



RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE BASIC DIETARY REQUIREMENT OF DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS (A'MAR) AND THE PRINCIPLES OF UNANI MEDICINE

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Abstract

Diet is an essential part of life without which one cannot be able to survive. It is quite possible to survive for few days to months without having food. The quality of dietary substances has great impact on human health and the aging process. There are different age groups which require different nutritional values in their specific diet. The temperament of the dietary substances and temperament of different age groups are kept on the priority in the Unani medicine while advising certain food items in one's diet or to make it a balanced diet. Other factors like food availability, season, occupation, gender, socioeconomic status etc are also kept in mind during selection or advice of food items in one's diet. This paper will elaborate temperament of different age groups (broadly 4 age groups in Unani system of Medicine: Sinn-e-Namu, Sinn-e-Shabab, Sinn-e-Kuhulat and Sinn-e-Shaikhukhat) and diet according to their requirement.

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Introduction:-

There is a broad classification of ages of life into four groups in Unani system of medicine and is known as Asnan-e-Arba. The process of aging depends on the content of Ratubat-e-Gharezia (innate fluid). These age groups are:

1. Sinn-e-Namu (Growing age)
2. Sinn-e-Shabab or Sinn-e-Waqoof (Adulthood)
3. Sinn-e-Kuhulat (Age of decline)
4. Sinn-e-Shaikhukhat (Age of superannuation)^{1,2,3,4,5}

Sinn-e-Numuhas sub categories which are as follows; Sinn-e-Tufulat (infancy), Sinn-e-saba (childhood), Sinn-e-tararu (adolescence), Sinn-e-Rihaq (puberty), Sinn-e-fata (last stage of growth). All these age groups vary from one another in many aspects and one of them is their Mizaj (temperament)^{1,2,3,4,5}. The body demands for growth and development and energy are different in different ages. Temperament plays a great role in the assessment of the health as well as diseased condition of an individual. Factors responsible for maintaining health should be in accordance to the mizaj while those which cause diseases are opposite to it. Every compound which exists has its specific temperament. Those compounds which are utilized by human beings as dietary substances, and are the major concern in this article. Now we bring the topic which will help to know what should be the diet according to different ages.

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Sinn-e-Numu:

It is a period of life upto 30 years of age. It is a period of growth and development and also called as sinn-e-hadath. In this, rutubat-e-gharezia (innate fluid) exceeds the quantity sufficient for the preservation of hararat-e-ghariziyah^{1,2,3,4,5}.

Diet in Sinn-e-Numu (growing age):

Here is the general description of Sinn-e-Numu which includes all its sub groups. The food requirement in both quality and quantity is different in this age group from other age groups. As this is the growing age so body building blocks are the main requirement, keeping in view the power of digestion and chances of infection due to dietary stuffs. High protein diet like dairy products, poultry products etc., diet rich in vitamins i.e., fresh fruits, essential fatty acids, easily digestible starchy foods such as cereals, grains, boiled potatoes, boiled and mashed vegetables in sinn-e-numu are the required diets.^{6,7,8,9} Required diet in Youth/ adolescence is high protein with maximum number of varieties to get all the essential amino acids. Different types of fats, as essential fatty acids are necessary for the components of cell membranes, required for the production of various biologically active molecules such as prostaglandins, leukotrienes, thromboxanes etc^{6,7,8}. Adequate amount of cholesterol should be in the diet as it is a necessary component of cell membranes and precursor of steroid hormones and vitamin D as ideal for growth of bones. Starch containing foods are necessary in this age group as it is in the rapid growth phase and starch provides ready energy (hararat-e-gharezia). Fresh fruits for the required amounts of vitamins and minerals should also be included in the diet^{6,7,8,9,11}.

