INTRODUCTION

Obesity is a condition in which an individual is significantly overweight and an excessive amount of body fat get accumulated under the chin and on the beasts, belly, buttocks and thighs. Though it is not a serious case in itself, it may shorten the span of life, as well as create diminished efficiency and happiness. Obesity has become an epidemic in North America. Recent figures show that in the past two decades the number of overweight children and adolescents has doubled. Diabetes, heart disease, stroke, hypertension, high cholesterol, some types of cancers are major health risks due to obesity. Mainly causes of obesity are overeating, excessive intake of heavy or cold food and drinks, oversleeping, lack of exercise, frequent snacking, eating processed food and leftovers, eating while multi-tasking and eating food that is not suitable to one’s body type. **Ayurveda and its approach:** Ayurveda is an ancient science and has a holistic approach to life. In Ayurveda, obesity is described as Medoroga, a disorder of Meda dhatu, which includes fat tissue and fat metabolism. According to Ayurveda obesity begins with imbalance of Dosha (Vata, Pitta, and Kapha), Agni (digestive fire), Mala (waste products) and of Srotasa (microcirculatory channels). This collection of imbalances then interferes with the formation of Dhatu or tissues and leads to a tissue imbalance which leads to excessive weight. From the Ayurvedic perspective, the key cause is found in lifestyle and diet choices that disrupt balance. Ayurveda views weight imbalance and obesity as something that should be corrected before it can contribute to other health problem. Ayurvedic word for digestion and metabolism is Agni. Agni, when loosely translated, means fire. It actually signifies something much more than just fire and includes the idea of a precise and powerful functioning intelligence. Agni has remarkable
transformative qualities. All types of food we consumed must be transformed into useful parts to the body (nutrients) and that which is not needed (waste). The nutrients, or most refined products of of Agni, are used to create th Dhatu of body.

The Vicious Cycle: Body composed of seven Dhatu, and they are created sequentially. The creation of Dhatu is an ongoing complex process. The key word is sequential. If at any stage there is an imbalance, this disrupts the whole sequence of tissue formation. The Srotas or channels play a major role, because they carry the information required to properly form the tissues step by step. If Srotas get vitiated due to toxins (Ama), an imbalance starts. According to Ayurveda to maintain balance and health strong Agni and normal functioning of Srotas are essential.

From Ayurvedic perspective the cause of weight gains is cyclical. It begins with balance reducing choices in diet and lifestyle that weaken the digestive fire, which in turns increases toxins, clogging the communication channels Srotas and thereby disrupting the formation of tissues. The poorly formed tissue layers increases meda dhatu and an imbalance in Kapha Dosha. This in turn increases accumulation of toxins (Ama), which leads to imbalance in Meda dhatu.

Accumulation of Ama in Srotas , causes an imbalance in naturally-flowing of Vata dosha.

Restricted or imbalanced Vata dosha ends up increasing Agni - the digestive fire - leading to an increase in appetite and thirst. This leads in turn to an increase in Kapha Dosha and Meda dhatu and the whole cycle starts again.

To break this vicious cycle, the Ayurvedic Vaidya determines the unique nature of the individual (Prakriti) and the nature of imbalance (Vikriti). The essence of recommendation is generally comes down to addressing a few core issues: strengthening the digestion power (balance Agni), removing Ama, improving dietary habits and adjusting inappropriate daily routines and lowering stress.

Vata: A balanced Vata is creative, artistic, sensitive, spiritual and funny. When not in balance vata is nervous, anxious and restless. Stressful job or complicated relationship could lead to lack of sleep or worry, anxiety, fatigue and depression. Vata is associated with air and ether elements, which causes unstable mood and mind and as a result in irregular diet. Vata becomes ultimate grazers, mostly because lack of routine and order to plan a meal. Eating lots of sugar
calms the nerves as well as eating lots give Vata a sense of security.

