

# The Ashta Aahar Vidhi Visheshaayatana and the Significance It Plays in Maintaining a Balanced Diet

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52403/ijhsr.20250422>

## ABSTRACT

The concept of *Ashta Aahar Vidhi Visheshaayatana*, or the eight principles of dietary intake, is central to Ayurveda's understanding of nutrition and its impact on health. These principles—*Prakriti* (nature of food), *Karana* (processing), *Samyoga* (combination), *Rashi* (quantity), *Desha* (place), *Kala* (time), *Upayoga Samstha* (rules of consumption), and *Upayokta* (consumer)—guide the selection, preparation, and consumption of food to promote a balanced diet and maintain *Doshik* harmony. This article explores the significance of *Ashta Aahar Vidhi Visheshaayatana* in designing a balanced diet, emphasizing its relevance to contemporary nutritional science. The principles offer insights into personalized dietary recommendations, nutrient assimilation, and the prevention of diet-related disorders. Ayurvedic dietary guidelines rooted in these principles are correlated with modern dietary strategies, highlighting their potential for integration into global nutritional practices.

**Keywords:** *Ashta Aahar Vidhi*, balanced diet, Ayurveda, nutrition, personalized diet, *Dosha* balance

## INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda, the ancient Indian science of life, emphasizes that food is a cornerstone of health and disease prevention. Its comprehensive dietary framework, encapsulated in the concept of *Ashta Aahar Vidhi Visheshaayatana*, outlines eight critical principles governing food selection, preparation, and consumption. These principles are designed to ensure that food nourishes the body and mind, maintaining harmony among the three doshas—*Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha* <sup>(1)</sup>.

In modern nutritional science, a balanced diet is defined as one that provides essential nutrients in appropriate proportions to meet an individual's physiological needs. The

Ayurvedic perspective of *Ashta Aahar Vidhi Visheshaayatana* adds depth to this understanding by emphasizing the qualitative, quantitative, temporal, and individual-specific factors influencing dietary choices <sup>(2)</sup>.

This article delves into the eight principles of *Ashta Aahar Vidhi Visheshaayatana*, their application in achieving dietary balance, and their relevance to contemporary nutrition. By integrating Ayurvedic wisdom with modern dietary science, this framework offers a holistic approach to diet and health.

## The Eight Principles of *Ashta Aahar Vidhi Visheshaayatana*

### 1. *Prakriti* (Nature of Food)

*Prakriti* refers to the inherent qualities of food—hot, cold, heavy, light, dry, or oily. These qualities determine the effect of food on the body and mind <sup>(3)</sup>.

- **Relevance to Balanced Diet:** Foods with contrasting qualities can be used to balance individual dosha imbalances. For instance, cooling foods like cucumbers benefit Pitta individuals, while warming foods like ginger are suitable for Kapha types <sup>(4)</sup>.
- **Modern Correlation:** The concept aligns with the glycaemic index, caloric density, and thermal effects of foods studied in contemporary nutrition.

### 2. *Karana* (Processing)

*Karana* denotes the methods used to prepare food, such as cooking, fermenting, or soaking. Processing alters the physical and chemical properties of food, enhancing or diminishing its nutritive value <sup>(5)</sup>.

- **Relevance to Balanced Diet:** Proper processing ensures digestibility and assimilation of nutrients. For example, fermentation enhances the bioavailability of probiotics.
- **Modern Correlation:** This principle aligns with food technology and culinary science, emphasizing techniques that preserve or enhance nutritional value.

### 3. *Samyoga* (Combination)

*Samyoga* refers to the compatibility of food combinations. Ayurveda cautions against incompatible combinations, or *Viruddha Aahara*, which can produce toxins and impair digestion <sup>(6)</sup>.

- **Relevance to Balanced Diet:** Proper combinations, such as rice and lentils, create a complete amino acid profile, supporting balanced nutrition.
- **Modern Correlation:** Food pairing in modern nutrition, such as combining

vitamin C with iron-rich foods for better absorption, reflects this principle.

### 4. *Rashi* (Quantity)

*Rashi* encompasses the quantity of food consumed, both in terms of the entire meal and individual components. Ayurveda emphasizes moderation to prevent overloading the digestive system <sup>(7)</sup>.

- **Relevance to Balanced Diet:** Eating appropriate portions prevents malnutrition and overnutrition, both of which disrupt *Doshik* balance.
- **Modern Correlation:** Portion control and caloric intake guidelines in contemporary nutrition parallel this concept.

