



Review Article

REVIEW ON AYURVEDA CONCEPTS ON THE REGIMEN OF FOOD AND DRINK CONSUMPTION

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KEYWORDS: Ayurveda, food, food regimens.

ABSTRACT

This is a review conducted with the objectives of evolving the concepts of the regimens of the food consumption according to the Ayurveda. In comparison to the past decades, non communicable diseases are a burden to the present society. Non-healthy patterns and practices of the food consumption are proven as a major determinant factor to increase the non-communicable diseases. This has been proven by various studies. Hence, it is important to identify the healthy pattern and practices of food consumption. This review is based on the textual references in relation to Ayurveda medicine and journal articles. Ayurveda medicine which provided wide range of spectrum in food consumption, fulfilled with wholesome and non wholesome way of arrangement in the kitchen, qualities of the person who prepares the meals, methods of preparing meals, methods of offering the meal, way of selecting the meal, determining the quantity of food that is liable to be consumed, proper time for consuming food, things that should and should not be done before and after consuming meals, codes and ethics during the food consumption with conceptual justification based on the Ayurveda medicine. Some of these facts are proven by the modern science also. This knowledge can be utilized as a solution for the prevailing health burden in non-communicable diseases with a more advanced and scientific way.

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INTRODUCTION

It has been emphasized for centuries that Ayurveda; 'the science of life' is responsible in the prevention the person from diseased conditions, curing of diseases and maintenance of the healthy status of an individual. Food is the major necessity of an individual. Therefore, food plays a major role in the aspect of health. But modern competitive society is not concerned about the consuming their meals in a healthy manner. Prevalence of the vast range of diseases that are communicable and non-communicable diseases such as diabetes mellitus, dyslipidemia, hypertension, coronary heart diseases and cancers have also increased during the recent past. Dietary practices have been influencing as a major health determinant within this scenario of disease prevalence.

Sushruta Samhita has elaborated the importance of food to maintain the health of an individual.^[1] Food and drinks that partaken in

accordance with the appropriate manner are supportive for satisfying the senses and imparting longevity.^[2] Therefore, healthy food consumption is important for the preventive aspect of the diseases. Though, various studies have been done on identifying the dietary patterns and practices and their involvements with the health in the aspect of modern medicine, few reviews have been conducted in accordance with the aspects of Ayurveda medicine.

Considering these facts, there is a prime importance of studying the concepts on dietary practices in Ayurveda medicine. Therefore, this review was conducted with the aim of compiling the concepts on patterns and practices of food consumption with findings of textual literature in Ayurveda medicine.

Materials and methods

Details on concepts of practices in regimen of food consumption are collected from Caraka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, Ashthanga Samgraha Samhita, Bhavaprakashaya and published research papers.

Results and Discussion

According to the Caraka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, Ashthanga Hridaya Samhita and Bhavaprakashaya, there are many codes and ethics about regimen of patterns and the practices in food consumption.

The way of arrangement in the kitchen, qualities of the person who prepares the meals, methods of preparing meals, methods of serving meals, way of selecting the meals, determining the quantity of food that is liable to be consumed, proper time for consuming food, things that should and should not be done before and after consuming meals, and codes and ethics during the food consumption have been described in the above-mentioned texts.

Arrangement in the kitchen and qualities of the person who prepare the meals

Sushruta Samhita has mentioned that the kitchen; the place of food preparation should be spacious, clean and attended by faithful persons.^[3] These ethics are important to maintain the food hygiene and avoid contaminations.

Methods of preparing meals

Food which has undergone favorable processing, delectable, having beneficial and favorite *Rasa* (taste), clean, warm and fresh is wholesome.^[3] In another hand *Samskarana* (method of preparation) cause to change the properties of the food items also. Therefore, one should be aware of the methods of preparation and its effect on the food items.^[2]

Methods of serving meal

a. Place and environment of consuming a meal

Serving of the meal should be done by a person who is clean, affectionate, not retaining the

urge of hunger and obedient.^[2] The place used to consume food should be separate.^[4] The place used to consume meal should not be a very open place, in sun light, in darkness, or under a tree.^[2] These are important to maintain the food hygiene and sanitation as it prevents the contamination from environment in addition to the microbes transmitted by flies, dust etc.

