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## INTERPRETATION OF NITYA SEVANEYYA AHARA IN GERIATRIC CARE

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**ABSTRACT:**

*Elderly people have different nutritional requirements compared to the normal adult population. With increasing age, people become more vulnerable to malnutrition for many reasons including Arocaka(anorexia) due to ageing, medication, disease like Smrutinasha(dementia), Manoavasada(depression), stroke, Kampavata(Parkinson disease) and other neurological disorders, poor dentition, delayed gastric emptying, ill-fitting dentures, swallowing problems, oral infections, taste changes and diminished smell sensation. Ageing is a process of physical, psychological and social change in multi-dimensional aspects. Ahara is considered to be vital for a human body as it provides the basic nutrients, which are very essential to carry out the basic activities of digestion and metabolism. A healthy, well balanced diet can enable older adults to live a healthful, enjoyable life by lessening the risk for chronic disease, slowing the progression of a disease and reducing disease symptom.*

**KEY WORDS:** *Balanced Diet, Elderly Peoples, Jara, NityaSevaneeya, Malnutrition*

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**INTRODUCTION**

In *Ayurvedic* classics, *Ahara* is mentioned as one among the three *Upasthambas*. *Ahara* is considered to be vital for a human body as it provides the basic nutrients, which are very essential to carry out the basic activities of digestion and metabolism. *Ahara* taken in proper method nourishes the person physically and

mentally both and it is the food through which person attains positive health and growth of body.

Ageing is a process of physical, psychological and social change in multi-dimensional aspects. The World population of the elderly is increasing and by the year 2050, adults older than 65 years will comprise 1/5th of the global population. In India 3.8% of the population are older than 65 years of age. By 2025, the number of elderly people is expected to rise more than 1.2 billion<sup>1</sup>. There is a slow and steady growth of elderly population during the last few decades. It is interesting to note that there is a shift in the population growth from child and young to higher age groups. The percentage of elderly population is also increasing in faster than that of total population. These demographic changes may be due to the improvement of health status, socioeconomic status and medical care facilities.<sup>2</sup>

Nutritional well-being and the enjoyment of food play an important role in the quality of life in older adults. A healthy, well balanced diet can enable older adults to live a healthful, enjoyable life by lessening the risk for chronic disease, slowing the progression of a disease and reducing disease symptom.<sup>3</sup>

### BALANCE DIET IN AYURVEDA

An Ancient balanced diet consist food articles which are explained in *Nitya Sevaneeya Ahara*. The food articles which are advised to take daily will fulfill the body requirements. The food articles which have similar qualities of *Nitya Sevaneeya Ahara* can be taken regularly. One should take food articles that which maintain the health and prevent the diseases. Ideal health means positive and perfect health and not merely an absence of disease.

Food which are *Hita* to the body like *Shali* (Rice), *Mudga* (Green Gram), *Saindhava Lavana* (rock salt), *Amalaki* (Gross Berry), *Yava* (Barley), *Antariksha Jala* (Rain Water), *Paya* (Milk), *Ghrita* (Ghee), *Jangala Mamsa* (Meat) and *Madhu* (Honey). These foods consumed regularly for the maintenance of health and prevention of diseases.<sup>4</sup>

1. *Shashtika* is a kind of rice which grows very quickly to maturity--within sixty days (meaning of *shashtika*) and is therefore light on digestion. It is rich in carbohydrates, potassium.
2. *Shali* is a variety of rice, sometimes translated as red rice. It is rich in carbohydrates.
3. *Mudga* is a pulse called green gram (maybe including black gram) similar to lentils which is light on digestion. It

