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YOGIC LIFESTYLE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GERIATRIC POPULATION W. S.R TO DIETARY PRINCIPLES

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ABSTRACT:

Geriatric people often have limited abilities and are more prone to disease, syndromes, and sickness than younger adults. The major physical changes seen at this time are wrinkling of skin, greying of hair, baldness, and weakness, reduced joint flexibility, vision problems, and decreasing ability to do physical work. Healthy aging includes the interaction between genes, the environment, and lifestyle factors, particularly diet, physical activity & yoga. Diet is very important as it nourishes all the seven Dhatus (body tissue). Favourable nutrition results in speedy restoration from illness, surgery, or broken bones & can generally improve quality of life. Yoga prescribes that Sattvic type of diet is extremely good for mental as well as physical health of general population as a whole & geriatric population in particular. Regular physical activity helps reduce the effects of aging such as limited mobility, balance, flexibility and muscle strength. If one becomes more active, the more oxygen flows through the body & to the brain which results in more energy, better sleep, happier & healthy mind & body with more self-confidence. Yoga is an excellent activity that has many health benefits. It strengthens the body and increases flexibility, brings together physical and mental disciplines to achieve peacefulness of body and mind, helping in relaxation and manage stress and anxiety. Another benefit of yoga is that it decreases social isolation amongst the geriatric population. The present paper will discuss the details of Yogic Dietary principles & recommendations for geriatric population.

KEYWORDS: Yoga, lifestyle, diet, dietary, geriatric.

INTRODUCTION

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Old age consists of ages nearing or surpassing the average life span of human beings, and thus the end of the human life cycle. Old people often have limited

regenerative abilities and are more prone to disease, syndromes, and sickness than Younger adults. The study of the aging process is called gerontology, and the study of diseases that afflict the elderly is termed as geriatrics. Hypertension, diabetes mellitus, musculoskeletal disease such as osteoarthritis, low-back pain (LBP), and fibromyalgia in geriatric population are related to inactivity and lifestyle^{1,2}. Aging refers to a multidimensional process of physical, psychological, and social change. The major physical changes seen at this time are wrinkling of skin, greying of hair, baldness, and a diminishing ability to do physical work.

Yoga & Ayurveda are charming and divine system of healing the human beings. Aging is a natural process and with the help of *Yoga & Ayurveda*, aging can always be a healthy aging making elderly people independent rather than depending on others for fulfilling their routine tasks. *Yoga* comprises physical postures, regulated breathing, meditation and relaxation techniques, which have been used in different combinations to manage major age related health problems. The beneficial effects of *Yoga*, based on the available evidence in a geriatric population include an improvement in the muscle power, cognitive functioning and cardio-respiratory endurance. Studies suggest that

increased physical activity through postures interspersed with relaxation techniques can reduce inactivity complications; pain related to musculoskeletal disorders and improves the Quality of Life^{3,4}.

Health is not just physical health or a body that is free of diseases, instead real health is the optimum functioning of a healthy mind in a healthy body paving way for a healthy environment. Diet, proper nutrition, routine health examinations, regular socialization, and social support are just some of the ways that aid in improving psychological, physical, and emotional well-being⁵. (*Module # 3: Healthy aging, Geriatrics, Palliative Care and Inter professional Teamwork Curriculum*)

Problems Related to Inactivity

Old age as a period of "Integrity vs. Despair", during which a person focuses on reflecting back on his life. There are two different types of old people described in this stage of life. Those who are unsuccessful during this phase will feel that their life has been wasted and will experience many regrets. This type of old people will be called as "OLD AGE" as they are depending on others for specific services due to declining health or diseases. Those who feel proud of their accomplishments will feel a sense of

integrity. They are called as "young old" they are healthy individuals who can function on their own without assistance and can complete their daily tasks independently.

Older people become free from work and family responsibilities, allowing them to enjoy the rest of their lives peacefully. They begin to interact less often and activity levels are decreased. This is due to sedentary life style can lead to weakness, reduced joint flexibility, arthritis, high blood pressure, low back pain, breathing difficulties, vision problems, stress related illnesses, inability to sleep well, osteoporosis, and general deterioration. Furthermore, loss of balance may also become an issue due to inactivity.

