



IMPACT OF UNBALANCED DIET ON RAKTAVAHA STROTAS LEADING TO MENSTRUAL DISORDERS

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ABSTRACT

The importance of a balanced diet is emphasized both in Ayurveda and modern science for maintaining overall health, particularly reproductive health in women. Menstrual disorders are a growing concern among women of reproductive age, and lifestyle. In Ayurveda, The Raktavaha Srotas—the channel responsible for the transportation and formation of blood—plays a crucial role in the maintenance of normal health and menstruation. An unbalanced diet can lead to dysfunction in this system, resulting in various diseases including menstrual disorders such as amenorrhea, dysmenorrhea, and menorrhagia. This article explores the impact of dietary imbalances on Raktavaha Srotas and how this leads to menstrual disturbances from both Ayurvedic and modern viewpoints.

KEYWORDS: Raktavaha Srotas, menstrual disorders, unbalanced diet, Ayurveda, srotodusti, lifestyle disorders.

1. INTRODUCTION

Menstrual health is a reflection of a woman's overall well-being. In recent years, there has been a rise in menstrual disorders such as amenorrhea, oligomenorrhea, dysmenorrhea, and menorrhagia, especially among young women. Modern lifestyle changes, fast food consumption, and improper dietary habits are leading to disturbances in the balance of bodily functions, also Increased BMI, short sleep, and sedentary and vigorous physical activity can contribute to the risk of developing menstrual disorders. Unhealthy food habits are a major risk factor for menstrual disorders. A key underlying cause is dietary imbalance—irregular eating habits, consumption of processed foods, excessive fasting, or overeating.

According to Ayurveda, Srotas are defined as transporting passages of dhatus undergoing transformation, therefore health is maintained through the proper functioning of Srotas (body channels). Among them, The Raktavaha Srotas are channels responsible for the circulation of Rakta Dhatus (blood). Menstruation, known as Artava Pravritti, is deeply connected to the proper functioning of Raktavaha Srotas and Rakta

Dhatu. When these Srotas are disturbed, due to faulty diet or digestion, it can ultimately disturb Artava Vaha Srotas (reproductive channels) and lead to menstrual disorders.

2. AIM

To analyse how an unbalanced diet disrupts the Raktavaha Srotas and leads to various menstrual disorders, from both Ayurvedic and modern perspectives.

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This is a literature-based review combining:

- Classical Ayurvedic texts such as Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, and Ashtanga Hridaya
- Modern scientific literature on nutrition, endocrine health, and gynaecology

4. Conceptual Framework

❖ Understanding Raktavaha Srotas in Ayurveda Origin and Pathways

- Moola (root): Yakrit (liver) and Hridaya (heart)
- Srotomula Dhatus: Rasa and Rakta Dhatus
- Function: Transport of Rakta (blood), nourishment of tissues, and support for menstrual blood (Artava)

- Raktavaha srotas Dushti Hetu: intake of Vidahianna (food which causes burning sensation) and Pana (drinks), Snigdha (oily), Ushna (hot) Drava (liquid) food consumption along with exposure to Atapa (sunlight) and Anila (air) which lead to Raktavaha Srotas Dushti.

A healthy Raktavaha Strotas ensures proper menstruation. Any blockage (Srotorodha) or vitiation (Dushti) can result in disorders of Rakta and Artava.

❖ Unbalanced Diet – An Ayurvedic Perspective

Ayurveda emphasizes Ahara (diet) as one of the three pillars of life. An unbalanced diet, in this context, includes:

- Excessive intake of Guru (heavy), Snigdha (oily) foods
- Overconsumption of processed, stale, or junk food
- Inadequate intake of fresh fruits, vegetables, and water
- Improper timing and quantity of food
- Viruddha Ahara (incompatible food combinations)
- These dietary habits lead to:

❖ What Different Types of Food Quality Affect Rakta Dhatu in Ayurveda

1. Rasa (Taste) and Its Impact on Rakta

Rasa (Taste)	Effect on Rakta
Madhura (Sweet)	Nourishes Rakta Dhatu when taken in moderation; excess can cause Kapha and Meda aggravation leading to Rakta Dushti
Amla (Sour)	Slightly increases Rakta; excess intake causes Pitta and Rakta vitiation (e.g., rashes, hyperacidity)
Lavana (Salty)	Increases fluid retention, heats the body, can vitiate Rakta and Pitta, leading to skin and menstrual disorders
Katu (Pungent)	Dries and thins Rakta; long-term use leads to Rakta Kshaya (deficiency), bleeding disorders
Tikta (Bitter)	Purifies Rakta and reduces Ama; useful in Rakta Dushti disorders
Kashaya (Astringent)	Contracts channels; excessive intake may lead to Rakta Sankocha (constriction), causing scanty menstruation or dryness

