

Diet and Food in Iranian Traditional Medicine: Hints for Further Research

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DEAR EDITOR,

Iranian traditional medicine (ITM) is a medical system that is based on temperament; the main objective in ITM managements during health and disease is returning and maintaining the human being to an equilibrium in which the organ systems works at their optimal status. The life style rules in ITM are mainly focused on six most essential items: “Setah Zaroriah”; within them one of the most important sectors is about nutrition and diet. There are certain rules of healthy eating and drinking in ITM for the whole population as well as during illness. For example, some of these commands are listed below; these recommendations are not evidence-based and are extracted from ITM literature that may be used as research subjects in future studies; recommendations in ITM are mainly based on estimations of “Gastric temperament and natural temperature”, and “Food natural temperature and quality”:

- Using of the medicinal food as routine daily recipes should be avoided; they must be used only to modify body temperament or other foods temperament. Medicinal food means those that can change body temperament significantly^[1]
- The food should be chewed enough and one should be in complete relaxation in mealtime^[2]
- Man must not resist against hunger and food must not be eaten without hunger.^[1] Eat only

in true hunger and stop eating before complete satiety.^[2] The estimation of dietary needs varies according to the nature of the body, the age, the seasons, and the alterations by the disease, as well as the power of digestion^[3]

- Food with cold nature must be eaten in summer and food with warm nature in winter^[1]
- Simultaneous use of multiple types of foods during one meal session and different recipes is strongly prohibited.^[1,2] It may cause indigestion especially when different colorful foods are used^[3]
- The best food is a tasty food, but a lot of tasty foods maybe harmful; A tasteless food reduces hunger and cause lethargy. Sweet food reduces hunger and increases the body temperature. Salty food dehydrates the body and macerates it. Sour foods speeds up digestion but, dry and hurt nerve.^[1] A sweet food may prevent disadvantage of a sour food and vice versa; Salty food and spicy foods control disadvantages of tasteless food and vice versa.^[1] The food with a mild nonboring bitter taste, is compatible with the stomach^[4,5]
- Water should be used after the digestion phase of foods (1.5 h after eating); Immediate drinking after eating, causes indigestion, whereas drinking during eating has the worst effect^[1,5]

- People, which have hot nature of the stomach, may benefit from drinking water, and in these people the tendency to eat foods is weak^[1]
- Excessive food intake is better to be avoided during high-grade fever; because high body temperature increases at the time of digestion^[3]
- In the case of postprandial fullness especially within 2 h after eating, entering bathrooms is prohibited; Furthermore, intercourse and other things that stimulate the body energy turnover strongly is not allowed^[3]
- You should not change the dietary habits suddenly; if a person is accustomed to eating one meal or several meals in a day, it must not be altered; food habits must modified gradually in the event of sickness^[3]
- One of the management that corresponds to more stomach is limiting food at once per day without becomes full at that time^[4,5]
- To be careful about the food wasn't already used to it, and you do not know it^[5]
- Preventing of defecation and gas passing is very bad and harmful^[5]
- Oily meals of any kind may not be tolerated by stomach very well might induce its weakening. Olive oil, walnut oil and pistachio oil seems to be less harmful^[5]

- These principles of nutrition in the life can prevent particularly the stomach disease and subsequently systemic diseases.

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