# CHAKRAPANI AYURVEDA ISO 9001 & 22000

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## Ayurvedic Approach to Obesity

Dear Readers,

We are back again with our next Newsletter on Obesity this time. Ayurveda deals with obesity in a different perspective as compared to the modern science. Ayurveda defines various causes and treatments to help obese person to reduce weight.

This article on 'Ayurveda approach to obesity' explains thorough understanding about principles and practice of weight management in Ayurveda. It is bit technical but it is required to understand the subject from its core and not merely taking weight loss tips. It will be simplification of the subject if I put some weight loss tips from Ayurveda and such tips are available everywhere. So, do enjoy reading interesting knowledge from Ayurveda.

We heartily welcome your suggestion on our newsletter how to make it more useful and knowledgeable.

Best Regards and Namaste.

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## Ayurvedic Approach to Obesity by Rajesh Kotecha

**WHAT IS OBESITY?**

Obesity is a condition in which the natural energy reserve, stored in the fatty tissues of the body, is increased to a point where it is associated with certain health conditions or increased mortality. Obesity is both an individual clinical condition and is increasingly viewed as a serious public health problem. Obesity contributes too much morbidities in the population and it is known as causative or precipitating factor for various killer ailments like diabetes, hypertension, coronary artery diseases, joint disorders, Gall Bladder disease, Breast, Prostrate and Colon Cancers, Respiratory problems, Stroke, Heart diseases, etc.

**OBESITY IN AYURVEDA**

Obesity has been described by the term Sthaulya Roga in various Ayurvedic classics. According to Ayurveda, Obesity is the excess amount of body fat. In this way excess weight of muscles, bone, fat and water in the body can be labeled as Obesity, also known as overweight.

Ayurveda included Atisthula (obese or overweight) person in Ashta Nindatiya Purushas (eight despised or undesirable physiques). These eight despised persons are Atideergha (very tall), Atihriswa (very short stature), Atigaura (very fair colored or complexion), Atikrishna (very black colored or complexion), Atiloma (with excessive body hairs), Aloma (absence of body hairs), Atikrisha (excessive thin or emaciated persons) and Atisthula (obese or overweight). Ayurveda further stated that Atisthula and Atikrisha persons are more despised among above eight despised persons.

Charaka, the great ancient scholar of Ayurveda, stated that people who are Atisthula (overweight) are more liable to be at a health risk than those whose weight is at the normal range for their body types. They are more prone to chronic diseases like heart disorders, diabetes mellitus, high blood pressure stroke, and a few types of cancers. It represents certain people who display low metabolism and water retention, thus finding it difficult to burn sufficient energy to maintain a healthy weight range.

**CATEGORIES OF PERSON ON THE BASIS OF BMI**

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Obesity and overweight ranges are determined by using height and weight to calculate a number known as the Body Mass Index (BMI). Body mass index (BMI) is a measure of body fat based on height and weight that applies to both adult men and women. It is used for people to correlate the amount of body fat they possess. For example, an adult with a (BMI) of between 25-29.9 is considered overweight. A person having a (BMI) 30 or higher would be considered obese.

| S.N. | B.M.I. | CATEGORIES |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | < 18.5 | Underweight |
| 2 | = 18.5-24.9 | Normal weight |
| 3 | = 25-29.9 | Overweight |
| 4 | > 30 | Obesity |

$$\text{B.M.I.} = \frac{\text{Weight in Kg.}}{(\text{Height in meter})^2} \quad \text{or (BMI = kg / m2)}$$

**CAUSES OF OBESITY**

When a person consumes more calories than he burns up, then the excess calories get stored in the form of fat or adipose tissues, causing obesity. The causes of Sthaulya Roga (obesity) are very clearly explained in Ayurveda. These are as follows-

- Avyayama - Not exerting physically or lack of exercises
- Divaaswapna - Sleeping in daytime (the afternoon).
- Shleshmal Ahara Sevana - The diet, which causes an increase in the Kapha Dosha.
- Shleshma Vardhaka Vihara Sevana - Life styles, which cause an increase in the Kapha Dosha.
- Atisampurana – Excessive intake of foods, which are difficult for digestion, such as consuming sweet, cold and unctuous food contents in excessive quantity, etc.
- Avyavaaya – Not indulging in copulation
- Harshanitya- Enjoying happiness always.
- Achintana – Not thinking of anything or worry less.
- Bijaswabhava – Nature of the seeds i.e. spermatozoa and ovum at the time of fertilization or due to heredity.

Above causative factors can be explained as follows -

- Genetic factors: Obesity tends to run in families. If parents are fat then the offspring also shows a tendency to accumulate fat. Even the diet and lifestyle habits, which are practiced in the family, contribute to obesity.
- Environmental Factors: A person's eating habits and their level of physical activities can also contribute to an excess deposition of fat. When a high level of calories is ingested together with sedentary work and life style habits, then the excess calorie amount is stored as fat.
- Psychological Factors: There is a tendency to overeat in response to negative emotions like boredom, sadness or anger. This leads to obesity.
- Eating disorders: Diseases and conditions like Hypothyroidism, Cushing's syndrome, Depression, and certain neurological problems lead to overeating which in turn leads to accumulation of fat.
- Medicines: Certain medicines such as steroids and some antidepressants may cause weight gain.

