



EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF PARYUSHIT AHARA (STALE FOOD) ON THE BODY IN THE MODERN LIFESTYLE

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ABSTRACT

Paryushita is a Sanskrit word referring to “food kept overnight” (even though not soured). The word is used throughout Dharmshatra literature such as the Manusmṛti. Paryushita Ahara is known as Stale food Stale food, a common issue in households and commercial settings, refers to edibles that have lost their freshness and palatability due to extended exposure to air or time. This state occurs in various food items like Bakery like bread, crackers, and chips, among others. Stale food typically becomes dry, tasteless, and less nutritious, leading to potential health risks and wastage. Understanding the causes and consequences of staleness is crucial in minimizing food waste and ensuring food safety. Proper storage techniques, such as airtight containers, refrigeration, and timely consumption, can help prevent or delay the onset of staleness, promoting a sustainable and healthier approach to food management.

KEYWORDS: Paryushita Ahara, Stale Food, Bakery products.

INTRODUCTION

In Ayurveda, "Ahara" refers to the concept of diet and nutrition. It emphasizes the importance of food in maintaining overall health and balance in the body and mind. Ahara is considered one of the three pillars of health in Ayurveda, along with sleep (Nidra) and a balanced lifestyle (Brahmacharya). According to Ayurveda, the quality and quantity of food we consume directly influence our physical, mental, and emotional well-being. Proper ahara is believed to support digestion, metabolism, and the assimilation of nutrients, while improper eating habits can lead to imbalances and diseases.

A list of faulty dietary habits, lifestyle, psychological factors with their effect on various Dhatu (fundamental support of body) and specific features of these deranged Dhatu in the form of symptoms have also been enlisted.^[1,2] These symptoms corroborate with group of diseases which are collectively called as metabolic syndrome.^[3] approximately 20 – 25 per cent of the world's adult population has a cluster of risk factors which is termed as metabolic syndrome.^[4] Recent studies have established that there is a link between these diseases and altered lifestyle, dietary habits and psychological factors and they play a major role in their manifestation.^[5] Hence there is a need for an understanding of the Paryushita Ahara (Stale Food). The purpose of the descent of Ayurveda was to relieve the

sufferings of individuals afflicted with diseases caused due to shifts in the lifestyle, dietary habits and psychological factors.¹ The changes seen concerning unwholesome dietary habits, lifestyle and stress are collectively termed as Paryushita Ahara (Stale Food).^[6]

When certain foods are exposed to air, they can undergo chemical and physical changes. For instance, bread becomes stale as the moisture inside it migrates to the surface, making the crust harder and the interior drier and less soft. This process is accelerated in low-humidity environments. Staling is a natural process and is not the same as food spoilage or the growth of harmful bacteria.

While stale food is not necessarily unsafe to eat, it may not be as enjoyable to consume as fresh food. Stale bread can be tough and less palatable, while stale cookies and crackers may lose their crispness and become softer. Stale food can sometimes be revitalized by reheating or adding moisture, but the quality will never fully return to that of freshly made food. If you encounter stale food, it's best to consume it within the recommended timeframes or consider using it in recipes that can benefit from drier or tougher textures, such as breadcrumbs or croutons.

Ayurveda categorizes food based on its taste (Rasa), post-digestive effect (Vipaka), and energetic qualities (Virya). There are six primary tastes (sweet, sour, salty, bitter, pungent, and astringent), three main post-digestive

effects (sweet, sour, and pungent), and two main energetic qualities (hot and cold).^[7] Each individual has a unique constitution known as their dosha, which is a combination of three energies or humors: Vata (air and ether), Pitta (fire and water), and Kapha (earth and water). Understanding one's dosha is crucial in determining the appropriate ahara for maintaining balance and preventing or managing health issues.

Ayurveda also recommends mindful eating practices, such as eating in a calm and peaceful environment, avoiding overeating, and consuming meals at regular intervals. It encourages the consumption of fresh, seasonal, and locally sourced foods, as well as the avoidance of processed, canned, or genetically modified foods.

The specific dietary recommendations vary based on an individual's constitution, current health condition, age, and other factors. Consulting with a qualified Ayurvedic practitioner is essential to receive personalized guidance on ahara and how to incorporate Ayurvedic principles into your lifestyle for optimal health and well-being.

