

**Stress and constipation (vibandha) - critical review****Dipashri Eknath Borse\*<sup>1</sup>, Santosh Chavhan<sup>2</sup>**

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**ABSTRACT**

Thoughts and emotions triggered by stress can have an effect on stomach and bowel movement. Physical signs and symptoms of stress overload include chest pain, rapid heartbeat, loss of sexual drive, diarrhoea/ constipation. In this article we have tried to enlighten the association of stress and constipation. The mainly observed clinical features of *Vibandha* are Hard Stools, Excessive Straining, Sense of Incomplete Evacuation, Flatulence and Lower Abdominal Fullness. The stress hormone may contribute to constipation.

**Keywords:** stress and constipation (vibandha)

**INTRODUCTION**

The equilibrium of body and mind creates happiness while its imbalance causes the unhappiness i.e. Disease. Now days, stress and strains of Urbanization (Modern life styles), feeling of uncertainty and insecurity, fast running life, competition in every fields, poor hygiene are the main factors for malfunctioning of mind & body. In this article, we have tried to enlighten some

of the possible links between stress and constipation.

Constipation is a disease condition resembling to *Vibandha* described in Ayurved. It refers to bowel movements that are infrequent or hard to pass and is a general term used to indicate fewer bowel movements, Solidified hard stools, painful defecation and feeling of bloating, abdominal discomfort or incomplete elimination. Constipation is a common cause of painful defecation.

Stress is defined as “a state of mental or emotional strain or tension resulting from adverse or demanding circumstances”. The body reacts in a very unique way, as in such circumstances, the afflicted person may undergo severe diarrhea that completely disrupts the regularity of the sufferer’s bowel movements, which would then be followed by a bout of constipation.

**Aspects of Stress and Constipation**

- Constipation occurs when the large intestine absorbs too much water from the stool with the result dry and hard stools are passed. It may also be due to inadequate

contraction of bowel walls to expel the stool and waste product. It occurs due to Poor diet (low fiber diet). Less mobility and lack of exercise. Ageing, stress and travel. Ignoring the urge to defecate. Inadequate fluid intake are also the predisposing factors.

- Stress can also lead to constipation. When psychological stress leads to physical symptoms, they are known as somatic symptoms.
- The effects that stress hormones have on the body can cause constipation. In addition, when a person is stressed, they are more likely to eat an unhealthy diet, get less exercise or sleep, or forget to stay hydrated. These factors can lead to constipation.
- In stressful situations, the body's adrenal glands release a hormone called epinephrine, which plays a role in the so-called fight-or-flight response. It causes the body to divert blood flow from the intestines toward vital organs, such as the heart, lungs, and brain. As a result, intestinal movement slows down, and constipation can occur.
- While eating, the neurons that line digestive tract signal the intestines to contract and digest the food. When person is under stress, this digestive process can slow down to a crawl. If the stress is severe or long-term, symptoms such as stomach pain and constipation can become chronic.
- Stress can also cause inflammation to occur in gastrointestinal tract, increasing constipation and worsening existing inflammatory conditions.
- **Age related aspect:Old age:** *Vibandha* is caused by aggravated *vata dosha* in old age, along with decreased physiological functions

of the body in old age constipation is caused due to increased medicinal intake such as NSAID'S, calcium channel blockers, anticholinergic drugs, calcium supplements, decreased intake of fluids and fibre in diet, metabolic factors, neurological diseases like Parkinson's disease, depression, stroke in old age results in decreased intestinal motility. Globally, prevalence of constipation in community dwelling elderly people is 50% and 74% in nursing home residents.

- Stress causes increased intestinal permeability. This permeability allows inflammatory compounds to come into the intestines, which can lead to a feeling of abdominal fullness — a common complaint among people who struggle with constipation.
- Under chronic stress, central nervous system will continuously interpret as being under constant physical threat and the continued slow movement in gut will translate into constipation becoming a chronic condition as well, causing physical and mental duress.

## DISCUSSION

- Stress may affect normal healthy bacteria in the gut. Research has not confirmed this theory, but many people believe that stress may reduce the number of healthy gut bacteria in the body, thus slowing digestion.
- Ayurved states that these three layers can't exist without each other or we can say that these components are strongly dependent upon each other because body is the source for bonding and mind is for

meditation to connect with the divine soul.

**Management approaches** Treating stress-related constipation some of the best ways to relieve constipation include

**Preventive Aspects:**

- Consumption of light and easily digestible high fiber diet.
- Intake of plenty of fluids and water (minimum 2-3 lt. per day)
- Practicing regular exercise.
- Lifestyle Management.
- **Yogic Practices** are beneficial in constipation.
- Alcohol, cigarettes, and foods high in sugar and fat can all increase the risk of constipation and stress. Avoiding or limiting these items may improve both symptoms.

**Curative Aspects:**

<sup>1,2</sup> **Basti Chikitsa:** In Ayurveda, *basti* or medicated enema is considered as *ardhchikitsa* for vitiated *vata dosha*. Due to *Basti* there is *shodhan of pakwashayastha mala & sthanik dosha* which leads to *Shaman of Vata dosha*. *Basti stays at Pakwashaya* and starts its action from there. *Pakwashaya* is the natural abode of *Vayu*. *Basti* conquers the vitiated *Vata* in its *PrakrutaSthana* by which *Vata* dwelling in other parts of the body is automatically conquered. *Basti* removes *Malasanghata* and thus maintains the *Anulomagati of ApanaVayu*. This further helps in regulation of *Samana & VyanaVayu*. *Vata* is vitiated by *Laghu, Ruksha, Sheeta etc.Gunas*. *AnuvasanaBasti* (medicated oil Enema) with its *Snigdha Guna* destroys *Rukshata, with Guru Guna, Laghuta* and with *Ushna Guna, Sheetata of Vata*.

**Shiro Basti:** The word *shiro* means “head” and *basti* means “to retain” hence the process of retaining the medicated/herbal oil with the help of a leather cap over the shir pradesh (head region) is known as the shiro basti.

Identifying the sources of stress that may lead to constipation might be particularly helpful for people with a history of trauma or mental health conditions, such as depression or anxiety.

**CONCLUSION**

Stress can lead to constipation in several ways. Stress hormones directly influence bowel movements by affecting bodily processes. In addition, people are more likely to have a poor diet, drink too little water, and get less exercise when stressed, which can cause constipation. Anxiety and heightened emotions can cause or make constipation worse. A lifestyle based in harmony is a stress – free lifestyle. Ayurveda applies its principles to both the mind and the body. Though the practices of meditation and yoga, Ayurveda helps a person expand their perception of themselves and how they relate to the world around them. While so many people are plagued with fear, anger, anxiety and / or depression, Ayurveda helps people to come to the realization that life can be and is beautiful.

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