

POST-CONCEPTION CARE THROUGH AYURVEDA

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ABSTRACT

Post-Conception Care is a type of preventive health care. It has been mentioned in Ayurveda as *Garbhini-paricharya* thousands of years ago. Pregnancy and childbirth are a special phase in any women's life. It can also be a challenging phase of life as the mother's body goes through numerous changes in order to create and support the development of the new life. It has been also called as Antenatal Care or simply a Pregnant Woman Care. Ayurveda prescribes some set of guidelines which can help make this period more enjoyable and easy for the women. There have been advised specific *ahara* (nutrition), *vihara* and *aushadh* which a woman should follow during the different stages of pregnancy. Such advises aim to support the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual aspects of both the mother and her baby. Such recommendations regarding the general management of Pregnancy have been given in both Charaka and Sushruta Samhitas under the subject of *Garbhini-Vyakarana*. The physician is cautioned to be very vigilant during the management of pregnancy. If a cup filled with oil right up to the brim is to be carried without spilling even a single drop, every step has to be taken with care. Ayurveda advises the same degree of care and attention in the management of pregnant women.

Keywords: *Garbhini-paricharya, ahara, vihara, aushadh*

INTRODUCTION

Post-conception care is a type of preventive health care which should be given to all pregnant ladies. The aim of such care is to treat and prevent potential health problems throughout the course of the pregnancy and to promote healthy lifestyle which benefits both mother and the growing foetus. So, post-conception care also called antenatal care is a need of every pregnant lady. This specific care of a pregnant woman has been given a special term in our Ayurveda classics as *Garbhini-Paricharya*.

Pregnancy is a joyous time of life for every woman. Healthy progeny and safe conferment is a dream of every pregnant woman. Also it is associated with physiological, immunological and endocrinal adaptations of body functions for benefit of both mother and the growing baby inside.

Garbhini- Paricharya refers to Post-conception care with special recommendations of *ahara* (special diet plan), *vihara* (normal daily activities and therapeutic procedures) and *aushadh* (medicines). So *Garbhini-*

paricharya if properly followed would result in good health of the foetus, smooth and minimal or painless delivery and also good health of the mother so that she may withstand the strains of labour and the post-partum phase.

Objectives

- To promote and maintain the health of mother
- To prevent the fear and anxiety during delivery.
- To facilitate healthy growth and development of the foetus.
- To minimize the complications during pregnancy and labour.

Different aspects of Post-Conception Care

Aahara management

Aahara (diet) affects the expectant mother and the growing foetus in all dimensions like physical, behavioural and psychological setup. For the achievement of full term healthy baby, a proper nutrition is essential. An inadequate and improper diet and life routine may lead to any defect or even death of the implanted foetus. The pregnant lady's diet should be increased in quantity as well as quality.

The diet of pregnant women should be balanced in terms of all essential food factors like calories, minerals, vitamins and others.

The dietetic requirements of expectant mother should be according to her place of living, seasonal variations and digestive capacity etc.

Mother's diet should contain all six rasas which give strength and good complexion to the foetus. In Ayurveda, it has been said that whatever diet a pregnant woman takes, that becomes congenial to the foetus, so she should always take healthy diet. Fresh green leafy vegetables, fruits, whole grains, cereals, dairy products are the mainstay of pregnant woman's diet. The pregnant lady should always use butter, ghee, milk (medicated with *Jeevaneeya* and *Madhur varg* drugs like *Shatavari*, *Madhuyashti* and *Kakoli* etc). Sweet, cold, liquid or palatable diet should be taken in first three months preferably like fresh juices, coconut water, flavoured milk, buttermilk etc. Milk provides nourishment and stability to the foetus.

Wherever *ghrita* is mentioned, it means preferably cow's *ghrita*. It has *jeevaniya* properties which is good for *ojo-varadhan* and *varna-prasadan*. Honey works as immunomodulator. *Jangal mansarasa* is an excellent source of proteins. It acts as antioxidant, supplies good number of calories, helps in muscular tissue formation of the foetus and iron, beta-carotene formation, helps in blood formation.

In second trimester, *Shashtik* rice with milk (*kheer*), rice with curd, milk with honey, milk with butter and milk with ghee can be given. Also, soup made with different cereals mainly *moong* for vegetarians and soup made of wild animal's meat (*mansarasa*) give more calories to pregnant women who prefer non-vegetarian diet.

In eighth month of pregnancy, sweet gruel made of rice, sooji, wheat, vermicelli should be taken. Use of dried grapes, soaked almonds, *anjeer*, *khajoor* with milk is also beneficial in third trimester.

Following Ayurvedic regimen from conception till delivery will nourish the pregnant lady and help in proper growth and development of the foetus as well. Some food items like packed juices, bakery products, frozen food, junk food, aerated drinks, papaya, kiwi, aloe vera etc. should be avoided.

