Health Drinks
Ayurvedic Concept

Dr. Ritu Sethi
A-4/65, Konark Apartments
Kalkaji Extension, New Delhi-110019
Ph:-91-11-2609 3436; E-mail: ayurvedaexpert@rediffmail.com

Introduction

Ayurveda is a complete science of health and it aims to protect the health of the healthy and to alleviate disorders in the diseased. Caraka says, “The body is the product of food. Diseases occur as the result of faulty diet. The distinction between pleasure (health) and pain (disease) arise as a result of difference between the wholesome and unwholesome diet.” Also “Body is outcome of the nutrition ingested in four-fold manner, viz. Eating, Drinking, Licking and Mastication.”

Around 50-65% of human body is water content. This shows that water and other drinks are essential part of our diet. It can be consumed in plain water form or in the form of different drink preparations. These different types of health drinks can fulfill nutritive or corrective (of disease) requirements of our body and can also add to taste.

The drinks, which have medicinal properties along with quenching thirst, are called health drinks. Several health drinks are described in Ayurveda for diseased state as well as for healthy state to safeguard against the onslaught of extreme seasonal variations. They can be described according to their method of preparations and suitable drinks are recommended further according to season.

Types of health drinks

1. Expressed juices (Svarasa)
2. Decoction (kvatha/kada)
3. Medicated milk preparation (Ksirapaka)
4. Drinks prepared with curd
5. Cold infusion (Hima kalpana)
6. Warm infusion (Phanta kalpana)
7. Churned drink (Mantha)
8. Beverage (Panaka)
9. Squash (Sharbat/sarkara)
10. Fermented medicinal beverages/drinks (Asava/Arista)

Expressed juices (Svarasa)

Juice expressed out of a fresh drug by mechanical pressure is Svarasa. The part of the drug is washed, cleaned and crushed and then juice is extracted out. Svarasa can also be obtained from dry drugs by soaking the coarse powder of the drug overnight and then next morning mashing it by hand and squeezing the juice out of it. Some of the juices are described here.

1. Amla (Emblic myrobalan) juice — Rejuvenating, digestive, appetizer, beneficial for eyes, hyperacidity and diabetes.
2. Orange juice — Appetizer and rejuvenating.
3. Pomegranate juice — Appetizer and digestive.
4. Vegetable juices/soups — Juice/soup of vegetables like carrot, tomato, spinach, mint, ginger, etc. are useful health tonics. These are beneficial for digestive system and contain different minerals and vitamins.

Decoction (Kvatha/kada)

Decoction is prepared by boiling drugs in water and then straining. This is given lukewarm to the patients. Here are few decoctions for common problems:

1. Sunthi (Dry Ginger) decoction is used in arthritis, fever, etc.
2. Vasa (Malabar Nut), Giloy (Gulancha tinospora) decoction is useful in common cough.
3. Triphala (three Myrobalans) and Amaltas (Golden Shower) decoction is useful in common cough.
4. Triphala (three Myrobalans) decoction mixed with honey is given early morning for obesity.
5. Decoction of Amla (Emblic myrobalan) and Munga (Green/Golden Gram) with pinch of salt and ghee is useful for vomiting.
Medicated milk preparation (Ksirapaka)

Fragrant milk like ilaichi (Cardamom), badam (Almond), etc. available in the market are best example of this preparation. Milk processed with medicinal herbs is called medicated milk (Ksirapaka). To prepare medicated milk coarsely powdered drug (1 part), cow's milk (8 parts) and water (32 parts) are mixed and boiled. When only milk remains in the pot then it should be filtered with the help of a cloth. Various types of Ksirapaka are:

1. Lasuna (Garlic) ksirapaka — This is prepared by taking lasuna as an ingredient. This is useful in hyperlipidaemia (increased cholesterol), arthritis, sciatica, etc.
2. Sunthi (Dry Ginger) ksirapaka — The ingredient here for this preparation is sunthi powder. This ksirapaka is very useful in arthritis and abdominal problems like indigestion, pain in stomach, etc.
3. Arjuna (Arjuna) ksirapaka — Stem bark of Arjuna tree is used to prepare Arjuna ksirapaka. This is useful in heart related problems. According to Ayurveda, Arjuna is a heart tonic.
4. Asvagandha (Aswagandha) ksirapaka — This is prepared with powder of Aswagandha roots. This is a very good health tonic. It increases weight, improves body immunity and rejuvenates the body cells.
5. Pippali (Indian Long Pepper) ksirapaka — Pippali fruits are used to prepare this ksirapaka. This is used for liver diseases, bronchial asthma, and general tonic.

Drinks prepared with curd

Curd products like buttermilk and lassi are commonly used in Indian kitchens in daily routine. Buttermilk enhances digestion. It is customary to drink buttermilk in the end of the meals. While churning the curd mild water can be added to it. Freshly roasted and powdered cumin seeds can be added to it if a patient is suffering from indigestion, diarrhoea and dysentery.

There are two types of lassi — sweet and salty.
1. Sweet lassi contains curd, 500 g; sugar, 300 g; and water, 200 ml. Being sweet it is cool and good in summer season, for burning sensation and it is also nutritive.
2. Salty lassi contains curd, 500 ml; water, 200 ml; and salt according to taste. It is appetizer and beneficial for digestive system.

Cold infusion (Hima kalpana)

Cold infusion is obtained by putting one part of the crushed herb in six parts of water over night and then cold extract is obtained in the morning by rubbing the herb and filtering it.
1. Dhaniya (Coriander) hima — Dhaniya fruit is taken to prepare this infusion. It reduces excessive thirst and burning sensation.
2. Vijaysara (Indian Kino Tree) hima — Heartwood of Vijaysara is used to prepare infusion of vijaysara. This infusion is very effective in bringing down blood sugar of diabetes patients.
3. Giloy (Gulancha tinospora) hima — This cold infusion is prepared by stem of Giloy and it is given in chronic conditions of fever.

