



ROLE OF AYURVEDA IN THE MANAGEMENT OF SMALL INTESTINE FUNGAL OVERGROWTH (SIFO):

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ABSTRACT

Small Intestinal Fungal Overgrowth (SIFO) is a condition characterised by an excessive proliferation of fungal organisms in the small intestine. This leads to gastrointestinal symptoms such as bloating, diarrhoea, abdominal pain, and malabsorption. Conventional treatment often involves antifungal medications, but prolonged use can lead to resistance and side effects. Ayurveda, an ancient system of holistic medicine, offers alternative approaches to managing SIFO by addressing its root causes and promoting gut health through diet, herbal formulations, and lifestyle modifications.

INTRODUCTION

Small intestinal fungal overgrowth (SIFO) is an abnormal increase in fungal organisms within the small intestine linked to gastrointestinal (GI) symptoms. Candidiasis, in particular, is a known cause of GI symptoms, especially in immunocompromised individuals or those treated with steroids or antibiotics. Candida is naturally present in small amounts in the

mouth, skin, and intestines, where it typically causes no issues. However, suppose its growth is not regulated, and it becomes excessive. In that case, it can lead to several common infections, such as oral thrush and vaginal yeast infections and several common symptoms, such as Diarrhea, Bloating, Nutritional deficiencies, Fatigue, Malabsorption, Lack of

appetite or excessive hunger, and Irregular bowel movements. Gut discomfort, especially after eating anything; additionally, an overgrowth in the intestines can disrupt gut health. In Ayurveda, small intestinal fungal overgrowth (SIFO) can be understood as imbalances in the doshas, primarily Kapha and Pitta. The overgrowth of fungi like Candida in the small intestine may be linked to impaired digestive fire (Agni), which leads to the accumulation of Ama (toxins) in the body. Factors such as poor dietary habits, excessive intake of sweets, fermented foods, or antibiotics can disturb the balance of gut flora, allowing fungal organisms to multiply excessively. Ayurvedic treatment aims to address the sharir (body), indriya, and satva by targeting the root causes of imbalance. The Ayurvedic approach to managing SIFO generally emphasises restoring digestive harmony, strengthening Agni, and removing toxins.

Pathogenesis

The pathogenesis of SIFO (Small Intestinal Fungal Overgrowth) involves an overgrowth of fungi, primarily Candida species, in the small intestine. This

overgrowth disrupts the normal gut microbiota balance, leading to inflammation, altered intestinal permeability, and impaired digestive functions. Contributing factors include immune dysfunction, prolonged antibiotic use, and conditions compromising gut motility or creating an environment favourable for fungal growth.

Risk factors

Several risk factors, including prolonged antibiotic or steroid use, immunosuppression, diabetes, the use of proton pump inhibitors (PPIs), impaired gut motility, and diets high in refined sugars or carbohydrates, are associated with the development of small intestinal fungal overgrowth (SIFO). These factors create conditions that Favor fungal overgrowth in the small intestine.

Ayurvedic management

The Ayurvedic management of SIFO focuses on addressing the root cause of the condition by restoring digestive balance, enhancing Agni (digestive fire), and eliminating accumulated toxins (Ama). In Ayurveda, many herbal formulations are available, such as

1. Vati –
i. Kutaj ghan vati
ii. Chitrakadi vati
iii. Sanjivani vati
iv. Dhanvantar gulika
v. Agnitundi vati
vi. Ghandhak vati
vii. Bilvadi gulika
2. Churna –
i. Hingwashtak churna
ii. Kapithashtak churna
iii. Bilvadi churna
iv. Narayan churna
v. Talishpatradi churna
vi. Yavanishadav churna
vii. Dadimashtak churna
viii. Shivaksharpachan churna
ix. Triphala churna
3. Avleha -
i. Bilvadi avleha
ii. Panch Jeerak gulum
iii. Talishpatradi leham
iv. Lavangadi modak
v. Dadimadi avleha
4. Aasav aarisht –
i. Kumariaasav

ii. Bilvasav
iii. Madhukasav
iv. Chitrakasav
v. Kutajarishta
vi. Mustakarishtam
vii. Jeerkadhayarisht
viii. Takrarishta
ix. Amalakasav
5. Ghrit-
i. Changerighritam
ii. Kshirshatpala ghrit
iii. Nilani ghrit
iv. Dadimadhyaghrit
6. Kashaya
i. Saptasaarkashaya
ii. Phaltrikadikashaya
iii. Jeerkakashaya
iv. Dhanyak Kashaya

Home remedies for SIFO (Small Intestinal Fungal Overgrowth) may include:

1. *Takra* (buttermilk).
2. *Aarnaal* (*kanji*) -beetroot kanji, rice kanji, carrot kanji, kokam kanji.
3. Pickles – Indian gooseberry pickle, lemon pickle ,garlic pickle, ginger pickle, carrot pickle

Pathya apathya

Pathya -

1. Eating fresh seasonal fruits and vegetables.
2. Increase the intake of warm and home-cooked meals.
3. Increase the intake of prebiotics and probiotics, as good gut bacteria can kill bad bacteria.
4. Practice yoga and meditation to reduce stress.

Apathya-

1. Avoid alcohol and smoking.
2. Avoid highly processed and ultra-processed foods.
3. Avoid beverages like coffee and tea.
4. Avoid heavy foods that are difficult to digest.
5. Avoid high fat, high sugar and complex carbohydrates.
6. Avoid self-diagnosis and self-treatment.

DISCUSSION

Ayurvedic management of Small Intestinal Fungal Overgrowth (SIFO) focuses on balancing the body’s

doshas and enhancing digestive health. According to Ayurveda, an imbalance in Agni (digestive fire) and accumulation of Ama (toxins) can create an environment conducive to fungal overgrowth. Treatment often involves a combination of herbal remedies, dietary adjustments, and detoxification techniques. Panchakarma is a cleansing and rejuvenating process of Ayurveda, which plays a crucial role in SIFO management. Procedures like Virechana (purgation) and Basti (medicated enemas) are tailored to effectively cleanse the gut and eliminate toxins. These therapies, combined with a personalised Ayurvedic regimen, aim to restore balance, strengthen digestion, and promote overall health.”

CONCLUSION

Currently, people are deeply troubled by the fast-paced nature of life, which is taking a toll on their mental health and disrupting their digestion. Modern eating habits, irregular daily routines, environmental changes, social inequalities, and uncertainties about employment and life contribute to a stressful lifestyle, negatively impacting overall health. Small intestinal fungal overgrowth is a common problem among the many digestive issues that arise. Ayurveda offers comprehensive solutions to such issues by identifying their root causes. Detailed explanations of these concerns are provided in various sections of Ayurvedic

texts. By following Ayurvedic principles, these problems can be effectively resolved.

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