### 5. *Desha* (Place)

*Desha* signifies the geographical and environmental factors influencing food selection. Ayurveda recognizes that foods should align with the climate and terrain of the consumer's habitat <sup>(8)</sup>.

**Relevance to Balanced Diet:** Seasonal and locally available foods are considered more suitable for maintaining health.

**Modern Correlation:** The locavore movement and seasonal eating trends in modern nutrition emphasize similar principles.

### 6. *Kala* (Time)

*Kala* refers to the timing of food consumption, including seasonal variations and daily meal timings. Ayurveda underscores the importance of eating according to the body's natural rhythms <sup>(9)</sup>.

**Relevance to Balanced Diet:** Consuming lighter meals in the evening supports digestive health and aligns with circadian rhythms.

- **Modern Correlation:** Chrono nutrition, which studies the impact of meal timing on metabolism, aligns with this principle.

### 7. *Upayoga Samstha* (Rules of Consumption)

*Upayoga Samstha* involves guidelines for mindful eating, such as eating in a calm

environment, chewing food thoroughly, and avoiding distractions<sup>(10)</sup>.

- **Relevance to Balanced Diet:** Mindful eating enhances digestion and prevents overeating.
- **Modern Correlation:** Mindfulness-based interventions for weight management reflect this Ayurvedic insight.

### 8. Upayokta (Consumer)

*Upayokta* refers to the individual consuming the food, taking into account their age, health status, dosha constitution, and lifestyle. Ayurveda advocates personalized dietary recommendations<sup>(11)</sup>.

- **Relevance to Balanced Diet:** Tailoring diets to individual needs ensures optimal nutrient utilization and health.
- **Modern Correlation:** Personalized nutrition, based on genetics and metabolic profiling, echoes this principle.

### Role of Ashta Aahar Vidhi

#### *Visheshaayatana* in a Balanced Diet

##### 1. Promoting Digestive Health

The principles emphasize foods and combinations that enhance Agni (digestive fire), preventing conditions like indigestion, bloating, and malabsorption. This focus on digestive health aligns with modern recognition of gut health's role in overall well-being<sup>(12)</sup>.

##### 2. Preventing Chronic Diseases

By discouraging incompatible combinations and promoting moderation, these principles reduce the risk of metabolic disorders, cardiovascular diseases, and obesity. This aligns with the goals of public health nutrition to prevent diet-related non-communicable diseases<sup>(13)</sup>.

##### 3. Supporting Nutrient Absorption

The principles of Prakriti, Karana, and *Samyoga* optimize nutrient bioavailability, ensuring efficient absorption and utilization of vitamins, minerals, and macronutrients<sup>(14)</sup>.

### 4. Enhancing Mental Health

Mindful eating practices, as outlined in *Upayoga Samstha*, reduce stress and enhance the eating experience, contributing to mental well-being. The emerging field of nutritional psychiatry supports the role of diet in mental health<sup>(15)</sup>.

### Integrating Ashta Aahar Vidhi Visheshaayatana with Modern Nutrition

#### 1. Personalized Diet Plans

Combining *Upayokta*'s individualized focus with modern tools like genetic testing and metabolic analysis can refine dietary recommendations<sup>(16)</sup>.

#### 2. Sustainable Eating

*Desha*'s emphasis on local and seasonal foods supports sustainable agricultural practices and reduces the carbon footprint of diets<sup>(17)</sup>.

#### 3. Functional Foods

*Karana* and *Samyoga* principles inform the development of functional foods and nutraceuticals that target specific health concerns<sup>(18)</sup>.

#### 4. Chrono nutrition

*Kala* aligns with contemporary research on meal timing and its impact on metabolism, paving the way for integrated approaches to managing obesity and metabolic disorders<sup>(19)</sup>.

### CONCLUSION

The concept of *Ashta Aahar Vidhi Visheshaayatana* offers a comprehensive framework for understanding the interplay of food and health. Its emphasis on personalized, mindful, and balanced dietary practices aligns with modern nutrition science, highlighting its relevance in contemporary healthcare. By integrating these principles into modern dietary strategies, a holistic approach to nutrition can be achieved, addressing both individual and public health needs.

#### *Declaration by Authors*

**Ethical Approval:** Not Required

**Acknowledgement:** None

**Source of Funding:** None

**Conflict of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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How to cite this article: Chandni Goyal, Dinesh Chandra Sharma, Pooja Pareek. The Ashta Aahar Vidhi Visheshaayatana and the significance it plays in maintaining a balanced diet. *Int J Health Sci Res.* 2025; 15(4):141-144. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52403/ijhsr.20250422>

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