

Milk and Ayurveda: Unlocking the Secrets of Nutrition, Digestion, and Longevity

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ABSTRACT

Milk has been a fundamental part of the human diet for millennia, and in Ayurveda, it is regarded as a vital source of nourishment, health, and longevity. This article explores the multifaceted role of milk in Ayurveda, delving into its numerous health benefits, the different types of milk consumed across society, and the proper ways to consume milk based on Ayurvedic principles. It also highlights the importance of understanding the source, quality, and digestion power of milk to maximize its health benefits. The article emphasizes the critical factors such as the type of cow, buffalo, or goat milk, the proper preparation techniques, and the appropriate time for milk consumption for optimal health. By following Ayurvedic guidelines, milk can be an incredibly potent substance for improving vitality, balancing doshas, and promoting overall well-being..

Introduction:

Milk has been a cornerstone of human nutrition for centuries. Its significance is rooted in various cultural, spiritual, and dietary practices. While infants rely on milk as their primary food source, adults too benefit from milk's various health-enhancing qualities. According to Ayurveda, milk is a vital substance that has a wide range of health benefits, including nourishing the body, increasing vitality, and maintaining balance among the doshas. However, not all milk is the same, and understanding its source, type, and preparation methods can help individuals harness its full potential.¹

Ayurvedic texts emphasize the medicinal qualities of milk, which is considered a "complete food" that supports growth, longevity, and overall well-being. Yet, with modern industrial practices and the widespread use of buffalo milk, many people are unaware of the nuances in

milk's health benefits. This article highlights these principles by focusing on the qualities of milk, the types of milk commonly consumed, and the various ways it can be consumed to maximize its effects on health.¹

Milk in Ayurveda: According to Ayurvedic texts, milk is characterized as sweet, nourishing, and cooling in nature. It has the ability to pacify Vata and Pitta doshas, while it also strengthens all body tissues, especially the reproductive tissues. It increases vitality, provides nourishment, and is considered an aphrodisiac. Milk is also noted for its ability to promote longevity and improve brain function. Ayurveda recommends milk as an essential part of a balanced diet for its various healing properties.¹

Importance of milk²

Dugdham sumadhuram snigdham vātapittaharam saram |
Sadyaḥśukrakaram śītam sātmyam sarvaśarīriṇām || 1 ||
Jīvanam br̥mhaṇam balyam mēdhyaṁ vājīkaram param |
Vayaḥsthāpanam āyusyaṁ sandhikāri rasāyanam || 2 ||

Milk in general is sweet in nature, unctuous, pacifies Vata & Pitta doshas, & aids the mobility of gastro intestinal tract. It increases shukra dhaatu, is cold in nature, readily assimilated by the body. It increases vitality & muscle mass, body strength, is good for brain & is one of the best aphrodisiac. It helps in achieving longevity, quality of life & strengthen all the dhaatus. So as we see there isn't a single negative effect arising out of milk consumption

The ancient Sanskrit verses in the *Bhavaprakash* describe milk's qualities, including its impact on digestion, health, and longevity. These texts outline who should consume milk and the recommended types based on an individual's health condition. For instance, milk is beneficial for individuals recovering from illness, suffering from mental or physical weakness, or dealing with digestive issues. It is also advantageous for children, the elderly, and individuals with specific health conditions, such as anemia, dehydration, or emaciation.

दुग्धपानार्ह³ – Who all should consume milk?

