

**DIET AND LIFESTYLE REGIMEN FOR VARSHA RITU (MONSOON SEASON)**Twinkal Pramar<sup>1</sup>, Ashok Kumar Sharma<sup>2</sup>

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**ABSTRACT**

*Ayurveda*, the eternal science of life, has a way of making things more accessible for people. *Ayurveda* promotes the ideas of *Dinacharya* (daily regimen) and *Ritucharya*, reflecting the diversity of theories and principles that the science of health offers for achieving a state of physical and mental well-being. Among these practices in *Ritucharya*, which is crucial for facilitating the adaptation of seasonal regulations without compromising body homeostasis. In the ancient classics of *Ayurveda*, various seasons and the regimen one must adapt to remain healthy, irrespective of them, are mentioned. In *Ayurvedic* classics, the seasons or *Ritus* have been divided into six, namely, *Shishir Ritu* (Late Winter), *Vasant Ritu* (Spring), *Greeshma Ritu* (Summer), *Varsha Ritu* (Monsoon), *Sharad Ritu* (Autumn) and *Hemant Ritu* (Early Winter). Among them, you merely have to follow the dietary and behavioural patterns mentioned in *Varsha Ritu* (Monsoon season) to remain fit as a fiddle. According to *Ayurveda*, *Vata Dosh*a is the indistinct energy correlated with the governance of breathing, blinking, movement of the muscles & tissues, the heartbeat and, in short, the overall movement of the body, including the flow of thoughts. When in balance, *Vata* aids in ingenuity and resilience. However, being out of balance engenders panic and apprehension. During the *Varsha Ritu*, *Vata Dosh*a aggravates, which causes *Mandagni* or impeded digestive power, decreased immunity and a weakened body. The impaired digestive system begets *Ama*, the root of many diseases. Another *Dosh*a which plays a part in *Varsha Ritu* is *Pitta*. It generally deals with metabolic processes to effectuate heat and energy. The dietary and behavioural aspects are to be controlled to balance the *Vata & Pitta Dosh*as and keep

them free from diseases. Thus, one should follow the diet and lifestyle modification according to season to remain healthy or disease-free, which also helps boost immunity.

**Keywords:** *Varsha Ritu*, Diet & Lifestyle, *Vata* and *Pitta Dosha*, *Mandagni*, *Ama*, Immunity.

## INTRODUCTION

*Acharya Charaka* divided the year into two *Kala*, *Adana kala* and *Visarga kala*. *Varsha Ritu* is the *Ritu* of *Visarga Kala*.<sup>1</sup> *Varsha Ritu* (Monsoon season) is the month of *Shravan* and *Bhadrapada* (mid-July to mid-September). The heat that accumulates on the Earth is released when the Sun goes down and pours as rain. It is one of the favourable seasons, and the relaxed environment is such a boon to harsh summer. During this season, the sky is cloudy and rains without thunderstorms. We all love the earth's fragrance and raindrops' flow during the rainy season. The lakes and rivers are filled with water. The rainy season is the breeding season for mosquito-borne, water-borne diseases and also increases toxins in the body, which causes common flu, viral fever, cold, cough, sore throat, Malaria, Dengue, Cholera, etc. *Rasa* and *Mahabhuta* in this season are *Amla*<sup>2</sup> (sour) and *Prithvi* and *Agni*<sup>3</sup>, three, respectively. The strength of an individual becomes weak in this season. In *Varsha Ritu*, all three *Dosha* get vitiated; according to *Charaka Samhita*, a cloudy environment during the rainy season will vitiate the *Kapha Dosha*, *Bhubhashpa* (water from the ground), which turns into *Amlavipaka* (sour). This vitiates the *Pitta Dosha*; *Pitta* will be in the *Sanchaya* stage. *Vata Dosha* will be in the *Prakopa* stage; due to a cold breeze, *Vata* gets vitiated; due to groundwater, *Pitta* gets vitiated; and due to low digestive power, *Kapha* gets vitiated.<sup>4</sup> All these conditions will lead to vitiation of all three *Doshas*, which in turn affects a person's *Agni* and *Bala*. The humid weather in the rainy season makes your immune system and digestive system weaker due to the accumulation of *Doshas* in the body, specifically *Vata* and *Pitta Dosha*, which leads to *Agnimandya*.<sup>5</sup> *Mandagni* during *Varsha Ritu* cannot bear to take in heavy food, and thus light food and water are suggested.

