

Bridging Ayurvedic Ahara and Modern Nutrition

Dr. Nirmala Telrandhe, Dr. Prajakta Jibhkate

Date of Submission: 15-06-2025

Date of Acceptance: 25-06-2025

ABSTRACT

This review literature article explores Modern diet and Ayurvedic diet, highlighting their distinct approaches to health. Modern diet like Keto, Paleo, and Mediterranean are based on scientific principles and focus on specific goals such as weight loss, improved energy, or heart health. They offer quick results but can be restrictive and may not support long-term sustainability.

In contrast, Ayurvedic diet focus on holistic well-being, personalizing nutrition based on an individual's dosha and digestive health. They emphasize balance, natural foods, and detoxification but may require more time to show results. While modern diet are evidence-backed, Ayurvedic diet offer a long-term approach to overall health.

Ultimately, both diet have unique strengths, with modern diet offering short-term benefits and Ayurvedic diet providing a more sustainable, balanced lifestyle.

Keywords: Modern diet, Ayurvedic Ahara, digestive health, balanced lifestyle, Personalized Diet.

I. INTRODUCTION

The impact of diet on health has been an ongoing area of study, as eating habits can significantly influence overall well-being. With diet available today, individuals often face challenges in selecting the right approach for achieving optimal health. While modern diet rely on scientific principles focusing on specific goals like weight loss or disease prevention, Ayurveda offers a holistic approach to nutrition, emphasizing balance, digestion, and long-term wellness. This paper compares these two approaches, shedding light on their philosophical foundations, benefits, limitations, and practical applications.

Modern diet such as Keto, Mediterranean, Paleo, and Vegan diet have garnered attention due to their focus on macronutrient management and the promise of quick results. However, the long-term sustainability of these diet is often questioned. In contrast, Ayurvedic diet provide a more personalized approach to nutrition, with an emphasis on balancing the body's doshas and

promoting digestion. This paper aims to compare and contrast modern diet with Ayurvedic diet in terms of scientific evidence, health outcomes, flexibility, and lifestyle compatibility.

Methods

To understand the differences between modern and Ayurvedic diet, a comprehensive review of both approaches was conducted, encompassing:

1. **Dietary Principles:** A detailed exploration of both modern and Ayurvedic dietary philosophies, focusing on their foundational principles, customization, and health goals.
2. **Scientific Research:** An analysis of scientific studies that support or critique the health benefits and efficacy of modern diet, including weight management, cardiovascular health, and metabolic function.
3. **Ayurvedic Wisdom:** A study of Ayurvedic principles such as dosha types, food properties (guna), and the concept of Agni (digestive fire), and how they influence dietary choices and health outcomes.
4. **Dietary Guidelines:** An examination of the practical considerations for following each diet, such as food selection, meal planning, and lifestyle Corrections.
4. **Comparative Analysis:** A direct comparison of the diet in terms of their approach to health, long-term sustainability, and compatibility with modern lifestyle.

Overview of Modern diet

Definition and Core Principles

Modern diet are built on scientific research. They focus on balancing calories, macronutrients (proteins, carbs, fats), and micronutrients. The goal is to optimize health, manage weight, or prevent disease. Convenience and variety are key—people often eat processed or ready-made foods to save time.

Popular Modern diet

- **Keto:** Low in carbs, high in fats. Designed for weight loss and improved energy.

- **Paleo:** Based on eating like our ancient ancestors — meats, nuts, fruits, and vegetables.
- **Mediterranean:** Rich in healthy oils, whole grains, fish, and vegetables. Known for heart health.
- **Vegan:** No animal products, emphasizing plant-based foods for health and ethics.

Key Features and Popularity : Modern diet are trending because of their quick results and easy access. Many people chase weight loss or better energy levels. The rise of social media and celebrity endorsements boosts these diet' popularity. Data shows over 45% of Americans try some form of diet at least once a year.^[1]

Scientific Perspective : Many modern diet have evidence backing their claims. For instance, the Mediterranean diet is linked with reduced heart disease. Registered dietitians and health organizations recommend tailored diet based on individual needs. Still, some diet lack long-term studies, making it essential to be cautious.

