

Combating Lifestyle Diseases in Kerala with Ayurvedic Regimen

*Dr.T.C Simon

**Rakhi P.S

*Associate Professor, M.A.M.O College, Calicut

**Research Scholar, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore.

Abstract:

Ayurveda, popularly known as the Indian System of medicine, is gaining worldwide recognition day by day. It is the ancient Indian system of medicine and is the world's oldest and comprehensive system of natural medicine. Ayurveda¹, like other systems of medicine has its unique features. It lays emphasis on the promotion of positive health and prevention of diseases. The methods of ayurvedic healthcare and patient care are unique, hence Ayurvedic system is universal. Instead of treating the symptoms of a disease, it treats the individual and caring is given for the entire body. As the magnitude of diseases is increasing, life style diseases and other chronic ailments, the relevance of Ayurvedic system of medicine is also increasing. The present article analysis the lifestyle diseases in Kerala and how we shall combat it with Ayurvedic treatment on preventive as well as on curative lines.

Key Words: Life style diseases, Ayurveda.

Objectives of the Study:

The objective of the study is to explore the preventive and curative treatment for lifestyle diseases with the Ayurvedic system of medicine in Kerala and to fix the strategies to improve the perception and awareness of the patients by enquiring in to the current infrastructure and the market potential of Ayurveda. The study aims to explore more potential of the rich culture of Ayurvedic medical science and the treatment for the emerging life style diseases in the present era. It is proved to be highly effective for curing various chronic illnesses, and also enquires in to the possibilities to strengthen the opportunities in Ayurvedic treatment in Kerala for life style diseases.

Research Methodology:

The study primarily relies on secondary data that were available in the area of Ayurvedic treatment. For this purpose the researcher relied up on various sources like reference materials, ancient manuscripts, medical journals, internet etc.

Ayurveda and Health Care

Kerala-the mesmerizing land located in the south of India enjoys geographical features that are unique and rich. Kerala absorbed cultures, religion and traditions and inimitable natural beauty. Possessing one of the finest health indices in the country, with primary as well as super specialty health facilities that comply with global standards, Kerala has made remarkable strides in Healthcare.

The Aim of Ayurveda: Ayurveda is an excellent guide for health care, and facilitate a living in a good and moral way. Like many holistic therapies, the emphasis is on the mind, body and spirit – and in Ayurveda that spirituality is intrinsic to good health and a noble way of life. It aims at not only on curing diseases but also to ensure health and wellbeing. The theory of Ayurveda is based on the individual constitution of a person, according to which he or she is susceptible to certain illnesses.

Ayurveda considers the influence of psychosomatic factors in most of the diseases and the imbalance of the basic constitutional factors that are responsible for causing an illness². The treatment is aimed at restoring the disturbed mechanism within the patient. The basic constitutional factors are the *Tridosha* the Three 'Doshas- *Vatha*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*– and

restoration of their dynamic balance regulates the life cycle and controls the entire body, thereby restoring health.

Panchakarma³

Ayurveda follows an entirely different way of treating diseases known as “*panchakarma*” which literally means “five purification therapies” which are subtly harmonized purification procedures that dissolve metabolic waste products and toxins generated from the environmental ill effects. It includes Emesis (Vamana), Purgation (Virechana), Enema (Vasti), Nasal drops/Snuffs (Nasya) and Bloodletting (Rakthamokshana).

The success of ayurveda in the treatment of various chronic illnesses and life style diseases are unknown to a significant segment of prospective clients. Ayurveda also has a comprehensive system of massages and body treatments that gives relief to a wide range of illnesses, that detoxify and cleanse the body through controlled emesis, purgation, fomentation which makes the body receptive to further treatment. These therapies are more effective in Kerala due to the almost year around humid climate of the state.

Lifestyle diseases

"Lifestyle diseases" known internationally, as ‘non-communicable diseases’ (NCD’s) or ‘chronic diseases of lifestyle’ (CDL) emerge from inappropriate relationship of people with their environment⁴ These are a group of diseases that share similar risk factors, which may be due to exposure to unhealthy diet, smoking habits, lack of exercise and stress. The major risk factors include high blood pressure, tobacco addiction, high levels of blood cholesterol, diabetes⁵ and obesity. These result in various long-term disease processes, culminating in high mortality rates attributable to stroke, heart attack, tobacco and nutrition induced cancers, chronic bronchitis, emphysema, renal failure, and many others.

The history of Ayurvedic medical science has already proved beyond all doubt that the NCD’s can be prevented by resorting to a timely ayurvedic medical intervention. There is abundant evidence to support the argument that a large percentage of NCD’s are preventable by changing the risk factors. Unhealthy diet and physical inactivity directly account for so many deaths each year. According to WHO, the death figures world over from life style diseases will double by 2017 unless all out efforts are taken to combat them.