And it should have an environment fit with pleasant, covered, auspicious, clean, decorated with fragrant flowers and even.^[3] Wearing garlands and ornaments, with scents anointed to the hands and feet, face and mouth well cleaned, helped by affectionate and from his own hand are advisable. It has been advised to use un-contaminated foods, food not impoverished, not experienced dislike, not used by others.^[2] A pleasant mind during the meal is encouraged by this environment. Consuming food in an emotionally unbalanced state such as sorrow and anger which has been emphasized as a non-recommended practice during the food consumption, leads to digestive problems. According to modern science brain and mind have a direct effect on the functions of stomach and intestines, including secreting of enzymes and hormones that help digestion. If the person is with sorrow and anger, functions of stomach and intestines will become abnormal and may lead to nutritional disorders.

The posture management during meal is suggested as to sit on a comfortable and heightened chair in a balanced posture.^[3] And meal should be ingested with full attention^[3,4] Due to lack of attention, gastric secretions will be reduced, thereby causing indigestion of food resulting in nutritional disorders.

b. Vessels used to serve the food items

Vessels used to serve the food items and the arrangement of the placing of food items cause to make the consumer comfortable. Ayurveda advises not to use broken materials to consume meals.^[2] Table 01 shows relationship between food items and material of the food container.

Table 1: Materials used for food containers

Material(s) of the vessel(s) used as containers	Food items
Iron	Ghee ^[2,3]
	Barley ^[2]
Silver	<i>Peya</i> (drinkables), <i>Yusha</i> (soup), <i>Rasa</i> (mutton soup), <i>Vyanjana</i> (boiled vegetables, sauces, pickles) ^[2]
	Liquid gruel, liquid items and juice ^[3]
On leaves	Fruits and hard food items ^[3]
Gold	Dried and unctuous food items ^[3] , Drinking water, syrups, boiled rice ^[2]

Stones	Buttermilk and types of vegetable soups ^[3]
Copper	Well boiled and then well- cooled drinkable water ^[3] , Cooked milk ^[2]
Earthen	Syrup, wine ^[3]
Glass	<i>Raaga, Shadawa, Sattaka</i> ^[3] , Drinking water, syrups, boiled rice ^[2]
Bronze	Dry, which are adhere to the vessels, <i>Khala</i> (buttermilk boiled with sour substances and spices), <i>Khatwara</i> (a preparation with pungent and sour substances for licking), <i>Kambalika</i> (sour milk mixed with whey) ^[2]
Diamonds	<i>Ragashadawa</i> (a sweet syrup compounded of grapes, pomegranates or mango along with ginger, cardamom, ghee), <i>Sattaka</i> (buttermilk processed with cumin seeds) ^[2]
Mud, quartz	Drinking water, syrups, boiled rice ^[2]

These materials influence with a specific effect on food and health. Bhavaprakasha has been depicted these effects of the material used as a food container are mentioned in the table no. 02.

Table 2: Effects of the food container on foods and health^[4]

Material of the food container	Effects to the health
Silver	Relieves defects of <i>Doshas</i> , good for eyes
Bronze	Improve intellect, flavorsome, promote blood and increases <i>Pitta</i>
Gold	Good for eyes, remove all defects of food
Brass	Increase <i>Vata</i> and dryness in the body, removes <i>Kapha</i> , removes intestinal worms
Iron/ glass	Cure edema, anaemia, cure jaundice, make desire, give strength
Leaf	Tasty, appetizer, remove sin and poison
Wooden	Tasty, produce <i>Kapha</i>
Crystal/ glass/ Vaidurya (drinking)	Prosperous and cooling effect

In modern sciences, glassware were identified as a safe material for containing food by the as it is producing lesser negative impact on health.^[5] Modern science states that usages of plastics and lunch sheets have been identified as a health risk due to leaching of pathogenic chemicals during the packaging and storing.^[6] Food consuming from an aluminum container may also create a harmful impact on health as there is a possibility of contamination with Aluminum.^[7] Therefore, understanding the value of the material used as a food container is important in the aspect of preserving the health.

c. Arrangement of the food and beverages while serving

As given in table 03, Ayurveda describes how to arrange food and beverages when serving.

