**PRECONCEPTION CARE-AN AYURVEDIC APPROACH**

Sonali Ganguly¹, Kaushalya Khakhlary²

¹PG Scholar, ²Associate Professor, Deptt. of Prasuti Tantra & Stree Roga, Govt. Ayurvedic College, Jalukbari, Guwahati-14, Assam, India

Email: sganguly888@gmail.com

**ABSTRACT**

Pregnancy and parenthood are amongst the most exciting times in the life of an individual. It brings with it joy, contentment and anticipation. Ante natal care and post natal care are very important to ensure the well being of both the mother and her child. But, preconception care is also equally important. For healthy young couples as well as couples facing fertility issues, the preconception care as per Ayurveda ensures a physically, mentally, intellectually healthy progeny. To prepare for the desirable and quality pregnancy outcome, preconception care is essential and may reduce the risk of adverse outcomes such as congenital defects, miscarriage and preterm delivery. To prepare for the desirable and quality pregnancy outcome, preconception care is essential and may reduce the risk of adverse outcomes such as congenital defects, miscarriage and preterm delivery. Ayurveda stresses immense significance to the preparation of both partners prior to conception.

**Keywords:** Pregnancy, Ayurveda, preconception care.

**INTRODUCTION**

Preconception care is considered as an important component of health care for woman of the reproductive age. Preconception care is a broad term that refers to the process of identifying social, behavioral, environmental, and biomedical risks to a woman's fertility and pregnancy outcome and then reducing these risks through education, counseling, and appropriate intervention, when possible, before conception. It is defined as a set of interventions that aim to identify and modify biomedical, behavioral and social risks to the woman's health or pregnancy outcome through prevention and management. It emphasizes all the health issues that require action before conception for maximal impact.
Ayurveda has given detailed descriptions of the preconception care to be given for both the partners. Ayurvedic treatments in preconception care, encourage the body’s innate ability to cleanse, renew and heal itself. Panchakarma procedures, not only ensures a total cleansing of the body and the reproductive organs, but also rejuvenates and improves the vitality of a person.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES
1. To collect the literary resource regarding preconception care in Ayurvedic treatise and its utility in present era’s obstetric care
2. To promote anxiety free pregnancy and healthy progeny through preconception care as per Ayurveda.
3. To reduce the risks and adverse pregnancy outcomes as encountered in previous pregnancies through Ayurvedic principles.

MATERIALS AND METHODS
This is a conceptual literary study on the pre-conception care as mentioned in Ayurveda.

DESCRIPTION
When a couple is seen and counseled about pregnancy, its course and outcome well before the time of actual conception is called preconception counseling. Objective is to ensure that a woman enters pregnancy with an optimal state of health which would be safe both for herself and the fetus. Ayurveda is a science which has both, preventive as well as curative aspect. According to Ayurvedic principles in order to have a physically, mentally and spiritually healthy progeny, both the partners male as well female, must need to have proper preconception counseling and care.

In the Vedic literature, Shodasha Samskaras have been mentioned. Out of these, 16 samskaras, Vivaha and Garbhadhana are the two samskaras which are concerned with the preconception care. Ayurvedic texts have mentioned about Garbhadhan vidhi or method of impregnation thereby laying stress on the importance of preconception care to be taken in case of all the couples.

Care should be taken from the very beginning, right from neonatal care to care during menstrual phase to a healthy pregnancy, thereby leading to healthy mother and healthy child who aids in creating a diseases free society and therefore help in the development of the nation.

Various instances are found in this context which is as follows:
1. Mode of living during menstruation (Rajaswalacharya)\(^2,3,4\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indication</th>
<th>Contraindication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Havishya (meal prepared of ghee, Sali rice and milk)</td>
<td>tikshna, katu, lavana substances.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Yawaka (meal prepared of barley and milk)</td>
<td>Nasya, Swedana and Vamana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• During first 3days of menses, she should remain isolated.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• On 4th day of menstruation, wear white or new clothes and ornaments and then with the enchanting of religious hymns, should see her husband first clad in white garments.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. **Criteria for marriage**

*Acharya Sushruta* mentioned that the marriageable age for man and woman is 25 and 12 years respectively while *Vagbhata* said 21 and 12 years respectively. *Vagbhata* added with this, the qualities of appropriate girl for marriage i.e.- she should not belong to the same gotra(atulyagotra), not suffering from any contagious diseases, beautiful, modest, having complete body parts, delicate etc. 

