



“Mindful Hydration: Unveiling the Ayurvedic Approach to Water Consumption”

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Abstract

Water is a fundamental element essential for life and human well-being, recognized for its critical role in maintaining health across biological, chemical, and environmental dimensions. In Ayurveda, water (jala) is revered for its profound significance in balancing the doshas, supporting digestion, and sustaining life processes. This article examines water's role, misconceptions, and Ayurvedic guidelines for optimal consumption. Key Ayurvedic principles highlight the importance of mindful water intake based on timing, quantity, and preparation to align with individual needs and seasonal variations. Misconceptions such as excessive or indiscriminate water consumption are debunked, emphasizing the digestive process of water and its tailored use in managing diseases. The article also explores therapeutic applications of water in different dosha imbalances, the impact of meal timing on water intake, and the importance of consuming boiled and herb-infused water for health benefits. By integrating these insights, individuals can harness the life-sustaining and curative properties of water for enhanced health and longevity.

Keywords: Water, Ayurveda, Dosha balance, Water digestion, Brahma Muhurta, Seasonal water intake, Water and digestion, Jala sevan, Dosha-specific water, Therapeutic water usage.

Introduction

Water, a ubiquitous and essential substance, is central to modern scientific understanding across disciplines. As a simple molecule with the formula H₂O, water's unique physical and chemical properties make it fundamental to life, the environment, and technological advancements. It is often referred to as the "universal solvent" due to its unparalleled ability to dissolve a wide range of substances, enabling critical biological and chemical processes.¹

These insights continue to emphasize water's irreplaceable role in life processes, environmental balance, and technological progress.

Role and Importance in Modern Science 2,3

1. **Biological Significance:** Water makes up 60–70% of the human body and is critical for cellular activities, including nutrient transport, enzymatic reactions, and temperature regulation. It is essential for maintaining homeostasis and acts as a medium for biochemical reactions in all living organisms.
2. **Chemical and Physical Properties:** Water's polarity and hydrogen bonding give it a high specific heat capacity, surface tension, and solvent capabilities, making it integral to chemical reactions and thermal regulation. Its anomalous expansion when frozen allows ice to float, protecting aquatic ecosystems in cold climates.
3. **Environmental and Ecological Role:** Water drives the hydrological cycle, influencing climate, weather, and water distribution across the planet. It supports ecosystems by serving as a habitat and regulating temperature and nutrient cycles.



4. **Technological Applications:** In technology, water is used in cooling systems, renewable energy production (hydroelectric and hydrogen fuel cells), and desalination technologies. Water quality and management are critical for addressing challenges like scarcity, pollution, and sustainability.

- **Jivanam jivinaam jivo jagat sarvam tu tanmayam naato atyant nishedhen kadachit vaari vaaryate 4**

Water is an integral & unavoidable part of all living beings. Survival without it is impossible. Oxygen, food & water - only 3 things that we take from outside into the body. Hence these 3 are to be taken in the right manner, to remain healthy. There are many misconceptions (rather conceptions according to some) regarding the process of drinking water intake. Ayurveda has an elaborate description in all major texts about vaari or jala (water) still the world is unaware about it. This article is an attempt to clear some of these misconceptions.

Misconception:1

Drinking Water In Sufficient Quantity After Waking Up In Morning

Ayurved advocates drinking water in Brahma muhurt. Brahmamuhurta is the night's fourteenth muhurt which can be considered as vaat dosha kaal (3:30am-5:30am approx.) BRAHMAMUHURTA is the time for brahmachintan and all the normal urges like passage of urination, defecation etc takes place. Now in this period, 8 prasuti i.e. 4 anjali- which is a dose specific to every individual according to his anjali pramaan (1 anjali- both the hands full) should be taken.(approximately 200ml for an average adult) Water is an aap mahabhut (Physical element) pradhan dravya with snigdha, sheet, guru, sara, drava gunaas. Of these, gunaas like sara drava snigdha etc help in the easy passage of urges which are specific of vaataj kaal. Majority of people without waking up in brahmamuhurta wake up in kaph dosh pradhan kaal (6am-10am) Here already some amount of kapha dosh sanchay takes place due to getting up late. People routinely consume water in excess quantities. This leads to prakop of kapha by saamanya vishesh siddhant. Excess amount of water Disturbs the normal paanchbhautik sangathan of the body, the aap mahabhoot increases via vitiation of agni (digestive power). This apaachit aap mahabhoot gets out of the body in the form of vyadhi's like pratishyaay(cold), atisaar(Diarrhoea) etc or gets accumulated in the form of diseases like shoth (oedema). By Loka purusha saamya siddhanta, a river after over filling causes flooding similar thing happens in the body. Taking water is advisable considering the ritu (season), but only before udaykaal (sunrise) that too in mentioned quantity (8 prasuti)

- ***"Savitu udayakaale prasruti salilasya pibed ashtau rograaj parimukto jived vatsar shatam saagram"*⁵**

The above shlok mentions that before the sun rises, drinking 8 prasuti (4 anjali) jala cures diseases, doesn't let old age set in and the person leads a long life of 100 years. He gets rid of his vega's (Natural urges) like mala (Defecation), mutra (Urination) etc, vajikara action takes place with mukti of all 3 doshas & agni.

