



AYURVEDA DRUGS FOR EARLY AGING AND ROLE OF RASAYANA IN PREMATURE AGING

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is indeed an ancient Indian medical system that focuses on achieving and maintaining overall well-being, including physical, mental, and spiritual aspects. It is based on the principles of the five basic elements (*Panchamahabhuta*): space, air, fire, water, and earth. According to Ayurveda, an individual's constitution, or *Prakriti*, is determined by the predominant combination of these elements and the three *Doshas*: *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*. Ayurveda recognizes that imbalances or vitiation in the *Doshas* can lead to various pathological manifestations, including the process of aging (*Jara*). Ayurveda also acknowledges that depletion of *Dhatus* and imbalances in the *Doshas* can also contribute to premature or accelerated aging. In Ayurveda, specific herbs and substances are utilized to counteract the effects of aging and promote longevity. Some commonly mentioned Ayurvedic herbs and remedies known for their anti-aging properties include *Brahmi*, *Amalaki*, *Guduchi*, *Turmeric*, *Ginseng* and *Ashwagandha*, etc.

KEYWORDS: *Ayurveda*, *Aging*, *Rasayana*, *Jara*.

INTRODUCTION

The life span of person from birth to death described as *Ayu* and this period of lifespan can be divided into three part; *Bala*, *Madhya* and *Jirna*. *Bala* is described as early stage of life and *Madhya* resembles middle stage of life while *Jirna* or *Vridhdhavastha* is described as later stage of life. These stages differ from each other in terms of level of growth, enthusiasm and decay. The *Jirna* or *Vridhdhavastha* considered as aging which resembles process of decaying and various degenerative changes. This degenerative change mainly arises with ageing process after middle age but sometimes many causative factors induce manifestations of early aging. Ayurveda described many approaches including balanced conduction of *Ahara-Vihara*, utilization of *Vayasthaprana* drugs, meditation and *Yoga*, etc. to maintain *Dhatusamyata* thus prevent consequences of early aging.^[1-4]

According to Ayurveda aging is the process of becoming old and decaying. As age advances, several changes take place in the body. Elderly people are susceptible to several chronic diseases also. In Ayurveda, *Jara* is described as the degenerative stage of life characterized by symptoms such as loss of appetite, loss of luster, weakened bodily functions, physical weakness and lack of enthusiasm, etc. According to Ayurveda, aging is

influenced by natural destructions, depletion of *Dhatus* and suppression of *Agni*.

As aging progresses, several aspects of the individual are affected, including *Shareera*, *Indriya*, *Satwa*, *Agni*, *Bala* and *Ojas*. The degenerative changes associated with *Jara* are considered natural and are a result of the aging process. However, there are instances where degenerative changes occur prematurely, leading to *Akalaja vridhdhavastha* associated with mental and physical illnesses.^[4-7]

Factors that influence healthy aging in Ayurveda include *Kala Parinama*, *Prakruti*, *Doshas*, *Ahara*, *Achara* and *Jatharagni*, etc. *Ahara*, or diet, is an important factor that influences overall health and aging. Consuming deficient food, along with an imbalanced lifestyle, can lead to *Dosha* imbalances and pathological changes that accelerate aging. Poor dietary practices, improper timing of food intake, consumption of processed and refined foods and incompatible food combinations can decrease overall lifespan.

Jatharagni, the digestive fire at the biological level, is a vital factor that affects an individual's health. It regulates the process of digestion, absorption, and assimilation of food. Proper functioning of *Jatharagni* nourishes the

body, restores normal health, and delays the aging process. Any disturbance in *Jatharagni* can affect digestion, leading to malabsorption, malnourishment and early aging.^[6-8]

Ayurveda has a holistic approach toward all the miseries of man and aging is one of these. Ayurveda described several approaches for managing early aging and utilization of natural drugs and classical formulations is one of the important aspects of Ayurveda against the aging process. Ayurveda described various categories of drugs as depicted in **Figure 1**, which are used for premature aging.



Figure 1: Categories of natural drugs used to cure consequences of premature aging.

Ayurveda Drugs for Aging

✓ **Skin Restoration:**

There are two main approaches to anti-aging therapies: *Urjaskara* and *Vyadhihara*. In the case of aging with *Vata*-predominant skin, symptoms of dryness may occur, and it is recommended to use nourishing and rehydrating treatments to address these problems. Warm oil massage is beneficial for moisturizing the skin, for *Pitta*-predominant skin, which is prone to issues like sunburn and itching, cooling and soothing therapies are advised to alleviate these conditions. *Kapha*-predominant skin can be managed through oil massages and regular cleansing to restore skin health.

