supporting Overall Well-being: Yoga is not only about physical postures but also encompasses mental and emotional aspects. Regular yoga practice promotes a sense of well-being, boosts mood, and enhances self-awareness. This can positively influence lifestyle choices, including dietary preferences and stress management techniques.
- Complementing Ayurveda: Yoga is closely integrated with Ayurveda, the traditional Indian system of medicine. Both disciplines emphasise balance and

harmony within the body and mind. Ayurvedic principles often recommend specific yoga practices tailored to individual body types (doshas) to optimise health and prevent disease.

Yoga serves as a valuable tool in understanding and addressing the impacts of changed dietary and lifestyle attitudes on health. By incorporating yoga into daily life, individuals can cultivate a healthier relationship with food, reduce stress, improve digestion, and promote overall well-being in conjunction with other holistic practices like Ayurveda.

Different Habits for Food from Different Areas

Any food substance which is habituated to a particular person in a particular geographical area. Certain items should not be withdrawn instantaneously even if they are not conducive or not wholesome to body and mind. If any unwholesome food is prohibited instantly the person may not be benefited from it. *Sarva Rasabhyasa* (food with all tastes) is best for *Balakara* (promotes strength).

Signs of complete digestion are called *Jirna Lakshana* in Ayurveda. *Kshudha* Vega (good appetite), *Samyak malatyaga* (proper passage of natural urges like stools and urine), *Laghuta* (lightness in the body) and *Udgara Vishuddhi* (purity of eructation) are the *Lakshana of Jirna Ahara* (complete digestion of food). The medicines are to be given after observing these symptoms to pacify the diseases. If medicine is given in the absence of such symptoms, it may lead to adverse effects. One should not use three substances excessively in comparison to other substances, such as 1. Pippali (Long pepper fruit – Piper longum), 2. Kshara (Alkali), 3. Lavana (Salt).

Association of Diet and Lifestyle Altitudes with Diseases

There are many diseases that can arise due to poor dietary choices. Some of these include heart disease, obesity, type 2 diabetes, stroke, hypertension, chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases (COPD), asthma, osteoporosis, insomnia, stress, mental health illness, arthritis, depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), thyroid, polycystic ovarian disease (PCOD), and polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS).

- Obesity: Consuming excessive calories, especially from high-fat and high-sugar foods, can lead to weight gain and obesity. Obesity increases the risk of several health conditions, including diabetes, heart disease, and certain cancers.
- Type 2 Diabetes: Diets high in refined sugars and carbohydrates can lead to insulin resistance and eventually type 2 diabetes mellitus. This disease affects the body's ability to regulate blood sugar levels effectively.

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- the development of cardiovascular diseases such as coronary artery disease, heart attacks, and strokes.
- High Blood Pressure: Consuming too much sodium (salt) and not enough potassium from fruits and vegetables can increase blood pressure, putting strain on the heart and blood vessels.
- Digestive Disorders: Poor dietary choices, such as excessive consumption of processed foods, refined grains, and insufficient fibre intake, can lead to digestive issues like constipation, bloating, and irritable bowel syndrome (IBS).
- Osteoporosis: Inadequate intake of calcium and vitamin D, often due to poor diet choices, can weaken bones and increase the risk of osteoporosis, especially in older adults.
- Certain Cancers: Diets high in processed meats, fried foods, and sugary beverages have been linked to an increased risk of certain cancers, such as colorectal cancer and breast cancer.
- **Dental Problems:** Consuming sugary foods and drinks can contribute to tooth decay and gum disease, leading to dental issues and oral health problems.
- Mental Health Disorders: Emerging research suggests a connection between diet and mental health. Poor dietary choices may contribute to conditions like depression and anxiety.
- Nutrient Deficiencies: Eating a diet lacking essential nutrients such as vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants can weaken the immune system and increase susceptibility to infections and illnesses.

Overall, a balanced and nutritious diet plays a crucial role in preventing various diseases and promoting overall health and well-being. Adopting healthy eating habits, including a variety of whole foods such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats, is essential for maintaining optimal health and reducing the risk of dietrelated diseases.

There has been a significant rise in the number of cases of these diseases compared to earlier times due to the prevalence of unhealthy, processed foods and sedentary habits. As people have embraced this junky and cholesterolladen lifestyle, the need for practices like yoga and Ayurveda has become essential to maintain health and well-being. Yoga offers physical activity, stress reduction, and mindfulness practices that can counteract the negative effects of sedentary living and chronic stress. Ayurveda provides holistic health guidance, emphasising balanced nutrition, herbal remedies, and lifestyle modifications tailored to individual needs. Together, yoga and Ayurveda offer comprehensive approaches to promoting health and preventing diseases caused by modern dietary and lifestyle choices. By incorporating these ancient practices into daily routines, individuals can cultivate a healthier and more balanced way of life, supporting overall well-being and longevity.