Table 3: Arrangement of the food and beverages while serving

Food item/ beverage type	Should be placed in
<i>Bhakshya</i> (eatables) ^[2] , Fruits and hard food items, dried items ^[3]	On the right side of the consumer
<i>Peya</i> (drinkables), <i>Lehya</i> (lickables), balls which require hard chewing ^[2] , Liquids, juices, water, syrup, milk, vegetable soups, liquid gruels ^[3]	On the left side of the consumer
<i>Bhojya</i> (staple food) ^[2]	In the centre
Rice and pulses along with well processed lickable items ^[3] Jiggery, Raga, <i>Shadawa, Sattaka</i> ^[3]	In front

Way of selecting the meals

Ayurveda has advised to consider the following factors such as *Svabhava* (natural qualities), *Samyoga* (admixture), *Samskara* (processing), *Matra* (quantity), *Desha* (habitat), *Kala* (season) and *Upayoga Vyavasta* (mode of using) in

partaking of food. These factors act as the influential factors to the health and ill health.^[2]

a. Svabhava [2]

Guru (hard to digest) and *Laghu* (easy to digest) properties of the food and beverages should be taken into the consideration while partaking in the food.

b. Samyoga [2]

Mixing of two or more separate substances together provide special properties to the new preparation, which were not present in previous individual substances. It is important to be aware of the effect of such admixtures during the meal.

c. Samskara [2]

Impacts of method of preparation while the processing of the food items is known as *Samskara*. Methods of *Samskara* have been mentioned as contact with water and fire, washing, churning, place, time, mode and vessel used for cooking.

d. Matra [2]

Total and individual quantity of food that is ingested during meal is also mentioned as an important factor that needs to be concerned of during the meal.

Determining the quantity of food that is liable to be consumed

Properties of foods that should be taken into consideration are *Guru Ahara* (not easily digestible) and *Laghu Ahara* (digest easily) when consuming food. Considering the natural properties of foods such as *Guru* and *Laghu Swabhawa* is appreciated during the food consumption and it is a determinant factor for the selection of the *Pramana* of food used to consume.^[2,3,8]

The property of *Guru* can be present in three ways, that is, as *Swabhawa Guru* (naturally occurring - this kind of foods are not digested easily), *Sanskara Guru* (foods becoming hard to digest due to preparatory method), *Mathra Guru* (becoming hard to digest due to the ingestion in large quantities). In another way food items which are heavy to digest such as preparations of flour, rice, flattened rice have been not recommended to eat on the top of a meal. Although while hungry, right quantity of these food should be consumed. Depending on the *Guru Swabhawa* of the food, habitual partaking of meat, dried vegetables, tuber and stalk of lotus are also not recommended as these are heavy to digest.^[9] It has been mentioned that heavy articles should be taken up to one third or one half of the saturation of the capacity of stomach, even light ones should not be taken in excess, in order to maintain the strength of *Agni*.^[8] This is because of that the proper quantity of food provides strength, complexion, happiness, longevity to the individual while preserving the normalcy.^[8] Bhavaprakasha opined to partake heavy

foods up to half mark of point of satiety and other foods up to cherished point of satisfaction.^[4] Hence, this quantitative satisfaction in food consumption is depending on an individual. One should be aware about the properties of food in the concept of *Guru* and *Laghu*. As per another description, Ayurveda advises to partake meal for filling the half of the stomach with solid foods, one forth by liquids and another quarter by keeping vacant for air movements.^[2,4] Adhering to these ethics during the consumption of food is helpful to prevent diseases caused by indigestion resulting in defects of metabolism, formation of tissues and nutritional disorders.

Eating a meal before the digestion of the previous meal disturbs the proper digestion and normal metabolism. Hence, consuming a meal before the digestion of the previous meal has been proscribed in Ayurveda.

e. Desha^[2]

In relevance to the habitat of the food material and the region of the user lives in are considered for the *Desha*. Here, the health status of the consumer as healthy or unhealthy and the constitutional composition should be kept in mind when consuming meals.

f. Kala

Season, stage of the diseases and stage in food digestion have been mentioned as the important factors that should be aware of while consuming food and beverages.^[2]

In relation to the seasonal variations, Ayurveda advises to consume food in the morning in seasons with long nights, in evenings for the seasons having days of longer duration and should take food as of evenly dividing times when in the seasons having nights and days with equal duration.^[3] It has been mentioned that the provocation of bodily humours (*Dosha*) and vitiation of body tissues which lead to raise of various discomforts and diseases during the rainy season can be prevented by seasonal adaptations. Recent animal study on effect of drinking warm water during winter has shown improvement in the growth performances and optimizing of the gut microbiota.^[10]