Regularly drinking water in brahmamuhurta

Cures diseases like:-

arsha, shoth, grahani, jwar, jathaar, medovikaar, mutraaghaat, rakta-pitta, shravan gala shir shool, akshirog and diseases originating from the vitiation of vata, pitta, kapha and rakta.

Misconception :2

Drink As Much Water As You Can Throughout The Day, It Cleanses The Skin And Removes All The Toxins From The Body.

- Here I would like to give one reference-



*“Ati ambupaanaat na vipachyate annam
nirambupaanaat ch sa ev dosha
tasmaat naro vanhi vivardhanaay
muhur vaari pibet bhuri”⁶*

This shloka mentions that water should be taken in correct quantity. Drinking excess water or for that matter no water leads to indigestion. So to keep the agni (digestive power) normal water should be consumed in small amounts but regularly. Again as mentioned in Charaka samhita sutrasthaan 27, ati ambupaana (excess water) leads to increase in kleda (undigested water content) in the body which leads to skin disorders. So the thought of cleansing skin by drinking water in excess amount throughout the day, unknowingly and surprisingly leads to its own destruction. People aren't aware of this fact and sooner or later fall prey to it.

Misconception : 3

Water Doesn't Need Digestion, It Directly Gets Filtered Out Through Kidney's.

According to Ayurveda water i.e. aap mahabhoot is the second most guru dravya i.e. heavy. Guru itself means which takes more time to get digested. One unique reference of Bhavaprakasha nighantu clearly mentions that water indeed needs digestion-

*“Pitam jalam jiryati yaam yugmaadai ek maatraat Shrut sheet jalam ch
tad ardha maatren shrutam kad ushnam paya prapaake traya ev kaala”⁷*

The above shloka mentions the time taken for digestion of water-

- Normal unboiled water takes 6 hours for digestion.
- Water that has been boiled and cooled and then consumed takes 3 hours to get digested.
- Water that has been boiled and consumed warm takes 1 ½ hours for digestion.
- Yogratnakar mentions the same thing but the difference lies in the time taken, which according to the above order is 3 hours, 1.5 hours & 45 minutes respectively .
- So water cannot be consumed anytime and in any quantity. Water should be consumed only when needed and not unnecessarily. In Ayurveda, 'thirst' is 'trushna' which is a vega. Vega means an urge. So this is a normal body mechanism. Whenever your body needs water it will ask for it, You don't have to unnecessarily drink it. One should rely on this vega.

Misconception : 4

In Diseases Like Diarrhea, Water Should Be Given Regularly To Compensate The Loss Of Water.

- **Gulmarsho.....**

**“Vaataruchi atisaarke kaphayute koshte pratishyaayke ushnam vaari sushitalam shrutahimam
swalpam pradeyam jalam” 8**

In diseases like atisaar(Diarrhoea) only water that has been boiled and then cooled should be given that too in very less quantity. Already there is aap dhaatu dushti and agnimandya (weak digestive power) which further aggravates by excess water consumption. Water is taken without even thinking about the aam and niraam avastha. So considering the avastha and vyadhi bala shruta shita jala should be advised to the patients.



CONCEPTIONS ABOUT JALA SEVAN

**"Taptam paatha paadbhaagena hinam pathyam prouktam vaatjaan aamayaghnam
Ardhashonam naashyed vaatpittam paadpraayam tattum doshtrayaghnam"**9

- 3/4th part water remaining after boiling -pathya and vaata roga naashak
- 1/2 part water remaining after boiling - vaata pittaghnam
- 1/4th part water remaining after boiling- tridoshanaashak

"Ushnodakam shrestatamam vadanti vishva yavanisahitam kramen kaphe cha vaate...."9

Shunthi siddha jala is sreshtha for kapha dosha

Yavaani siddha jala is shrestha for vaata dosha

**"Bhinnati sleshma sanghaatam maarutam chaapkarshati
Ajirna jarati aashu pitam ushnodakam nishi"**9
**"Sharkarasahitam niram-kaphakrut & pavanaapham
Sita sitopala yuktam- shukralam and doshnaasnam
Sa gudam- mutra kruchaghnam and pitta shleshma karam"**9