Vihar (lifestyle and therapeutic procedures)

According to Ayurveda, some special guidelines of daily activities and therapeutic procedure should be followed by a pregnant woman. This comes under *vihar*.

1. Personal care:

- To wear clean and comfortable garments, unbroken ornaments and flat heeled shoes.
- Excessive sexual intercourse during early and late pregnancy should be avoided.
- Lifting heavy things or remaining in a bending posture should be avoided.
- Travelling in a jerky vehicle on rough roads should be avoided.
- Daily bathing will not only refresh and relax but also helps prevent infections.
- *Abhyanga* – Massage with sesame oil on all parts of the body with light strokes and circular

strokes, very gently with oil to the abdomen. Massage of the nipples is also recommended after 4th months.

2. Emotional support

- The psychological status and emotional activities are also responsible for healthy mother and foetal outcome.
- A pregnant lady should be provided with a pleasing environment.
- The behaviour of husband and other family members should be good, loving and caring which helps in the maintenance of pregnancy.
- Any type of mental stress should be avoided.
- Pregnant lady should perform religious rites and she should be supported with positive thinking and meditation also.

3. Rest and sleep:

- Rest is especially needed in the first two and last two months of pregnancy. Rest should be frequent and before feeling tired.
- Adequate rest with foot-end elevation position and left lateral position is more beneficial.
- Pregnant lady should be in bed for about 10 hrs (8 hrs at night and 2 hrs in noon)

4. Exercise:

- Regular exercise during pregnancy can improve health and reduces the risk of excess weight gain, back-pain and it may make the process of delivery easier.
- Moderate exercise during pregnancy can improve her stamina, decrease fatigue and constipation, boost mood and energy level enhance sleep and improve muscle strength.
- Walking, indoor stationary cycling, prenatal yoga and low impact aerobics are suitable activities during pregnancy. These are safe to perform in uncomplicated pregnancies and the lady can do them as long as she feels comfortable, but no overdo allowed.
- Meditation may also be done for mental and physical relaxation

5. Tobacco and alcohol restriction:

- Smoking or tobacco chewing either before or during pregnancy is associated with a wide range of poor pregnancy outcomes and increases risk of pregnancy complications.
- When a pregnant women drinks alcohol, it also enters the bloodstreams of the foetus and when excessive amounts of alcohol are consumed they can have damaging effects on the foetus.

6. Local treatment on abdomen and breasts:

- During the seventh month, the abdominal skin gets stretched due to growing foetus and produces itching and striations on abdomen and breast which are known as '*Kikkis*'. This should be treated by local application of the pulp of sandalwood, lotus, *neem*, basil and *manjishtha* medicated oil or butter.
- Irrigation of abdomen and breasts should be done with decoction of either *patol*, *nimb*, *manjishtha* for cleansing and anti-itching action.

7. *Asthapan Vasti*:

- In third trimester of pregnancy, most women feel constipation due to the pressure of gravid uterus over the bowel and as an effect of high progesterone level. For cleaning of the retained faeces due to prolonged constipation and for *anuloman* of *apana vata*, *Asthapan vasti* has been advised by acharya Sushruta in eighth month of pregnancy. Also *asthapana vasti* helps balance the *apana vata* which is a key for maintaining the pregnancy as well as smooth delivery of the baby at the time of labour. *Asthapana vasti* means administration of drugs decoction through anus. Decoction of *badri* mixed with *bala*, *atibala*, *shatapushpa*, *palala*, (pestle sesame seeds), milk, curd, *mastu* (sour butter), oil, salt, *madanphal*, honey and *ghruta* should be given.

8. *Anuvasana Vasti*:

- It should be given in eighth and ninth month. *Anuvasana vasti* means administration of medicated oil prepared with the drugs of *madhur varga* and milk through anal route. This *vasti* is

also known as unctuous enema. The body of a pregnant woman thus treated becomes unctuous. She gains strength and delivers vaginally without complications. This procedure also balances *apana vata*. After *anuvasana vasti*, she should be given unctuous gruels and meat-soup of wild animals. This type of enema should be given to the woman in bent or humpback position because in this position the passage becomes dilated and the medicines enter properly.

9. Vaginal tamponing:

- In ninth month, vaginal tamponing with medicated oil like *Bala tail*, *Ksheerabala tail*, *Kadammash tail* should be given.

- Vaginal tampon of this oil should be given for lubrication of *garbha-sthana* and *garbha-marga* (uterus, vaginal canal and perineum). It also destroys pathogenic bacteria of vaginal flora and thus prevents puerperal sepsis.
- Regular use of vaginal tampon till delivery might influence autonomic fibres governing myometrium and help in regulating their functions thus help in normal labour.

