

Lifestyle intervention: A preventive approach for non-communicable diseases

Human body system comprises complex mechanism and its functions properly under the state of equilibrium of biohumors as per Ayurveda. Being composed of *Panchamahabhuta* (five basic elements), its healthy state depends on appropriate supply and maintenance of *Panchamahabhautika* composition of the body. *Ahara* (nutritive diet article), as per Ayurveda, is *Panchamahabhautika* form of nutritive substances expressed as six forms of taste, and qualities such as *Guru* (heavy to digest), *Laghu* (light to digest) and *Snigdha* etc. replenish, as *Dhatu* (body tissue) and thus maintain health. However, along with proper diet, other factors such as *Prakriti* (body constitution), *Desha* (habitat/environmental factors), *Agni* (enzymatic activities), and *Vihara* (lifestyle) influence the health. Considering this, it can be said that whatever be the type of disease, the root cause lies in faulty food and lifestyle habits (*Mithya Ahara-Vihara*), which in turn is evoked by profanity (*Pragyaparadha*). For these reasons, the causes of all diseases in classics have been described under the heading of *Ahara* (dietary), *Vihara* (behavioral), *Kala* (environmental) and *Manasa* (psychological) sections. These principles of Ayurveda indicate that diet and lifestyle have direct role in health and diseases.

From the beginning of human civilization, diet along with physical activities was given due importance considering that proper nourishment and assimilation of food is must to attain state of health and ultimately to get energy to execute daily activities and earn livelihood. With the urbanization and changes in social structure, the rich diet remained the part of lifestyle, but physical activities slowly escaped which ultimately caused in outbursts of overnutrition or malnutrition, resulting in high incidence of non-communicable disorders. From the last few decades, there is a global concern on raising trends of these diseases and continuous efforts are being made to curb these disorders but in vain. Positive aspect of non-communicable disorders is that lifestyle disorders can be barred and its influence can be weakened by lifestyle modification. Time has come, when a message to the mass has to be propagated that food is medicine and medicines are not food and that there are several diseases which do not need medication and can be prevented by lifestyle modifications. Prerequisites for health as per Ayurveda are triad of *Ahara* (proper nutrition), *Nidra* (proper and timely sleep), and *Brahmacharya* (celibacy) along with *Vyayama* (physical exercise), which shall be indeed followed in judicious manner. Thus, these four factors can be considered as the basic components of lifestyle and their derangement can be considered as the cause of lifestyle disorders. Hence, time to reintroduce healthy living style mentioned in Ayurveda in the form of *Dinacharya*, which comprises package of healthy lifestyle habits to be followed

from the time of awakening till sleep, good food habits along with appropriate physical exercise has to be adopted.

Although ample of research activities have been initiated for the establishment of role of lifestyle modification in the management of such disorders, very little has been done to establish role of lifestyle intervention in the prevention of such diseases. Healthcare burden in developing countries is mainly imposed by non-communicable diseases, and the prevention of such disease is indeed the true solution to it. As per Ayurveda, before manifestation of any disease, warning signs of upcoming diseases can be traced by the occurrence of few of the premonitory sign or symptoms of that particular disease. Take for example, patients proceeding toward disorders of deranged fat metabolism (*Meda Dosha*) may present with the symptoms of lethargy, heaviness in the body, and indigestion along with unsatisfactory bowel habits, and if these individuals are screened for blood tests for lipid profile or plasma glucose level, the reports may either indicate abnormal lipid profile or prediabetic state. Hence, for such conditions, health plans can be adopted focusing on prevention by timely screening of such individuals training them for appropriate lifestyle modifications which can result in the prevention of such disorders. Such preventive models may include starting of facilities at healthcare center of trained doctors who can screen the individuals who are prone to diseases related to non-communicable conditions and advocate appropriate lifestyle changes to them. The team of such doctors may also include trained health workers who can perform door to door screening of such cases and start awareness program to inspire the community for adoption of healthy lifestyle. Appropriate digital communication system can also be used for impressive propagation of awareness among the mass.

On the other hand, for the management of non-communicable disorders, non-communicable disease clinics can be started where patients can be educated about the role of lifestyle intervention and routine checkup with appropriate medicines can be provided. This will check the progression of the disease and avoidance of complications can be done. For example, the flare-up of episodes of allergic conditions such as allergic asthma, allergic rhinitis, urticarial rashes, and eczema is strongly associated with faulty diet and lifestyle such as incompatible diet associated with sedentary lifestyle. For such individuals, adopting of modified lifestyle can help to bring down the severity of conditions. Further, timely *Panchakarma* (bio purification) procedures such as *Vamana* (emesis), *Virechana* (purgation), or *Nasya* (nasal drops) along with *Rasayana* (immune modulatory medicines) therapy may prevent recurrences of the symptoms.

Ayurveda is a medical science where maintenance of health and prevention of disease has been given utmost importance.

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Hence, holistic and wholesome diet, healthy eating habits, appropriate lifestyle, and living with self-controlled behavior with tranquility of mind in accordance to one's *Prakriti* are the simplest and best ways to maintain self-health and prevention of lifestyle disorders. People of today era shall be made known the fact that judicious use of food and healthy lifestyle is real medicine for health. Thus, let food be our medicine and not medicine be our food. Researches in Ayurveda may also focus on this aspect and publications of such information may boost the program for the prevention of non-communicable disorders.

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