

Food myths debunked by Ayurveda: From smoothies to tea, coffee beverages and more

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Tea and coffee are good for refreshment but what Ayurveda says about it. (Reuters image)

There are a plethora of myths surrounding us that are related to our lifestyle specially food habits. Almost everyone has their own understanding and perception of one particular thing. For example, the consumption of milk is best enjoyed alone. It shouldn't be combined with sour fruits. Similarly, there are a number of food combinations that can be threatening to our lives but people are either unaware or misinformed about those. Similarly, there is a time to consume each type of food depending on how it will affect the body.

Ayurveda has a set of dietary and lifestyle guidelines based upon the elements comprising an individual's body constitution for balanced, healthy living. Below mentioned are a few food myths which have been debunked by Ayurveda:

1. Smoothies are great meal replacements but what Ayurveda says about it – There is no doubt that smoothies are so easy to make, great in taste, convenient to carry while travelling and have all sorts of nutrients. Well, this not likely in the case of Ayurveda and if you follow an ayurvedic diet then you must have heard about the perils of smoothies. Let us discuss some of them here:

Smoothies are cold – Usually, smoothies are consumed cold and cold foods are indigestible and damage the agni(digestive fire) when consumed for a long time. Frozen fruits used in making smoothies lack prana (life energy) and can damage agni.

Usage of raw foods – Smoothies are usually made using raw foods which are difficult to digest and create ample fodder for parasites. This further encourages yeasts, bacteria and other parasites to flourish in your gut.

Poor food combinations – Smoothies are usually prepared by combining the foods that shouldn't be taken together as per Ayurveda, e.g., fruits and vegetables, and chilled fruits mixed with milk or yogurt. They may cause weakness, fatigue, lethargy and sensitivity to cold.

Amount consumed –Smoothies are a blend of multiple ingredients in cold milk or frozen yogurt, which makes it difficult to digest when ingested by individuals with weak digestive fire. Therefore, people with weak digestion should avoid consuming smoothies.

2. Frozen and canned foods are highly consumed but what Ayurveda says about it – While frozen or canned foods are quick and easy recipes to eat, they contain preservatives and flavours which are considered harmful for health when consumed daily. They make our body feel inactive and enhance inertia as they lack nutrients, as well as taste. According to Ayurveda, foods are best when consumed fresh and freshly cooked at home.

3. Tea and coffee are good for refreshment but what Ayurveda says about it– The presence of caffeine in tea and coffee can have adverse effects on the human body. Although these beverages are considered to be refreshing but consuming them in large quantities may increase the imbalance in the system. Caffeine affects differently in all Prakriti(body type/constitution) –

Vata Dosha – It increases anxiety, fear and nervousness and may cause jitteriness, shakiness, dizziness and muscle tremors, bloating, constipation, brittle bones and osteoporosis.

Pitta Dosha – Caffeine may increase blood pressure for up to 2-3 hours after consumption. It also increases irritability, frustration, headaches, anger, and short

temper. Excessive consumption may even cause sour stomach, nausea, vomiting, hyperacidity, heartburn and gastric ulcers.

Kapha Dosha – It affects kidneys and bladder. It decreases digestion and also increases urination.

4. Drink as much as water you can but what Ayurveda says about it – We are all aware of the benefits of drinking enough water but no one has the right definition of enough. One should follow a few simple guidelines set by Ayurveda to lead a healthy life.

Quality of water – One should take care of the quality of water as drinking impure water could lead to serious illnesses.

Way of drinking – One should drink water while sitting instead of standing. It helps in digestion and also ensures that you don't feel bloated after having water. Always drink water in sips.

Time gap – Avoid drinking water just before or after having meals. There should be a gap of 40 minutes as it helps in easy digestion of the food.

Temperature of water – Avoid drinking cold water as it may lead to indigestion. You can drink lukewarm water.

Take hints from your body – Observe your body. If you have parched lips, it means your body requires water, similarly, if the colour of your urine is yellow, it indicates your body is dehydrated.

First thing in the morning – Make a habit of drinking water first thing in the morning as it helps in flushing out the toxins.

(Disclaimer: All Information provided in the article are independent views expressed by Dr. Partap Chauhan, Director of Jiva Ayurveda, is an author, public speaker, TV personality, and Ayurvedacharya.)