Warm infusion (Phanta kalpana)

Warm infusion or fluid is obtained by putting one part of powdered herb in eight parts of hot water, keeping it at room temperature for some time to get it cooled thereafter straining it for use.
1. Tea is a good example of warm infusion. Medicinal tea can be prepared by adding ginger, tulsi (basil) leaves, cardamom, mint, cinnamon, etc. to attain different types of medicinal effects.
2. Warm infusion of sunthi (dry ginger) powder can be given to arthritis patients and people having digestive problems.

Churned drink (Mantha)

Drink obtained by churning of one part of drug into four parts of water and then strained is called churned drink.
1. One part of parched and powdered lentil (sattu of masur) is churned in four parts of water. Pomegranate juice and honey is mixed in it. This Mantha is useful in vomiting.
2. One part of parched and powdered barley (sattu of yava/jau) is churned in four parts of water. This is used for excessive thirst and burning sensation.

Beverage (Panaka)

Fruits like mango, pomegranate, grapes, orange or pineapple is crushed and juice is expressed out of them. Sixteen parts of cold water and sugar is added into them and mixed well. This drink is called panaka.
1. Chandana (sandal wood) panaka is made according to the above method. It is beneficial in burning sensation, urine infections and fever.
2. Imli (tamarind) panaka is beneficial for digestive tract problems. It is given in indigestion, loss of appetite, excessive thirst and burning sensation.
3. Aamra (unripe mango) panaka is given in prophylaxes for sunstroke and for burning sensation. It is appetizer and digestive.
Squash (Sharbat/sarkara)

Fruit juices and double quantity of sugar are boiled together to attain a thick consistency like syrup and then aqueous distillate (arka) of rose, kevra, saunj are added into them for fragrance. Some preservatives like sodium benzoate and citric acid can also be added into them12.

1. Phalsa squash can be made by the above method. It is appetizer, digestive, laxative and useful in anemia and jaundice.
2. Banafsha squash (Viola) is made from flowers of banafsha. It is beneficial for cough, sleeplessness, headache, etc.

Fermented medicinal beverages/drinks

Asava and Arista are used in Ayurvedic system of medicine since ages. In these preparations natural low alcohol is generated. Hence, these get more quickly absorbed by the system and act in a fast way. Shelf life of these preparations is also very long. Their action in the body gets faster as these preparations get older.

Fermented alcoholic product of crude drugs (Asava)

It is a self generated alcoholic preparation obtained from fermentation of the raw herbal drugs along with honey, jaggery, etc. in an earthen vessel7.

Kumari (Aloe) asava is made by the above method of preparation. It is useful in all digestive system problems, distension of abdomen, pain and burning sensation during urination and kidney stone.

Chandana (Sandal wood) asava is strength promoting, nutrient, heart tonic and digestive.

Loha (Iron) asava is useful in anemia, edema, abdominal diseases, bronchial asthma, piles and loss of appetite. It is a heart tonic also.

Fermented alcoholic product of aqueous extract/decoction of drugs (Arista)

It is a self-generated alcoholic preparation obtained from fermentation of the decoction of herbal drugs along with honey, jaggery, etc. in an earthen vessel8.

Drakarista is strength promoting, appetizer and carminative. It is useful in abdominal problems like indigestion and piles.

Kutajarista is useful in bleeding piles, fever and improves indigestion.

Vidangarista is given in worm infestations, kidney stone, diabetes and abscess.

Arjunarista is an important heart tonic, appetizer and digestive.

Rohitakarista is used in liver and spleen enlargements, piles, skin problems and loss of appetite.

Kanji (Sour vinegar)

Rice and pulses are boiled and kept for fermentation. Thus sour preparation obtained is called kanji9. It can also be prepared with vegetables like radish, carrot, etc. It is appetizer, digestive, carminative and useful in indigestion.

Asavas and Aristas are available in the market. Other beverages can be prepared in the kitchen easily with little effort.

Conclusion

Various hot and cold health drinks are described here. In Ayurveda, different health drinks are recommended according to season13. In very cold and dewy season, warm beverages like warm fragrant milk products, vegetable soups, meat soup, sugarcane products can be taken as a part of food.

In spring season, barley, honey, mango juice as food and beverages such as asava (fermented infusion), arista (fermented decoction), sidhu (fermented sugarcane juice), honey mixed with water and water boiled with extracts of chandan (sandal wood) can be taken. Chilled drinks along with cold water may be taken in summer season according to requirement.

Panak Panchisara [syrup prepared with draksha (grapes), iksu (sugarcane), madhuka, date, kashmarya (gumhar) and parushaka (phalsa) fruits with equal quantity of cold water and a pinch of cardamom powder] and Lassi (sweet or salty) may also be taken to get relief from heat of the summer season.

In rainy season, meat or vegetable soups and mastu (thin water of yogurt) are suggested for consumption with food. Take easily digestible food and avoid heavy food, curd, oil, and strong liquors during autumn. To attain the best effects of these health drinks seasonal recommendations should be followed.

References

1-9. Sarangadhara Samhita, Madhyam Khand, edited by Dr. Shailaja Shrivastava (Chapter-1/2-4); 2/1-2; 2/165; 4/1; 3/1-2; 3/96; 10/1; 10/2; 10/12), Chaukhamba Orientalia, Varanasi, India, 2nd edition, 1998.