Macronutrients:

The daily nutritional requirement refers to the amount of essential nutrients a person needs each day to maintain good health. These needs can vary depending on age, sex, activity level, and health conditions, but here's a general overview based on the recommended daily intake for a healthy adult.^[2]

1. Carbohydrates:

- 45–65% of total daily calories
- About 225–325g if you're on a 2000-calorie diet
- Source: Whole grains, fruits, vegetables, legumes

2. Proteins:

- 10–35% of daily calories
- Roughly 50–70g/day
- Source: Meat, fish, eggs, dairy, legumes, soy, nuts

3. Fats:

- 20–35% of daily calories
- Focus on healthy fats: avocados, nuts, seeds, olive oil
- Limit saturated fats to <10% and avoid trans fats

4. Fiber:

- Men: ~38g/day
- Women: ~25g/day

- Source: Whole grains, fruits, vegetables, legumes

Vitamins:

- Vitamin A: 700–900 mcg
- Vitamin C: 75–90 mg
- Vitamin D: 600–800 IU
- Vitamin E: 15 mg
- Vitamin K: 90–120 mcg
- B-Vitamins (like B12, B6, Folate): Varies (e.g., B12 ~2.4 mcg)^[3]

Minerals:

- Calcium: 1000–1200 mg
- Iron: 8 mg (men), 18 mg (women)
- Magnesium: 310–420 mg
- Potassium: 2600–3400 mg
- Zinc: 8–11 mg^[4]

Water:

- Men: ~3.7 liters/day (from all beverages and foods)
- Women: ~2.7 liters/day^[5]

Introduction to Ayurvedic Diet Principles and Philosophy

Aahar, Nidra and Brahmacharya form the basic tripod of Ayurved^[6]. These are the basic three pillars on which health depends. In charak samhita in Swasthchatushka^[7], the very first mention is of aahar matra which clearly indicates that to remain swastha or healthy the most important governing factor is the amount of aahar consumed by an individual. Anything that we consume to nourish our body is categorized as aahar. As everything is panch bhautik^[8] so is our ahara dravya and so is our body constitution. Panchbhautik principle of ayurved explains the formation of universe with the five basic elements i.e. Prithvi, Aap, Tej, Vayu, Akash. These are present in all the material existing which includes humans and food consumed by them. Ayurved explains the functioning of the body on the basis of tridosha siddhanta^[9] i.e. vaat, pitta and kapha.

Historical and Cultural Context

Developed thousands of years ago, Ayurveda guides many traditional health practices. Its recipes and food choices were designed to suit different people based on their unique mind-body type, called dosha (Vata, Pitta, Kapha). This personalized approach is still popular today.

Core Components

- Herbs and spices like turmeric, ginger, and cumin.
- Whole foods, including seasonal and local ingredients.
- Mindful eating, emphasizing gratitude and awareness.
- Food qualities like light, heavy, warming, or cooling, tailored to your dosha.

Classification of Ahara dravya:^[10]

1. Classification is mentioned on the basis of Anna Dravya.
2. The very first type of aahar as per Charaka samhita is through the act of deglutition that aahar term was derived.” Aahriyate iti aaharah”.
3. Second classification is done on the basis of the origin of edible dravya that is from plant /animal origin.
4. Aahar is classified as hitkar/beneficial and ahitkar / non-beneficial.
5. On the basis of consumption in its physical state ashit/eatable, peet/drinkable, khadit/chewable and lehya/lickable consistency food is classified.
6. On the basis of 6 tastes as per ayurved classification of dravya is mentioned with sweet, sour, salty, pungent, bitter and astringent.
7. On the basis of gurvadi guna ahar dravya can be classified in 20 types.
8. Lastly on the basis of permutations and combinations there can be an infinite number of food articles.