Stage of the digestion should be understood while consuming meals. A person should not eat before three hours after eating and fast for more than 6 hours. This is because the digestion will be taking place within the three hours after eating and fasting more than 6 hours from a meal cause to loss of body strength. The proper time to take food is when having an appetite. Appetite stimulates the digestion of food.. So when appetite is perceived that is the proper time for consuming food. Features of proper

digestion such as energetic feeling, timely excretions, free belching, lightness in the body and development of thirst and appetite are also clues to find the appropriate time for taking meal.^[4] Consuming food when having appetite leads to proper digestion and promote metabolic functions. It has been evidenced in modern science that defective satiety generation in central nervous system, hypothalamus and brain stem causes to eat more, which may result in obesity.^[11]

In comparison to the stage of the respective disease, appropriateness of the variety of meal has to be kept in mind as there is a altered *Agni* and *Ama* stage (digestive and metabolic functions) in a disease pathogenesis.

g. Ahara Upayoga Vyavastha

This advised the manners of taking food. It says that one should not take food without putting on any cloths, without taking bath, without offering oblations to fire, without saying the holy hymns, without offering to gods and clergy, preceptors, guests, dogs, birds and baggers, to these depending upon him and others who depend on them and animals maintained in the house and many other codes and ethics that should be followed during the meal has been known as *Ahara Upayoga Vyavastha*.^[2]

Guidelines in food consumption according to the authentic texts

a. Recommended regimens in food consumption

It has been recommended not to suppress natural urges of hunger and thirst.^[2,3,9] This is because of the hunger suppression resulted for the weakness, emaciation, loss of body complexion, body ache, aversion to food and dizziness while suppression of the thirst cause to dryness of throat and mouth, deafness, exhaustion, weakness and cardiac pain.^[9] As physiological mechanism starts to acquire the energy from the body tissues during the starving and the resulting loss of strength can easily affect to daily life routines also. Modern sciences also evidenced to the irritations of stomach mucosa due to delay in consuming meals causes to interrupt digestion and metabolism. As this produce hypoglycemic conditions, loss of strength may result in reduced work capacity. Although, some occasionally consume food when feeling hungry, this may cause to alter the physiology on circadian rhythm. In another aspect, digestion starts at mouth with the help of enzymes in saliva. Thirst indicates that the body needs water. Water plays an important role on secretions including secretions of digestive system and food absorption. If a person consumes food while being thirsty, it may lead to mal-digestion and mal-absorption.

Palatability of the food has been mentioned as an important factor during the meal. Ayurveda advises to eat the most palatable last.^[3,4] Chewing salt and ginger just before meals has been advised by Acarya Bhavamishra as these are having influence as a appetizer and cause to clear tongue and throat.^[4] While having a poor digestive capacity, consuming liquid and warm foods in the beginning cause to improve digestion and metabolic actions. Hence ingestion of warm and liquid foods in the beginning has been advised for persons having poor digestive capacity.^[4]

Ingesting the tastes of the food in the sequence of sweet in the beginning, sour and salty in middle, astringent, pungent and bitter at the end of the meal has been recommended.^[3,4] This sequence is supportive for the *Avastha Paka* in digestion also.

Eating Pomegranate and other fruits, liquids, soft and hard edibles in the sequence of meal or in reverse order is advised by Acarya Susruta and Bhavaprakasha advised to ingest the food in the sequence of hard foods mixing ghee, soft and liquids.^[3,4] As it is resulted for alleviate *Dosha* and make free from complications, eating Indian goose berries (*Amalaki*) in beginning, middle and the end of the meal has been advised.^[3]

Although it has been recommended that consuming fruits like pomegranates in the beginning of the meal, consumption of Banana and Cucumber should not be recommended at the beginning of the meal.^[4]

Eating the lotus roots, lotus stalks, sugarcane should be done in beginning and not recommended to eat at the end while cereal starches, fried foods, flattened rice are never to be eaten after the meal too.^[4]

b. Non-recommended regimens in food consumption

Consuming all the six tastes were recommended in the disciplines of Ayurveda while disregarding practice of the consuming food with one taste alone as presence of all six tastes provide balanced nutritional composition to the consumer.^[2,3] Hence, it is a good pattern and practice in food consumption in order to avoid micronutrient and other nutritional deficiencies.

