

## Role of Pathya Apathya in the management of Surgical Disorders - A Review Article

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In the science of Ayurveda, the management of Shalya Vikāras (surgical disorders) is not limited to surgical intervention alone, but also emphasizes a comprehensive approach that includes Āhāra (diet), Vihāra (lifestyle), and Manasika Bhāva (mental state). The principles of Pāthya (wholesome regimen) and Apāthya (unwholesome regimen) hold significant importance in the pre-operative (Pūrvakarma), operative (Pradhānakarma), and post-operative (Pascātkarma) phases of Shalyakarma. Classical texts like Suśruta Saṁhitā and Caraka Saṁhitā strongly emphasize that even a well-performed surgery may not yield desired results if Pāthya-Apāthya is neglected. Proper observance of Pāthya aids in Agnidīpana (enhancing digestive fire), Dhātu Pushti (nourishment of tissues), Vraṇa Ropana (wound healing), and in the prevention of Upadravas (complications). Conversely, indulgence in Apāthya can lead to Agnimāndya, Āma Sanchaya, and delayed recovery. Modern evidence also supports that nutrition and lifestyle influence surgical outcomes, wound healing, and immunity. Thus, the inclusion of Pāthya-Apāthya in the management protocol of surgical disorders ensures a holistic, cost-effective, and patient-centric approach. This article explores the Saṁhitā-based references, clinical relevance, and modern correlations of Pāthya-Apāthya in the effective management of Surgical Disorders.

**Keywords:** Pathya, Apathya, Shalya Tantra, Vrana Ropana, Agni, Ayurveda

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## Introduction

*Ayurveda*, the ancient science of life, emphasizes a holistic approach to health and disease management, integrating physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. Among the eight branches of *Ayurveda*, *Shalya Tantra* specifically deals with surgical and Para surgical interventions. While surgical procedures are essential for managing certain conditions, the success of surgery in *Ayurveda* is not limited to technical excellence but also depends heavily on post-operative care, diet, lifestyle, and mental state.[1] One of the most critical yet often overlooked aspects of *Ayurvedic* surgical care is the concept of *Pathya* (wholesome regimen) and *Apathya* (unwholesome regimen), which govern both dietary and behavioural guidelines.

पथं पथोऽनपेतं यद्यच्चोक्तं मनसः प्रियम्।  
यच्चाप्रियमपथं च नियतं तन्न लक्षयेत्॥Ch.Su.25/45

*Pathya*, which is the *Aahara-Vihara* that calms the mind, is beneficial to the body, and provides nutrients and *Apathya*, which is the opposite of *Pathya*. [2]

In M. Monier-Williams, *Pathya* is a *Sanskrit* word that means:- "Belonging to a particular way" or being healthy, fit, suitable or appropriate. They include

- Foods indicated for healthy people.
- Foods contraindicated for healthy people.
- *Pathya-Apathya* toward the patient[3]

### Synonyms[4]

**Pathya** - *Satmya*, *Swastha-paripaalaka*, *Swastha-hitakara*, *Hita Ahara*, *Swastha-urjaskara*, *Sukha-Parinaamkara*, *Dhatu-Avirodhi*, *Dhatu-Saamyakara*.

**Apathya** - *Asatmya*, *Ahitakara*, *Anupashaya*, *Swastha-Ahitakara*, *Asukha-Parinaamakara*, *Dhatu Asamyakara*, *Ashrmakara*.

पञ्चभूतात्मके देहे ह्याहारः पाञ्चभौतिकः । (Su.Su.46/526)

- *Pathya* diet is essential for health and body and diet are
- Body organs are nourished only through diet.
- Healthy eating causes physical development while unhealthy eating causes disease.
- *Dosha-Dhatu-Mala* are the basics of a body.

*Pathya* helps nourishing them and maintain the equilibrium.[5]

*Acharya Kashyapa* has called *Ahara* as *Bheshaja*. He stated that food is the best medicine. Only the *Hitakara-Ahara* can keep a person healthy.[6]

*Acharya Harita* stressed that if a person does not acknowledge the concept of *Pathya-Apathya* and consumes *Apathya* (unhealthy), illness will never leave the body.[7]

The foundation of *Pathya-Apathya* lies in maintaining the balance of *doshas*, enhancing *Agni* (digestive fire), and promoting *Dhatu* (tissue) regeneration. *Pathya-Apathya* is not a generic set of instructions but a dynamic and individualized set of guidelines that vary based on the patient's constitution (*Prakriti*), the nature and stage of the disease, and the surgical procedure performed.