2. Guna (Qualities) and Their Influence

Guna	Effect on Rakta Dhatu
Snigdha (unctuous/oily)	Increases the liquidity and nourishment of Rakta, helpful in Rakta Kshaya
Laghu (light)	Enhances digestion but may reduce Rakta if overused
Guru (heavy)	Difficult to digest; can cause Ama and vitiate Rakta by blocking Srotas
Ruksha (dry)	Depletes unctuousness of Rakta; may cause Rakta Kshaya and menstrual irregularities
Ushna (hot)	Increases Pitta and Rakta, can cause Rakta Dushti if excessive (e.g., spicy food)
Shita (cold)	Slows down Agni and Rakta formation; causes Ama production and poor circulation

3. Virya (Potency)

Virya	Effect on Rakta
Ushna (hot potency)	Increases circulation and Pitta, may cause Rakta Dushti and menorrhagia if in excess
Shita (cold potency)	May reduce Agni and hinder proper Rakta Dhatu formation, leading to fatigue and amenorrhea

- Agnimandya (weak digestive fire)
- Ama (toxins) formation
- Dhatwagnimandya leading to improper formation of Rasa and Rakta Dhatu
- Srotorodha (obstruction in bodily channels)

In Ayurveda, food quality (Ahara Gunas) significantly impacts the formation, quality, and function of Rakta Dhatu (blood tissue). Different types of food based on their Rasa (taste), Guna (quality), Virya (potency), and Vipaka (post-digestive effect) affect Rakta in various ways.

Foods That Vitiate Rakta Dhatu

- Excess spicy, oily, fried food
- Junk and processed food
- Excess sour and salty items (pickles, fermented foods)
- Meat in excess (especially red meat)
- Alcohol and smoking

❖ Examples of Foods That Affect Rakta

Spicy food (Ushna Virya + Katu Rasa) : Vitiate Pitta and Rakta, can cause hypermenorrhea

Green leafy vegetables (Tikta Rasa): Purify Rakta and reduce Pitta

Fermented foods (Amla Rasa + Ushna Virya) : Aggravate Rakta and Pitta

Excessive dairy and sweets (Madhura Rasa + Guru Guna): cause ama and slow down rakta metabolism.

Dry and packaged food (Ruksha Guna + Shita Virya): lead to rakta kshaya and constipation, affecting menstrual health.

4. Pathogenesis (Samprapti) of Menstrual Disorders via Raktavaha Srotas Dushti

1. Agnimandya due to improper diet → formation of Ama
2. Ama mixes with Rasa and Rakta Dhatus → vitiates the Dhatus
3. Leads to Srotodusti of Raktavaha Srotas (either blockage or excessive flow)
4. Disturbed Artavavaha Srotas, causing:
 - o Irregular menstruation (Artava Dushti)
 - o Scanty or excessive bleeding (Alpata or Atipravritti)
 - o Painful menstruation (Kashtartava)
 - o Absence of menstruation (Nashta Artava or Amenorrhea)

Unbalanced diet → Agnimandya → Formation of Ama → vitiates dhatus → disturbed Raktavaha srotas → disturbed Artavavaha Srotas → menstrual disorder.

5. Dietary Factors Causing Menstrual Disorders modern point of view

Excessive Intake of Junk or Processed Food

- Modern diets high in sugar, salt, and trans fats impair metabolism
- Leads to hormonal imbalance and menstrual irregularities

Irregular Eating Patterns

- Skipping meals or late-night eating disrupts Agni
- Causes indigestion, bloating, and reduces nutrient availability for Artava Dhatus formation
- Lack of Rasa-rich Food
- Nutrient-poor diets lead to Rasa Dhatus Kshaya, affecting the formation of Artava Dhatus
- Overeating and Sedentary Lifestyle
- Leads to obesity, insulin resistance, and conditions like PCOS, linked with menstrual dysfunction

Modern Viewpoint: Nutritional Deficiencies and Menstrual Disorders

From a modern medical perspective, unbalanced diet causes:

- Iron Deficiency: Leading to anemia, which affects menstruation
- Low caloric intake: Causes hypothalamic suppression → amenorrhea
- Obesity and high-fat diet: Leads to hormonal imbalances like increased estrogen → menorrhagia or PCOS
- Deficiencies of vitamins (B-complex, D) and minerals (zinc, magnesium): Affect hormonal regulation

Thus, modern science also recognizes the connection between improper diet and menstrual health.

