

SIMPLE DIETARY REFORMS FOR HEALTHY PREGNANCY AS PER ANCIENT TEXTS

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ABSTRACT

In the Ayurvedic classics it has been beautifully explained with a very good example that in order to achieve good quality grain, four factors i.e. *Beeja*, *Ambu*, *Kshetra* and *Kala* is important likewise to attain healthy child *Beeja* which are *Stree Artava* and *Purusha Shukra*, *Ambu* meaning *Aahara*, *Kshetra* i.e. *Garbhashaya* and *Kala* the *Rutukala* plays very important role. In this review article *Ambu* i.e. *Ahara* and its importance for healthy pregnancy and good nourishment and development of fetus is focused.

Keywords: *Masanumasika Pathya*, *Garbhini*

INTRODUCTION

Science is advancing daily with its new inventions, better facilities and making life much easier. On one hand science is acting as boon and making the lives easy but also it is bringing the side effects as curse. Many such curses can be enlisted like polycystic ovarian syndrome, thyroid disorders, etc and the common cause for all of this is stress, inappropriate diet, sleep and improper daily routine. One of the rising problems in pregnant women is spontaneous abortions and premature birth.

A study conducted in year 2016 showed that the prevalence of recurrent spontaneous abortions in India is 32%.¹ An estimated 15 million are born premature every year i.e. more than 1 in 10 babies and approximately 1 million children die each year due to complications of preterm birth². These problems can be handled or controlled very cost effec-

tively by following certain simple measures like following dietary regimen that have been mentioned in different Ayurvedic classical texts.

THE PREVENTIVE SOLUTION:

In Ayurveda texts it has been clearly described about the regimens for the *Garbhini* to follow and avoid few dietary habits for acquiring healthy baby. It has been mentioned in the *Brihat Trayi* as *Masanumasika Pathya* (month wise dietary regimen). So the dietary regimen described for every month is enlisted below.

DIETARY REGIMEN FOR FIRST MONTH

Having doubt of conception, from the first month itself she should take non-medicated milk repeatedly

in desired quantity. Congenial diet should be taken in morning and evening.³

During first month the pregnant woman should take medicated milk, timely in specific quantity i.e. the quantity which does not cause indigestion twice in morning as well as evening. Describing further for first twelve days lady should take *Ghrita* extracted from milk and medicated with *Saliparni* and *Palasa*. *Madhura*, *Sheeta*, liquid and congenial diet should be taken twice. Massage of oil should be avoided.⁴

According to Ayurveda Milk is *Kapha Vardhaka* & thus promotes development of embryo. Rich in proteins & increases blood supply helps in the growth & development of placenta. Rich in calcium & helps in development of breast & uterus. It also has Vitamin D which is necessary for calcium absorption in mother.

SECOND MONTH

In second month milk medicated with drugs of *Madhura Varga* should be taken.^{5,6}

- *Madhura* drugs are *Jeevaneeya* & *Kapha Vardhaka*, *Pittahara* & are *Garbhasthapaka Dravyas* like *Shatavari*, *Kakoli*, *Ksheera kakoli*, *Meda* etc. help in the development of fetal brain, growth of fetal body tissues. They also provide carbohydrates.

THIRD MONTH

Both *Charaka* and *Vagabhata* advices to take milk with honey and *Ghrita* in third month^{7,8}

- Honey acts as a free radical scavenger, increases immunity, has antibiotic property.

During the first trimester of pregnancy most women experience nausea and vomiting, thus cannot take proper diet. *Madhura Gana Dravyas* being anabolic will help in maintenance of proper health of mother and fetus.

During the first trimester stress is laid on stabilizing the pregnancy and nurturing the uterine bed through *Rasa* and *Rakta Dhatus*. The embryo gets nourishment directly by *Upsnehana*. Hence more *Jaleeya* substances such as juicy fruits, coconut water, milk are advocated. Also the use of *Garbhasthapaka*

Dravyas helps in implantation of embryo and thus prevents from the threat of abortion.

Use of *Sheeta* (*Sheeta Veerya*) and *Madhura* liquid diet along with milk will prevent dehydration and supply required nourishment.