Virekavāntibastīnām sevyamōjōvivṛddhanam |
Jīṇajvare manōrōge śoṣamūrchābhramēṣu ca || 3 ||
Grahanyām pāṇḍurōge ca dāhē tṛṣi hṛdāmayē |
Śūlōdāvartagulmēṣu vastirōgē gudāṅkurē || 4 ||
Raktapittē'tisārē ca yōnirōgē śramē klamē |
Garbhāsrāvē ca satatam hitam munivaraiḥ smṛtam || 5 ||
Bālavṛddhakṣatakṣīṇāḥ kṣudvyaṁvāyākṛśāśca yē |
Tēbhyah sadā'tisayitam hitamētadudāhṛtam || 6 ||

Milk should be consumed in the following conditions-

Those who have undergone panchkarm process like Vaman, Virechan & Basti, people suffering from deep seated fever, mental disorders, emaciation, losing consciousness or vertigo due to generalized weakness, IBS, anemia, burning sensation, frequent thirst due to excessive heat, heart diseases without obstructive pathology, body ache due to heavy work, bladder disorders, bleeding piles, hemorrhagic disorders, loose motions (With bleeding or large amount of fluid loss), uterine disorders, tiredness due to or without physical activity, abortion.

Also useful for children, old age people with good digestive power, emaciated people due to bleeding tendencies, excessive hunger or loss of seminal fluid.

Types of milk commonly consumed by the society-

1. Cow's milk ⁴

Gavyam dugdham viśeṣeṇa madhuram rasapākayōḥ |
Śītaṁ stanyakṛtsnigdham vātapittāśanānam || 7 ||
Doṣadhātumalasrōṭaḥ kiñcitklēdakaram guru |
Jarāsamastarōgāṇām śāntikṛtṣēvinām sadā || 8 ||

Cow's milk is sweet in taste, which post metabolism stays the same, cold by nature, increases abnormal water content in body tissues in those with sluggish metabolism, heavy to digest, increases lactation, unctuous, pacifies vaat, pitta doshas & disorders of blood particularly related to excessive heat, prolongs old age & disorders arising due to vitiation of vaat & pitta doshas. Here we observe that cow's milk is heavy for digestion.

Qualities of cow milk as per their appearance & skin color-⁵

Kṛṣṇāyā gorbhavēd dugdham vātahāri guṇādhikam |
Pītāyā haratē pittam tathā vātaharam bhavēt |
Ślēṣmalam guru śuklāyā rakṭacitrā ca vātaḥṛt || 9 ||

Milk obtained from a black cow pacifies vaata dosha & has more good qualities as compared to other cows. Milk from yellow/brown cow pacifies pitta & vaata dosha, milk of white cow increases kapha dosha & is very heavy to digest & milk of multicolored or dark brown cow also pacifies vaat dosha. Ayurved advocates consuming milk from cow's depending upon the vitiated dosha of the body. Each type exhibits different qualities. Likewise people suffering from repetitive cold, cough or blocked sinuses should avoid taking milk obtained from a white colored cow. This difference in quality may be observed due to effect of absorption & radiation of sunlight through different skin colors of cow.

Quality of milk as per habitat of cows ⁶

Jāṅgalānūpaśailēṣu carantīnām yathōttaram |
Payō gurutaram snēhō yathāhāram pravartatē || 10 ||
Swalpāṇna bhakṣaṇāj jātaṁ kṣīraṁ guru kapha pradam |
Tattu balyaṁ param vṛṣyaṁ swasthānām guṇadāyakam |
Palālatṛṇakārpāsabījajaṁ guṇairhitam || 11 ||

Milk of cows grazing in snow clad mountains is heavy to digest as compared to those grazing in areas with more water bodies like sea, rivers etc. Milk of cows grazing in desert areas or rocky terrains is comparatively easy for digestion owing to the amount of physical efforts required plus the lightness of the grass consumed.

2. Buffalo's milk (माहिषदुग्ध) ⁷

Māhiṣaṁ madhuraṁ gavyāt snigdhaṁ śukrakaraṁ guru |
Nidrākaramabhiṣyandi kṣudhādhikyaram himam || 12 ||

Buffalo's milk is more sweet, unctuous & heavy to digest as compared to cow's milk. It increases shukra dhaatu, induces good sound sleep, is very heavy & sluggish to metabolize with tendency to get stuck in channels, cold by nature. It's good for people who feel hungry very often or for those with strong digestive power.

