

DIETARY INTERVENTION IN AMLAPITTA (HYPERACIDITY)

Nanjaiah Sowmya Mandakalli Kavita M. B. Jyothi K. Shivakumar
 Dept. of Swasthavritta, SDM College of Ayurveda and Hospital, Hassan, Karnataka, India

ABSTRACT

Amlapitta (Hyperacidity or Acid dyspepsia) is a common disorder affecting almost 45% people in our country. Though it can be described as a disease of modernization due to irregular eating habits, it is more of psycho- somatic disorder caused due to mental stress & strain added with dietetic indiscrimination. It has predominance of vitiated *Pachaka Pitta* (Pitta that helps for digestion) and involves vitiation of *Annavaha and Purishavaha Srotas* (channels carrying food and faeces). The pathology includes *Mandagni* (reduced digestive ability) & *Ama*. In this era where the society is conscious enough about “what to eat and how to eat?” the awareness about the food items, their quantity, quality and nutritional values etc are increasing gradually. Even then, the popularity of fast food is greater due to the shortage of time. *Ayurveda* also agrees Faulty food habit is the main culprit to cause *Amlapitta*. Alleviation of cause is the first line of management for any kind of disease. Even efficient medicaments will not be much useful while the causes still persist. So emphasis is given to dietary habits.

Keywords: Hyperacidity, Food, *Pitta*, *Srotas*, *Agni*, *Ama*

INTRODUCTION

Hyperacidity is the commonest disease of the speedy, fashionable and fast-food based modern life. The term hyperacidity is also a term used by common man. *Agni* refers to fire like activity in alimentary canal responsible for digestion of food. This activity is influenced by status of *doshas*. When *Samana vata* associates with *kapha* in turn produces weak digestive power (*Agnimandya*). Food is the very cause of our existence. Both body and disease are formed by food¹. Consuming food against code of dietetics i. e. *Ahara vidhi vidhana* and *Ahara vidhi visheshayatana* (method of taking food) lead to a number of diseases related with food. Eating food before the previous food is digested, untimely food, eating too much of acidic food, eating when

not hungry, drinking too much water during food² and at a time unless required, very hot-high fatty-fried food, stale food, heavy diet, excess consumption of horse gram vitiate all the three body humours (*Tridosha*).

Food, when consumed without understanding one’s own digestive capacity, will not be digested properly and gets sour (*vidahata* of Ahara). The fresh food ingested further too gets sour when it mixes with the previously soured food as the seat (*Ashaya*) itself is vitiated. Due to sourness of consumed food the liquidity of *pitta* increases further decreasing the capacity for digestion (*Agnimandya*). Hence *Rasadi Dhatu* are not formed in proper manner. This, after certain period, manifests as *Amlapitta*³. *Amlapitta* includes symptoms like indigestion, sour or bitter belching,

abdominal heaviness, burning sensation in chest and throat region and loss of taste.

Ayurveda agrees that no medicine is equivalent to food; it is possible to make a person disease free merely with appropriate and congenial diet⁴. In hyperacidity, *Ayurveda* administers dietary changes like consumption of barley, wheat, old rice, gruel made of green gram (*Mudga Yusha*), bitter gourd, ash gourd, sugar, banana, pomegranate, indian gooseberry, wood apple⁵, milk⁶, Lajamanda⁷ and fresh buttermilk⁸.

DISCUSSION

In the management of any disease, food and dietetic code are the important aspects to be looked upon. The dietary interventions can be of much benefit in *Amlapitta* as the majority of causes are dietary.

Thick gruel of rice mixed with a glassful of fresh buttermilk and a well ripened banana given twice a day is a nutritious diet⁹. Rice has a gelatinous texture that protects the stomach and fresh buttermilk alleviates vitiation of *Pitta Dosh*⁸.

A well ripe banana can be given with milk. Milk neutralizes the acid and further secretions are prevented by the action of serotonin present in banana¹⁰.

Barley gruel with butter milk and lime juice is a good food in acidity¹¹. Barley being sweet and astringent in taste kindles *Agni* (digestive fire), helps in relieving *Ama*¹² and fresh buttermilk helps in correcting the vitiated *Pitta Dosh*. In lime, presence of citric acid kills germs in the stomach¹³.

Cooked green gram is easily digestible and absorbable¹⁴ as *Amlapitta* is a disease caused by *Mandagni*. It is endowed

with vitamin A and B; it helps in the normal cell function in stomach^{15,16}.

Pomegranate is one among fruits that normalize *Pitta Dosh*. It also aids digestion¹⁷. By its unctuousness it nourishes and maintains mucous membrane of the stomach in healthy state. Being a rich source of Vitamin A, it also helps to quicken recovery from nausea, vomiting¹⁸.

One can also opt for *Amalaki* (Indian gooseberry). Indian gooseberry predominantly having sour taste with astringent and sweet as secondary taste; cold potency, is known to normalize all the three *Dosh*s. It does not aggravate vitiated *Pitta Dosh*¹⁹. High content of vitamin C in Indian gooseberry helps in healing inflammation of stomach by forming collagen. It enhances normal tissue metabolism and reduces tissue damage in stomach by combating free radicals²⁰.

Adding ginger to food preparations aids in digestion²¹. *Shatavari Kalpa* with milk reduces hyperacidity by the cooling effect of *Shatavari*^{22,23}.

On the contrary, freshly harvested rice should be avoided as it is heavy for digestion and is constipating²⁴. Sesame and black gram are heavy for digestion and enhance *Pitta Dosh*²⁵, thus should also be restricted. Horse gram which increases *Pitta Dosh*²⁶ should be avoided. Excessive consumption of salt, sour, pungent foods, smoking and alcohol consumption decreases the production of bicarbonates buffer which in turn increase acid secretion resulting in the damage of epithelial barrier. This results in hyperacidity and hence should not be resorted to²⁷. Deep fried foods are difficult for digestion as it contains more of oil²⁸; too much of coffee, tea consumption causes more gastric secretion due to caffeine,

tannin content present in it; carbonated drinks contain carbon-di-oxide dissolved water and coloring agents / preservatives present in them irritate the stomach walls²⁹. Hence all the above said dietary stuffs have to be avoided.

CONCLUSION

One has to follow code of dietetics for better health. Appropriate quantity and quality of food consumed helps to prevent and control hyperacidity. One should also take food considering one's own capacity of digestion. With the complaints of *Amlapitta*, following the dietary do's and don'ts helps to produce soothing effect on the inner layer of the stomach, reverses inflammatory changes and controls the digestive secretions by which hyperacidity can be tackled.

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CORRESPONDING AUTHOR

Dr. Sowmya M N
Research scholar of Swasthavritta
SDM College of Ayurveda and Hospital,
Hassan, Karnataka, India
Email: somsnanjangud@gmail.com

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