- If milk may not be consumed or accepted in daily routine for its odour or taste it can modified by adding some taste inducers like *Shatavari*, *Chawanprash* etc

Therefore, even *Acharya Sushruta* says the use of *Madhura*, *Sheeta* and *Dravabahula* diet to be taken for first three months.⁹

FOURTH MONTH & FIFTH MONTH

In these two months *Acharyas* have mentioned to take Butter extracted from milk in one *Aksha Matra* i.e. two *Tola* 12 gms or milk with butter.^{10,11} Other food articles like Cooked *Sasti* rice with curd and any *Ahara* mixed with milk and butter, which acts as *Hridya* or pleasant to mind, also meat of animals of *Jangala Desha* also should be consumed.¹²

SIXTH MONTH

From the fourth to the sixth month, drugs, which give strength to the uterine muscles and nourishment to the embryo, are advised e.g. *Ashwagandha* and *Guduchi*.

Ghrita medicated with the drugs of *Madhura Gana* should be consumed.^{13,14} They help to prevent intrauterine growth retardation (IUGR). Nourishment starts through the umbilical cord by the *Kedar Kulya* method. The diet should be one of rice, milk, butter and Ghee. Fruits such as *Amalaki* etc are advised. The drugs prescribed like Milk, Butter, Meat, *Shastika Shali* also fulfill the need.

In the second trimester i.e., fourth month onwards-muscular tissue of fetus grows sufficiently requiring more protein, which is supplied by use of meat or meat soup.

By the end of second trimester most women suffer from edema of feet and other complications of water accumulation. So, *Ghrita* or rice gruel medicated with *Gokshura* may be taken.¹⁵ Use of *Gokshura* a

good diuretic in sixth month will prevent retention of water as well as its complications.

SEVENTH MONTH

Acharya Charaka and Vagbhat have advocated the use of Same diet as of sixth month^{16,17} But *Acharya Sushruta* mentions *Ghritha* medicated with *Vidarigandhadhi Gana* of drugs to be taken. The drugs of *Vidarigandhadhi* group are diuretic, anabolic, relieve emaciation and suppress *Pitta* and *Kapha*. Their regular use in seventh month help in proper growth, maintaining health of mother and fetus.¹⁸ From the seventh month onwards, there should be less fat, less salt and less water in the diet therefore, rice gruel¹⁹ with a little ghee is advocated which avoids complications like pedal edema and hypertension.

EIGHTH MONTH

Rice gruel prepared with milk and mixed with *Ghritha* should be given. *Bhadrakapya* opines that it should not be given as it may cause tawny complexion of the child. *Punarvasu Atreya* agrees with the fact of tawny complexion but also suggests it as useful as it keeps the pregnant women free from disease and delivers the child with best health, energy, complexion, voice, compactness of the body. *Chakrapani* also explains that the benefits are much more than the side-effects thus, it should be used.²⁰ She should be given unctuous gruels, *Jangala Mansa Rasa*. This gives the strength to the women to deliver normally without any complications.²¹ Rice gruel mixed with *Ghritha* should be given²². Rice gruel with milk & *Ghritha* is *Brumhana* thus helps in body building & weight gain.

NINTH MONTH

Acharyas have not mentioned any specific dietetic regimen for ninth month, however, regimen of eighth month i.e. continuous use of unctuous gruels and meat soup up to the period of delivery is advised.

BENEFITS OF FOLLOWING THE MONTHLY REGIMEN

Brihat Trayi says that by following it, lady remains healthy and delivers the child with good health, energy, voice, compactness of body. By the use of this regimen from month first to month ninth, her *Garbhdharini*, *Kukshi*, sacral regions, flanks, back become soft, *Vayu* moves into right path or direction, feces, urine are excreted properly by their respective passage, skin and nails become soft, woman gains strength and complexion and she delivers easily at proper time a child with excellent health and long life.²³

CONCLUSION

- The *Rasa* derived from the diet taken by the pregnant woman serves three purposes, Nourishment of her own body, Nourishment of fetus, Nourishment of breast or formation of milk, thus increased demands of calories, fats and other nutrients is met.
- For proper growth of the fetus the required diet in every month, satisfy the needs during its course of time, like Proteins help for expansion of maternal plasma, the growth of uterus and breasts. Calcium meets the demands of both mother and fetus for strong bone. Certain minerals & Vitamins like sodium, potassium, vitamin B-6, B-12, magnesium etc help both maternal and fetal nourishment and immunity development.

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