

The Concept of Pathya and Apathya Ahara-Vihara in Madhumeha

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Abstract: Madhumeha, a major clinical entity described under Prameha in Ayurveda, correlates strongly with modern Diabetes Mellitus due to its clinical presentation and metabolic nature. Effective management of this chronic metabolic disorder relies heavily on the dual pillar of Chikitsa (therapeutics) and Ahara-Vihara (dietary and lifestyle modifications). In Ayurvedic classics, these modifications are structured under the principles of Pathya (wholesome/beneficial diets and conducts) and Apathya (unwholesome/harmful diets and conducts). This article presents a comparative overview of the specific dietary and lifestyle regulations indicated for Madhumeha. The article highlights the critical therapeutic role of bitter and astringent tastes, ancient grains, active physical exercises, and specific herbal decoctions. The synthesized knowledge aims to bridge classical Ayurvedic dietetics with contemporary diabetic lifestyles.

Index-Terms: Madhumeha, Pathya-Apathya, Ahara-Vihara

I. INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda defines Pathya as any wholesome food (Ahara) or behavioral conduct (Vihara) that is beneficial and nutritional to the physical body and provides a state of happiness to the mind. Conversely, Apathya refers to those practices that adversely affect physiology, tissue vitality, and mental equilibrium. In a metabolic disorder like Madhumeha, the metabolic fire (Agni) is deeply impaired, and the body accumulates heavy, moist factors like Kapha, Meda (fat), and Kleda (fluid waste). Because the deep tissue structures become blocked by this metabolic debris, management cannot succeed through drugs alone. Wholesome management dictates a strict adherence to Pathya Ahara-Vihara to break the disease pathogenesis while completely avoiding Apathya Ahara-Vihara to prevent further accumulation of metabolic waste.

II. PATHYA AND APATHYA REGIMENS ACCORDING TO DIFFERENT AUTHORS

The dietary (Ahara) and behavioral (Vihara) directives extracted from classical Ayurvedic scriptures focus on a multi-pronged metabolic alignment strategy. These are systematically organized below into wholesome and unwholesome actions:

1. Wholesome Diet and Lifestyle (Pathya Ahara-Vihara)

Pathya Ahara (Diet): Grains such as Syamaka (Barnyard millet), Kodrava (Kodo millet), Uddalaka, old wheat, and Yava (Barley) are highly recommended. Pulses like Bengal gram, Adhaki (Pigeon pea), and Kulattha (Horse gram) should be consumed regularly. For vegetables and meats, Tikta (bitter) vegetables, Patola and the meat of wild animals (Jangala mamsa) are beneficial, often taken alongside honey (Madhu), Saindhava lavana (Rocksalt) and Maricha.

Pathya Vihara (Lifestyle): Indulging in regular and varied physical exercises (Vyayama) is essential to eliminate the disease. Classical guidelines suggest walking long distances barefoot up to 100 Yojana (1 Yojana = ~ 8 miles), moving through forests without an umbrella, and maintaining an active, low-comfort lifestyle resembling an ascetic to eliminate metabolic sluggishness.

2. Unwholesome Diet and Lifestyle (Apathya Ahara-Vihara)

Apathya Ahara (Diet): Heavy, sticky (Abhisyandi), excessively dry (Ruksa), intense (Tiksna), and hard-to-digest (Durjaya) food and drinks must be completely avoided. Specific forbidden items include Sauviraka (fermented grain beverage), wine, vinegar, oil, milk, ghee, jaggery (Guda), sour items, sugarcane juice, preparations made of rice-flour, and the meat of aquatic animals (Anupa mamsa). Vegetables like garlic (Rasona) and onion (Palandu), as well as fish-food (Matsya), are also restricted.

Apathya Vihara (Lifestyle): Destructive lifestyle habits include Vegaroda (suppression of natural bodily urges), Vyavaya (excessive sexual intercourse), and Nisijagarana (not sleeping at night/night awakening). Additionally, over-exerting past normal capacities or exposing oneself to intense environmental heat, fire, and direct sunlight (Suryagni santapa) worsens the condition.

