

## REVIEW ON WHOLESOME DIET IN PREGNANCY- AN AYURVEDIC PERSPECTIVE

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### ABSTRACT

Ayurveda, the ancient life science emphasizes on prevention and treatment of diseases. Ideal food or wholesome diet is the key to attain and sustain health. The food which is wholesome and soothing to the body as well as maintains health is *pathya* (wholesome), Ayurvedic literature quotes “No other medicine like *pathya* exists and *aushadha* (Medicine) without *pathya* is futile”. A lot of physical and psychological changes occur in Women’s body during Pregnancy. Proper diet and regimen during antenatal period is very significant for the health of Mother and the baby. Antenatal care aims at effective transition to positive labour and childbirth and ultimately to a positive experience of motherhood. *Pathya Ahara* (Wholesome Diet) in Ayurveda generally refers to wholesome food containing all 6 rasa if consumed in proper quantity according to appropriate season and capacity of digestion bestows Satisfaction, Nourishment, Steadiness, Intellect, Valor, Strength, Appealing voice, Immunity, Brilliance, Sustains life, Luster and Cleverness. This Article aims to review the diet and regimen to be followed during pregnancy from the Ayurvedic literature.

**KEYWORDS:** Ayurveda, Diet, *Pathya*, Pregnancy, *Garbhinicharya*, Ante-natal care

### INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda being the ancient life science highlights on prevention of diseases. Health of an Individual can be achieved when there is balance in the three pillars of life also known as *Trayopastambha* which are *Ahara* (Healthy Diet), *Nidra* (Proper Sleep) and *Brahmacharya* (Celibacy)<sup>1</sup>. *Ahara* is not only the basic need of life but the health or diseased state of a person depends on the food and regimen followed. *PathyaAhara* (Wholesome Diet) in Ayurveda generally refers to wholesome food containing all 6 rasa if consumed in proper quantity according to appropriate season and capacity

of digestion bestows Satisfaction, Nourishment, Steadiness, Intellect, Valor, Strength, etc<sup>2</sup>. A woman undergoes quite a lot of physical and psychological changes from womb to tomb. But drastic changes happen in a pregnant woman so foremost care should be taken along with proper diet and regimen for the well-being of both the lives. Antenatal care aims at effective transition to positive labour and childbirth and ultimately to a positive experience of motherhood<sup>3</sup>. Maternal Mortality Ratio of India is 130 per 100 000 live births in 2016<sup>4</sup>. The food ingested by pregnant women turns

to *Ahararasa* (Nutrient essence) after digestion which is responsible for nourishment of body and helps in growth and development of fetus. This *Ahara rasa* in *Garbhini* (Pregnant Woman) is divided into 3 portions, one for the nourishment of the *garbhini*, second for growth and nourishment of the fetus, and final portion for the formation of stanya<sup>1</sup>. So there is a crucial requirement of proper and *satmya* (Congenial) diet practice during pregnancy. In Ayurveda, the *Pathya* and *Apathya* (Unwholesome) to be followed during pregnancy is ably described along with monthly regimen for nine months. There are even references of appropriate diet to be taken before conception for a healthy progeny<sup>1</sup>. During the first trimester of pregnancy stress is laid on *garbhasthapan* (stability of pregnancy) and nourishment of *rasa* and *rakthadhatu*, hence *jaleeyadravya* (liquid diet) is advocated which gets absorbed through *upasnehana*<sup>1,5</sup>. During the second trimester, the extremities are differentiated, organogenesis and development of sensory and motor nervous

system take place, the mother may have craving for certain food which is deficient in her body or needed for the baby and the drugs which helps in strengthening and nourishing are used along with proper solid food<sup>6</sup>. Third trimester marks the completion of organogenesis and the preparation for labor, Ayurvedic literature advocates preparation of the birth canal through different treatments including *Basti* (Medicated enema) and *Yoni Pichu* (Vaginal Tampon)<sup>7,8</sup>.

### Garbhinicharya

*Ahara* is the source of energy for all living beings. The proper diet will reduce the risk of ill-health. In Ayurveda, the importance of *pathya* is explained. *Pathya* refers to wholesome diet which is good for the body as well as mind. Following *Pathya* during pregnancy is extremely important. In accordance with place, time, capability of digestion and dose, *Navaneeta* (Butter), *ghrita* (Ghee), *ksheera* (Milk), *suswadu* (Sweet), *drava* (Liquid) and *Snigdha* (Unctuous) diet are considered as general *Pathya* during pregnancy<sup>7,8</sup>.