Prevention of aging is very important. There are many aspects to this; the psychological ones are the most significant. The time to prevent growing old is between the ages of 40 and 65. One of the strategies includes well-balanced diet which is high in vitamins, minerals, and other basic nutrients and low in fats and refined foods is crucial.

Principle of Dietary intake in Elderly

Exercise, eating right and avoiding harmful habits like smoking could help elderly women live five years longer and elderly men live six years longer, the

British Medical Journal study showed. The Healthy Eating Index provides a single summary measure of diet quality. Healthy eating means that likely to feel healthier stay active for longer and protect individual against illness⁶. It's helps to get all nutrients & helps to maintain a healthy weight. Healthy eating throughout life should include:

- Limiting our intake of sodium.
- Limiting our intake of solid fats (as opposed to the intake of liquid fats such as oils).
- Limiting our intake of added sugar, particularly liquid sugar in the form of sweetened cold drinks and undiluted fruit juices.
- Limiting our intake of refined grains.
- Increasing physical activity and spending less time doing sedentary activities.

The older adults have special dietary needs that must be met to ensure health and well-being. Older adults need fewer calories because their energy requirements decrease with age. A geriatric diet typically consists of nutrient-dense foods that promote fluid balance, bone health and prevent muscle loss. As it nourishes all the seven *Dhatus* (body tissue) and is responsible for the maintenance of compactness, strength, and formation of an excellent form of *Dhatus*.

Diet has an enormous impact in managing, delaying or preventing the onset of many chronic diseases such as constipation, diabetes, heart disease, blood pressure etc.

Healthy & balanced diet in Elderly

The older adults have special dietary needs that must be met to ensure health and well-being. Older adults need fewer calories because their energy requirements decrease with age. A geriatric diet typically consists of nutrient-dense foods that promote fluid balance, bone health and prevent muscle loss. As it nourishes all the seven *Dhatus* (body

tissue) and is responsible for the maintenance of compactness, strength, and formation of an excellent form of *Dhatus*. Proper Diet has an enormous impact in managing, delaying or preventing the onset of many chronic diseases such as constipation, diabetes, heart disease, blood pressure etc.

Foods having *sattvic* qualities means easily digestible, especially useful for elderly population should be carefully selected, which has been described in the following table below.

Table – I Showing Healthy & balanced diet in Elderly

| <i>Food group</i> | <i>Examples</i> | <i>Quantity</i> |
|--|--|--|
| <i>Bread, other cereals and potatoes</i> | <i>Chapatti, rice, breakfast cereals and potatoes</i> | <i>These should be the main part of every meal (one third of meal)</i> |
| <i>Fruit and vegetables</i> | <i>Oranges, apples, bananas, carrots, peas and tomatoes</i> | <i>These should be a main part of every meal and at least five servings should be consumed a day</i> |
| <i>Milk and dairy foods</i> | <i>Milk, cheese</i> | <i>Three servings a day</i> |
| <i>Foods containing fat and sugar</i> | <i>Crisps, drinks, sweets, butter, dry fruits like kismis, badam ...</i> | <i>Should be consumed only in moderation</i> |

The diet should be regulated taking into account the habitat, season, age, etc. It should be balanced and the quantity should be taken according to one's digestive capacity. Following Points may be considered while planning/ advising dietary and other life style regimen -

1. The food should be tasty, nutritious, fresh and good in appearance.
2. Too spicy, salty and pungent food should be avoided.
3. It should neither be very hot nor very cold.
4. Liquid intake should be more frequent and in small amount.

5. Heavy food can be prescribed in a limited quantity.
6. Heavy food 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.
7. Heavy physical work should be avoided after food.
8. Mind should be peaceful while eating.
9. Diet should be taken only when hungry and avoidance of over eating should be the rule.
10. Inclusion of sufficient amount of vegetables and fruits in diet.
11. Daily intake of vegetable soup and fruit juices.
12. Milk and ghee are the dietary articles of choice in Old age. Hence, their daily usage is advisable. Patients with hyperlipidaemia, ischemic heart disease, obesity should use in moderate quantity.
13. Folic acid deficiency is more common in elderly. Diet containing cereals, vegetables, legumes and fruits should be given to the elderly.