Sleep Modification

Sleep patterns and modifications have significantly evolved from earlier times to the present day. In ancient eras characterised by agrarian societies and pre-industrial lifestyles, sleep was predominantly regulated by natural light-dark cycles, leading to longer and more continuous periods of rest. People generally went to bed shortly after sunset and woke up with the sunrise, adhering closely to their circadian rhythms. Sleep arrangements were often communal, with families sharing sleeping spaces and using simple bedding materials. Fast forward to modern times, marked by industrialisation and technological advancements, sleep habits have undergone substantial transformations. The advent of artificial lighting, followed by the proliferation of electronic devices, has extended waking hours into the night, disrupting natural sleep patterns. Shift work and busy lifestyles further challenge traditional sleep schedules, contributing to sleep deprivation and irregular sleep-wake cycles. However, contemporary society benefits from a deeper understanding of sleep science and the development of sleep technologies, which offer insights into optimising sleep quality through improved sleep hygiene practices and specialised treatments for sleep disorders. Despite these advancements, balancing the demands of modern life with the restorative benefits of sleep remains an ongoing challenge.

Importance of Day Sleep

In Ayurveda, the traditional Indian system of medicine, the importance of day sleep (known as "divaswapna") is emphasised for its rejuvenating and health-promoting benefits, particularly outside of the hot summer season. Day sleep is considered beneficial during cooler seasons like autumn, winter, and spring when the weather is conducive to rest. Taking a short nap during the day is believed to balance the body's doshas (biological energies) and promote overall well-being. Day sleep can help alleviate fatigue, improve mental clarity, and enhance productivity by providing a refreshing break to the body and mind. However, during the hot and humid summer months, Ayurveda advises against day sleep as it may aggravate the Pitta dosha (related to heat and metabolism) and lead to lethargy or heaviness. Instead, in summer, it's recommended to conserve energy during the hottest part of the day and engage in lighter activities. Overall, according to Ayurveda, day sleep has its time and place as a beneficial practice for maintaining health and vitality, particularly in seasons other than summer.

Importance of Night Sleep

In Ayurveda, night sleep (known as "ratricharya") holds immense importance for overall health and well-being.

The quantity and quality of night sleep are considered crucial for maintaining balance among the body's doshas (biological energies), particularly *Vata* (related to movement and nervous system), *Pitta* (related to metabolism and digestion), and *Kapha* (related to stability and lubrication). According to Ayurveda, the ideal duration of night sleep varies based on an individual's constitution and age, but generally, adults are recommended to get around 7–8 hours of uninterrupted sleep each night. Adequate night sleep helps in the proper functioning of bodily systems, supports immune function, aids in digestion and metabolism, and promotes mental clarity and emotional balance.

To optimise night sleep according to Ayurveda, several guidelines are suggested:

- Maintain a Regular Sleep Schedule: Going to bed and waking up at consistent times each day helps synchronise the body's internal clock and supports healthy sleep-wake cycles.
- Create a Relaxing Sleep Environment: Ensure that the bedroom is quiet, dark, and conducive to sleep. Limit exposure to screens and artificial lights before bedtime.
- Follow a Bedtime Routine: Engage in calming activities before bed, such as gentle yoga, meditation, or reading, to signal to the body that it's time to wind down.
- Avoid Heavy Meals Late at Night: Eat a light dinner at least a few hours before bedtime to aid digestion and prevent discomfort that can disrupt sleep.
- Herbal Support: Ayurveda recommends herbs like Ashwagandha, Brahmi, or Jatamansi to support relaxation and promote restful sleep. However, it's essential to consult with an Ayurvedic practitioner before using herbs for sleep support.
- Mind-Body Practices: Incorporate stress-reducing techniques like Pranayama (breathing exercises) and Abhyanga (self-massage with warm oil) into your evening routine to calm the mind and body.

By following these Ayurvedic principles, individuals can cultivate healthy sleep habits that contribute to overall vitality, balance, and well-being. Each person's sleep needs and preferences may vary, so it's essential to listen to your body and prioritise restful and rejuvenating night sleep for optimal health according to Ayurveda.

Yoga offers several stress-relieving exercises that promote relaxation and calmness. Some of these stress-free yoga exercises include:

- Balasana (Child's Pose): This gentle resting pose helps stretch the lower back, hips, and thighs while promoting deep breathing and relaxation.
- Shavasana (Corpse Pose): This final relaxation pose involves lying flat on your back with arms and legs extended, focusing on deep breathing and releasing tension from the body.