➤ **Type Of Water To Be Consumed in Various Seasons according to Yogratnakar**

- Sharada rutu- ardha paad hinam(1/8th part boiled away)
- Hemant rutu- paadhinam(1/4th part boiled away)
- Shishir vasant grishma- ardhaav shisha (1/2 part boiled away)
- Viparit rutu and pravut rutu- ashtaavasheshe (1/8th part remaining after boiling)

**"Na cha paryushitam deyam kadaachit vaari jaanta
Amlibhutam kaphotkledi na hitam tat pipaasve"**1

Bhukt aahaar va jala sambandh 11

Drinking water during meals leads to- sama avastha

Drinking water after meals leads to- sthulata

Drinking water before meals leads to- krushta

There are certain diseases in which the quantity of water consumed should be less like

arochaka, pratishaay, mandaagni, shotha, kshay, mookhpraseka, jaathar, netra aamay, jwar, vrana, madhumeha etc. drinking excess water in these diseases aggravates them. Jala sevan is an very elaborate topic. I would like to conclude with an all important shloka from Yogaratnakara rutucharya adhyaaya-

**"Jala adhikyaat manushyanaam aama vrudhi prajaayte
Aam vrudhya tu mandaagni mandagnau cha api ajirnata
Ajirna jwar utpatti jwaraadve dhaatunaashnam
Dhaatu naasaat sarva roga jaayante chauttarouttam"**

Ayurved is an ancient science which has survived the test of time. We should religiously follow what the principles of Ayurved quote and see the results for ourselves. So water is life but it should be consumed



in right manner and in right quantity to remain healthy. Any unhealthy practice should not be followed blindly.

Conclusion

The article presents an in-depth exploration of the role and importance of water in the context of Ayurveda, highlighting its undeniable significance for human health and well-being. Drawing from classical Ayurvedic texts, it sheds light on the misconceptions and conceptions regarding water intake and its effects on the human body. The detailed discussion establishes that water, while being essential, must be consumed mindfully, keeping in mind its properties, timing, and the individual's specific health condition.

Key Takeaways from the Article

1. **Water as the Foundation of Life:**
Ayurveda identifies water as a primary and indispensable element of life. The shlokas cited from classical texts like Bhavaprakash Nighantu and Yogaratnakara underscore water's integral role in maintaining physiological processes and overall vitality.
2. **Balanced Water Intake:** Excessive water consumption disrupts bodily balance by aggravating Kapha dosha and diminishing Agni (digestive power), leading to conditions such as oedema, indigestion, and skin disorders.
 - Insufficient water intake also disrupts digestion, causing dryness and impairing bodily functions.
 - Optimal water intake aligns with individual needs, seasonal variations (Rutus), and daily routines, ensuring harmony between the body's elements.
3. **Digestion of Water:**
Contrary to the misconception that water requires no digestion, Ayurveda emphasizes its digestive process based on temperature and preparation:
 - Un boiled water: Takes up to 6 hours for digestion.
 - Boiled and cooled water: Digests in 3 hours.
 - Warm boiled water: Digests in 1.5 hours.
4. **Morning Water Consumption:**
Drinking water in Brahma Muhurta (early morning, pre-sunrise) is recommended for maintaining health and preventing diseases. Consuming water in specific quantities during this time supports the body's natural urges and balances doshas, particularly Vata.
5. **Guidelines for Disease Management:** In conditions like diarrhea (Atisaar), only boiled and cooled water in minimal amounts is advisable to prevent further aggravation of Aap Mahabhuta and Agni Mandya.
6. **Diseases like indigestion, Mandagni, Jwara, and Shotha necessitate restricted water intake to prevent complications.**
7. **Specific Water Preparations for Dosha Balance:**
Ayurvedic practices emphasize boiling water with specific herbs like Shunthi for Kapha disorders and Yavaani for Vata disorders to enhance therapeutic benefits.



8. Seasonal Considerations:
The quantity of water boiled and consumed varies across seasons, ensuring alignment with the body's needs during Sharada, Hemant, Shishir, and other Rutus.
9. Meal Timing and Water Consumption: Drinking water before meals aids in weight reduction (Krushta), Drinking water during meals maintains balance (Sama Avastha). Drinking water after meals can lead to weight gain (Sthulata).

Concluding Thoughts

Water, as highlighted in the article, is not merely a consumable substance but a therapeutic tool with the potential to maintain or disrupt health depending on its usage. The Ayurvedic wisdom insists on consuming water thoughtfully, respecting its properties, seasonal variations, and the body's specific needs. The article serves as a reminder to integrate these principles into daily life, thereby preventing ailments and promoting longevity.

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