Water as essential nutrient for any age group

Water is an essential nutrient required for life, but it is often overlooked in discussions about nutrition. Water intake is important for maintaining adequate blood

volume and for the normal functioning of body systems. According to the Illinois Council on Long Term Care, the water content of the body tends to be lower in elderly adults, putting them at increased risk for dehydration. Additionally, the perception of thirst declines with advancing age, causing many elderly people to drink less water than their bodies require.

Dietary Modifications

"Quick Reference to Clinical Dietetics" states that many elderly adults have one or more chronic conditions, such as diabetes, hypertension or cardiovascular disease. Dietary modifications are often appropriate for these diseases, but they can contribute to chronic under nutrition in older adults. Good nutrition results in speedy recovery from illness, surgery, or broken bones & can generally improve quality of life. A well balanced diet containing a variety of protective foods from each food group will have several positive effects & can affect physical & mental well-being. To keep well, pattern of eating regular nutritious food are essential. Eating in company can increase quantity as well as enjoyment of food.

Favourable nutrition results in speedy restoration from illness, surgery, or broken bones & can generally improve quality of life. Yoga prescribes that *Sattvic* type of diet is extremely good for mental as well

as physical health of general population as a whole & geriatric population in particular.

Benefits of Physical activity

There are many health and lifestyle benefits from active physical activity. People with an active lifestyle feel healthier and have an improved sense of wellbeing. One of the best ways of living a long and healthy life is through regular exercise. It might seem like a chore, or one may think that he doesn't have time. However, physical activity comes in many ways and forms, including gardening, housework, walk with small children's, walking to the shops to buy the milk or newspaper. Regular physical activity helps reduce the effects of aging such as limited mobility, balance, flexibility and muscle strength. It also decreases the risk of heart problems and osteoporosis, as well as keeping one in a happy and healthy frame of mind. If one becomes more active, the more oxygen flows through the body & to the brain which results in more energy, better sleep, happier & healthy mind & body with more self-confidence. The secret is to start off slowly with activities you enjoy, and gradually build on these. The important thing about taking regular exercise is to start early. Just 30 minutes every day can keep feeling

younger, healthier and more energetic. It is just an art of meditation and self-growth.

Focus on getting started, establishing a routine and enjoying the benefits of physical activity. Getting started can be as simple as walking to the shops, taking the stairs instead of the escalator, or getting off the bus one stop earlier. Once you've started these simple things, it's then time to build on this exercise with some other pleasurable physical activities. Choose activities that enjoy – one will be surprised at how quickly time goes by. If one enjoys gardening, then make a point of doing it for a little longer. Or take the dog for a longer walk. One should try a few different activities until he finds one that suits him. He'll find it's then easier to establish a routine, and could also make new friends.

Benefits of Yoga

Yoga is an ancient Indian science and way of life which brings about relaxation and also produces a balanced mental state ⁷. Yoga techniques include physical postures i.e. asana, voluntarily regulated breathing i.e. pranayama, meditation, and philosophical principles which help to reach a balanced mental state. A closely related ancient Indian discipline, Ayurveda (the 'Science of Life', in Sanskrit), provides comprehensive knowledge about diverse aspects of health ^{8,9}. Wide ranges of health measures are covered including

massage and herbal preparations. The latter are used for healthy persons ('rejuvenating preparations' or *Rasayanas*) and for therapy.

Yoga is necessary to do at times that suits person; otherwise it will feel like a chore. Yoga practice should focus on asana, or poses, which are gentle, help, cleanse the air passages, keep the joints moving, and promote muscle strength and flexibility. Seated or lying poses provide a stable alternative as well e.g. *Pavanamuktasana* i.e. Wind Removing Pose, *Ardha Matsyendrasana* i.e. Seated Spinal Twist, *Savasana* i.e. Corpse Pose etc.... includes breathing exercise & meditational techniques.