Partaking in food too quickly is not beneficial for merits of meal or demerits too. Slow consumption during the meal is not delightful.^[2,4] Therefore, consuming a meal neither hurriedly nor slowly is recommended as eating foods too hurriedly or too slowly may interfere with the digestion as it does not provide the needed time for food to mix with saliva and start the digestive process.

Vishamashana (consuming food before or after the proper time or inappropriate quantity) is not advisable. [2,3] In another way *Adhyashana* (eating meal before the digestion of previous meal) is also not recommended. [2,3] Consuming meal in proper time in a large amount or at odd times in lesser amounts has been not recommend as a healthy practice in the regimen of food consumption. This cause to produce heaviness, abdominal distension, delay in digestion, emaciation and loss the strength. [4] Eating too early and too late are also responsible to give raise to diseases. Especially earlier consumption of food rather than at the proper time cause to produce different diseases, headache, body weakness, diarrhea and indigestion while delayed food consumption cause to digest food with great difficulty as a result of suppressed digestive fire. [4]

Consuming prepared meal from shops, dirty, thrown out, containing grass, stone and earth, unpalatable, food which is cooked long before, incompletely strained or churned, loses natural taste, consumption of incompatible foods (*Viruddha Ahara Sewana*) have been found as non recommended practices during the meal. [3] Consuming of stale food also should be avoided. [2,3] Acarya Bhavamishra said that heated or reprocessed foods after the first preparation does not make good for health. [4] Consumption of cold food cause to make the difficulty in digestion and the hot food cause to feebleness. Hence, these are also known as avoidable practices during the meal as these are detrimental for wellbeing as per Ayurveda. [4]. Food additives and unhealthy processing of food contribute to disease causation. Modern sciences also hold the view of the beneficence of consuming freshly prepared meals. Nutritive value of food such as Vitamins decreases with time. Microbial growth can lead to development of toxins in stale food, which can cause food poisoning. Over cooked food cause tiredness and not recommended to use. [2,3,4] Administrating food other than the water or liquid in the presence of thirst and administrating water or liquid other than the food in the presence of hunger cause to produce *Gulma* and *Jalodara*. Hence, these practices should be avoidable. [4]

Water intake

Drinking water at frequent intervals while eating is advised in Ayurveda. [4] This is because tongue loses its capacity of taste sensation after

taking some food. But if water is consumed in large quantities or if not drinking at all, the food is not processed or digested. Hence, water should be consumed in a way of promoting digestive fire also. [4] Drinking water in proper quantity after and also while taking food has been depicted by Acarya Susruta. [3] The reason behind this concept is that, washing the mouth with water during meal cause to give new relish to the food as of tongue being cleaned. [3]

Bhavaprakasha describes drinking water while having food enhances the absorption through *Rasankura* (taste buds) in the tongue and results in normal anthropometry. It has been described that drinking before consumption of food and after consumption of food will result a person be coming thin or obese, respectively. [4] Modern sciences provide evidences for less energy absorption by drinking water just before the meal. [12]

Ayurveda advised to drink 8 *Prasrti* (120 ml) of water at the time of sun rise as it gives longevity and enables to live 100 years without suffering from any disease and fear of old age. [4]

The diseases of haemorrhoids, edema, fever, malabsorbntional diseases, abdominal enlargements, skin diseases, obesity related diseases, haemorrhagic diseases, ear, throat and head diseases, pelvic pain, eye diseases, other diseases caused by *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha* are not affecting the persons habitually drink water in early morning. [4]

As the major constituent in human body, water balance is compositionally important to maintain the positive health of the body. Moistening tissues, preventing dehydration, carrying nutrients and oxygen to tissues and organs, physiological functioning as a solvent and reaction medium, removing waste products from the body, thermoregulation, function as a lubricant and shock absorber are some benefits of water to the human body. Ayurveda medicine didactic to take sufficient amount of water as soon as the thirst is felt rather than suppressing the thirst.

Anupana (after drinks/ follow-up) of food consumption

Alternative (follow-up) drinks advisable to use other than the water in meal are mentioned in the table no. 04.