**CONCEPTS OF SANTARPANA AND APATARPANA**

In Ayurveda, diseases are classified in to two broad divisions on the basis of their etiology. These are-

Santarpana Janya Vyadhi - Diseases due to over nourishment.
Apatarpana Janya Vyadhi – Diseases due to under nourishment.

Ati Santarpana (over nutrition) is produced due to intake of excessive nutritious

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**Interesting Health News : Mother's Milk Helps Improve Baby's DNA**

Source: beta.thehindu.com

WASHINGTON, May 24, 2010: According to a leading researcher at the University of Illinois, most of the genes enhanced by breast milk promote quick development of the intestine and immune system. Giving reasons why

diet and lifestyle. Persons who partake more quantity of foods which are unctuous (fatty), sweet, hard for digestion and slimy, use fresh grains and fresh wine, meat of animals of marshy lands and living in water, milk and its products, food made from jaggery and corn flour; who dislike physical activities, spend more time in day sleep, comfort of good bed and seats, may get affected by the diseases caused by over nutrition.

Diseases produced due to over nutrition are – Diabetes, corbuncles, Kotha (eruption or rashes), itch, Anaemia, fever, leprosy, various skin disorders, Ama Dosha, Dysuria, Anorexia, Stupor, Impotence, profound obesity, lazyness, heaviness of the body, coating of sense organs and srotasas with Kapha and meda etc.

Atisthaulya (obesity) is also produced due to Atisantarpana, as Obesity is the excess amount of body fat due to excessive intake of nutritious diet. In this way excess weight of muscles, bone, fat and water in the body can be labelled as Obesity or overweight.

Thus, by viewing all the above description regarding obesity, it can be concluded that the excessive accumulation of body fat or Meda is the main causative factor for obesity. Therefore it should be dealt in details.

**CONCEPTS OF MEDA (FAT)**

The lipids as described in modern science possess properties, which closely resemble that of Meda, Vasa etc. Ayurveda describes Meda as one amongst seven basic body tissues (Dhatus) i.e. Rasa, Rakta, Mamsa, Meda, Asthi, Majja, and Shukra Dhatus. These seven Dhatus remain inside the body in a proper quantity and quality and thus promote the growth and support to the body. Any disturbance in their quantity or quality may cause various disorders.

MEDA DHATU - This is fat or adipose tissue of the body. Its function is to lubricate the body. Unctuousness in complexion is the feature of normal Meda Dhatu. A certain amount of body fat has the following functions. This means that under normal conditions the body fat keeps the body moisturized, promotes sweating, provides energy to the body ,nourishes the bones, helps in Heat insulation, Absorption of shock, Storage of energy etc. Excess of Meda Dhatu makes person fatty and causes obesity

How normal or abnormal Meda Dhatu is form?

Dhatus are formed continuously in our body in a consecutive manner, and are in a constant state of regeneration from the previous one — they are being constantly formed, destroyed and reformed. These Dhatus, in their cycle of creation, destruction and recreation are fed with appropriate materials derived from nutrient substances from the time of one's conception until one's death. This means that if one Dhatu is not healthy, the Dhatu that will come after that particular Dhatu will also not be healthy.

According to Ayurvedic principles, after the intake of any type of Ahara (diet) it is processed at various places of digestive system and is transformed in to first Dhatu i.e. Rasa Dhatu. After bio-physiological reactions during digestion, a few part of Rasa Dhatu is transformed in to next one i.e. Rakta Dhatu. Same process continues in the formation of respective Dhatus until the last Dhatu i.e. Sukra Dhatu is obtained. Thus all these Dhatus get their nutrition through their precursor Dhatu or directly from Poshaka (nourishing) Rasa. Each Dhatu consists of countless infinite small cells, which are units of structure and function.

Thus, Agni has very important role in the digestion and metabolism on both the levels i.e. Jatharagni (digestive fire) and Dhatwagni (fire at tissue level). In Sthaulya Roga there is Dhatwagni Mandya and Srotorodha (obstruction in the channels of adipose tissues) in Rasavaha and Medavaha Srotasa due to excessive intake of above etiological factors, which leads to formation of Ama Dosha. This Srotorodha (obstruction in the channels) does not allow the nutritive part of the following Dhatus to make other Dhatus, except from the Meda, thus there is an increase in the Meda only except other Dhatus. Ultimately this gives rise to excessive accumulation of the fat in the body and thus obesity is produced.

Being obstructed in its movements due to Meda, Vata Dosha moves specially in the Koshtha (abdomen), stimulates the digestive fire dries up the food present there; so the person digests his food quickly and desires more of foods again. If there is delay in getting food, he develops many severe diseases, the causes behind this activity are increased Agni (digestive fire) and Vata Dosha specially. They burn up (destroy) the body quickly by giving rise to severe diseases just as the forest fire destroys the forest quickly.

mother's milk is always better than any formula, scientists have claimed that breast milk improves the functioning of their genes in a way that protects them from illness.