✓ **Rejuvenation Therapy**

The rejuvenation therapy in Ayurveda aims to establish *Dhatu*samya and maintain balance in the body. It utilizes health-promoting *Rasayana* drugs and *Panchakarma* therapy to rebuild the body, prevent degeneration, and delay the aging process. *Rasayana* treatments promote physical and mental health, nourish the entire body, clear the body's channels, boosts immunity, circulation, strength and metabolic activities, thus suppressing degenerative changes responsible for early aging.

- ✓ **Vayasthapana** herbs preserve youthfulness and delay the aging process. *Gotu-Kola*, for example, enhances collagen synthesis.

- ✓ **Varnya** herbs brighten the complexion of the skin. Herbs such as sandalwood, Indian madder and Indian sarsaparilla offer this effect.
- ✓ **Sandhaniya** herbs support the repair mechanism and enhance the process of regeneration, thereby boosting the overall health of the skin.
- ✓ **Vranaropana** herbs heal the lower layers of the skin and improve the natural healing process.
- ✓ **Tvachya** herbs keep the skin hydrated and maintain moisture. Silk cotton tree and rose petal, among others, are useful in imparting this effect. Grapefruit extract nourishes the skin and prevents aging as it is a source of vitamins A, C, and E.
- ✓ **Shothahara** drugs provide anti-inflammatory action and protect the skin from toxic chemicals and allergens. Aloe Vera and turmeric are important herbs that have a *Shothahara* effect and promote healthy skin.
- ✓ **Tvachagnivardhani** herbs give the skin a shining and lustrous appearance while promoting intrinsic metabolism. *Centella asiatica* improves circulation, removes *Ama* and mitigates the effects of allergens, thereby preventing allergic skin responses.
- ✓ **Tvagrasanaya** herbs refine skin features and alleviate chronic ailments. *Amalaki*, for example, has a *Tvagrasanaya* effect as it is a source of Vitamin C, gallic acid and tannins, also imparts adaptogenic properties.^[7-9]

Drugs used for *Rasayana* in Case of Early Aging

Gotu-Kola considered a rejuvenating herb that supports cognitive function and overall vitality. *Amalaki* is a rich source of antioxidants and vitamin C. It is believed to support immune function, promote healthy digestion and nourish the body tissues. *Guduchi* offers immune-enhancing and rejuvenating properties. It is used to promote vitality, strength and overall well-being. *Ginseng* often used in Ayurvedic formulations for its adaptogenic properties. It is believed to support resilience to stress and promote vitality. *Ashwagandha* is a well-known adaptogenic herb, *Ashwagandha* is used to support the body's ability to cope with stress and promote overall well-being. It is also believed to have rejuvenating effects on the mind and body.

These Ayurvedic herbs and remedies are believed to have anti-aging, complexion-enhancing, nourishing and *Rasayana* effects. They are often used in Ayurvedic formulations and treatments aimed at promoting healthy aging, maintaining youthful vitality and supporting overall well-being.^[8-10]

CONCLUSION

Aging is a natural process that occurs over time, characterized by physiological changes in the body associated with the passage of time. However, in some cases, aging may occur prematurely due to various causative factors such as physical and mental exertion, anxiety, exposure to environmental pollutants, drug abuse, alcoholism, and smoking habits. These factors,

combined with unhealthy diet and lifestyle practices, can disrupt the balance of *Doshas* and deplete the *Dhatus* resulting in early aging. Ayurveda recommends several herbs and remedies that can help delay the aging process, restore skin health, possess antioxidant effects, boost immunity against infectious organisms, prevent allergic responses, and provide anti-stress properties. Important Ayurvedic herbs such as *Brahmi*, *Guduchi*, *Guggulu*, *Amalaki*, Ginseng, *Ashwagandha* and Turmeric offer various effects including *Vayasthapana*, *Varnya*, *Sandhaniya*, *Tvachya*, *Shothahara* and *Tvachagnivardhani* properties. These Ayurvedic herbs, when combined with the disciplined conduction of a balanced diet and lifestyle (*Ahara-Vihara*), provide comprehensive health benefits against aging.

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