**Pitta:** Pitta is driven, competitive, ambitious and constantly chasing the next goal. Pitta is intelligent and razor-sharp focus. Hunger is very intense in Pitta. But pitta frequently forget to eat and can’t stop what they are doing to eat something healthy. They become absorbed in their task whatever they are doing. When it is time to eat pitta overeats, and full of cravings, because craving is instantly gratified with ample of sugar, coffee and red meat. They become addicted to such food. Weight develops muscle and flabbiness.

**Kapha:** Kapha moves through life at a slow, methodical space. They are calm, easy going, affectionate and content. Kapha is associated with earth and water elements. When get imbalanced it is the most common Dosha that develops obesity, slow metabolism, easy weight gain, continuous appetite (addiction to eat), hypothyroid or other hormonal conditions that cause retention of weight, mainly water and fat, weak pancreas and kidneys, excess phlegm, fat deposits and benign tumors may develop.

**Management of Obesity**

**Hydrate with warm water:** According to Ayurveda, warm water is a natural detoxifier. Warm water mops up impurities as it travels through over-taxed digestive system, sweeping away molecules left behind from partially digested food that could be slowing down what nature intended to be an enviably swift metabolic rate. Replacing sugary beverages like soda and fruit juices with clear warm water automatically reduces number of calories per day. Cold drinks cause the muscles and blood vessels in gastrointestinal tract to freeze and in turn vitiate digestive fire, which leads sluggish digestion. Warm water, on the other hand, relaxes the muscles and dilates the blood vessels. Dilation of blood vessels allows the assimilation and absorption of the contents of the meal to occur more efficiently.

Sipping water during meal is ideal. It helps digestion, absorption and Dhatu building. The rule of thumb is drink ¼ of capacity of the stomach while eating. Drinking water before meal will decrease the power of Agni, which will hamper the digestion and lead to weakness. Drinking water right after meal will increase Kapha dosha, causing weight gain. Ideal time to drink water is right after waking up in the morning and one hour before and one hour after each meal. The quantity of water consumption varies with body type; Vata needs more water than Kapha type.
One cup of hot water with a one teaspoon honey and 10 drops of lime juice added is a good substitute for eating and will help to melt the fat.(Ref.)

**Mindful eating:** A study shows that people who eat quickly are three times more likely to be overweight than those who take their time. While eating zoning out, watching TV, talking, driving, and multi-tasking undermine the digestive process and counteract the effort to lose weight. Mindful eating means it is about being conscious and present while eating. When food is eaten mindfully, the brain sees, tastes, smell and feels and sends signals to the stomach to release enzymes and juices to digest the food.

According to Ayurveda, you are not what you eat but what you digest. The first stage of digestion starts in the mouth with Bodhaka Kapha. The moment that any kind of food or substance comes in contact with saliva (Bodhaka Kapha), the first experience is taste. Ayurveda says that taste has direct actions on Dosha, so the moment you start eating food the process of digestion begins. The digestive process is governed by Agni and certain subtypes of each three power Dosha. Usually six or more hours are required for the digestion of a meal.

In order to lose weight and reach optimal level of Agni it is important to avoid the following:

- Avoid overeating and/or eating heavy foods in large quantities
- Avoid Tamasic foods: Leftovers, processed, canned foods, fast food or food with additives and colorings
- Avoid ice cold water and drinks and cold foods
- Quit alcohol and smoking
- Avoid cruciferous vegetables, fried foods and heavy foods
- Do not talk or laugh while eating. Do not eat on the run or while watching TV

In order to be healthy and increase the digestive power (Agni) while losing weight, the following steps should be followed

- Eat according to your body constitution –
  
  **Vata Prakruti:** Vata reducing herbs, diet and lifestyle, complex carbohydrates (whole grains and starchy vegetables), avoidance of refined sugar, fewer hot spices and more sweet digestives like cardamom, coriander, brahmi, jatamanshi, and ashwagandha calms the mind.