Aim of study

The aim of this study is to reevaluate the impact of Paryushit Ahara (stale food) on the body in the context of modern lifestyle. By examining traditional Ayurvedic principles and comparing them with contemporary dietary practices, the study seeks to understand whether consuming stale food affects health differently in today's fast-paced world. Investigating potential benefits or drawbacks of Paryushit Ahara in relation to digestion, nutrient absorption, and overall well-being may offer valuable insights for individuals seeking to adopt a balanced and sustainable approach to nutrition, promoting health and harmony amidst the demands of modern living. This study helps to researcher and practitioner to update their knowledge about Paryushita Ahara (Stale Food)

Review of literature

What is prayushit ahara (Stale food)

Prayushit Ahara, also known as stale food, refers to food that has lost its freshness due to extended exposure to air, moisture, and bacteria, resulting in changes in its taste, texture, and nutritional value. In many cultures, consuming stale food is often discouraged or considered less desirable than consuming freshly prepared food. However, it's important to note that the perception of stale food can vary from one culture to another, and some traditional cuisines even deliberately ferment or age certain foods to enhance their flavors and preservation.

Here are some key points about prayushit ahara (Stale food):

Loss of freshness: Stale food generally loses its characteristic fresh taste, aroma, and appearance. For example, bread may become dry and hard, fruits may

become mushy or discolored, and cooked rice may lose its moisture and stickiness.

Microbial growth: When food is left at room temperature or stored improperly, bacteria, molds, and other microorganisms can proliferate, leading to spoilage and potential health risks. Consuming such contaminated food can cause food poisoning or other gastrointestinal issues.

Nutritional changes: As food ages, its nutritional content may degrade. Vitamins and minerals, which are essential for our health, can be affected by exposure to air, light, and heat, resulting in a reduction in nutritional value.

Food safety concerns: Stale food is more susceptible to foodborne illnesses due to the presence of harmful bacteria. Eating such food can lead to food poisoning and other digestive problems.

Preservation techniques: While some foods are intentionally aged or fermented as part of traditional culinary practices (e.g., aged cheese, fermented pickles, and cured meats), specific preservation methods are employed to ensure that these foods are safe to eat and that their flavors are enhanced rather than compromised.

Discarding stale food: To avoid health risks, it is advisable to discard food that has gone stale, especially if there are signs of spoilage like foul odors, visible mold, or unusual texture.

Prayushit ahara – Ayurvedic review

In Ayurveda, an ancient system of traditional medicine originating in India, Prayushit Ahara (stale or leftover food) is considered to be detrimental to health and is generally discouraged. Ayurveda places a strong emphasis on the quality and freshness of food as it believes that the nature of food directly influences an individual's overall well-being.

According to Ayurvedic principles, food is an essential factor in maintaining balance in the body and promoting good health. The concept of "Prana" in Ayurveda refers to the vital life force or energy present in all living beings, and fresh, nutritious food is believed to contain higher Prana than stale or old food. When food is freshly prepared, it is thought to be more nourishing and easily assimilated by the body, thereby maximizing the benefits of the nutrients it contains.

Here are some ayurvedic perspectives on prayushit ahara (Stale food):^[8]

Reduced prana: Ayurveda believes that Prana diminishes in food as time passes, especially in cooked or processed foods. Stale food is considered to have lower Prana, making it less energizing and less effective in supporting the body's vital functions.

Aggravation of doshas: In Ayurveda, there are three fundamental energies or Doshas – Vata, Pitta, and Kapha. Stale food is believed to aggravate the Doshas, potentially leading to imbalances and various health issues.

Production of ama: Ama refers to the toxic by-products of improper digestion and metabolism. Eating stale food is thought to create Ama in the body, which can hinder nutrient absorption and disrupt the digestive process.

Impaired ojas: Ojas is considered the essence of immunity and vitality in Ayurveda. Stale food is believed to decrease Ojas, weakening the body's natural defenses and making it more susceptible to illnesses.

Weakened agni: Agni is the digestive fire responsible for breaking down food and assimilating nutrients. Ayurveda suggests that stale food can weaken Agni, leading to digestive disturbances and the accumulation of toxins in the body.

Based on these principles, Ayurveda recommends the following dietary practices to maintain optimal health:

- Choose fresh, seasonal, and locally sourced foods.
- Avoid leftovers and reheating of food, as it may further decrease its Prana.
- Option for freshly cooked meals over packaged or processed foods.
- Eat mindfully and in a relaxed environment to aid digestion.
- Incorporate a variety of tastes and nutrients into your meals to support all aspects of health.

