

Food Pyramid According to Persian Medicine's Point of View and its Comparison with Modern Medicine

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Dear Editor

From the perspective of Iranian traditional medicine, food is a common name for eatables beverages that are produced good blood ("Saleh") and used as a substitute for depleted food ("Badala Ma Yatahallal"). In addition, food is included the eatable things which humans eat when they are hungry, in order to provide for their body requirements. Because, the human body in different conditions and stages of life, requires material replacement or consumptive food in order to maintain the body balance.¹

Food Pyramid in the modern medicine

The food pyramid is developed as a nutrition guide for healthy persons over the age of two years. The guide stresses eating a wide variety of foods from the five major food groups while minimizing the intake of fats and sugars. The daily quantity of food from each group is represented by a triangular shape. The pyramid is composed of four levels.^{2,3}

1. The main floor and the base of the pyramid are related to Carbohydrates which include bread, rice, pasta, cereal, and all foods that are made of grain plants.

2. The second layer of the pyramid is divided into two categories that are related to foods that are made from plants. Fruits and vegetables are due to the presence of vitamins, minerals, and fiber.

3. The third layer of the pyramid, which is divided into two categories is related to two food groups that most of them are made from animals such as; milk, yogurt, cheese, meat, poultry, fish, eggs, beans, nuts. Foods of this class contain protein, calcium, iron, etc.

4. The top layer of the pyramid includes fats, oils, and sweets. Examples of this layer of foods are sauce, salad, kinds of oil, cream and margarine, sugar, soda, candy, and sweet dessert. These foods are high in calories and low in nutrients that should be included in the diet.

Food pyramid in ancient literature (Persian medicine)

Food Pyramid from the perspective of different period's philosophers according to various conditions seems to have changed. However, it has largely been preserved as a whole.

Razi, the Persian physician, philosopher and alchemist in his book (Manafeol-Aghzeih) reports and advises that the main foods of people are as follows:

Since the main meal of people is bread, water, and other drinks and meat as well, and almost of their meal is composed of these materials, I would like to start my advice with this food. The author of Kholast-al-tajarob had attractive descriptions of the diet of people in this country: People are very long-lived which has often been healthy. And, their meal for their whole life was based on different flour (Barley, wheat, maize, peas, and beans),

sometimes different rice, bread, yogurt, yogurt drink (Doogh), and vinegar.^{4,5}

Naser Al-Hokama has reported an eloquent expression: Therefore, it is obligatory upon the people who would preserve their health that limits their food to clean wheat bread (that does not contain rotten things) and derived from proper cultivation without any pest and damage, and Ambar of Gilan rice with the good smell and Chanpay of Shiraz and Peshawar rice which protects the health and makes life longer, and should not mix with the Wheat Shilm(black) because it would make intoxicant and corrupt in tempered, and the one-year-old Lamb meat without sickness and six months yearling and one-year-old calf and partridge and francolin and chicks and rooster and tiny fresh fish meat such as white fish and Salmon fish and like them and any moderately good and fast digest meat, on the condition that all of them are not closed and confined but also are moving in the pasture and good grasslands and partridge and francolin should be newly hunted and not be confined to cages. For the sweets and cookies, they should be mild, and better to mix the sugar and almond together then eat them, because the sweetness is pleasant for the liver. Juicy fruits such as figs and grapes are useful before food and subacid pomegranate after food and melon and ripe dates and like them between two meals of food. Residents of countries, that produce these fruits, can use them. Otherwise, if they come from overseas importing dates or other fruits is not appropriate. Because it is harmful and causes malignant diseases and some of these fruits are similar to the food which was mentioned above. This policy on food is suitable for healthy people.⁶

From the perspective of physicians in the past, the Food pyramid of patients was conducted under special rules, and this issue was one of the most detailed parts of the treatment and is not only set based on the quantity or quality but also there are other indices.⁷

As we mentioned above the food pyramid in the ancient sources was different in various conditions such as age, climate, temperament, and the seasons, it should be noted that this dietary diversity is a valuable hint in this regard.

Discussion

According to the traditional Persian medicine's point of

view and its comparison with views of modern medicine, it is revealed that Iranian former sages have pointed out the principles of proper nutrition principles precisely and delicacy.

This affirmed their knowledge and insight during those years. An important point that has been considered in the principles of foods and drinks strategies is that eating and drinking are not a separate issue from the series of six essential topics "SetahZaroriah" that include motion and rest, sleep and wakefulness, sensual moods, retention, vomiting and air and each of these cases can have positive or negative effects on the performance of the others. All of these cases indicate that the food pyramid was worthwhile in relation to the five above principles and should have special consideration for the pyramid of life which is mentioned above.⁸

Nowadays, due to the increase in chronic diseases such as metabolic syndrome, cardiovascular diseases, and cancers, in the new food pyramid, sport and physical activity have a very prominent place and it is considered as a basis to adjust the dietary; this case has been approved largely in current studies.

In the basics of nutrition in ancient literature, nutrition resource and their type were very important and they did not consider only the amount of some indicators such as levels of carbohydrates or fats, and proteins, therefore choosing the appropriate food for having a healthy life is very important. Therefore, they emphasize the consumption and usage of some foods.^{9,10}

Conclusion

According to the current food pyramid, the use of carbohydrates, meat, vegetables, and fruit categories has been considered, but the Persian Medicine's sages have been regarded as food consumption pattern and food pyramid in a particular format. Temperament, age, gender, climate conditions, health and sickness, seasons, and special conditions such as pregnancy and breastfeeding are the cases that must be considered in setting the food pyramid, and these changes in the dietary merely are not quantitative but also had special attention to quality and food interactions, and moreover, they recommended to use different types of particular food at the proper time; for example, drinking milk among young

people in spring and among older ones in warm seasons, or they recommended to use more cold-natured foods in warm seasons and vice versa.

Nowadays, regarding an increase in chronic diseases, the food pyramid has changed in recent studies and physical activity is added to the base of the pyramid as well; these cases among the sick people can be adjusted according to particular rules and with further sensitivity and accuracy. Although many people use the foods just because of their cost (cheap), availability, and is delicious. In the Iranian Traditional Medicine, food is not eaten just to fill the stomach, in addition to the special importance in protecting the health, providing the required energy for metabolism and regeneration of tissue and finally on the whole-body either physical or mental effects. Therefore sensitivity and accuracy in food selection for temperament balance, and providing the body's requirement as the material replacement has an extremely important role.

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Abbreviations

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