3. **Appropriate age for conception**

Age factor plays a significant role in achieving a good progeny because biologically a person (wife or husband) is capable of producing a healthy child, only after attaining sexual maturity. *Charaka* opines that the male become sexually mature at the age of 16 years, while *Sushruta* said that male at the age of 25 years and females at the age of 16 years are completely mature, hence, they should attempt for achieving conception. Since both the partners are full of valour and vigour at this age, the born child also possesses these qualities.

4. **Factors responsible for conception**

Various factors play role in achieving proper conception. *Ayurveda* mentions about the significance of four factors required for conception which are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ritu</th>
<th>Time of ovulation, when the chances of conception are Maximum.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kshetra</td>
<td>the reproductive tract where fertilization and implantation occurs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambu</td>
<td>nourishment including all the hormones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beeja</td>
<td>healthy sperm and ovum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. **Adoption of measures prior to conception**

- The couple should firstly undergo shodhan therapy starting with purvakarma snehan-swedan then vaman, virechan, asthapan and anuvasan basti. 
- Both the partners should observe celibacy (brahmacharya) for one month before attempting coitus. 
- The male should consume *Sali* rice with ghrita and milk. *Taila* and masha should be consumed by the female.

The reason of such dietetic regimen in light of science may be as follows:

1. **Male aspect:**
   - *Ghrita*- It has vata-pitta shamak qualities and is shita virya. It is beneficial for rasa, shukra and oja. It also has the quality of rasyana. All these aids in the proper functioning of shukra and hence, helps to attain conception.
   - *Sali*- It alleviates pitta dosha. It is madhura rasa, snigdha, balya, vrishya, bringhana etc. which promotes the qualities of shukra.

2. **Female aspect:**
   - *Masha*- It is vatahara, snigdha, ushna virya, madhura rasa. It has the qualities of balya and punstwa. Moreover, it is chemically constituted of proteins, carbohydrates, vitamin B, magnesium, calcium, iron and folic acid which are very essential for conception and pregnancy. Calcium and magnesium play a good role in regulating estrogen level. The presence of folic acid in it helps in preventing of neural tube defects. All these qualities help to promote the qualities of artava.
   - *Taila*: It is effective in Vataja disorders and does not increase Kapha. It Promotes strength (balya) and helps in yoni vishodhana(cleanses...
the yoni marga).\textsuperscript{14} Tila taila has a property of Garbhshaya vishodhanam.\textsuperscript{15} Hence, these qualities help the female reproductive organs function properly leading to fertilization.

14. 

Hence, these qualities help the female reproductive organs function properly leading to fertilization.

\textbf{CONCLUSION}

Ayurveda focuses on the promotion and preservation of health and prevention of diseases. The preconception care is a cognitive measure as mentioned in all the Ayurvedic texts. Therefore, to achieve conception, contentment or balanced psychology of both the partners is very essential. It has been advised only healthy, physically and mentally fit couples should attempt for conception. The dietary regimen has been mentioned in the classics for the couple prior to conception in order to nourish and enhance the functional activities of reproductive organs. Hence, Ayurveda offers a radical and informative knowledge about the preconception care which may be adopted by all the couples planning for pregnancy and also may be implemented as an integral part in the community healthcare.

\textbf{REFERENCES}

1. DC Dutta’s Textbook of Obstetrics, pg-116, 8\textsuperscript{th} edition, Jaypee Brothers Medical Publishers (P) Ltd.
5. Ayurvediya Prasuti Tantra evam Stree Roga part I by Prof. (Km.)Premvati Tewari, Pg-79, Reprint 2007, Chaukhamba Orientalia, Varanasi.
10. Charak Samhita Hindi Tranlation by Pt.Kashinath Shastri and Dr. Gorakhnath
Chaturvedi  Vol.I, Sutra Sthan 13/14, Pg-258, Reprint 2013, Chaukhamba Bharti Academy, Varanasi


Source of Support: Nil
Conflict Of Interest: None Declared