How prayushit ahara (Stale food) harm to our body

Food is an essential aspect of human life, providing the necessary nutrients for growth, energy, and overall well-being. However, not all food is created equal, and consuming stale food can pose serious risks to our health. Staleness occurs when food undergoes chemical, physical, and microbial changes over time, rendering it unfit for consumption. In this article, we will explore the various ways in which stale food can be harmful to humans and the importance of proper food handling and storage to safeguard our health.

Microbial Growth and Foodborne Illnesses:

One of the primary concerns with stale food is the rapid proliferation of harmful microorganisms such as bacteria, molds, and yeasts. When food is left at room temperature or inadequately stored, it creates an ideal breeding ground for these microorganisms. As they multiply, they can produce toxins that cause foodborne illnesses when ingested.

Contaminated stale food can lead to a range of symptoms, including nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, and fever. The severity of these illnesses varies based on the type and amount of harmful microorganisms present in the food. Vulnerable populations, such as the elderly, young children, and individuals with weakened immune systems, are particularly susceptible to the adverse effects of foodborne illnesses.

Loss of nutritional value:

Stale food not only compromises safety but also results in a loss of nutritional value. Over time, the nutrient

content of food can degrade due to exposure to air, light, and temperature fluctuations. For instance, stale fruits and vegetables may experience a reduction in essential vitamins and minerals, which are crucial for maintaining optimal health.

Consuming stale food may lead to nutrient deficiencies, contributing to a variety of health issues, including impaired immune function, fatigue, and poor growth and development in children. To ensure a balanced diet and sufficient nutrient intake, it is vital to prioritize fresh and properly stored food.

Formation of harmful compounds:

Certain foods, particularly those high in carbohydrates and proteins, can undergo chemical changes during staleness. For instance, the Maillard reaction, which occurs when proteins and carbohydrates react at high temperatures, can lead to the formation of harmful compounds such as acrylamide and advanced glycation end-products (AGEs).

Acrylamide is a known carcinogen found in starchy foods like potato chips and bread that have been cooked at high temperatures. AGEs have been linked to various chronic conditions, including diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and Alzheimer's disease. The accumulation of these harmful compounds in the body can pose significant long-term health risks.

Rancidity of fats:

Fats and oils in stale food can undergo a process called rancidity, resulting in the breakdown of fatty acids. This degradation produces off-flavors and odors, making the food unpalatable. Additionally, rancid fats can release harmful free radicals, which contribute to oxidative stress and inflammation in the body.

Consuming rancid fats may increase the risk of heart disease, promote inflammation-related disorders, and accelerate aging. Proper storage of oils and fats, such as keeping them in a cool and dark place and using them before their expiration date, is crucial to prevent rancidity.

Reduced Palatability and Wastage:

Stale food often loses its desirable taste, texture, and appearance, making it less appealing to consume. As a result, people may be tempted to add excessive amounts of salt, sugar, or other unhealthy condiments to mask the staleness, leading to an unhealthy diet.

Moreover, when food becomes stale, individuals are more likely to discard it, contributing to food wastage. Food waste not only has economic and environmental implications but also represents lost opportunities for nourishing those in need.

How prayushit ahara (Stale food) harm to your metabolism^[9]

Metabolism is the complex process by which your body converts food into energy and carries out various physiological functions. When you consume stale food, it can negatively impact your metabolism in the following ways:

Nutrient degradation: Stale food tends to lose its nutritional value over time due to exposure to air, light, and heat. Essential vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients may break down, leading to a decreased availability of vital substances that your body needs to function optimally. This can affect metabolic processes that rely on specific nutrients.

Impaired digestion: Stale food may contain higher levels of harmful bacteria and toxins due to microbial growth during prolonged storage. When you eat such food, it can disrupt your digestive system, leading to issues like bloating, gas, indigestion, and stomach discomfort. Impaired digestion can slow down the overall metabolic rate and affect nutrient absorption.

Imbalance in gut microbiota: The bacteria in your gut play a crucial role in metabolism and overall health. Consuming stale food with an increased microbial load can disturb the balance of gut bacteria, potentially leading to dysbiosis. This imbalance in the gut microbiota can influence metabolism and may contribute to weight gain and other metabolic disorders.