Researchers at the University of Illinois have found that infants' first food affects their gene expression, giving a possible mechanism for how breast milk impacts health. Gene expression is the process by which instructions in a gene are used to synthesize a functional gene product, mostly proteins. When genes are expressed, it is as if they are "turned on".

Lead researcher Sharon Donovan of the University of Illinois said that it has already been known that breast milk contains immune–protective components that make a breast-fed infant's risk lower for all kinds of illnesses. "But what we haven't known is how breast milk protects the infant and particularly how it regulates the development of the intestine," she said, adding that understanding those differences could help formula makers develop a product that is more like the real thing.

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**Suggested food for Obesity :**

**Early morning** - A glass of warm water mixed with the juice of half a lemon. A teaspoonful of honey can be added if you like.

**Breakfast** - Wheat or Mung (green beans) sprouts and one cup skimmed milk.

**Mid morning**- A glass of orange, pineapple or carrot juice.

**Lunch** - Salad of raw vegetables such as carrot, beet, cucumber, cabbage, tomatoes. In case you can not digest raw vegetables, either steam or boil them. Whole grain bread or whole wheat chapatis (Indian recipe) and a glass of buttermilk.. It will be good to add some roasted cumin seeds, green coriander leaves, a little salt and some grated ginger in the butter milk.

**Mid afternoon** - Coconut water or dry fruits or lemon tea or vegetable soup.

**Dinner** - Whole grain bread or chapatis, steamed vegetables and any seasonal fruit except banana and apple.

Because of excessive increase of Meda (fat/adipose tissues) and Mamsa (muscle tissues), there will be movement of the Sphik (buttocks), Udara (abdomen) and Stana (breasts); body growth is imbalanced and there is lack of enthusiasm. Thus a person is known as Atisthula (Obese or overweight).

**CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES IN OBESITY**

Ayurveda describes that Meda gets deposited in and around the belly in all living beings. It is also present in Anvasthis (cartilage). Hence when a person becomes obese his stomach bulges out and the hips, belly and breasts sag down. The sagged parts flap as that person moves. An obese person is not too active.

Generally, females have more body fat than males. In females, the fat usually accumulates around the hips giving them a pear shape. In men it accumulates around the belly giving them an apple shape. The obesity related problems start when fat accumulates around the waist.

**DEFECTS IN AN OBESE PERSON**

The obese body shape is widely regarded as unattractive. Many negative stereotypes are commonly associated with obese people, such as the belief that they are lazy, stupid, or even evil. Obese children, teenagers and adults face a heavy social stigma. Obese children are frequently the targets of bullies and are often shunned by their peers. Obesity in adulthood can lead to a slower rate of career advancement. Most obese people have experienced negative thoughts about their body image, and many take drastic steps to try to change their shape, including dieting, the use of diet pills, and even surgery.

According to Acharya Charaka, eight kinds of defects are common in obese persons –

- Diminission of life span: As stated earlier, in obese persons, only fat tissues gets nourished and not the other tissues; because of this, there is diminission of life span.
- Quick onset of senility: Body being loose, tender and heavy, fat obstructs the body channels, thus other tissues cannot get proper nutrition so there is occurrence of quick onset of senility.
- Difficulty in performing sex or copulation: Semen being less in quantity and channels of Shukra also being obstructed by the fat so there is difficulty in performing sex or copulation.
- Debility: Debility develops due to imbalance of the tissues.
- Bad smell in the body: Bad smell of the body is due to the nature of fat and sweat is also more because of that.
- Trouble by more sweat: Troubles due to more sweat, are produced when fat combines with Shleshma, by increase of moisture inside the body, there is increased heaviness in the body and inability to withstand physical activities.
- Excessive hunger: Due to increase in the Vata Dosha and increased digestive power there is occurrence of excessive hunger.
- Profound thirst: Due to increase in the Vata Dosha and increased digestive power there is occurrence of excessive thirst. (Charaka Samhita Sutrasthana 21/4)

According to Ayurveda the obese persons are more prone to the following diseases -

- Diabetes
- Kidney related problems.
- Hepatitis.
- Low libido.
- Low energy levels.
- Skin problems.
- Fistula
- Piles.
- Filariasis, etc.

**Obesity – Basic Concepts of Ayurvedic Management**

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According to Ayurveda, Atisthula (obese person) is more despised, because it gives more troubles to the patients. Hence, when any disease affects this person, it may be more lethal in obese person than others. As stated earlier that Obesity contributes too much morbidities in the population and it is known as causative or precipitating factor for various killer ailments like diabetes, hypertension, coronary artery diseases, joint disorders, Gall Bladder disease, Breast, Prostrate and Colon Cancers, Respiratory problems, Stroke, Heart disease, etc. So it is the right time to reduce your weight.

We shall continue our journey to the knowledge in our next article and will discuss how to effectively deal with extra weight on our bodies according to Ayurveda. Till then, have a good day. Kindly do write back your feedback / comments or queries. I will be happy to respond.

**CONTACT US**

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