Table No.1: General *Pathya* and *Apathya* during Pregnancy<sup>7</sup>

Property	Pathya	Apathya
Rasa	Madhura, Amla, Tiktha	Katu, Kashaya, Lavana
Veerya	Sheetha	Ushna
Guna	Snigdha, Tarpana	Teekshna, Guru, Pichila, Abhishyandi and Apatarpana

Table No.2: Monthwise diet regimen during Pregnancy

### 1<sup>st</sup> Month

<i>Charaka</i> <sup>1</sup>	Non Medicated milk frequently in desired quantity, <i>Satmya</i> food should be taken during day and night
<i>Sushruta</i> <sup>7</sup>	Sweet, cold, liquid diet
<i>AshtangaSangraha</i> <sup>11</sup>	Medicated milk which is cooled and in desired quantity can be taken frequently. First 12 days ghee extracted from milk and medicated with <i>shaliparni</i> and <i>palasha</i> is advised. Use of water boiled with silver and gold and cooled can be taken as after drink. Sweet, cold, liquid and

	congenial diet
<i>Harita Samhita</i> <sup>10</sup>	<i>Madhuyashti, Parushaka, Madhupushpa</i> with <i>Navaneeta</i> and <i>Madhu</i> followed by sweetened milk

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Month

<i>Charaka</i> <sup>1</sup>	Milk Medicated with <i>Madhuraaushadha</i>
<i>Sushruta</i> <sup>7</sup>	Sweet, cold, liquid diet
<i>AshtangaSangraha</i> <sup>11</sup>	Milk Medicated with <i>Madhuraaushadha</i>
<i>Harita Samhita</i> <sup>10</sup>	Sweetened milk with <i>kakoli</i>

### 3<sup>rd</sup> month

<i>Charaka</i> <sup>1</sup>	Milk along with honey and ghee
<i>Sushruta</i> <sup>7</sup>	Sweet, cold, liquid diet
<i>AshtangaSangraha</i> <sup>11</sup>	Milk with honey and ghee.
<i>Harita Samhita</i> <sup>10</sup>	<i>Krishara</i> (prepared with rice and pulses)

### 4<sup>th</sup> Month

<i>Charaka</i> <sup>1</sup>	Butter extracted from milk in the quantity of one <i>aksha</i>
<i>Sushruta</i> <sup>7</sup>	Cooked <i>shashtika</i> rice with curd, pleasant food with milk, butter and meat of wild animals.
<i>AshtangaSangraha</i> <sup>11</sup>	Milk with honey and ghee.
<i>Harita Samhita</i> <sup>10</sup>	Medicated cooked rice
<i>Bhela Samhita</i> <sup>9</sup>	Milk with Butter

### 5<sup>th</sup> Month

<i>Charaka</i> <sup>1</sup>	Ghee extracted from milk
<i>Sushruta</i> <sup>7</sup>	Cooked <i>shashtika</i> rice with milk, <i>jangalamamsa</i> , food mixed with milk and ghee
<i>AshtangaSangraha</i> <sup>11</sup>	Ghee extracted from Milk
<i>Harita Samhita</i> <sup>10</sup>	<i>Payasa</i> (Rice cooked with milk and sweetened)
<i>Bhela Samhita</i> <sup>9</sup>	<i>Yavagu</i>

### 6<sup>th</sup> Month

<i>Charaka</i> <sup>1</sup>	Ghee extracted from milk medicated with <i>Madhura</i> drugs
<i>Sushruta</i> <sup>7</sup>	Ghee or rice gruel medicated with <i>gokshura</i>
<i>AshtangaSangraha</i> <sup>11</sup>	Ghee extracted from milk medicated with <i>Madhura</i> drugs
<i>Harita Samhita</i> <sup>10</sup>	Sweetened Curd
<i>Bhela Samhita</i> <sup>9</sup>	Ghee extracted from milk

### 7<sup>th</sup> Month

<i>Charaka</i> <sup>1</sup>	Ghee extracted from milk medicated with <i>Madhura</i> drugs
<i>Sushruta</i> <sup>7</sup>	Ghee medicated with <i>vidarigandhadi</i> group of drugs
<i>AshtangaSangraha</i> <sup>11</sup>	Ghee extracted from milk medicated with <i>Madhura</i> drugs
<i>Harita Samhita</i> <sup>10</sup>	<i>Ghritakhanda</i> (Sweet dish)

### 8<sup>th</sup> Month

Charaka <sup>1</sup>	Yavagu prepared along with milk and ghee to be taken frequently
Sushruta <sup>7</sup>	Asthapanaand Anuvasana then Snigdhayavagu, mamsa rasa
AshtangaSangraha <sup>11</sup>	Yavagu prepared along with milk and ghee to be taken frequently, Aasthapanabastiand Anuvasana then Snigdhayavagu, mamsa rasa
AshtangaHridaya <sup>8</sup>	Liquid diet prepared with ghee and milk. Anuvasana and Niruhabasti
Harita Samhita <sup>10</sup>	Ghritapuraka

**9<sup>th</sup> Month**

Charaka <sup>1</sup>	Madhuraoushadhasidhatailanuvasana and yonipichu
AshtangaSangraha <sup>11</sup>	Anuvasana and Yonipichu
AshtangaHridaya <sup>8</sup>	Meat soup with cooked rice and ghee. Anuvasanabasti and Yoni picchu. Daily bath with cold decoction of vatahara drugs
Bhela Samhita <sup>9</sup>	Anuvasanabasti