is rich in proteins, phosphorus, calcium, potassium.<sup>5</sup>

4. *Saindhava* is called rock salt--it is powdery, light pink in color. Its composition is said to include more of potassium than of sodium. This salt is cooling unlike other types of salt.
5. *Amalaki* is a type of fruit indigenous to India. It is rejuvenative, antioxidant, pacifying to all *Doshas* but *Pitta*, especially. It is rich in vitamin C and calcium.<sup>6</sup>
6. *Yava* (Barley) is also light, laxative, diuretic, and is especially useful for removing excess *Kapha* from the body. It is rich in carbohydrates, Vit. B1, B2, phosphorus.<sup>7</sup>
7. Rain water is the translation in the text but because of environmental pollution a better meaning would be pure water. It's interesting to note that the source of water determines its *Doshic* qualities. Well water is heavy while moving water is lighter. Hot water reduces *Kapha* and body weight while cold water increases *Kapha* and body weight. It maintenance the fluid in the body and minerals.<sup>8</sup>
8. *Paya* (Milk) that comes fresh from cows is best among milks. It is more easily digested if brought to a boil then drank warm. Milk is light in digestion,

nourishing the body and tri-*Doshic*. It rich in fat, protein, vitamins and minerals.<sup>9</sup>

9. Ghee is clarified butter and is best among oils for pacifying *Pitta*. It also pacifies *Vata* and because it increases the digestive fire and is digested easily it does not aggravate *Kapha*. Rich in fat.<sup>10</sup>
10. Honey pacifies *Kapha* predominantly and *Pitta* secondarily. Honey must be raw, uncooked and never used in foods to be cooked. The lighter the colour means the less sharpness in it.<sup>11</sup>

*Vagbhata* lists the following as to be taken regularly: *Shali* (rice), *Godhuma* (wheat), *Yava* (barley), *Shashtika* (rice maturing in 60 days), *Jangala* (meat of animals of hot arid lands), *Sunisannaka*, *Jivanti* (tuberous plant), *Balamulaka*, *Pathya* (*haritaki*), *Amalaka*, *Mridvika*, *Patoli*, *Mudga* (green gram), *Sharkara* (sugar), *Ghrita* (ghee), *Divyodaka* (rain water), *Ksheera*(milk), *Kshaudra* (honey), *Dadima* and *Saindhava Lavana* (mineral salt) may be consumed regularly.<sup>12</sup>

## BALANCE DIET IN MODERN SCIENCE

Geriatric nutrition applies nutrition principles to delay effects of aging and disease, to aid in the management of the physical, psychological, and psychosocial

changes commonly associated with growing old. Calorie requirements decrease with age, although individuals vary greatly depending on their activity level and health status. Diets that fall below 1,800 calories a day may be low in protein, calcium, iron, and vitamins, so should feature nutrient-dense foods. The cornerstone of geriatric nutrition is a well-balanced diet. This provides optimal nutrition to help delay the leading causes of death: heart disease, cancer, and stroke. In addition, ongoing research indicates that dietary habits, such as restricting one's calorie intake and consuming antioxidants,

may increase longevity. In old age our lifestyle may be less active; may sit more and perform less vigorous exercises or physical labor. Also, our body's metabolism may be less efficient or slower. These lifestyle and metabolism changes may cause weight gain and less efficient absorption of nutrients. We should select more nutrient-dense foods with lower amounts of fat and sugar (empty calories). If we have problems losing weight, then we should limit our fat or sugar intake. One should eat a variety of foods that are good sources of protein, vitamins, minerals, and fibre.<sup>13</sup>

**Table.1 Daily allowances of nutrients for old people<sup>14</sup>**

	N.R.C U.S.A.		U.K. Expert panel		I.C.M.R India	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Age (Year)	(55-75)		65-75	55-75	-	-
Body weight	70	58	63	53	55	45
Calories (Kcal)	2400	1700	2350	2050	2100	1700
Protein (g)	65	55	59	51	55	45
Calcium (g)	0.8	0.8	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Iron (mg)	10	10	10	10.0	20	30
Vitamin A(µg)	1000	1000	750	750	750	750
Thiamine (mg)	1.2	1.1	0.9	0.8	1.2	1.0
Riboflavin (mg)	1.7	1.5	1.7	1.3	1.3	1.0
Nicotine acid(mg)	14	13	18	15.0	16.0	13.0
Ascorbic acid (mg)	60	55	30	30	50	50
Vitamin D (I.U.)	400	400	200	200	200	200
Folic acid (µg)	400	400	-	-	100	100
Vitamin B12 (µg)	6.0	6.0	-	-	1.0	1.0

