

CHAPTER-10

AYURVEDA CARE FOR CHILDREN

Dr. SREELAKSHMI. C. L

Assistant Professor
Department of Kaumarbhritya
Glocal College of Ayurved IC
Medical Sciences and Research Centre,
Glocal University, Saharanpur, U P, India

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ABSTRACT

The primary objective of Ayurveda is to ensure the preservation of well-being and the prevention of diseases. Among the eight branches of Ayurveda, there is a specific branch called Kaumarbhritya that focuses solely on the care of children. Having a healthy child in every family today ensures a healthy society for tomorrow. Children are more susceptible to different forms of illnesses and developmental issues due to their immature immune system. Hence, rather of addressing the symptoms following the commencement of an illness, it is crucial to focus on its prevention. Ayurveda, a holistic system, emphasises the importance of a child having optimal physical and mental well-being.

Keywords: *Ayurveda, Pediatrics, Kaumarbhritya.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is the ancient body of knowledge that forms an integral part of Indian culture. The primary objective of Ayurveda is to ensure the preservation of well-being and the prevention of diseases. Among the eight branches of Ayurveda, Kaumarbhritya is a specific branch that focuses solely on the care of children. Every child is entitled to a state of well-being. Having a healthy child in every family now ensures a healthy society in the future. Ayurvedic literature pertaining to paediatric care addresses a range of childhood diseases, as well as methods and the significance of enhancing children's immune system. Children are more susceptible to different forms of illnesses and developmental issues due to their immature immune system. Hence, rather than addressing the symptoms post disease development, it is crucial to focus on prevention. Ayurveda, with its holistic perspective, emphasises the importance of a kid having optimal physical and mental well-being.

2. AYURVEDA IN PAEDIATRICS AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

Pediatric Ayurveda, known as Kaumarbhritya, focuses on child-rearing, childhood illnesses, and treatment. It involves the care of children from conception to the age of maturity, emphasizing scientific methods for addressing disease symptoms, diagnosis, and treatment.

Pediatric Ayurveda lays the foundation for a healthy life, emphasizing the physical, mental, and psychological growth of a child. Childhood diagnosis differs from adults, with challenges such as children being hesitant to communicate symptoms. Treatment methods, including the avoidance of certain actions and the use of child-friendly medicines, highlight the unique approach to pediatric care. Following

Ayurvedic principles in child-rearing, childcare, and treatment can contribute to the child's development into a happy and healthy adult.

3. PRECONCEPTION CARE

The physical characteristics and behavioural traits of a kid are determined by the genetic makeup inherited from their parents. Thus, it can be inferred that all the characteristics of a child are determined during the moment of conception. According to contemporary scientific understanding, genetics significantly influence the transmission of features from parents to offspring. Similarly, diseases can also be passed down through genetic inheritance. Chromosomal abnormalities can lead to gene mutations. These anomalies might arise as a result of the parents' unhealthy lifestyle choices, such as engaging in alcohol and smoking. According to Ayurveda, the production of garbha is attributed to the roles of shukra and shonit¹. Hence, ensuring the highest quality of both the sperm and ovum is crucial for producing superior offspring. Prior to engaging in family planning, it is imperative to provide parents with appropriate counselling. Hence, preconception care has the potential to prevent various disease conditions and thereby enhance pregnancy outcomes.

4. BREASTFEEDING

The practice of exclusively breastfeeding for a duration of 6 months offers numerous advantages for both the new-born and the mother. Commencing nursing promptly, during the first hour after birth, safeguards the infant from contracting infections and diminishes neonatal mortality. Infants and new-borns greatly rely on breast milk as a vital source of energy and essential nutrients. Charak samhita states that maatrustanya (breast milk) possesses invigorating properties, is highly nutritious². However, if the mother is not taking care of her food and habits, the breast milk might become contaminated. These contaminants can then have an adverse impact on the child's health. The condition is known as stanya dushti. These symptoms might manifest in children as a result of numerous illnesses. In order to mitigate the occurrence of these illnesses, it is imperative for the mother to prioritise her self-care, as this will contribute to the production of high-quality breast milk. In conclusion, nursing not only provides passive protection against diseases during lactation but also has the ability to activate the offspring's immune system, perhaps resulting in various long-term benefits³.

5. SUVARNAPRASHANA

Suvarnaprashan, a distinctive notion in Ayurveda, has gained popularity as a helpful technique for improving health in children. The Kashyap Samhita, one of the

oldest texts in Ayurveda, specifically discusses importance of various lehanas and suvarnaprashan in the field of paediatrics⁴. Clinical and Pharmacological investigations demonstrate that Suvarnaprashana has immunomodulatory, nootropic, and therapeutic effects⁵.

6. PANCHAKARMA IN CHILDREN

Panchakarma treatments are significant in Ayurveda for the purification of the body, benefiting both adults and children. Abhyanga, a newborn care regimen of the present period, is very scientific and has proven to be beneficial in promoting weight gain, reducing pain, boosting immunity, and facilitating the healthy growth and development of the infant⁶. There are others procedures mentioned in classical textbooks like nasya (nasal administration), basti (enema) etc. which are also helpful for the management of various disease conditions in children.

7. RAKSHOGHNA KARMA

Ayurveda has consistently prioritised disease prevention. Preventive measures encompass practices such as Aahar (dietary habits), Vihar (lifestyle), Dinacharya (daily routine), Ritucharya (seasonal regimen), and others. Fumigation, also known as dhoopan, is a crucial component of preventive measures. It is employed to cleanse the environment by eliminating microorganisms, thereby playing a crucial role in preventing infections. Ayurveda describes Dhoopan as an integral aspect of Rakshoghna karma. Acharya Kashyap has devoted an entire chapter to providing a comprehensive explanation of Dhoopan. Acharya Kashyap's Dhoopakalpadhyaya provides a detailed account of several Dhoopan yogas, as well as the many forms of Dhoopan and Dhoopan dravyas. The usefulness of these medications in promoting health and preventing and controlling diseases has been scientifically explained⁷.

8. YOGA IN CHILDREN

One of the primary cause of illnesses is predominantly attributed to insufficient physical activity. Additionally, research indicates that engaging in consistent physical activity might enhance our self-confidence, emotional state, and quality of sleep, hence reducing our susceptibility to illnesses. However, due to our contemporary lifestyles and a growing dependence on technology, our level of physical activity has decreased in recent times, both among adults and children. Yoga counteracts the autonomic alterations and deterioration of cellular immunity that occur during periods of examination stress⁸. Hence, it is crucial to promote physical activity, such as exercise or yoga, and maintain physical fitness starting at an early age.

9. CONCLUSION

Ultimately, the fundamental concepts of Paediatric Ayurveda, namely in the domain of Kaumarbhritya, emphasise a comprehensive approach to raising children and providing healthcare. Ayurveda provides a complete framework for promoting the optimal physical, mental, and psychological growth of children, covering several elements such as preconception care, breastfeeding, Suvarnaprashana, Panchakarma, Rakshoghna karma, and the integration of yoga. By incorporating the age-old knowledge of Ayurveda into paediatric care, we not only prioritise the health of our children but also establish a basis for a healthy society in the future.

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