

Boosting immunity with ayurveda: Timeless wisdom for modern life

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is not simply a science that deals with diseases and treatments. It refers to a lifestyle that maintains good health and extends life expectancy. For the same reason, most classical texts on *Ayurveda* focus on how to prevent disease, maintain health, and strengthen Immunity. *Acharya Charaka* says “*Svasthanya Swastyalakshanam*”¹ that’s the main goal of *Ayurveda* is to preserve the health of a healthy people. Now this has become even more important in the modern era, where we are faced with new pathogens every day and are forced to survive under such conditions.

In *Ayurveda* Immunity described as *Vyadhikshamatva* in the classical texts of *Ayurveda* and it is the power of resistance. In other words, *Vyadhikshamatva* is nothing but it is the resistance against the disease. *Ayurveda* present the concepts of *Vyadhikshamatva* (immunity) along with fundamental concepts related to the nutrition as well as the *Dhatu Parinama*. Strength of immunity provides ability in external and internal sense organs to perform their own functions and also given stability and growth of our body. The person who is dependent on the *Hitahara* or beneficial diet does not develop the disease.

Due to various reasons, including genetics, allergies, poor diet, etc a person’s immunity can weaken this makes the person more susceptible to illness, which is a major concern. By strengthening immunity a person can become more resistant to diseases and illnesses, these measures to strengthen the immune system are very necessary for successful treatment of the disease. Hence, in this article we discuss on *Ayurveda* for immunity.

Key word- Immunity, Immune System, *Vyadhikshamatva*, *Rasayana*, *Bala*.

INTRODUCTION

According to *Ayurveda*, *Vyadhikshmatva*¹ is the body's natural defence mechanism that helps the body fight current diseases and protects it from future diseases. Efficient functioning of the digestive system helps produce *Oja*, a substance that is the end product of digestion. *Ojas* is a substance that helps provide immunity to our body. A strong *Oja* helps us build immunity against various diseases and enhances the body's natural ability to fight diseases. This helps you stay energized and energetic. *Sanskrit* word *Bala* means strength and in health it refers to the strength of the mind, body and its components. In *Ayurveda*, the term *Bala* invariably refers to immunity and the immune system in a normal state.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The materials were collected from the classical Ayurvedic literatures and research journals.

Vyadhikshmatva is composed of two words- *Vyadhi* + *Kshamatva* where *Vyadhi* means 'Disease' or 'Illness' and *Kshamatya* means 'to resist'.²

व्याधिक्रमत्वं व्याधिबलविरोधित्वं व्याध्यत्पाद
प्रतिन्धकत्वमिति यावत् ।

Ayurveda defines 3 types of immunity (*Bala*)³:
Sehaja bala- Constitutional strength that which we inherit by birth and is genetic.

Kalaja Bala- Temporal strength That which develops based on division of seasons and age.

Yuktikruta Bala- That which is acquired through a healthy diet, physical activities, lifestyle, and general well-being.

Factors responsible for *Vyadhikshamatva* (Immunity)

. There are 12 factors responsible for increasing *Bala* (strength) of the body⁴

1. Birth in a particular place where people are naturally strong
2. Birth at a time when people naturally gain strength i.e *Hemant Ritu* (November to January) and *Shishira*
3. Favorable deposition of time (pleasant and moderate climate)
4. Excellence in the qualities of seed i.e. sperm and ovum, and *Asaya* i.e. proper anatomical and physiological status of uterus of mother
5. Excellence of the ingested food
6. Excellence of the physique
7. Excellence of the *Satmya* (wholesomeness of various factors responsible for maintenance of the body)
8. Excellence of the mind
9. Favorable deposition of the nature
10. Young age of both the parents i.e. they should not be over *Aged*
11. Habitual performance of exercise
12. Cheerful disposition and immense love for each other

Concept of improving Vyadhikshamatva Immunomodulation

Ayurveda discusses the following immunization measures:

- 1- *Rasayana*
- 2- *Lehana* (Lickables or Electuaries)

***Rasayana*⁵** – *Rasayana* was explained by *Acharya Charak* in the first chapter of *chikitsa sthan*, under which it was told that the person who consumes *Rasayana* every day, his immunity improves and *Rasayana* protects him upcoming diseases. *Rasayana* with modern aspects are; nutritive function, immunomodulatory action, antioxidant action, anti-aging effect, neuroprotective action, etc.