### Calories, Carbohydrates, Protein and Fat

In old age energy requirements progressively decrease. Moderately active men and women aged 51 and older need between 1,800 and 2,400 calories per day. 45 percent to 65 percent of those calories should come from carbohydrates and 20 percent to 30 percent should come from fat.<sup>15</sup>

### Protein-Rich Foods

Body proteins are constantly being made and used during the lifetime to maintain cell and organ functions. Adequate protein intake and protein reserves are important for older adults, especially during periods of emotional and physical stresses. Protein helps to prevent muscle loss. Eat protein-rich foods such as meats, fish, dried beans and peas. Also, these foods are good sources of iron and zinc. Protein should make up the remaining 10 to 35 percent of daily calories, with women aiming for 46 grams per day and men aiming for 56 grams per day.

### Plant-Based Diet

Research reveals that a variety of nutrient-dense fruits, vegetables, and whole-grain foods may protect cells against free radicals (unstable compounds). They also may help protect you against the adverse effects of everyday

cancer causing agents such as pollution, dietary factors, tobacco smoke, and viruses.

### Fiber-Rich Diet

Fiber or roughage is important to have a healthy digestive system and proper bowel function. Constipation is a problem for many aging adults. Choose a variety of high-fiber foods - vegetables, fruits, beans, nuts, and whole-grain products - drink plenty of water and be physically active to stay regular. Eat at least one high fiber food (pears, dried beans and peas, corn, dates, 100% bran cereals, or potatoes with skins) every day to help you get 20-35 grams of fiber each day.

### Fruits and Vegetables

Eating fruits and vegetables reduces the risk of and treats chronic disease as they provide the body with essential vitamins and minerals. Aim for five to nine combined servings of fruits and vegetables per day. If fruits and vegetables are difficult to eat because of their texture, try to cooking fruits and vegetables until they are soft.

### Calcium-Rich Foods

Calcium and Vitamin D are essential to maintain strong bones and teeth. After age 50, more calcium or 1,200 mg are needed to prevent a disease called osteoporosis. In old age, minerals in the

bones are lost and bones may get thinner. Eat three servings of vitamin D-fortified low fat or fat-free milk or yogurt per day. Protect the bones by choosing calcium-rich foods, such as milk, cheese, yogurt, greens, broccoli, sardines, canned salmon with bones, dried beans and peas and calcium-fortified foods.

#### Vitamins and Minerals

Many older adults do not get enough vitamin B-12, found in fortified cereal, lean meats and poultry. A lack of vitamin B-12 can lead to macrocytic anemia and neurological problems that may affect sensory and motor function. Increasing the potassium intake and reducing salt intake can lower the risk of high blood pressure. Vitamin D helps the absorption of calcium. It is found in fluid milk, dried milk products, and fortified cereals. The body can make its own Vitamin D when skin is exposed to the sunshine. Several times a week try to take a walk or sit in the sun for 20-30 minutes. This is especially important in the winter when there is less sunlight. As you age, blood levels of vitamin B-12 usually decrease. Vitamin B-12 is needed to make red blood cells and maintain the central nervous system. Animal foods are good sources of vitamin B-12.

Antioxidants are compounds, such as vitamins A, C, and E, which are found

in foods. They protect us from cell damage and may reduce the risk of cancer and heart disease, and may slow down the aging process. Photochemical are chemicals or ingredients naturally found in all plant foods and they help to protect a healthy, normal cell from turning into a cancerous cell. Eat colorful meals and snacks by choosing lots of fruits, vegetables, dried beans, nuts and whole-grain foods. It is the easiest way to get all of these important nutrients.