During monsoon season, the water accumulated in water bodies is comparatively heavy; hence, there is a need for lightened water. The nutrient-rich diet and lifestyle modification can balance *Vata* and *Pitta* and keep you healthy and fit during the rainy season.<sup>6</sup> Following *Ayurveda* principles in your daily routine keeps you away from the ill effects of monsoons and helps boost your immune system. *Ayurveda* recommends a preventive technique to rejuvenate the whole body and helps to prevent various health issues. The *Ayurveda* therapies with oil and herbal medication flush out toxins within the body and rebalance the *Doshas*, keeping us away from lower immunity, allergies, indigestion, infection, and sluggish metabolism during monsoon. Certain *Panchakarma* therapies, as directed by *Ayurveda* physicians, are effective in relaxing, nourishing, and rejuvenating the body's cells. So, to remain healthy and fit, one should follow a diet and regimen for 15 days by giving up the routines of the previous season and embracing the new one for acclimatization.<sup>7</sup>

### Materials and method

During *Varsha Ritu*, *Doshas* could accumulate and aggravate, making life unhealthy. *Ayurveda* prescribes a certain lifestyle comprising diet, exercise, and way of life. This lifestyle protects you from the ill effects of monsoon and helps you lead a healthy life.

The following is a pattern of aggravation and accumulation of *doshas* during monsoon season and their impact on the body:<sup>8</sup>

**Vata:** It accumulates during the dry or dehydrating heat of the summer and becomes aggravated during the monsoon season after summer. This aggravation can lead to weakened digestion, acidic atmospheric conditions, and flatulence.

**Pitta:** The rainy season makes the atmosphere more acidic, which could lead to *Pitta* accumulation. It ag-

gravates during autumn when the heat returns after the cooling spell of the rainy season.

*Ayurveda* attributes the aggravation (vitiating) of *Vata* and accumulation of *Pitta* during this season as a major cause of various diseases. Hence, the food and lifestyle should be such that it helps balance *Vata* and *Pitta*.

### Diet and lifestyle<sup>9</sup>

#### 1) Foods to eat during *Varsha Ritu* (Monsoon season)

- Grains such as rice, barley, wheat, and jowar should be preferred.
- Vegetables such as pumpkin, bottle gourd, drumstick, ridge gourd, garlic, and fenugreek are beneficial and supportive in sustaining the body tissues.
- Legumes like arhar daal and green and black gram can be taken.
- Garlic, onion, and ginger are good as they boost immunity and digestion.
- Fruits like dates, mulberry and coconut are good.
- Milk products – take cow milk, cow ghee and buttermilk to sustain and balance the metabolism.
- *Annapana* (diet and drinks) is consumed mixed with *Madhu* (honey).
- Old grains and rice harvested and stored for more than sixty days, wheat, soups of pulses, and even goat meat are beneficial. Preparations with dals such as khichadi, kadi, rice gruels, and simple jeera rice are also good to consume daily.
- The food should majorly consist of *Snigdha* (unctuous -fats and oils), *Amla* (sour), less sweet, *Lavana* (salty tastes), and foods which are simple and of easily digestible nature.
- Have warm foods, especially in cooked form.
- Consume light and fresh foods.
- Have a small piece of ginger, jaggery and rock salt prior to each meal to aid your digestion.

#### 2) Warm drinks for the *Varsha Ritu* (Monsoon season)

Warm or even slightly hot drinks are recommended as they assist in kindling the digestive fire.