Benefits of Month-wise regimen<sup>4,11</sup>  
The Pregnant lady remains healthy and delivers offspring possessing good health, energy, etc at proper time. Ashtanga Sangraha kara narrates the pregnant lady's

abdomen, sacral region, flanks, and back become soft, Vayu (air) moves into the right path placenta expulsion happens on time.  
Table No.3: Properties of Dravyas used in Ante-natal care

S. No.	Dravya	Properties
1	Milk <sup>4</sup>	swadu , sheeta, snigdha, guru, gunassimilar toojas, bestjeevaniya, rasayanam
2	Navaneeta <sup>4</sup>	Sangrahi, Deepanam, hridyam, good ingrahini, arsha, aruchi
3	Shashtika shali <sup>4</sup>	Tridoshaghna, Snigdha, Aguru, Madhura, Sthirathmaka
4	Ghrita <sup>4</sup>	Sheeta, Madhura rasa andpaka, providessmriti, budhi, ojas, agni
5	Vidarigandhadi gana <sup>7</sup>	pittavatahara, jeevaniyaandmadhuradrugs. Indicated inshosha, gulma, angamarda, urdwaswasa, kasa
6	Gokshura <sup>12</sup>	sheeta, swadu, balakrit, bastishodhana, madhura, deepana, vrishya
7	Madhuyashti <sup>12</sup>	Sheeta, guru, swadu, balavarnakrit, shukrala, keshya, swarya, mitigates visha, chardi, trishna, glani, kshaya

Table No.4: KsheerapakaMonth-wise<sup>13</sup>

Months	Dravya
1	Bala
2	Lakshmana
3	Bruhathi
4	Amshumathi
5	Amritha
6	Nidigdhika
7	Yavaka

8	<i>Morata</i>
9	<i>Shatavari</i>

**General Treatment for Garbhini<sup>4, 7</sup>** – *Mridu*, *Madhura*, *Shishira*, *Sukha* and *sukumraprayaashadhaahara* and *achara*, no *shodhana* is indicated except in case of emergency. A *garbhini* should be protected just like a pot full of oil till the brim without spilling even a single drop, implying utmost care to be taken.

### DISCUSSION

The Diet and regimen followed by a pregnant woman during gestational period have direct impact on the health of the mother and baby. The antenatal care in Ayurveda emphasizes on congenial diet and proper regimen along with few treatments during the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> month of pregnancy. Milk and milk products stand out among the diet regimen as per Ayurvedic literature. Milk is a complete food and has a great concentration of nutrients like protein, calcium, phosphorus, potassium, iodine, vitamin B12, and riboflavin<sup>14</sup>. Studies have shown the consumption of cow's milk increases blood concentration of insulin growth factor 1 (IGF-1) which is an important determinant of growth during childhood<sup>15</sup>. Milk is one of the best *Jeevaniya* and *rasayanadravya* and the qualities of milk are same as *Ojas* so by the rule of *samanyasidhanta* it increases *ojas*<sup>4</sup>. Milk is indicated throughout the Pregnancy. Ghee possess sweet in taste and cool and also imparts *ojas*, *agni*, etc, which is required during the gestation period<sup>4</sup>.

During first 3 months of gestation, the pregnant woman experience indigestion, vomiting and nausea, so solid food intake is difficult. In Ayurveda, sweet, cold and

liquid diet is described for the first trimester to counter the indigestion issues. Sweet drugs or *Madhura rasa dravyas* are described in most of the months in *Garbhinicharya*, *Madhura rasa* being anabolic helps in maintenance of health of both Mother and fetus<sup>5</sup>. Fourth month onwards Muscle tissue growth occurs requiring protein and other supplements which is supplied through meat soup and through pulses<sup>5</sup>. Due to water accumulation towards the end of second trimester, pregnant women experience pedal edema and other related health issues that can be countered by using *Gokshura* which possess diuretic, immunomodulatory, anti-diabetic activity<sup>5, 16</sup>. *Vidarigandhadi* group of drugs having *madhuradravyas* are anabolic in nature and also is *brumhanawhich* helps in maintaining health<sup>7</sup>.

An observational single blind clinical study of *Garbhinicharya* (Ante Natal care) in its totality carried out at Bangalore<sup>17</sup>. All the phases of pregnancy were incidence free. Commonly observed health problems like indigestion, aches and pains were not observed. All the cases had onset of labour pain in the appropriate time<sup>17</sup>.

### CONCLUSION

Ayurveda emphasizes on the Prevention than cure. To be healthy during a life time proper diet and regimen is must. Pregnant women should be taken care of with more precautions so the *pathya* during gestation is very significant. A healthy progeny is the future of the nation. The health which is not limited to physical but also mental, social and spiritual can be attained by the practices

mentioned in Ayurveda. The diet and regimen for a healthy progeny starts even before the conception which is not followed nowadays. The vast knowledge of Ayurveda enables to bring health in all living beings.

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