Above classification is more related to preparation of ahara dravya that is in consumable form.

Classification of dravya to be used in the preparation of food given in classical texts is as follows:

A] This classification is done on the basis of Anna Dravya grouped as -

1. Shukadhanya varga.
2. Shamidhanya varga
3. Mansa varga
4. Shaka varga
5. Phala varga
6. Haritki varga.
7. Aharyogi varga
8. Jala varga
9. Kshir varga
10. Ikshu varga

11. Madya varga

12. Kritanna varga

Ayurved believes that diet is the most important part in the management of disease. As if one is not away from the causative factor disease cannot be cured from its root. So what we eat and how we eat both and when we eat all these aspects are very important. As mentioned in Ashataahar vidhi visheshayatana the effect of food depends on many factors like the method of cooking involved, its origin, season when it is grown, dosh pradhanta, state of body, agni, bala etc.

This diversified aspect of dietetics and nutrition is well elaborated in Ayurveda in the form of **Ashtaahar vidhi vishesh ayatan**^[11]

These eight principles of food consumption are as follows -

- Prakriti – basic nature/characteristic quality of dravya
- Karan – processing/sanskaar carried out on the dravya
- Sanyog – combination of more than one dravya
- Rashi- quantity as a whole and individual
- Desh – place/habitat
- Kaal – time/season
- Upyog sanstha – place, equipments and rules of diet consumption
- Upyokta - user

Ahara Vidhi Vidhan (Rules for food intake)^{[12]:}

- Ushnamashniyat- food should be consumed when it is freshly prepared and hot
- Snigdhamashniyat- food should contain snigdha dravya it should not be dry and devoid of oily substance.
- Matravatashniyat- quantity of food consumed as a wholesome and as individual food article
- Jirneashniyat- one should eat after previously consumed food is digested completely
- Veeryaviruddha- one should avoid incompatible combination
- Ishta desha- the place where one consumes food should be pleasing, neat and clean
- Ishta sarva upkaran- use of proper utensils for serving food should be done
- Na ati drutam-one should not eat too fast
- Na ati vilambitam - one should not eat too slow
- Ajalpan- consuming water along with food is not recommended
- Ahasan- while consuming food one should not laugh

- Tanmana bhunjit- one should consume food by focusing on eating with full attention
- Atmanam - one should analyse own hunger while eating so that over eating is avoided

Concept of viruddha ahara ^[13]

This is a unique concept of ayurved where in consumption of incompatible combinations is to be avoided.

Combination of two or more than two food items results in formation of new combinations which may yield beneficial or harmful effects. Opposite combination can happen w.r.t. kaal, desh, agni, matra, satmya, dosh, sanskar, veerya, koshta, avastha, krama, paka, sanyog, hriday, vidhi which may prove fatal.

Comparing Dietary Approaches

• Diet Planning and Food Choices

Modern Diet

Meal plans are based on percentage targets—such as 30% protein or 50% carbs. Popular diet often include supplements or fortified foods. Convenience foods make it easy for busy people but can sometimes be less healthy if consumed excessively.

Ayurvedic Diet

Each person's diet depends on their dosha. For example, a Pitta type may avoid spicy or hot foods. Food qualities—such as warming or

cooling—are adjusted based on individual needs. It's more personalized and focuses on digestion and balance over strict calorie counting.

• Health Goals and Outcomes

Modern Diet

Mainly aims to shed pounds, control blood sugar, lower cholesterol, or improve metabolic health. Many studies support these results, especially for weight loss and heart health. Still, some diet might be hard to maintain long-term.

Ayurvedic Diet

Focuses on overall wellness, stress reduction, and mental clarity. While scientific proof is limited, many users report feeling more energized and balanced. Some studies suggest that balancing digestion and reducing stress can help prevent chronic illness.