Reduced enzyme activity: Fresh foods contain natural enzymes that aid in the digestion and absorption of nutrients. As food ages, the activity of these enzymes diminishes. When you consume stale food, the reduced enzyme activity can hamper the efficient breakdown of nutrients, affecting their absorption and utilization by the body.

Ama formation: In Ayurveda, "Ama" refers to toxic substances that result from incomplete or impaired digestion. Eating stale food can contribute to Ama formation, which interferes with metabolic processes and can hinder the proper functioning of tissues and organs.

Impact on blood sugar levels: Stale food, especially carbohydrates like bread and rice, may undergo changes that result in an increase in their glycemic index. This can lead to rapid spikes in blood sugar levels, followed by crashes, which can negatively affect metabolic regulation and insulin sensitivity over time.

Easy tips to avoid prayushit ahara (Stale food)

Check expiration dates: Always check the expiration dates on food packages before purchasing or consuming them. When shopping, pick products with the furthest expiration dates to ensure they remain fresh for longer.

Proper storage: Store perishable items, such as fruits, vegetables, meats, and dairy products, in the refrigerator at the appropriate temperature. Use airtight containers or resealable bags to keep food fresh and prevent exposure to air, which can accelerate staleness.

Use the first-in, first-out (FIFO) method: When organizing your pantry or refrigerator, arrange food items in a way that encourages you to use the oldest ones

first. This method ensures that nothing sits unused for extended periods and helps minimize the risk of stale food.

Freeze when possible: If you have leftover food that you don't plan to consume immediately, consider freezing it. Freezing can preserve the quality and freshness of food for an extended period. Just be sure to label containers with the contents and date to avoid confusion later.

Avoid overbuying: Purchase only the amount of perishable items you can reasonably consume within their shelf life. Buying in bulk might seem cost-effective, but it can lead to food wastage and increased chances of food going stale.

Keep a clean refrigerator: Regularly clean your refrigerator to prevent the growth of mold and bacteria, which can accelerate food spoilage. Dispose of any expired or moldy items promptly.

Store bread properly: Bread is particularly susceptible to staleness. Keep bread in a cool, dry place, away from direct sunlight, and avoid storing it in the refrigerator, as it can dry out faster. Alternatively, freeze bread in slices, and defrost as needed.

Use vacuum sealers: Vacuum sealing machines can remove air from food packaging, helping to preserve the freshness of various items like meats, fruits, and leftovers.

Don't let leftovers sit for too long: If you have leftover cooked food, refrigerate or freeze it promptly after it cools down. Leftovers left at room temperature for an extended period can quickly become stale and unsafe to eat.

Be mindful of storage times: Be aware of the recommended storage times for different types of food. For example, cooked leftovers generally remain safe for 3-4 days in the refrigerator, while raw meat should be used within a few days.

DISCUSSION

Prayushit Ahara (Stale food) can have detrimental effects on human health due to microbial growth, foodborne illnesses, loss of nutritional value, formation of harmful compounds, rancidity of fats, and reduced palatability. It is crucial to adopt proper food storage practices, adhere to expiration dates, and consume perishable items promptly to avoid these health risks.

Consuming Prayushit Ahara or stale food can harm your metabolism by diminishing nutrient availability, impairing digestion, disrupting gut health, reducing enzyme activity, promoting Ama formation, and impacting blood sugar regulation. To support a healthy metabolism, it is crucial to prioritize fresh, nutritious, and properly prepared foods and avoid consuming stale or leftover food whenever possible.

To avoid the potential harm from stale food, it is essential to follow proper food storage practices, adhere to expiration dates, and consume perishable items promptly. When in doubt about the safety of a food item,

it is best to discard it rather than risk potential health issues.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, stale food can have detrimental effects on human health due to microbial growth, foodborne illnesses, loss of nutritional value, formation of harmful compounds, rancidity of fats, and reduced palatability. It is crucial to adopt proper food storage practices, adhere to expiration dates, and consume perishable items promptly to avoid these health risks. As responsible consumers, we must prioritize food safety and reduce food waste by planning our meals, practicing proper food storage techniques, and supporting initiatives that promote sustainable food practices. By doing so, we can safeguard our health and contribute to a healthier and more sustainable future for ourselves and the planet.

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