Now a day's wound and its healing are the most important problem facing in surgical practice because of number of patients suffering due to improper nutrition. Surgeon's aim is to minimize the complications of wound, remove or repair damaged structures and to promote the process of wound healing to restore the functions.

*Acharya Sushruta* has given superior position to *Vrana*, *Sutra sthana* of *Sushruta Samhita* shows description of *Vrana* in most of the chapters and *Chikitsa sthana* of *Sushruta Samhita* begins with chapter of *Vrana chikitsa* & Sixty treatment modalities are mentioned only for *Vrana ropana*. *Acharya Sushruta* has mentioned *Vrana Vinischaya* as a major part of *Shalyatantra* and dedicated one whole chapter for *Pathya* and *Apathya* related to *Vrana* in *Vranitopasaneeya Adhyaya*.

Classical *Ayurvedic* texts like *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, and *Ashtanga Hridaya* elaborate on the importance of proper *Pathya* in the context of wound healing (*Vrana Ropana*), tissue rejuvenation, and immunity enhancement, particularly in the perioperative phase. Pre-operative preparation in *Ayurveda* includes a light and digestible diet to optimize *Agni* and detoxify the body.[8] Intra-operatively, surgical asepsis is maintained through herbal formulations and fumigation practices.[9] Post-operatively, the role of *Pathya* becomes even more pronounced, with dietary regimens like *Manda*, *Peya*, *Vilepi*, *Yavagu*, and *Yusha* recommended to support digestion and tissue repair.

Behavioural *Pathya* includes adequate rest, abstinence from physical exertion, and maintaining a calm mental state, all of which are conducive to faster recovery.

In contrast, *Apathya* practices - such as consuming incompatible foods (*Viruddha Ahara*), *Vyayama*, *Vyavaya*, *Krodha*, *Bhaya* - can lead to delayed healing, infection, and recurrence of disease.[10] These practices disturb *Doshic* balance, weaken immunity, and hamper the healing cascade.

Given the increasing interest in integrative medicine, the *Ayurvedic* understanding of *Pathya* and *Apathya* offers valuable insights into enhancing surgical outcomes through diet and lifestyle management.

This article aims to explore the relevance, applications, and scientific rationale behind these ancient yet timeless principles in the modern context of surgical care.

*Pathya-Apathya* related to *Ahara* mentioned in different classics:

Classics	Pathya	Apathya
Charaka [11]	Na Ati Sheeta, Na Ati Guru, Na Ati Snigdha, Avidahi	Lavana, Amla, Katu, Ushna, Vidahi, Guru, Viruddhanna, Adyasana
Sushruta [12]	Jeerna Shalyodana, Jangala Mamsa Rasa, Tanduliyaka, Jivanti, Sunishannaka, Vastuka, Balmulaka, Vartak, Patol, Karvellaka, Dadima, Amlaki, Saindava, Mudga Rasa, Saktu, Vilepi, Kulmasha, Shritjala.	Navadanya, Masha, Tila Kalaya, Kulatta, Nishpava, Haritaka, Amla, Lavana, Katurasa Pradana Dravyas, Gudapishti Vikruti, Vallura, Shushka Shaka, Aja, Avi, Aanupa, Oudaka Mamsa, Shitodaka, Krushara, Dadhi Dugdha, Takra[13]
Vagbhata [14]	Yava, Godhuma, Sashatika, Masura, Mudga, Tuvani, Jivanti, Sunishannaka, Bal-Mulaka, Vartaka, Tanduliyaka, Vastuka, Karvellaka, Karkota, Patola, Katukaphala, Saindava, Dadima, Dhatri, Ghrita, Jala, Jangala Mamsa Rasa.	Navadhanya, Tila, Masha, Ksheera, Ikshu Vikruti, Amla, Katu, Visthamabi, Vidahi, Guru, Sheeta, Madya.