Health crisis in Kerala

The occurrence of lifestyle diseases has become a major crisis in Kerala. Higher incidence of mental health problems, increased suicide rates, deaths due to road traffic accidents and other traumas are other dimensions of the health problems in Kerala.

Ayurveda with lots of potential for prevention

The incidence of lifestyle diseases like hypertension, diabetes mellitus, dyslipidemia, and overweight/obesity associated with cardiovascular diseases is on the rise and also hereditary factor⁵. With rapid economic development and increasing westernization of lifestyle in the past few decades, prevalence of these diseases has reached alarming proportions among Indians in the recent years. As Ayurveda is recognized as foremost life science and describes ways to prevent and manage lifestyle disorders, the world is being attracted towards its potential. Ayurveda provides better solution in bio-purification procedures, medicaments, and rejuvenation therapies. The holistic approach of Ayurveda, treating the patient as a whole, meaning intervention targeted toward complete physical, psychological, and spiritual well-being makes this science a wonderful option in lifestyle disorders.

As told in Cha.Su.5/103,

“Nagari nagarasyeva radhasyeva yadha

Swashareerasya medhavi kruthyeshu avavahitho bhavath”.

We should give importance to our body as a king who protects his kingdom and also like a driver of the chariot who gives conscious concern about his chariot.

Life style Changes & Disease Associated⁶

The life style practiced by the people leads them to different kinds of diseases. The major instances of such life style diseases in Kerala includes the following:-

- Decreased physical activity of the humans. Resulting in:
 - Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)
 - Diabetes mellitus
 - Stroke
 - Obesity and
 - Hypertension
- Excessive dependence on junk food and fast food which positively results in:

Cancerous growths

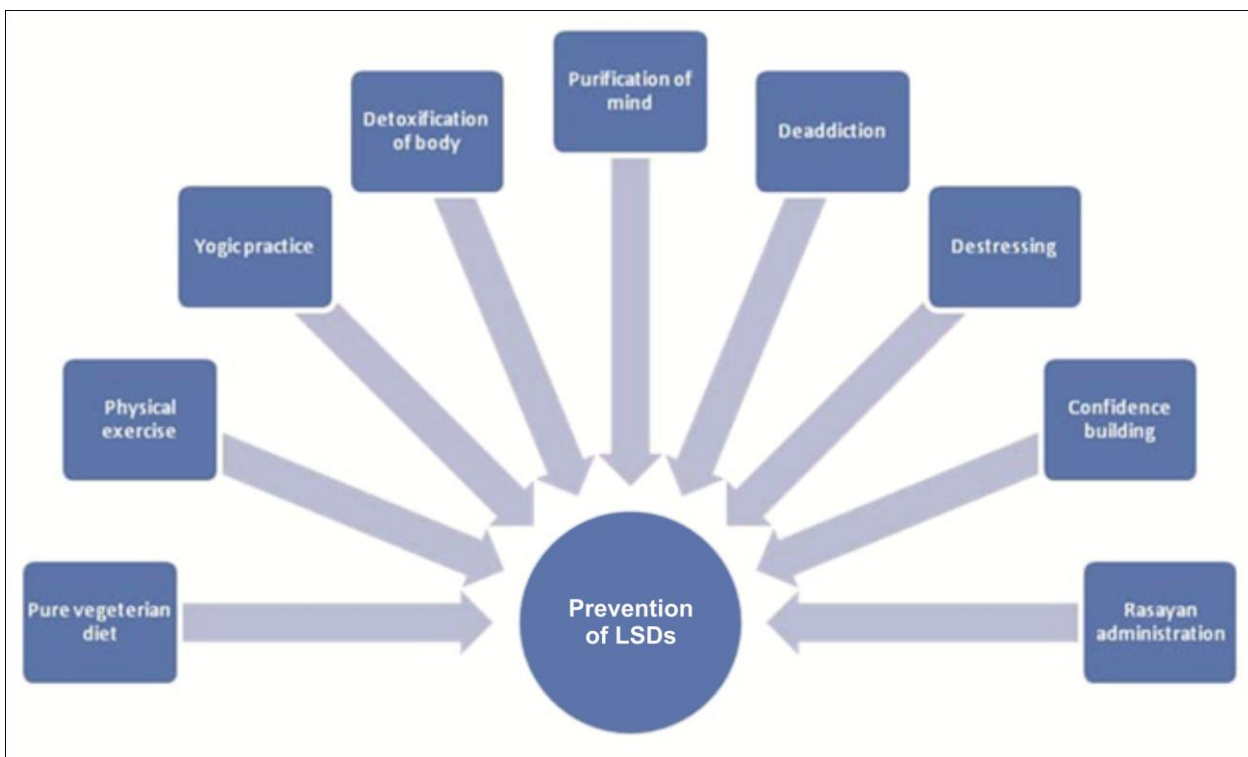
Arthritis

Nutritional Deficiencies etc

- Continuous and long time work without breaks like IT Professionals which result in:
 - Spinal problems
 - Carpal tunnel syndrome
 - Multiple sclerosis
 - Joint pains
 - Dementia
 - Depression
 - Anxiety Disorders
 - Chronic back aches etc
- The Exposure to the same environments without physical or mental rest which brings about:
 - Malignancy of the parts exposed
 - Occupational lung diseases (Silicosis, Fibrosis, Asbetosis)
 - Cerebro-vascular diseases etc
- Excessive usage of mobile phones and computers by the youngsters leads to:
 - Textophrenia
 - Skin disorders
 - Computer Vision Syndrome
 - Anxiety disorder etc
- Addiction to smoking, alcohol and drugs that is found increasing day by day leads to:
 - Asthma
 - Cancer

- Chronic liver disease/ Cirrhosis
- Bronchitis
- Respiratory diseases
- Self treatment by patients without the help of a qualified medical practitioner results in excessive usage of high doses of analgesics results in liver Diseases.
- Lack of proper sleep as part of employment and other reasons leads to:
 - Severe joint pains
 - Anxiety disorders
 - Cancer

How Ayurvedic Treatment combat Life Style Diseases



Ayurveda treats not only the affected part in the body, but the body as a whole where deformation is visible. Ayurveda has answers for the physical, mental, social and spiritual illness of a person. Ayurvedic system has equal emphasis on the preventive as well as the curative aspects. As all the disease due to life style changes are purely individual based, no other systems can provide a clear prediction of what disease a particular patient can develop. But, in Ayurveda, by considering his *prakruthi* and the life style (*ahara* and *vihara*) the Physicians can easily diagnose further developments within him. Ayurveda has its own unique treatment according to the severity of every disease. Ayurvedic medical system further suggests that Dinacharya are very crucial in the prevention of life style diseases and hence more importance should be given to the charyas which will help us to balance the unhealthy life style which we follow. Can adopt the *Rithucharya* (seasonal regimen) that can be followed by giving proper awareness about the changes that will take place during a *Rithu*. Taking care while a *Rithu Sandhi*. (climate switching) Daily practice of Some Yogas like *Surya Namaskaram*. Yoga practices can also be oriented on the prevention of disease involved. Practice of *Pranayama*. Decreasing the usage of mobile phones, computers and smart phones. Making both mind and body feel comfortable by the *Sadvritha*'s. (Good

conducts) Reducing the consumption of alcohol and smoking. Use of medicated smoke and other *paniya's* (*Medicated water*) instead of that. If have practice of consuming non-vegetarian food, the consumption of lean meat, poultry, fish, beans, eggs and nuts are preferably superior. Practice of meditation. Consumption of low energy dense foods which are fewer in calories per unit volume. Thus one can eat large volumes of it. Avoiding processed foods with saturated fats, trans-fats, cholesterol, salt (Na) and added sugars. Utilisation of more physical and mental power, than the usage of machines. Taking holidays and practice of *Panchakarma's* as a *Sukha chikithsa*.⁸ Making a happy environment in home, to be calm from the hectic load at the work place. Taking small breaks from the work by some nourishing foods which are suitable according to *Desa, Kala (Time)* and *Vaya (age)*⁹. Making a routine in children and making them interested to follow that. For all these measures, there is necessity of awareness programmes to make rural and urban people aware. But, that should contain the methods which will help them on the basis of their life style. Practice of *Rasayana Chikithsa* (Rejuvenation Therapy). It is the treatment by which one gets the excellence of *Rasa* (nourishing fluid which is produced immediately after digestion). Ayurveda also advises a total change in the revision of the life styles¹⁰.

Conclusion:

The modern civilized world witnesses many diseases of which majority are the outcomes of the way of life of man. Although a considerable share of these diseases can be cured either partially or completely there remains another share where all branches of medical sciences fail. So the need of the day is a major shift to the positive to the life styles of modern man. Among the different branches of medical sciences, Ayurveda has established its position to contain most of such diseases predominantly because along with the treatment Ayurveda also advises a total shift in the change of the life styles. The decisions we make now, will affect our health later in life. Ayurveda remind us that health is the balanced and dynamic integration between our environment, body, mind, and spirit. Providing guidelines on ideal daily and seasonal routines, diet and behavior in management of life style disorders, Hence in future Ayurveda will play a major role in combating most of the life style diseases of the future Kerala.

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