1. Adolescence is the period between childhood and adulthood. It is a 2nd period of rapid growth and development of an individual. Onset of puberty is chaperoned by rapid spurt (outburst) of growth leading to increased requirement of micro as well as macro nutrient. The requirement of excessive protein is balanced by its efficient use in development rather than energy^{6,7}.
2. Pubertal timing (onset of puberty) depends on nutrition during childhood. It also reflects earlier maternal nutrition because appetite control energy homeostasis and pubertal axis are being developed in natal and early post natal life^{7,8}.
3. Adolescents need more nutrients than adults because they gain atleast 40% of their adult weight and 15% of their adult height during this period. Inadequate intake can lead to delayed sexual development and slower linear growth. Protein and micronutrient supplementation in complementary pubertal growth are also required^{6,7,8}.
4. Cholesterol requirement /levels as per age should be taken care. Some children develop obesity at their early age either due to family history or having cholesterol rich diet and high fast food consumption.

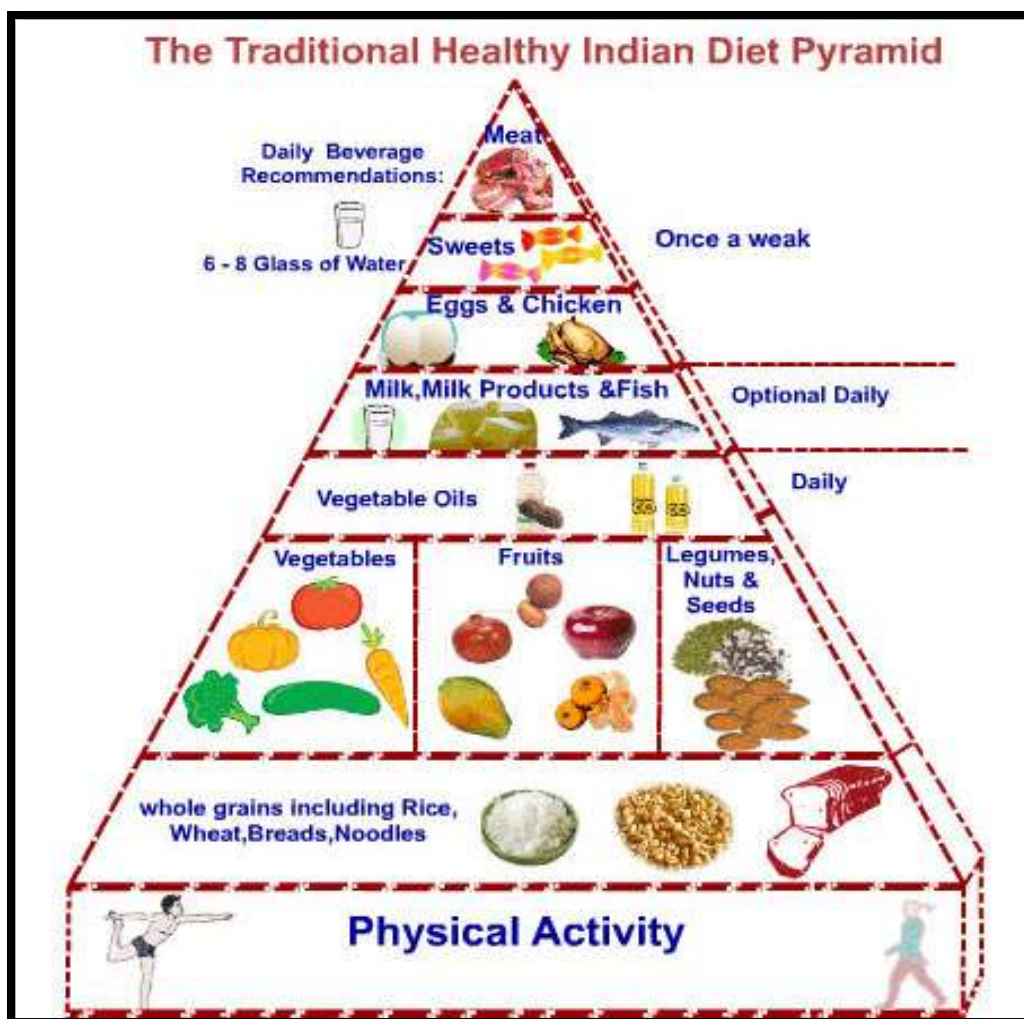
Sinn-e-Shabab:

It is the period of life up to the age of 30-40 years. Here the Rutubat-e-Gharezia (innate fluid) is sufficient to preserve the Hararat-e-Gharezia^{1,2,3,4}. The organs are fully developed at this stage of life. Energy is required to maintain the powers of the body and these fully developed organs to perform their functions at their maximum. So such diet should be included in this age the purpose could be fulfilled^{1,2,3,4}.