6. Impact of Raktavaha Srotas on Menstrual Disorders

- Rasa Dhatus is the precursor of Rakta Dhatus, which ultimately nourishes Ārtava (menstrual blood and reproductive tissues).
- When menstruation is irregular or obstructed, Apana Vayu becomes imbalanced.
- Agnimandya due to improper diet → formation of Ama
- Formation of Āma (toxins) due to improper digestion
- Āma blocks srotas, especially the rasa and rakta vaha srotas, Ama mixes with Rasa and Rakta Dhatus → vitiates the Dhatus, disturbing the nourishment of the reproductive system
- Leads to Srotodusti of Raktavaha Srotas (either blockage or excessive flow)
- Hormonal imbalance (from an Ayurvedic perspective, a disruption in doshic balance) affects menstruation
- Agni mandya (low digestive fire) impairs transformation from rasa to rakta to ārtava
- Hence, any impairment in digestion impacts the *rasa-rakta-ārtava* pathway.

Ayurvedic Cause	Menstrual Disorder
Agnimandya, Kapha obstruction, Vata imbalance	Amenorrhea (Nashta Artava)
Vata Prakopa, Srotorodha due to Ama	Dysmenorrhea (Kashtartava)
Pitta Dushti of Rakta, Rakta Pradoshaja Vikara	Menorrhagia (Atipravritti)
Vata-Pitta vitiation, weak Rasa-Rakta Dhatus	Irregular Cycles

7. Proper management requires

Ahara (Dietary Regulation)

- Laghu and Deepana Ahara: Easily digestible and appetite-stimulating food
- Rakta Prasadaka Ahara: Foods that purify and nourish blood like beetroot, pomegranate, spinach
- Avoid Viruddha Ahara and heavy, oily, spicy food

Vihara (Lifestyle)

- Regular exercise
- Stress management (Yoga, meditation)
- Proper sleep hygiene

Aushadhi (Medications)

- Ashokarishta, Lodhrasava: Regulate menstruation
- Kumaryasava, Chandraprabha Vati: For hormonal balance
- Triphala, Guduchi, and Aloe vera: Detoxify and rejuvenate Rakta Dhatu

8. DISCUSSION

- The relationship between diet, Raktavaha Srotas, and menstrual health is deeply rooted in Ayurvedic physiology. The proper functioning of Raktavaha Srotas (blood-carrying channels) is crucial for the formation and regulation of Artava (menstrual blood). According to Ayurvedic texts, Artava is an upadhatu (secondary tissue) of Rakta Dhatu, and any disturbance in Rakta Dhatu formation or circulation will directly impact menstruation. Poor digestion not only impairs nutrient absorption but also leads to the accumulation of Ama.

Thus, an unbalanced diet initiates a vicious cycle:

- Unbalanced diet → Mandagni → Ama → Ama mixes with Rasa and Rakta Dhatu → vitiates the Dhatus → Rasa and Rakta srotas Dushti → Artava Dushti → Menstrual Disorders

9. CONCLUSION

An unbalanced diet is a major lifestyle factor leading to Raktavaha Srotas Dushti which in turn cause menstrual disorders. Recognizing this connection is essential for both prevention and treatment. An unbalanced diet leads to dysfunction of Raktavaha Srotas by producing Ama, disturbing Agni, and vitiating Doshas. This directly impacts the quality and quantity of Rakta Dhatu and Artava, resulting in various menstrual disorders. Timely correction of dietary habits and lifestyle along with Ayurvedic management can restore balance and ensure healthy menstrual function. Thus, both preventive and curative strategies must start with mindful eating and dietary awareness.

10. Suggestions

- Promote dietary awareness among adolescent and reproductive-age women
- Encourage Ahara Vidhi Vidhan (rules of eating) as per Ayurveda

- Include Agni-balancing herbs like Trikatu, Jeera, Ajwain
- Regular practice of Yoga and Dinacharya to support both gut and reproductive health

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