- Boiled water
- *Arishtapana*

- *Madhvikambu*
- *Mahendra Jala*
- Ginger water
- Cumin water
- Coriander water

#### 2) Foods and lifestyle to avoid during *Varsha Ritu* (Monsoon season)

- Avoid the consumption of spicy, sour, oily and acidic foods.
- Avoid the consumption of potatoes, leafy vegetables, tubers, raw foods and salads, pre-packed foods, curd, red meat, excess water, and liquids.
- Avoid complex food preparations such as biryani, chole, rajma, etc.
- Avoid eating fish and seafood as the risk for waterborne diseases is higher.
- Food items and preparations which are heavy to digest should ideally be avoided.
- Avoid sleeping during the day, and avoid exertion and over-exercising.
- Avoid over-exposure to the sun.
- Avoid sexual indulgence.
- Avoid water from rivers for drinking.

#### 4) Lifestyle changes during *Varsha Ritu* (Monsoon season)

Consumption of a healthy diet is beneficial only when accompanied by a healthy lifestyle. During the monsoon season, the following tips can ensure a healthy and happy life.

- Ensure you follow a regular exercise regimen. *Yoga* is very beneficial.
- Immunity-boosting therapies can be beneficial during the monsoon season.
- Keep your body warm.
- Keep feet dry.
- Keep your surroundings clean, not letting any water accumulate.
- Take special note in clearing the breeding zones of mosquitoes.
- Avoid walking in dirty rainwater and getting wet in the rain. If you get wet, change into dry clothes and dry your head as soon as possible. The best choice to dry your clothes is the fumigation by

dry neem leaves and Loban, which have antimicrobial action.

### 5) Panchakarma therapies during Varsha Ritu (Monsoon season)<sup>10</sup>

The cool and damp ambience the rains present, creates disturbances in the body due to physiological changes in homeostasis. The three *Doshas* fall into chaos and can be brought back to their equilibrium through *Panchakarma* therapy. It mainly consists of five detoxification procedures, namely, *Vamana*, *Virechana*, *Basti*, *Raktamokshana* and *Nasya*.

The atmosphere becomes mild, the body's pores open up, and it becomes more responsive to healing. That moment when the body is freed from toxic elements, and the incursion of fresh nutrients occurs, *Panchakarma* helps recharge your body and toughen up all organs and tissues. As a therapy every *Ayurvedic* physician looks up to, the benefits of *Panchakarma* are numerous. Some of them encompass detoxifying the body, boosting immunity, preventing lifestyle disorders like diabetes, blood pressure, back pain, etc., improving blood circulation and most importantly, enhancing the digestive fire that dwindles during the monsoon. If one were to properly follow the dietary and lifestyle practices advised in *Ayurveda*, with the subsequent administration of *Panchakarma*, the positive effects of the therapy would benefit him throughout the year. Not only does this therapy purify the mind and body, but it also creates a protective shield against diseases.

### DISCUSSION

According to *Ayurveda*, the fundamentals of *Ritucharya* is to live one's life according to changes in the seasons. The seasons bring about alterations in the energy of the natural world. Their surroundings influence the health of humans, as they are a part of nature. Adopting the seasonal regimen can help avoid sickness, according to *Ayurvedic* tradition, which views preventive medicine as a seasonal system of holistic medicine. Humans are more susceptible to seasonal illnesses when suffering from *Varsha Ritu*, one of the *Visarga Kalas* that causes poor strength and digestive fire. This is because *Varsha Ritu* viti-

ates all three *Doshas*. Thus, one must choose a lifestyle that upholds one's health and adheres to routines that balance all three *Doshas*.

### CONCLUSION

*Ritucharya* is a complete philosophy that is founded on merging with nature. It enhances a person's strength, complexion, happiness, and longevity without upsetting the body's *Dosha* and *Dhatus* balance, thereby preventing illness. *Ritucharya* facilitates healthy departure. The seasons exist for a reason- to ensure humanity does not have a monotonous life. The varieties of the seasons bring about innumerable shades to the world. A myriad of seasonal diseases and allergies regrettably accompany it. Our wish to remain healthy all over the year can be accomplished by adhering to the principles of *Ayurveda*.

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