

CHAPTER-11

PREGNANCY CARE IN AYURVEDA- NURTURING MOTHER AND FOETAL WELL BEING

Dr. JOHN FINBE

Pro Vice Chancellor (AYUSH),
Glocal College of Ayurvedic Medical Sciences and
Research Centre, Glocal University, Saharanpur, U P, India

Dr. K P VIDYA

Assistant Professor,
Glocal College of Ayurvedic Medical Sciences and
Research Centre, Glocal University, Saharanpur, UP

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52458/9788196830069.nsp.2024.eb.ch-11>

Ch.Id:-GU/NSP/EB/GHTAGA/2024/Ch-11

ABSTRACT

Pregnancy is a transformative and delicate phase in woman's life, requiring specialized care to ensure the well-being of both mother and child. Ayurveda, the ancient system of holistic healing, provides a comprehensive approach to pregnancy care. In this chapter, we delve into Ayurvedic principles and practices tailored to support maternal health, facilitate a harmonious pregnancy journey, and promote optimal foetal development. From dietary guidelines and lifestyle recommendations to herbal interventions and spiritual wellbeing, Ayurveda offers a holistic framework for nurturing the sacred journey of motherhood.

Keywords: Epigenetics, Ayurveda, Pregnancy care

1. INTRODUCTION

Pregnancy is a time of profound physiological and emotional changes, requiring careful attention to support the health of both mother and developing foetus. Ayurveda, rooted in ancient Indian wisdom, recognizes the unique needs of pregnant women and provides a holistic approach to guide them through this transformative journey. Ancient scriptures of Ayurveda have given prime importance to the pregnancy care (1).

The Bruhatrayees have well described the fetal development and its care during pregnancy in Sarirasthana of their respective treatises. Ayurveda ensures the health of mother and child by suggesting a comprehensive, holistic regimen called Garbhini paricharya. It includes a combination of four factors such as Ahara(diet), Vihaara(lifestyle), Vichara (emotions and thoughts) and Aushadha (medications). These four factors can directly influence the Prakruti (Psychophysiological constitution) of the foetus. Prakruti is the unchangeable qualitative and quantitative Doshik dominance (2). Shad Garbhakara bhavas such as Matrija, Pitruja, Athmaja, Rasaja, Satwaja and Sathmyaja are necessary for a healthy progeny. Each Bhavas are assigned for a particular Organogenesis. Out of these, Satmyaja, Satwaja and Rasaja bhavas can influence the developing foetus. If these are adopted properly during pregnancy, it can modify the intra uterine environment and psychosomatic health of mother, which generate a healthy impact on the foetus (3).

Epigenetics links early environmental exposures during pregnancy with programmed changes in gene expression that alters the growth and development of foetus. Epigenetics describes the relationship between environmental and gene expression. It refers to external modifications to the DNA that turns genes ON and OFF. These modifications do not change the DNA sequence but changes its expression (4). When an unfavourable environment interacts with a genetic predisposition, the health of growing foetus is at risk. This can happen at any time during gestation which

contributes to the adulthood disorders like Obesity, Diabetes, Hypertension etc. Thus, pregnancy care is inevitable to improve the quality of life and the longevity of the offspring. This chapter explores the principles and pregnancy care in Ayurveda, offering insights into dietary considerations, lifestyle modifications, herbal support and the importance of spiritual well-being during this period (5).

2. AYURVEDIC PERSPECTIVE ON PREGNANCY

Ayurveda views pregnancy as a pivotal period where the balance of Doshas (Vata, Pitha, Kapha), plays a crucial role. The four factors like Ahara, Vihara, Vichara and Aushadha are to be customized for each individual for the balance of the Tridoshas.

3. KEY AYURVEDIC PRACTICES FOR PREGNANCY CARE

i. Dietary Guidelines

Ayurvedic dietary recommendations during pregnancy focus on nourishing both mother and developing baby. The food taken by a pregnant woman is absorbed in three ways.

- For the nourishment of the foetus.
- For nourishing herself
- For nourishing the breast milk.

In general, a pregnant woman should take balanced and Sattvik diet that includes a variety of fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, dairy and lean proteins.