The Yoga sessions should be planned accordingly: physical activity, relaxation, regulated breathing and philosophical aspects. This is an integrated approach of yoga, derived from principles in ancient texts which emphasize that Yoga promotes health at all levels ¹⁰. The session should be kept for sixty minutes daily. Subjects practices - breathing exercises (10 min), loosening exercises i.e. *Shithilikarana Vyayama*, 5 min, physical postures (20 min) [i.e., *Tadasana* (mountain posture), *Padahasthasana* (hand- to-foot posture), *Ardhakatichakrasana* (lateral arc posture), *Ardhachakrasana* (half wheel posture), *Viparithakarani* (half shoulder stand posture), *Matsyasana* (fish posture),

Bhujangasana (cobra posture), *Shalabhasana* (locust posture), *Makarasana* (crocodile posture), *Vakrasana* (sitting sideward twist posture), *Paschimothanasana* (back-stretching posture), *Ushtrasana* (camel posture), *Shashankasana*(moon posture), *Vajrasana* (diamond posture), (*Ardha*) *Padmasana* (half lotus posture), *Shavasana* (corpse posture)], voluntarily regulated breathing (pranayama, 10 min) such as: *Nadishudhi* (alternate nostril breathing), *Brahmari* (bumble bee breathing), *Surya Anuloma Viloma* (right nostril yoga breathing), and *Chandra anuloma viloma* (left nostril yoga breathing) and *Shavasana* (15 min), which has been described elsewhere. Also additional session in the evening time which consisted of devotional songs (*Bhajans*, 15 min) and lectures on theory and philosophy of yoga alternating with 'cyclic meditation'. The last technique is derived from another ancient Indian text (the *Mandukya Upanishad*) and involves alternating cycles of physical postures and supine rest ¹¹.

Yoga is an excellent lifestyle discipline that has many health benefits. It strengthens the body and increases flexibility, brings together physical and mental disciplines to achieve peacefulness of body and mind, helping in relaxation and manage stress and anxiety. It's balanced the mind, body, and spirit. It

helps them by getting sleep better, feel calmer, diminish of pain severity, regulation in sleep, emotional well-being and feel less anxious due to practicing yoga regularly. Physiologically improvement seems while regular practice, improves in breathing and lung problems, can decrease fasting sugar in geriatric person & also decrease hypertension, cholesterol, and promote weight loss. Another benefit - it has been seen that *Yoga* decreases social isolation amongst the geriatric population. For example, people who engage in yoga stated that they “felt part of a group and a sense of belonging”. A big concern amongst the elderly population is social isolation.

Yoga is also known to reduce anxiety while physical activity is increased. In addition, the philosophical aspects of yoga may be important to reduce depressive symptoms in geriatric person. Advantages of regular yoga practices are increasing to do more physical activity, relaxation with awareness and inputs about philosophical and emotional stability, improved sleep and increase feeling of being refreshed on awakening in institutionalized older persons.

Researchers on geriatric population performing yoga found decrease in anxiety, improvement in sleep, diminish of

medications for sleep and stress, improvement in flexibility and balance ^{12, 13, 14, 15}.

CONCLUSION

With regularity of performing physical activity, one would see & feel the positive effects of being able to bend, stretch & twist easier, will feel stronger, & able to carry more, & able to exercise for longer without getting tired & losing breath. A healthy and balanced diet, appropriate cooking methods, supplement of certain vitamins and minerals and a regular exercise, asana, pranayama & meditation routine goes a long way in ensuring a good quality of life. To conclude, diet, physical activity & yoga has many health benefits. All can reduce many health complications related to geriatric population. Furthermore, it has been found that practicing the above processes systematically can slow down the aging process. Leading an inactive life style can promote age related illnesses. Therefore proper knowledge & applications helps in maintaining healthy aging which includes the interaction between genes, the environment, and lifestyle factors, particularly diet, physical activity & yoga. Our aim should be to be fit physically & mentally through physical

activity, Yoga & proper planned diet are essential in everyday schedule.

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