Table 4: Anupana (after drinks) of food consumption^[2]

<i>Anupana</i>	Recommended indication
Milk	Specially after consuming rice, those who debilitated with fasting, long walk, speaking, sexual intercourse and exercise, children and aged
Meat soups	Emaciated by consumption and other diseases
Sour syrups	Disorders of <i>vata</i>
Sugar water	Disorders of <i>Pitta</i>
Water boiled with <i>Triphala</i> mixed with honey	Disorders of <i>Kapha</i> and of the eyes and throat
<i>Mastu</i> (whey)/ cold water	After consuming <i>Dadhi</i> (curd), <i>Kuchika</i> (inspissated buttermilk), <i>Kilata</i> (inspissated milk)
<i>Dhanyamla</i> (sour gruel of cereals), <i>Mastu</i> , <i>Takra</i> (butter milk)	After eating foods prepared with pulses, vegetables, coarse grains
<i>Madya</i> (wines)/syrups of sour fruits, water or fermented drinks prepared in cold processing	After consuming meat in relevance to the variety of meat
Water mixed with honey	obese

In the Ayurveda point of view drinking cow's milk after main meal stabilize the equilibrium of the bodily homeostasis. Nutritional composition of the cow's milk helps in fulfils the mineral and micronutrient needs. As these drinks cause to relieve and provide necessary aid to cure the specific disorders these should be applied accordingly.

Codes and ethics after the food consumption

Recommended codes and ethics after the food consumption

Post etiquettes that are recommended to be followed after the meal are mentioned as cleaning hands, gargling, touch the eyes with moist finger tips, chewing betel leaves, inhale smokes in Astanga Samgraha Samhita.^[2]

Cleaning teeth which remove food particles stuck between the teeth can be done by extracting slowly with tooth picks. This cause to eliminate foul smell in mouth due to adhering of food in teeth.^[3,4]

After meal one should sit comfortably then after moving 100 steps and lie down on bed by the left side.^[2,3]

Surrounded in an environment with favourite sounds, tastes, sights, smells and touches are also advised in Ayurved. These cause to position the food well.^[3]

Non-recommended codes and ethics after the food consumption

Use of bed for long who have taken more liquid foods, swimming, riding in chariot should be avoiding after the meal. ^[2,3] Indulge in sleeping or sitting, take liquids, expose to fire, sun, travelling and riding, having dirty food and excessive laughter which cause to induce vomiting are not recommended after the meal.^[3]

Sitting for long time after consuming meals causes indirectly to physical inactivity and results in overweight and obesity. ^[13] Sitting down for long periods reduced the blood circulation in the body. It also causes compression of organs in the abdomen including gastrointestinal tract which leads to slow the digestion of food resulting in nutritional disorders. Bathing slightly decrease the body temperature and blood around the gastrointestinal tract flows to other parts of the body to help in maintaining temperature instead of supporting digestion. Bathing after a meal delays digestion which leads to maldigestion and malabsorption resulting in nutritional disorders.

Energy is required for digestion and that is provided through increasing blood flow towards gastrointestinal tract. Activities requiring energy such as laborious work, laughing loudly, swimming, travelling and playing, decrease the energy supply for digestion which in turn leads to nutritional disorders due to maldigestion.

Sleeping immediately after meals retards digestion process and being upright is the best position for digestion. The food does not get digested properly, thereby producing an excess of stomach acid causing heartburn. Dainese *et al.*, (2003) reported that body posture has a significant influence on intestinal gas propulsion. Transit is faster in the upright position than when supine.^[14]

CONCLUSION

The involvement of the Ayurveda concepts on regimen of food consumption have been mentioned with pronounced elaborations with Ayurveda perspectives. Some of these regimens are supported with scientific evidence within the range of prevailing

knowledge also. Therefore, by considering these facts, importance must be given to study the Ayurvedic concepts on regimens of food consumption in depth, to give a better outcome in preventive aspects of diseases and disorders prevailing in the society today.

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Cite this article as:

Nanayakkara Vidanagamage Yasangi Diloopa, Edirimuni Rodrigo Hathishiya Sujatha Silva Ediriweera. Review on Ayurveda Concepts on the Regimen of Food and Drink Consumption. AYUSHDHARA, 2020;8(2):3229-3236.

Source of support: Nil, Conflict of interest: None Declared