Diet in Sinn-e-Shabab (Adulthood):

The diet should include variety of hot and moist food which is termed as Ghiza-e-Haqiqi. Such diet plays an important role in providing energy to the body. Totally balanced diet is required which has adequate amount of each and every sort of nutrients like carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins and minerals and fibre⁷. This is the age where growth and development has reached to its maximum and maintaining balance between formation of new cells and degradation of old cells is major criteria^{1,2,3,4}. Cereals, pulses, curd, meat, vegetables and fruits all should be included in the diet on regular basis in accordance to one's occupation, socioeconomic status etc¹¹.

In the picture given below the traditional diet pyramid is shown, which for sure varies from individual to individual due to many reasons like choices of food, occupation, region, socioeconomic status and many more. But here it is shown to provide an idea of a balanced diet which one can adopt accordingly^{10,11}.



Sinn-e-Kuhulat:

It is the period of life up to the age of 40-60 years (old age). There starts the declination in the Rutubat-e-Gharezia to preserve the Hararat-e-Gharezia. The powers of the body become weak so the diet should be easily digestible with required nutrients^{12,13,14,15}.

Sinn-e-Shaikhukhat:

It is the period of life from 60 years of age till death (old age). The difference between sinn-e-kuhulat and sinn-e-shaikhukhat is in powers of the body and more clear degenerative changes in the later stage^{12,13,14,15}.

Diet in Sinn-e-Kahulat and shaikhukhat (age of decline and age of supeannuation):

The dietary pattern for both the age groups (Sinn-e-Kuhulat and Sinn-e-Shaikhukhat) is quite similar^{12,13,14,15}. High fiber diet as constipation is one of the major problem faced by old aged people. Vitamins from fruits as well as supplements are equally important. Less starchy foods should be given to both the groups including healthy individuals and those who are diabetics. As in old age people usually get pro-diabetic. Immune system should be tried to strengthen as they are more prone to infection, fracture and various other diseases.

Calcium requirement:

Calcium is a very important mineral for the normal growth and development of an individual. We all know the importance of calcium in the development and maintenance of healthy bones and teeth. It is also very important in the normal functioning of nerves and muscles. It is also a very important modulator of various enzymes involved in a cascade reaction. It can also function as a trigger to blood clotting system and also plays an important role in contraction and relaxation of muscles. So this nutrient is required at every stage of life. Milk and dairy products are

the richest and most common sources of calcium in our daily diet. Some green leafy vegetables, tomatoes, nuts and some seeds are other good sources. Calcium fortified products are now available which are getting popular in the current generations as general awareness about health is increasing. Not enough calcium in the diet can lead to increased risk of developing osteoporosis. People at different life stages have different requirements of the mineral. Young children teen ages and older women have a higher need of calcium as the former two are the spurt of growth phases. And older women need more calcium because during menopause the amount of estrogen which keeps the bones protected falls dramatically, hence the need of more calcium in the diet increases. Women above 50 need around 1200 mg of calcium in the teenage girls. While a diet high in calcium count reverse age related bone loss but it can slow down the process.

Conclusion:-

In general, there are a lot of factors on which the dietary requirement and its components vary, like age, geographical distribution, seasonal variation, food availability, socio economic status, customs, state of the body (Health or diseased) and so on. An idea of the diet in different age groups is given in this article and the factors which vary accordingly. There are alternatives for each dietary substance for different age groups according to the choice as well but the basic behind the selection remains same. everyone should give attention on the diet to stay healthy.

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