***Lehana*⁶** (Lickables or Electuaries) - *Lehana* depicts administration of various herbal drugs, like ghee preparation and gols alone as supplementary feeds. In *Ayurvedic* texts, various *Acharays* have described different useful formulations and mode of conduct for children. *Acharya Kashyapa* describes a special formulation by the name of “*Lehana*”. Purposes of *Lehana* are to

enhances growth & development by providing sufficient nutrition, promote health, complexion and strength (immunity), protect from various infections along with improving intellect and speech (delayed milestone). Indication of *Lehana* newborn should be administered the drug mixed with honey and ghee equal to quantity of an *Amla* fruit.

***Swaran Prasana*⁷**- *Swaran Prasana* was told by *Acharya Kashyapa*, it is one of the best type of immunization in *Ayurveda*. rub pure gold in small amount with water on a clean stone and then give it honey and *Gritha* for the child to licking gold increases intelligence, digestion, metabolism, strength, longevity and improves complexion or remove *Grahas* (evil effect).

Safety Considerations-

Best time- it is to be given on Pushya Nakshatra days.

Age Appropriateness - from birth up to the age of 16.

Contraindications – Avoiding it during high fever or acute illness.

Immunity Booster Herbs, Food And Therapies

<i>Turmeric</i>	Turmeric is one of the best <i>Ayurvedic</i> medicines that strengthens the immune system while fighting inflammation in the body. As a part of <i>Ayurvedic</i> immunotherapy taking turmeric extract in the right dosage and duration may benefit people with metabolic syndrome, and other degenerative diseases
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Guduchi (Tinospora cordifolia)-	<i>Guduchi</i> (Tinospora cordifolia), also known as <i>Giloy</i> , is another powerful immune-boosting <i>Ayurvedic</i> herb. It helps to maintain all three <i>Doshas</i> . It can help improve digestion, thus helping to strengthen the digestive fire
Amla	it is also known as Indian gooseberry, <i>Amla</i> is a rich source of vitamin C, it is used in various <i>Ayurvedic</i> immune -boosting treatment including <i>Chyawanprash</i> .
Ashwagandha	<i>Ashwagandha</i> is one of the most revered immunity boosting herbs in <i>Ayurveda</i> . It is use in a variety of <i>Ayurvedic</i> treatments to strengthen the immune system, improve muscle strength, provide the body with essential nutrition, increase energy levels, balances hormones which all that boost immunity
Spices (<i>Ginger, Turmeric, Tulsi, Coriander, Jaiphala, Garlic</i>)	These herbs have antibacterial and antimicrobial properties, and also have immunomodulating properties or aid improve digestion. Adding spices to diet is a natural way to support and restore immune system function

Milk and Ghee – Milk and ghee play an important role in making *Ojas* in *Ayurveda*. Milk is considered as a complete nutrient food according to *Ayurveda*.

Pulses – pulses are a rich source of protein which help to build our body, as example mung daal easy to digest and rich in antioxidant or potassium. Sprouted green beans are great way to help improve immunity.

Fruits – fruits are rich in various vitamins and minerals, which are essential in trace amounts and play an important role in the healthy functioning of our body and strengthen our immune system. An example

like apple, apricots, citrus fruits like oranges, lemon, is a rich source of vitamin C, which help build cell and strengthen the immune system. Dry fruits and nuts such as almonds, walnuts and raisins are the good source of potassium, magnesium, vitamin A, vitamin B and vitamin C which are essential for strong protection.

Vegetables – vegetables are the good source of macro and micro nutrients or antioxidants, vitamins, manganese, zinc, which are essential for a healthy defensive system. As example Carrots or squash or orange vegetables are rich in Beta-carotene which protects the body from damaging molecules

call free radicals. *Acharya charak* also described different type of *Shaak Varg* and there importance in our diet under the chapter of *Annapaanvidhiya Adhyaay*.