*Pathya - Apathya* related to *Vihara* mentioned in different classics:

Classics	Pathya	Apathya
Charaka	Aswapnam Diva	Maithuna
Sushruta[15]	Nicha Nakha And Roma, Shuchi, Shukla Vaasina, Dhooa with Sarshapa, Nimba Leaves, Lavana, Ghee	Should Avoid Chankramana, Asana, Streenam Darshan, Sambhasana, Vaata, Atapa, Rajo, Dhooma, Irshya, Bhaya, Shoka, Raatrijaragara, Vishama Aashana, Shayana, Upavasa, Vaag, Vyayama
Vagbhata[16]	Aswapnam Diva	Maithuna

***Pathya – Apathya* mentioned in *Sushruta Samhita* for different disorders.**

### 1. *Pathya-Apathya* related to *Vrana*.

	Pathya	Apathya
Vranitagara [17]	Vastu, Shuchi	There should not be direct entry of Vaata and Atapa
Nidra[18]	Sukha Chesta Prachara, Prachya Dish, Hridbhir Anukula, Priyovadi Upasyamano	Diwaswapna, Ratrijaragara
Ahara[19]	Tanduliyaka, Jivanti, Sunishannaka, Vastuka, Balamulaka, Vartuka, Patola, Karvellaka, Ghrita, Saindava, Dadima and Amlaka, Mudga Yusha, Saktu, Vilepi, Kulmasha	Navadhanya, Masha, Tila Kalaya, Kulatta, Nispava, Haritakashaka, Amla, Katu, Lavana, Ahara, Guda pistavikruti, Vallur, Sushkashaka, Ajamamsa, Sheetodaka, Krasara, Payasa, Dadhi, Dugdha, Takra, Madya Vikara[20]
Vihara	Nicha Nakha and Roma, Shuchi, Shukla Vaasina, Shanti, Mangala, Deva, Bramhana, Gopooja, Bali, Upahara[21]	Vaata, Atapa, Rajo, Dhooma, Irshya, Bhaya, Kopa, Vyayama, Chankramana, Viruddha Adhyasana, Ajirna, Asana, Vishama Shayana, Uchhabhashana, Maithuna[22]
Dhupana[23]	Sarshapa, Arishta patra, Saindava, Sarpi	-
Shirodharana [24]	Chatra, Atichatra, Languli, Jatila, Bramacharini, Lakshmi, Guha, Atiguha, Satavirya, Sahasravirya, Shweta Sarshapa	-

### 2. *Pathya-Apathya* related to *Bhagna*

	Pathya	Apathya
Ahara[25]	Shali, Mamsa Rasa, Ksheera, Sarpi, Yusha, Tinaja, Brumhana Annapana	Lavana, Katu, Kshara, Amla, Ruksha Anna
Vihara	Bandana, Sheeta Ambu Shechana, Pradeha	Maithuna, Atapa, Vyayama

### 3. Pathya - Apathya related to Arsha

	Pathya	Apathya
Ahara[26]	Puranashali, Yava, Godhuma, Nimbayusha, Patola Yusha, Vastuka, Tanduliyaka, Jivanti, Upodika, Asvabala, Bal-Mulaka, Palanka, Asana, Cilli, Cuccu, Kalaya, Valli, Kulattha, Patola, Chitraka, Suvarnakanda, Shunti, Gomutra, Souvira, Tushodaka, Kapittha, Ksheera, Ghrita	Anupamamsa, Mastya, Pinyaka, Dadhi, Pishtika, Masha, Bilwa
Vihara[27]	Alepa, Kshara, Agni, Shastra	Prushta Yana, Streesevana, Vegadharana, Utkatasana[28]

### 4. Pathya -Apathya related to Bhagandara

	Pathya	Apathya
Ahara[29]	Trikatu, Vaca, Hingu, Pancha Lavana, Dipyaka should be administered with Kanji, Sauviraka, Kulatta	Viruddha Annapana, Guru Ahara
Vihara[30]	Lepa, Langana, Rakta Mokshana, Kshara	Vishamashana, Kopa, Vyayama, Maithuna, Yuddha, Prustayana

### 5. Pathya -Apathya related to Shopha

	Pathya[31]	Apathya[32]
Ahara	Godhuma, Mudga Yusha, Guda and Haritaki, Devadaru and Shunti, Guda and Adraka, Shunti powder dissolved in milk, Milk boiled with Pippali, Pippali Mula, Cavya, Chitrka, Mayura and Varshabhu or Milk with Varsabhu, Sunthi, Surangi roots or with Trikatu, Eranda and Shyma Roots	Amla, Dadhi, Guda, Vasa, Paya, Taila, Ghrita, Pishti, Guru Ahara Mritikabhakshana, Lavana, Dadhi products made up of Gramya Animals and Birds
Vihara	Alepa, Parisheka, Asthapana, Swedana, Upanahana, Siravyadana	Vegavarodha, Vishamasana, Diwaswapna, Vyavaya, Vyayama