• Flexibility and Lifestyle Compatibility

Modern Diet

Usually flexible, especially with vegan or Mediterranean plans. But some restrictive diet like Keto may be hard when eating out or during travel. This flexibility helps maintain consistency.

Ayurvedic Diet

Requires more effort, such as planning meals around doshas and seasonal changes. It encourages mindfulness, which can be slow to adopt but rewarding. Its emphasis on lifestyle makes it less convenient for fast-paced routines.

Feature	Modern Diet	Ayurvedic Diet
Foundation	Scientific studies, calories, nutrients	Ancient texts, dosha theory, digestion (agni)
Customization	Based on goals (weight, muscle, etc.)	Based on dosha (body constitution)
Approach	Quantitative	Qualitative + energetic
Lifestyle Fit	Flexible, tech-friendly	Ritualistic, seasonal
Supplements	Often used	Rarely used
Common Tools	Apps, calorie counters	Dinacharya (daily routine), ritucharya (seasonal regimen)

Practical Considerations and Implementation

• Accessibility and Cost

Modern diet often have easily available ingredients, making shopping simple in most areas. However, specialty products—like almond flour or

keto snacks—can add to costs. Ayurvedic ingredients like specific herbs or spices might be harder to find or more expensive.

• Ease of Adherence

Quick results from modern diet motivate many to stick with them. However, restrictive plans—like Keto or Paleo—can lead to cravings. Ayurvedic diet need patience, as they involve learning about your dosha and making mindful food choices.

Results

Modern diet

Modern diet have become popular due to their targeted health outcomes. Key findings regarding modern diet are as follows:

- **Keto, Paleo, and Mediterranean diet** focus on optimizing health through a specific macronutrient ratio (e.g., low-carb, high-fat, or balanced nutrients).
- **Scientific Backing:** Research shows that diet like the Mediterranean diet are associated with improved heart health and reduced risk of chronic diseases such as diabetes. However, many modern diet are restrictive and may lead to nutritional imbalances if not carefully managed.
- **Health Goals:** The primary goals of modern diet include weight loss, energy improvement, and disease management (e.g., cardiovascular disease, diabetes). These diet show positive short-term results but are often difficult to sustain long-term.

Ayurvedic diet

Ayurvedic diet emphasize holistic health, focusing on the balance between body, mind, and environment. The findings related to Ayurvedic diet include:

- **Personalization:** Ayurvedic diet are tailored to an individual's dosha (Vata, Pitta, Kapha), promoting a personalized approach to health and nutrition. Foods are selected based on their properties (e.g., hot, cold, heavy, light) to balance the dosha and support digestive health (Agni).
- **Scientific Insights:** While scientific research is limited, some studies suggest that Ayurvedic principles may enhance digestion, reduce inflammation, and improve overall mental clarity.
- **Long-Term Wellness:** Ayurvedic diet aim for sustained well-being rather than rapid weight loss or short-term health improvements. The focus is on enhancing the body's natural healing processes through food and lifestyle choices.

II. DISCUSSION:

- **Modern diet** are designed for fast results, typically focusing on weight loss, energy levels, or disease management, and they are supported by scientific research. However, they can be restrictive and may not address long-term health.
- **Ayurvedic diet** provide a holistic approach to health, focusing on personalized nutrition, balance, and well-being. It emphasizes the **integration of body, mind, and spirit** but requires more dedication and can take longer to see results.
- If you're looking for **immediate results** like **weight loss, increased energy**, or managing specific health issues, **modern diet** might be a better fit.
- If you seek a **long-term, balanced approach** that aligns with overall wellness and supports the body in a holistic manner, an **Ayurvedic diet** may be more suitable.

III. CONCLUSION

The detailed description of aahar dravya along with its properties itself shows the importance of diet in our day to day life. As diet is part of our daily regime one should be cautious about consuming food by following ayurvedic guidelines as far as possible. Eating a healthy diet and following rules of food intake helps in maintaining health whereas defying these rules results in various health complications leading to lifestyle disorders.

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