Immunity Booster Ghrita in Ayurveda- In *Ayurveda* various type of *Acharya* has described a different types of *Ghrita* to increase immunity.

Samvardhan ghrit, *Brahmi ghrita*, *Panchagavya ghrita*, *Kalyanaka ghrit*⁸, *Ashtanga ghrita*⁹

Immunity Booster Medhya Rasayana in Ayurveda¹⁰-

Mandukaparni Swarasa (juice) *Yashtimadhu Churna* (powder) *Guduchi Swarasa* (juice) *Shankhapushpi Kalka* (paste)

Immunity Booster Bhasm in Ayurveda¹¹-
Acharya Sushruta has mentioned 4 recipes (containing gold) which provide general immunity, body resistance, helpful in growth and development and enhancing the intelligence-

1. *Svarna bhasm* with *Kustha* (*Saussurea lappa*), *Vacha*, *Madhu* (honey) & *Ghrita*.
2. *Svarna bhasm* with paste of *Brahmi* (*Bacopa monnieri* Linn), *Sankhapuspi* (*Convolvulus pluricaulis*), with honey & *Ghrita*.
3. *Svarna bhasm*, *Arkpashpi* (*Holostemma annularium* Roxb.), *Vacha* (*Acorus calamus* Linn), honey & *Ghrita*.
4. *Svarna bhasm*, *Khaidarya* (*Murraya koenigii* Linn), *Sweta Durva* (*Cynodon dactylon* Linn.) *Ghrita*.

Yoga- In *Ayurvedic* literature different type of *Yoga* described for improve immunity. *Yoga* is a powerful way by which a person can help improve immunity. Physical exercise is essential to help strengthen the body and boost immunity.

Practice Sadvritta and Achara Rasayana

Panchakarma- it can help strengthen immunity by helping to rejuvenate the body.

DISCUSSION

Good immunity means that all components of your immune system are in optimal health. *Ayurveda* is a traditional medical system that focuses on immunity and provides a variety of advice to improve it, leading a healthy and balanced lifestyle. The immune system does not function in isolation. The strength of your immune system depends on your digestive health and mental state. *Agni* plays important role in maintaining gut health and immune homeostasis. All diseases are born out of *Mandagni* (weak digestive fire), this concept of *Ayurveda* emphasizes the importance of a healthy digestive system and balanced elements in the body for maintaining overall well-being and preventing diseases. According to *Ayurveda* *Agni* is the cornerstone of *Vyadhikshamatva*. A strong *Jatharagni* converts food into nutrient-rich *Aahar Rasa*. This feeds *Rasadi Dhatu* through *Dhatvagni* which forms the foundation of *Ojas* and *Bala*. So keep your digestive system in perfect condition, you

need to eat the right foods at the right time and in the right amount. *Ayurveda* also recommends activities such as meditation and *Yoga* to relieve mental stress, which is one of the main causes of weakened immunity. The concept of immunology has been known since ancient times and the *Acharyas* mentioned *Vyadhikshmatva* (the body's tendency to fight disease), which plays an important role in recovery from any disease. A person's *Bala* (strength) is an important factor in maintaining health and protecting life from disease. Due to changes in lifestyle, poor quality of nutrition, unfavorable changes in the environment, the strength of the body decreases day by day, the body's ability to fight diseases decreases. It causes many autoimmune diseases and infections.

CONCLUSION

The literature of *Ayurveda*, like *Dinacharya*, details daily practices to follow to maintain balance in the body and strengthen immunity. The concepts of *Ratricharya* (practice with seasonal changes), *Patya* (healthy), *Apathya* (unhealthy) and *Rasayana* were mentioned as factors promoting immunity. The *Ayurvedic* concepts mentioned above help to increase immunity, rejuvenate the body and improve nutrition by reaching the level of microcirculation in the tissues. However, *Ayurveda* recommends specific ways to enhance immunity naturally, this article present a comprehensive overview of

ayurvedic approaches to immunity however, it requires significant restructuring.

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