3. Goat's milk (छागदुग्ध) ⁸

Chāgaṁ kaṣāyaṁ madhuraṁ śītaṁ grāhi tathā laghu |
Raktapittātisāraghnam kṣayakāśajvarāpaham || 13 ||

Goat's milk is astringent & sweet in taste, cold by nature, useful in watery stools, very easy to digest, pacifies bleeding disorders, diarrhea, emaciation due to tuberculosis, dry cough & fever arising due to vitiation of vaat & pitta doshas.

Ajānām alpakāyatvāt kaṭutikta niṣēvaṇāt |
Stokāmbupānād vyāyāmāt sarvarogāpaham payah || 14 ||

The most important aspect of Goat's milk is that it is very easily digested, the reason for that being consumption of bitter plants, intake of less water quantity & more physical activity as compared to cow & buffalo. Hence goat's milk is said to cure almost all diseases.⁹

How should milk be consumed?¹⁰

Ardhodakam kṣīraśiṣṭamāmāllaṅghutaram payaḥ |
Jalena rahitam dugdhamatipakvaṁ yathā yathā |
Tathā tathā guru snigdham vṛṣyam balavivardhanam || 25 ||

Milk becomes light to digest if it is mixed with equal quantity of water & boiled. This process should be followed while consuming buffalo or cow's milk. If milk is boiled without adding water, it will be more tough to digest & can lead to diseases due to disturbed metabolism.

प्रभातादिसमयदुग्धगुण

When should milk be collected-¹¹

Rātrau candraguṇādhikyād vyāyāmākaraṇāttathā |
Prābhātikam tadā prāyaḥ prādoṣād guru śītaḥ || 34 ||
Divākarakarāghātād vyāyāmānilasevanāt |
Prābhātikāt tu prādoṣam laghu vātakaphāpaham || 35 ||

Milk collected in morning is comparatively heavy to digest as compared to that collected in evening as animals have very less to no physical activity after sunset, secondly moon has an influence on the quality of milk.

समयविशेषे दुग्धसेवन-

At what time milk should be consumed-¹²

Vṛṣyam bṛmhaṇam agnidīpanakaram pūrvāhṇakāle payo

The best time to consume milk is in morning that too empty stomach as it leads to building of body tissues, helps in increasing the digestive power & ultimately increases the vitality.

Conclusion-

1. Milk can be consumed by people of all ages & gender.
2. It should be taken strictly keeping in mind our digestion power as by default the milk available in market or given by vendor is buffalo's milk. And is observed earlier it is the most heaviest to digest.
3. Buffalo's milk is rampantly sold because of 2 major reasons- Milk production is comparatively huge & buffaloes are easy to keep.
4. Those suffering from metabolic disorders should only consume Goat's milk or cow's milk

mixed with equal quantity of water.

5. People with respiratory disorders or with frequent cold & sinus & edema should avoid milk.

6. We should ensure milk obtained is of organic origin.

7. Animals are subjected to hormonal injections to promote heavy lactation, this can be hazardous.

8. Animals should be kept in a harmonious atmosphere so as to ensure their physical & mental well being as they too are living beings.

9. Milk should be only collected after their younger ones have fed on them. Milk thus obtained has good soothing qualities as mothers know their child is not hungry. This quality gets transferred in milk & ultimately brings about a positive change in humans consuming it.

10. One should insist on buying cow's milk or goat's milk to obtain maximum benefits without hampering the digestive power.

11. Milk itself is a complete diet. A minimum gap of 4 hours should be kept in between breakfast/lunch/dinner & milk consumption.

12. Milk should always be boiled with water & taken. Raw unheated milk should be avoided.

13. Cold Milk/ Milk shakes particularly with citrus fruits are strictly prohibited by Ayurveda.

14. Milk if consumed in a proper way keeping in mind the digestive strength works as nectar.

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