### 6. Pathya -Apathya related to Vidradhi

	Pathya	Apathya
Ahara[33]	Varunadi Gana Dravya, Madhu + Shigru mixed with Maireya, Sura, Asava, Kanjika, Rice cooked with Siddartaka Jala in the decoction of Madhu & Shigru and taken with the Yusha of Yava, Kola, and Kulatta, Tilvaka Ghrita	Atiushna, Kshara, Amla, Lavana, Viruddha, Dusta, Ashuchi Bhojana
Panchakarma[34]	Virechana, Langana, Raktamokshana	Snehana, Dhumapana, Vyayama, Diwaswapna, Swedana, Vyavaya

## Discussion

The importance of *Pathya* and *Apathya* in the management of surgical diseases cannot be overstated when examined through the lens of *Ayurvedic* science. While modern surgery addresses structural and anatomical correction through operative methods, *Ayurveda* extends the healing process by advocating a supportive environment that includes correct dietary habits, regulated behaviour, and mental discipline.

The discussion of *Pathya-Apathya* is not only relevant but essential for ensuring a smooth post-operative recovery, reducing complications, and preventing recurrence. One of the key factors in post-surgical recovery is the restoration of *Agni* (digestive fire), which is often compromised due to anaesthesia, tissue trauma, and the stress of surgery.

*Ayurvedic* texts recommend light, nourishing, and easily digestible foods such as *Manda* (rice water), *Yusha* (lentil soup), and *Peya* (thin gruel) during the initial days following surgery. These not only rekindle *Agni* but also provide essential nutrients to begin the healing process.

The gradual transition to more complex food items as digestive strength returns is a critical aspect of *Pathya* that is often overlooked in modern recovery protocols. In terms of behavioural *Pathya*, emphasis is laid on rest, avoidance of exertion, maintaining hygiene, and emotional stability.

This aligns well with current recommendations for convalescence. However, *Ayurveda* adds the dimension of individualized care based on the *Prakriti* (constitution) of the patient and the specific *Doshic* imbalance present.

For example, a *Vata*-predominant individual may need more warm, unctuous foods and a calm, grounding environment, while a *Pitta* type may benefit from cooling, soothing diets and reduced mental stress. Conversely, consumption of *Apathya* - such as incompatible food combinations (*Viruddha Ahara*), processed or preserved foods, and habits like smoking or alcohol intake - impairs wound healing, causes inflammation, and increases the risk of infections.

These adverse effects can be explained both in *Ayurvedic* terms of *dosha* vitiation and in biomedical terms of oxidative stress, impaired immunity, and poor tissue perfusion.

This *Ayurvedic* approach not only aligns with modern nutritional and rehabilitative care but also fills in gaps left by the lack of personalized dietary protocols in many allopathic post-operative care systems. The inclusion of *Ayurvedic Pathya-Apathya* principles can lead to a more integrative and patient-centric model of surgical recovery. This discussion reaffirms that effective surgical treatment extends beyond the operation theatre and must include conscious efforts in diet and lifestyle to ensure complete and sustained healing.

## Conclusion

The principles of *Pathya* and *Apathya* form a fundamental pillar in the *Ayurvedic* management of surgical conditions. While surgical interventions address the structural aspects of disease, true and sustained healing requires comprehensive post-operative care rooted in proper dietary and behavioural regimens. *Ayurveda* emphasizes the restoration of balance in bodily functions, particularly through support of *Agni*, *Dosha*, and *Dhatu*, all of which are deeply influenced by food and lifestyle.

Ignoring *Pathya* and indulging in *Apathya* can hinder recovery, delay wound healing, and increase the risk of complications. Modern research increasingly supports the value of nutrition and personalized care in surgical recovery, echoing *Ayurvedic* wisdom. Integrating these time-tested concepts into contemporary surgical practice offers a promising avenue for improving patient outcomes, ensuring faster rehabilitation, and promoting holistic well-being. Thus, *Pathya-Apathya* should be regarded as essential therapeutic tools alongside surgical procedures in the comprehensive management of disease.

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