#### Fluid Intake

Dehydration is a form of malnutrition and can be a problem in older adults, especially those over the age of 85. Dehydration can lead to constipation, confusion, functional decline and, in some cases, death. Generally, older adults need between 2.7 and 3.7 liters per day. Intake of Enough Fluids water or other liquids are needed to avoid and prevent constipation and dehydration. Drink six to eight (8-ounce) glasses of fluid every day - water or other liquids (100% juices, milk, beverages, or soup). Limit the amount of caffeinated drinks (coffee, tea, and soda) and be sure to drink at least 2 glasses of water per day. If you are taking medications, you need more water. Throughout the day take water breaks, or in the morning, fill up a glass to remind you to drink water. Drink a smaller amount

of milk or buttermilk at a time.

Balance diet prevents the geriatrics changes or improves physical, mental, and nutritional health. Although we know that vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and possibly particular herbs are beneficial to

health, it is important that we don't use supplements in place of food or in extremely high amounts. Some herbal remedies or high potency vitamin or mineral supplements can interfere with the action of certain prescription and over the counter medications.

## DISCUSSION

Elderly people have different nutritional requirements compared to the normal adult population. With increasing age, people become more vulnerable to malnutrition for many reasons including *Arocaka*(anorexia) due to ageing, medication, disease like *Smrutinasha*(dementia), *Manoavasada*(depression), stroke, *Kampavata*(Parkinson disease) and other neurological disorders, poor dentition, delayed gastric emptying, ill-fitting dentures, swallowing problems, oral infections, taste changes and diminished smell sensation<sup>16</sup>. Older individuals tend to respond to thirst much less than the younger ones, predisposing to dehydration particularly in case of fever and diarrhea. Therefore fluid intake is necessary to replace physiological losses, better digestion and intestinal function and for renal clearance. There is no change in absorption of fats and carbohydrates, whereas vitamin D and calcium absorption is impaired, which leads to their

deficiency. Calcium intake along with vitamin D is necessary to prevent bone mineral loss in elderly.<sup>17</sup>Diet containing dairy products, fish, legumes, nuts, eggs, etc. are full of vitamin D and calcium. In addition, organic calcium like *Pravalapisti*, *Pravala Panchamruta*, *Kukkutanda Twak Basma*, *Shanka Bhasma*, *Kaparda Bhasma* etc. may be given as medication. Folic acid deficiency is more common in elderly. Diet containing cereals, vegetables, legumes and fruits should be given to the elderly. The diet should be regulated taking into account the habitat, season, age, etc. the diet should be balanced and the quantity should be according to one's digestive capacity. Following points may be considered while advising dietary and other life style regimen. The food should be tasty, nutritious, fresh and good in appearance. Too spicy, salty and pungent food should be avoided. Food should neither be very hot nor very cold and Liquid intake should be more frequent and



in small amount. Heavy food can be prescribed in a limited quantity and should not be given at night. The proper time for night meals is two to three hours before going to bed. After dinner, it is better to advice for a short walk. Heavy physical work should be avoided after meals Mind should be peaceful while eating and eating only whenever hungry and avoidance of over eating. Inclusion of sufficient amount of vegetables and fruits in diet. Milk and ghee are the *Agrasadhya*(drug of choice) of *Vardhakya*(senility).<sup>18</sup> Hence their daily usage is advisable. Patient with hyperlipidemia, ischemic heart disease, obesity these use in moderate quantity is essential.

These lists of foods may be described as *Sattvic* conducive to the growth of consciousness. In *Bhagavad Gita*, describes the qualities of foods to be favored for mental and physical evenness, Promoting life, virtue, strength, health, happiness, and satisfaction are foods of savory, smooth, firm, and pleasant nature to the stomach. Such are desired by the *Sattvic*. Causing pain, misery, and sickness, pungent, sour, salty, excessively hot, harsh, astringent, scorching are the foods desired by the *Rajasic*. Stale tasteless, putrid, left-over, the repulsive and foul are the foods desired by the *Tamasic*.<sup>19</sup>

### CONCLUSION

Ageing is an inevitable change for all living organisms. Most people panic about getting old. It's not the ageing, but the consequences of ageing which troubles them. By following the Ayurvedic principles of diet, it is possible to slow down the process of ageing, restore

physical and mental strength and prevent the consequences of ageing up to certain extent. *Akalajara* or premature ageing or early onset of ageing comes to those who don't follow the proper diet and behavior regimen.

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