10. Amulet for pregnant woman:

- The pregnant woman should wear the amulet made of *Trivrit* in her waist. It acts by special effect known as '*Prabhava*'. This procedure or act will be beneficial for maintenance of pregnancy as *Garbhasthapak*.

Table 1: *Aushadh* (Medicines)

Aindri, brahmi, shiva, arishta	Rebuild the reproductive tissues (Garbhasthapak)
Shatavari, Vidari, Yashtimadhu, Kakoli	Life building herbs (Jeevaniya)-these have anabolic properties and also prevent IUGR
Ashwagandha	It is a general neurotonic and nutritive, is good for weak pregnant women
Brahmi, Jatamansi	Can be taken after the third month to help calm down the nervous system and is also considered as sustainer of pregnancy
Shatapushpa churna	In small quantities is beneficial for its mild carminative and anti-spasmodic action
Gokshura kwatha	Acts as a diuretic and hence relieves pedal oedema, should be used in six-month pregnancy onwards, also helps to prevent toxemia of pregnancy and urinary tract infection
Medicated ghrut like Phalghrit, Somaghrit, Shata-varighrit, Prithakaparnyadi-ghrita	Has anabolic property thus helps for growth of the foetus properly
Madiphal rasayan and Kushmandavalehya	Give relief in morning sickness and hyperacidity
Punarnava-mandoor, Dhatri-loha	Beneficial for pregnant lady for treating anaemia
Praval-pishti with Gulkand	Calcium-supplementation
Munakka, triphala churna, isabgol and Gulkand.	Constipation in pregnancy can be treated with these
Agnisandipan churna	Given before meal in anorexia and indigestion
Almond oil, Coconut oil, Alovera gel and Camphor mixture	Should be applied locally for preventing itching and stretch-marks
Garbhapala rasa	Should be given in pregnancy since conception till delivery, is beneficial for both mother and the foetus
Vaginal tamponing with Garbhavillas taila	Beneficial in antenatal bleeding as it acts as Garbhasthapana
Bala tail, Lakshadi tail	For abhyanga of pregnant woman, pacifies Vata

DISCUSSION

Dietetic and other regimens advocated in *samhitas* for pregnant lady are of great significance. Special type health care of pregnant lady helps in the elimination of major waste products of the body, the metabolic changes result in proper relaxation of genital area and its surrounding to accommodate the gradual growth of the foetus and promote the rigour throughout the pregnancy.

Use of cold, sweet, liquid rich diet and milk prevents dehydration and helps supply required nutrition in first trimester. *Garbhini-paricharya* considers milk as an ideal element of diet for pregnant woman as it is a rich source of calcium, lactose and butter-fat. Pregnant women should not get constipated, therefore mild laxatives and enema is recommended. Fourth month onwards, pregnant woman requires more protein which may be supplied by using meat-soup. Use of *Gokshur* in sixth month of pregnancy prevents water retention as well as pregnancy induced hypertension and other related complications. Medicated *ghrita* help in maintaining health of mother and foetus. Use of medicated enema in eighth month helps relieve constipation and in balancing *apana-vata* during pregnancy and at the time of labour.

Use of tampons of oil may soften vaginal passage so that delivery of baby becomes comparatively easy with less or no vaginal and perineal tear.

Anuvasana-vasti is recommended for lubrication of cervix, vaginal canal and perineum also.

Various types of *Garbhasthapak dravyas* are prescribed during pregnancy for proper development of the foetus.

Pregnant health care through Ayurveda is an important aspect in *Prasuti tantra* as it helps in the proper development of the foetus, its delivery, the health of the mother and facilitates easy delivery and healthy post-partum period.

Pregnant health care reflects on the quality and health of the offspring.

CONCLUSION

Post-conceptional care has been mentioned thousands of years ago in our Ayurvedic texts as *Garbhini-paricharya*. It is a type of preventive health care which has been recommended by WHO to provide every pregnant lady under the term Antenatal care. Proper diet and lifestyle management and various external and internal medicine administration are the different aspects of this Post-conceptional care. *Aahar* affects the health of both the expecting mother as well as the growing fetus. It should be balanced in all aspects. Dietetic requirements also vary according to the habitat, seasonal variations and digestive capacity of the pregnant lady. These all should be considered during the post-conceptional care. *Vihar* management is also equally important. She should be advised to take proper personal care. Emotional support, rest and sleep are equally important. Some sort of exercise should also be done. Addiction like tobacco, alcohol, beedi, etc. need to be strictly discouraged. In third trimester, *Asthanan* and *Anuvasan basti* can also be given. Though pregnancy is a physiological process, certain medicines (which do not harm the foetus) can be given according to the need of the patient. Thus, we conclude that proper post-conceptional care is very useful. And if properly followed, most of the time may result in a healthy outcome with little or no severe hazard to the lady. So, it is a need of the present world.

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