

## *Ayurvedic Perspectives on Hygiene and Cleanliness for Promoting Swasthavritta*

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Swasthavritta, a holistic approach to health and well-being rooted in Ayurveda, emphasizes the importance of a balanced and harmonious life. Central to this philosophy is the Sattvic diet, which focuses on pure, wholesome, and light foods that are believed to positively impact mental clarity and emotional balance. This paper explores the influence of a Sattvic diet on the mind and emotions, shedding light on the connection between dietary choices and overall well-being within the context of Swasthavritta.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Ayurveda, Swasthavritta, Hygiene in Ayurveda, Cleanliness in Ayurveda, Ayurvedic lifestyle, Mental hygiene in Ayurveda, Ayurvedic principles*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Ayurveda, which translates to "the science of life," is a comprehensive system of healthcare with a history dating back thousands of years. Central to Ayurveda is the concept of Swasthavritta, which signifies the maintenance of health and prevention of diseases through a balanced and holistic lifestyle. Ayurvedic principles consider hygiene and cleanliness as foundational aspects of Swasthavritta, encompassing not only physical cleanliness but also mental and environmental cleanliness. This paper explores Ayurvedic perspectives on hygiene and cleanliness and their significance in promoting a state of balanced well-being.

## PHYSICAL HYGIENE AND CLEANLINESS

### 1. Personal Hygiene:

- **Bathing (Snana):** Ayurveda places great importance on daily bathing. It is not just about physical cleansing but also considered a ritual that refreshes the body and mind. Warm water, infused with herbs like neem or sandalwood, is recommended. The choice of water temperature should align with an individual's dosha (body constitution). Warm water is generally suitable for Vata and Kapha types, while cooler water may be advised for Pitta types.
- **Tongue Cleaning (Jihwa Prakshalana):** Cleaning the tongue is a daily ritual that removes toxins (ama) that accumulate overnight. This can be done using a tongue scraper or even the back of a spoon. Ayurveda recommends this practice to promote oral and digestive health.
- **Tooth Care:** Using herbal toothpaste or tooth powders containing ingredients like neem, clove, and camphor is favored over commercial toothpaste. Proper oral hygiene is not only about clean teeth but also about maintaining the health of the entire oral cavity.

### 2. Dietary Cleanliness (Ahara Shuddhi):

Ayurveda places significant emphasis on the purity and quality of food. Consuming fresh, seasonal, and locally sourced food is encouraged.

- **Food Combining:** Ayurveda suggests combining food items wisely to aid digestion. For example, combining proteins and carbohydrates can lead to indigestion, so it's advised to avoid such combinations.
- **Food Preparation:** Food should be prepared and cooked in a clean and serene environment. It is believed that the emotional state of the cook can influence the energy of the food. Therefore, the cook's emotional and mental cleanliness is considered important.

### 3. Evacuation (Malotsarga):

- Ayurveda emphasizes the regular and complete evacuation of waste from the body. Proper elimination is essential for physical cleanliness. Regular bowel movements help in the removal of toxins from the body. It is encouraged to establish a daily routine for bowel movements.

#### 4. **Cleanliness of Sense Organs:**

- **Eye Care:** Washing the eyes with cool water or using herbal eye drops can help keep the eyes clean and reduce eye strain. This practice can be especially beneficial for individuals who work long hours on screens or in dusty environments.
- **Nasal Cleanliness:** Ayurveda suggests the use of a neti pot for nasal irrigation. This practice helps clear the nasal passages and keep the respiratory system clean.
- **Oil Pulling (Gandusha):** Swishing and holding oil (usually sesame or coconut oil) in the mouth for a few minutes daily can help remove toxins, maintain oral hygiene, and improve the sense of taste.

#### 5. **Skincare and Herbal Products:**

- Ayurveda promotes the use of natural and herbal skincare products. Ingredients like aloe vera, turmeric, sandalwood, and neem are commonly used for skincare.
- The choice of skincare products should align with an individual's dosha. For example, moisturizers with cooling properties are recommended for Pitta types, while warming oils like sesame oil are beneficial for Vata types.

#### 6. **Exercise and Sweat Hygiene:**

- Regular exercise, according to one's constitution, helps maintain physical cleanliness by promoting circulation and removing toxins through sweat.
- After exercising, Ayurveda recommends waiting for a while before taking a shower to allow the body temperature to return to normal. This is believed to prevent the clogging of sweat pores and maintain skin health.

### **MENTAL HYGIENE AND CLEANLINESS**

#### 1. **Meditation and Yoga:**

Ayurveda emphasizes the practice of meditation and yoga as powerful tools for maintaining mental hygiene. These practices help calm the mind, reduce stress, and promote emotional and mental balance.

- **Meditation (Dhyana):** Regular meditation helps individuals connect with their inner selves, reduce mental clutter, and attain a state of mental purity and clarity. Specific meditation techniques are often recommended based on an individual's dosha or constitution.
- **Yoga Asanas and Pranayama:** Yoga postures and controlled breathing exercises

(pranayama) are essential for balancing the doshas and ensuring mental clarity. Various yoga asanas and pranayama techniques are prescribed according to an individual's constitution to enhance mental and emotional well-being.