  **Guggul helps in cleansing and warm the body.**

  **Pitta Prakruti:** Pitta reducing foods, avoiding meat, fish oily, greasy, or fried foods, sugars,
and desserts. Raw salads, green herbs, and chlorophyll, digestive bitters and bitter laxatives are the best foods to reduce weight and counter sugar addiction.

**Herbs include aloe vera, katuka, and turmeric.**

**Kapha prakruti:** Kapha reducing food, avoiding refined sugars, salt, dairy, sweet fruit, bread, pastry, meat, fish, fruit juices, cold liquids, and oils. Spice teas, vegetable juices, steamed vegetables, beans, and whole grains are good. Suggestion includes less sleep, no naps, and strong, aerobic exercise. Hot digestive herbs like black pepper, ginger, turmeric, and trikatu burn up the fat and raise the digestive fire. Bitter herbs, like katuka, triphala and guggul, reduce fat and dry water.

- Eat fresh and seasonal vegetables and fruit.
- Eat freshly cooked warm food. It will strengthens Agni, digests food better, reduces excess Kapha and Vata.
- Eat food, which has enough oil, and is moist enough (not fried). It tastes better, helps Agni, builds Dhatu, and increases strength.
- Do not eat food with wrong combination. e.g. Honey and ghee when combined in equal quantities is poisonous. Mixing sour fruits and milk curdles the milk.
- Eat only when you are hungry
- Eat three meals a day and avoid snacking
- Eat light meals for breakfast and dinner and heavy meal during lunch time, have early dinner between 6:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.
- Eat after previous food is digested
- Eat with proper frame of mind - create pleasant environment
- Eating sequence: First eat carbohydrates or sweet taste, next eat salty, sour, pungent and bitter foods. Finally eat astringent food.

**Breathing and Pranayama:** Due to fast passed life style many of us do shallow breathing. Practicing diaphragmatic breathing is beneficial. By simply observing the breath, we can be aware of what is happening inside. The more we become aware of breath, the disturbance, the negativity of the mind disappears and it becomes pure and peaceful. Bhasrika is a very powerful Pranayama. It strengthens the heart and lungs, improves the digestion and calms the mind. Right Nostril breathing (surya bhedi) will also be helpful.
Yoga: Certain gentle yoga asana are helpful, including the Tadasana (Palm Tree pose), and the Trikonasana (Triangle Pose). Also, while sitting on the floor, bend forward as far as you can, with the goal of eventually touching the head to the knees.

10 minutes of Suryanamaskara every morning is helpful. The “Suryanamaskara” is a complete Ayurvedic exercise. This series of postures simultaneously integrates the whole physiology including mind, body, and breath. It strengthens and stretches all the major muscle groups, lubricates the joints, conditions the spine, and massages the internal organs. Blood flow and circulation is increased throughout the body.

Herbal drugs
The following herbal drugs will help lose weight.
- 3 parts kutki, 3 parts chitrak, 2 parts shilajit and 5 parts punarnava - take ½ teaspoon of this mixture twice a day with 1 teaspoon honey, before meals.
- In addition, Triphala guggula, chitrakadi vati and Punarnava gugula with warm water is helpful to reduce the weight.
- It is also helpful to take triphala every night. At least 1 hour after dinner, pour 1 cup of boiling water over ½ to 1 teaspoon triphala, let it steep for 10 minutes and drink.

CONCLUSION
Obesity is a common problem in the world. It is mainly due to improper lifestyle, wrong food habits and lack of exercise. Above all, people do not have a sense of self awareness. They are taken by external factors, by their senses and do not give importance for their existence in this universe. They don’t have mind, body and spiritual connection, and not even breathing right.

Ayurvedic approach provides all the necessary tools to bring back health, harmony and peace in life. By adopting simple lifestyle and healthy eating habits anyone can enjoy the life Optimally without much stress or expenses. Possible diseases like diabetes, heart diseases, stroke, and cholesterol can be prevented. There will be happy and healthy people in a wealthy country!!

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