TABLE NO.1: AYURVEDIC PROPERTIES AND ACTIONS:

Ahara Item	Ayurvedic Properties	Therapeutic Action	Specific Mechanism in Madhumeha
Syamaka & Kodrava (Millets)	Ruksa (dry), Laghu (light), Kasaya-Madhura (astringent-sweet), Sita (cooling)	Lekhana (scraping), Kledopasoshana (moisture-drying), Kaphahara	Absorbs excessive pathological fluids (Kleda) and avoids tissue dampness accumulation in the urinary tract.

Yava (Barley) & Old Wheat	Rukṣa (dry), Laghu (light), Sita (cooling); Old wheat is light/non-sticky	Srotovishodhana (channel-cleansing), Balya (strength), Medohara	Yava scrapes deep-seated channel blocks (Srotorodha). Old wheat provides necessary tissue nutrition without fueling Kapha.
Kulattha (Horse Gram)	Usna (warm), Laghu (light), Tikṣna (penetrating), Kasaya (astringent)	Lekhana, Vatanulomana, Medovileyana (liquefying stagnant fat)	Its hot/sharp nature directly melts thick fat barriers (Meda), reducing baseline insulin resistance and clearing pathways.
Chana, Adhaki, Mudga, Masura (Pulses)	Rukṣa (dry), Kasaya (astringent), Sita (cooling)	Grahi (absorbent), Kaphapittahara, Medohara,	Astringent rasa binds and constricts hyper-dilated pathways, systematically lowering urine output frequency (Prabhuta mutrata).
Tikta Saka & Amalaka	Tikta (bitter) & Kasaya (astringent), Laghu, Sita	Deepana-Pachana (metabolic stimulant), Raktaprasadana, Rasayana	Bitter compounds ignite Agni without inducing acidity. Amalaka acts as a systemic shield to avert secondary diabetic organ damage.
Madhu (Honey - Old)	Madhura (sweet) but carries dry (Rukṣa) & astringent (Kasaya) sub-qualities	Lekhana (scraping), Yogavahi, Chedana (adhesion-cleaving)	Penetrates deep cellular groups to scrape away stagnant structural fats/mucus, transporting them safely out of circulation.
Jangala Mamsa (Wild Meat)	Laghu (light), Rukṣa (non-greasy), Usna-Virya (mildly warm)	Brimhana (tissue-building) without inducing channel clogging	Nourishes muscles safely during advanced tissue wasting (Dhatu Kshaya) without leaving heavy clogging deposits.
Rock salt	Lavana, Laghu (light), Snigdha, Sita	Deepana, Pachana, Srotoshodana, Kaphahara	Improves Agni, reduces ama, kapha, kleda & vata (by snigdha guna) and clears srothorodha.

III. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the traditional Ayurvedic management of Madhumeha emphasizes a deeply systematic, non-pharmacological approach where dietary inputs (Ahara) and behavioral habits (Vihara) serve as co-dependent pillars of treatment. The classical textual evidence demonstrates that metabolic recovery is achieved through the deliberate selection of foods possessing Ruksha (dry), Laghu (light), Kasaya (astringent), and Tikta (bitter) properties—such as Yava, Kulattha, and Syamaka—which act as biological scraping agents (Lekhana) to absorb excessive systemic moisture (Kleda) and reduce abnormal fat tissue (Meda) without triggering hyperglycemia. When these precise dietary interventions are paired with structured Pathya Vihara—such as regular physical exercise (Vyayama), long-distance barefoot walking, and adopting an active, low-comfort lifestyle—the body successfully clears deep-seated impurities and enhances metabolic fire (Agni). Conversely, strictly avoiding Apathya Vihara—including Vegaroda (suppression of natural urges), Nisijagaraṇa (disturbed night sleep), Vyavaya (excessive sexual indulgence), and Suryagni santapa (overexposure to harsh environmental heat)—is vital to prevent further channel blockages (Srotorodha) and structural tissue damage. Ultimately, integrating these classical principles of Ahara and Vihara provides a comprehensive lifestyle blueprint that closely aligns with contemporary diabetes management goals, offering a reliable methodology for long-term health restoration.

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