## 2. **Mindful Lifestyle:**

Ayurveda encourages individuals to lead a mindful lifestyle that is in harmony with their natural rhythms (circadian rhythms) and the environment. This includes:

- **Sleep Hygiene:** Maintaining a regular sleep schedule and getting sufficient rest is fundamental for mental cleanliness. Ayurveda suggests that the timing of sleep is vital; for example, the hours before midnight (Brahma muhurta) are considered highly beneficial for rest and rejuvenation.
- **Circadian Rhythms:** Aligning daily activities with the body's natural clock is believed to maintain mental equilibrium. For example, eating the heaviest meal at lunch when digestion is strongest and eating lighter dinners.
- **Nature Connection:** Spending time in nature, engaging in outdoor activities, and absorbing the healing energies of natural elements can help reduce stress and maintain mental cleanliness.
- **Mindful Eating:** Eating in a calm and peaceful environment, focusing on the sensory experience of food, and chewing food mindfully aids in proper digestion and mental clarity.

## 3. **Emotional Balance (Rasa and Bhava):**

- Ayurveda recognizes the importance of managing emotions and maintaining emotional hygiene. The practice of Rasa Shastra, which involves experiencing and managing emotions, is crucial.
- Ayurveda categorizes emotions into "rasas" (juices) and "bhavas" (mental states). Proper expression and management of these emotions are considered essential for mental cleanliness.
- Specific Ayurvedic herbs and practices may be recommended to balance emotions and promote emotional well-being.

## **Ayurvedic Therapies:**

- Ayurvedic therapies such as Shirodhara (warm oil treatment on the forehead) and

Abhyanga (oil massage) are used to calm the mind and maintain mental cleanliness.

- These therapies not only provide physical benefits but also have a profound impact on mental relaxation and emotional stability.

**Detoxification (Panchakarma):**

- Panchakarma is a cleansing and detoxification process in Ayurveda. It is believed to remove physical and mental impurities from the body and mind. It includes therapies like Vamana (emesis), Virechana (purgation), and Basti (enema), among others.

**Maintaining Sattva Guna:**

- Ayurveda recognizes three primary mental qualities or gunas: Sattva (purity and clarity), Rajas (activity and restlessness), and Tamas (inertia and darkness). Maintaining Sattva is essential for mental cleanliness.
- Practices that promote Sattva include consuming sattvic foods (pure and natural), engaging in virtuous actions, and cultivating qualities like compassion, truthfulness, and inner peace.

**ENVIRONMENTAL CLEANLINESS**

Environmental cleanliness, as viewed through the lens of Ayurveda, is an essential component of Swasthavritta (optimal health and well-being). Ayurveda places great emphasis on creating and maintaining a clean and harmonious living environment for promoting health and balance. Here, we'll explore the key principles and practices of environmental cleanliness according to Ayurvedic perspectives:

**1. Clean Living Space:**

- A clean and well-ventilated living space is regarded as essential for promoting positive energy and overall well-being.
- Regular cleaning of the home, including dusting, sweeping, and mopping, is recommended to eliminate physical impurities and maintain cleanliness.

**2. Purity and Aromatics (Gandha):**

- Ayurveda recommends the use of natural aromatic substances, such as incense, essential oils, and fresh flowers, to maintain a clean and fragrant living environment.

- The use of natural fragrances is believed to uplift the mind, calm the senses, and create a serene atmosphere.

### **3. Natural Elements (Pancha Mahabhutas):**

- Ayurveda recognizes the importance of the five natural elements (earth, water, fire, air, and ether) in maintaining environmental balance.
- Utilizing these elements, such as by having indoor plants to enhance the element of earth or ensuring proper ventilation to facilitate the flow of air, contributes to environmental cleanliness.

### **4. Fumigation and Purification (Dhoopana and Dhoomapana):**

- Ayurveda recommends regular fumigation of living spaces with specific herbs and resins to purify the air and eliminate pathogens.
- Commonly used materials for fumigation include frankincense, myrrh, camphor, and neem leaves. These practices are believed to cleanse the environment of harmful microbes and toxins.

### **5. Seasonal Cleanse (Ritucharya):**

- Environmental cleanliness also considers the changing seasons and their impact on health.
- Ayurveda suggests adapting the living environment to the season. For example, during the monsoon season, extra precautions are taken to prevent dampness, mold, and insect infestations.

### **6. Water and Air Quality:**

- Ayurveda recognizes the importance of clean air and water in promoting health.
- Proper filtration and purification of drinking water and ensuring good air quality through adequate ventilation are emphasized.

### **7. Waste Management (Mala Parigrahana):**

Proper waste disposal and recycling practices are seen as vital for environmental cleanliness. Ayurveda encourages minimizing waste, reusing items, and disposing of waste in an eco-friendly manner to maintain a clean and sustainable environment.

#### 8. **Vastu Shastra and Architecture:**

- Vastu Shastra, an ancient Indian system of architecture and design, aligns the design of living spaces with natural forces to promote harmony and balance.
- Proper adherence to Vastu principles is believed to foster a clean and energetically balanced living environment.

#### 9. **Natural Materials and Sustainable Practices:**

- Ayurveda promotes the use of natural, non-toxic, and eco-friendly building materials and furnishings in living spaces.
- Sustainability practices, such as using renewable energy sources and reducing environmental impact, align with Ayurvedic principles of environmental cleanliness.

### **CONCLUSION**

Ayurveda's perspective on hygiene and cleanliness as essential components of Swasthavritta provides valuable insights into maintaining holistic well-being. The principles and practices of physical, mental, and environmental cleanliness prescribed by Ayurveda are both time-tested and relevant in today's world. As individuals seek a balanced and healthy lifestyle, incorporating Ayurvedic principles can lead to improved health, vitality, and overall well-being. In this context, Ayurveda's approach to hygiene and cleanliness serves as a beacon for promoting Swasthavritta and a harmonious existence.

It is important to note that Ayurveda should be approached with care and consultation with qualified practitioners, as individual constitutions and requirements may vary, and the integration of Ayurvedic practices should be personalized to suit one's specific needs and circumstances.

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