- **Ghee Consumption:** Regular intake of ghee is encouraged for its nourishing qualities, supporting the development of foetal brain and nervous system.
- **Avoidance of Ceratin Foods:** Guidance on avoiding excessive spicy, oily and processed foods to prevent imbalances and ensure optimal digestion.

ii. Lifestyle Modifications

Ayurveda advocates for specific lifestyle adjustments to enhance the well-being of expectant mother.

- **Rest and Relaxation:** Adequate rest and sleep are crucial during pregnancy. Ayurveda emphasise the importance of establishing a regular sleep routine and incorporating periods of rest during the day.

- **Moderate Exercises:** Gentle and pregnancy-friendly exercises such as prenatal Yoga and walking are recommended to maintain flexibility, improve circulation, and promote overall wellbeing.
- **Emotional Balance:** Ayurveda recognizes the impact of emotions on pregnancy. Practices such as meditation, deep relaxation techniques, breathing exercises and daily self-care routines contribute to emotional balance.

Things harmful in pregnancy:

- **Avoidance of Ceratin Foods:** Guidance on avoiding excessive spicy, oily and processed foods to prevent imbalances and ensure optimal digestion.
- Travelling on irregular roads, on speedy vehicles and in irregular postures
- Lying in supine position, sitting on hard and irregular surface
- Holding natural urges
- Emotions like Kama (sexual pleasure), krodha (anger) etc.

iii. Herbal Support and Ayurvedic treatments (6)

The use of Ayurvedic herbs during pregnancy is approached with caution, focusing on those deemed safe and beneficial.

- **Shatavari:** known for its nourishing and rejuvenating properties, Shatavari supports reproductive health, making it a valuable herb during pregnancy.
- **Lakshmana moola (Pomoea sepiaria):** along with milk, this drug is given to the pregnant lady either as nasal instillation or to drink as such for the healthy pregnancy (4)
- Navaneetha (Butter) is well known for its antioxidant property along with its folate content which helps to prevent the neurogenic anomalies in foetus.
- Several medications like Madhuka, Shatavari, Kashmarya, Brihati etc are explained in preventing Garbhasrava (Abortion)
- Formulations like Dhanwantaram gutika, Mahadhanwantaram gutika, Kalyanaka Ghrita helps not only in preventing the gastric complaints during pregnancy but also helps in nourishing the foetus.

iv. **Spiritual and Emotional Well-Being**

Recognizing the interconnectedness of mind, body and spirit, Ayurveda places importance on the spiritual and emotional aspects of pregnancy.

- **Meditation and Pranayama:** practices that promote relaxation, such as meditation and pranayama are encouraged for their positive impact on the emotional state of mother and the growing foetus.
- **Bonding Rituals:** Ayurveda encourages ritual that strengthen the bond between the mother and the unborn child, fostering a sense of connection and well-being.

4. CHALLENGES AND CONSIDERING

While Ayurveda provides valuable insights into pregnancy care, challenges such as individual variations, cultural factors and the need for integration with conventional medical care must be considered. Collaborative efforts between Ayurvedic practitioners and mainstream healthcare providers contribute to comprehensive and holistic pregnancy care.

5. CONCLUSION

Ayurveda with its ancient wisdom, offers a holistic approach to pregnancy care, acknowledging the sacred nature of this transformative journey. By embracing dietary guidelines, lifestyle modifications, herbal support and spiritual well-being, expectant mothers can navigate pregnancy with a sense of balance and harmony. As the global interest in integrative and holistic healthcare grows, the Ayurvedic perspective on pregnancy care becomes increasingly relevant, contributing to the well-being of both mother and their precious unborn children.

REFERENCES

1. *Sushruta Samhita Sharira sthana, Garbhavakranthi Shareeram 3/33 Available from: <http://niimh.nic.in./ebooks/esushruta> Last accessed on 2021 Jan 20.*
2. *Bharadwaj, Priyanka, Pooja Changing the phenotypes- Epigenetics in Ayurveda, Journal of Ayurveda p 54-57 Jan –Mar 2023*
3. *Tiwari P V, Ayurvediya Prasuti Tantra evum Stree Roga. Benaras, Chowkhambha Orientalia 1986*
4. *Lad, Vasnt (2002). Ayurvedic Perspective on selected Pathologies.*
5. *Tiwari, Maya (1999) Women's Power to heal: through inner medicine.*