- Pranayama (Breathing Techniques): Practices like deep belly breathing (diaphragmatic breathing) or alternate nostril breathing (Nadi Shodhana) can calm the nervous system and reduce stress.
- Anjali Mudra (Salutation Seal): This simple hand gesture involves pressing the palms together at the heart centre, promoting mindfulness, focus, and inner peace.
- Sukhasana (Easy Pose) with Meditation: Sitting comfortably cross-legged, practising meditation by focusing on the breath or repeating a calming mantra to quiet the mind and reduce stress.
- Viparita Karani (Legs-Up-the-Wall Pose): Lie on your back with your legs extended up against a wall, which can help improve circulation, alleviate fatigue, and induce relaxation.

These yoga exercises are suitable for practitioners of all levels and can be incorporated into a daily routine to manage stress, promote relaxation, and cultivate a sense of inner peace. Regular practice of these stress-free yoga exercises can contribute to overall mental and emotional well-being.

Diet in Pregnancy

According to Ayurveda, the traditional system of medicine originating in India, the diet during pregnancy is believed to play a crucial role in ensuring the health and well-being of both the mother and the developing baby. Ayurveda emphasises the consumption of wholesome, nourishing foods that support the body's natural balance and promote optimal health during pregnancy. Here are some dietary principles and types of foods that are considered beneficial in Ayurveda for pregnant women:

- Warm, Nourishing Foods: Ayurveda recommends consuming warm, cooked foods that are easy to digest and nourishing for both the mother and the baby. This includes soups, stews, cooked grains, and steamed vegetables.
- Ghee (Clarified Butter): Ghee is highly valued in Ayurveda for its nourishing properties. It is believed to support the development of the baby and promote healthy digestion and metabolism in the mother.
- Whole Grains: Whole grains such as rice, quinoa, oats, and barley are considered excellent sources of energy and nutrients during pregnancy. They provide sustained energy and help maintain stable blood sugar levels.
- Mung Beans: Mung beans are often recommended in Ayurveda for their easy digestibility and nourishing properties. They can be cooked into soups, stews, or kitchari (a traditional Ayurvedic dish made with rice, mung beans, and spices).
- Cooked Vegetables: Cooked vegetables are easier to digest than raw ones and provide essential vitamins,

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- minerals, and fibre. Ayurveda suggests including a variety of seasonal vegetables in the diet during pregnancy.
- Sweet and Slightly Sweet Foods: According to Ayurveda, sweet and slightly sweet foods are considered nourishing and grounding during pregnancy. This includes naturally sweet fruits, cooked grains, and sweet root vegetables like sweet potatoes and carrots.
- Herbal Teas: Certain herbal teas, such as ginger tea or chamomile tea, may be recommended in Ayurveda to support digestion, reduce nausea, and promote relaxation during pregnancy. However, it's important to consult with a qualified Ayurvedic practitioner before consuming herbal remedies during pregnancy.
- Moderate Amounts of Protein: Adequate protein intake is important during pregnancy for the growth and development of the baby. Ayurveda recommends incorporating moderate amounts of protein-rich foods such as lentils, beans, tofu, and lean meats into the diet.

It's essential for pregnant women to consult with a qualified Ayurvedic practitioner or healthcare provider to ensure that their diet is appropriate for their individual needs and constitution during pregnancy.

Conclusion

Regular practices like Yoga and Ayurveda principles play crucial roles in achieving a healthy and happy life. By paying attention to these ancient disciplines, we can enhance our well-being on multiple levels and delay the ageing process by rejuvenating the body.

Yoga and Ayurveda both emphasise cultivating *Sattva* (purity and harmony) to meditate, enhance mental clarity, and manage emotional and psychological disorders effectively. Ayurvedic Yoga integrates the principles of *Prakriti* (individual constitution), *Vikriti* (current imbalance), and *Gunas* (qualities of nature) into its framework, providing a holistic understanding of health and healing.

Through Yoga, we can engage in physical postures (asanas), breathing techniques (pranayama), and meditation (dhyana) practices to promote balance and vitality. Ayurveda complements this by offering personalised health recommendations based on an individual's unique constitution and current imbalances. By embracing these practices and frameworks, individuals can align with nature's rhythms, optimise their health, and cultivate a sense of inner peace and resilience. It's essential to integrate Yoga and Ayurveda into our daily lives to nurture holistic well-being and lead fulfilling lives.

Conflicts of Interest: None

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