

CLINICAL IMPORTANCE OF AYURVEDA APPROACHES OF NEONATAL AND PEDIATRIC CARE

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**ABSTRACT**  
Adolescence is indeed a critical stage in life that significantly influences health, well-being, learning, and behavior throughout the lifespan. In Ayurveda, an ancient system of medicine originating in India, *Balacikitsa* refers to the branch of medicine specifically dedicated to the healthcare of children. Among the eight parts of Ayurveda (*Ashtangas*), *Balacikitsa* holds a prominent position due to the importance of this developmental stage and its long-lasting impact on an individual's health. *Balacikitsa* holds a crucial position in Ayurveda, it contributed significantly to pediatric healthcare. The importance of *Balacikitsa* remains noteworthy, and efforts to preserve and integrate traditional knowledge into modern healthcare can be valuable for providing comprehensive and holistic medical care. Present article explores clinical importance of Ayurveda approaches of neonatal and pediatric care.

**KEYWORDS:** *Ayurveda, Balacikitsa, Neonatal, Pediatric.*

**INTRODUCTION**  
The clinical significance of Ayurveda practices lies in their ability to quickly revive the newborn and ensure their well-being after birth. The sensory, material, and auditory stimulation from these actions helps the baby transition smoothly into the outside world and start breathing independently. Additionally, the recitation of *Mantras* near the baby's ear not only provides mental

support to the mother but also serves as an auditory stimulus for the baby.<sup>[1-4]</sup>

It's important to note that Ayurveda practices are part of ancient traditions and may not align with modern medical practices. While they offer valuable insights into the historical methods of newborn care, some of these Ayurveda approaches of neonatal care are depicted in **Figure 1**.

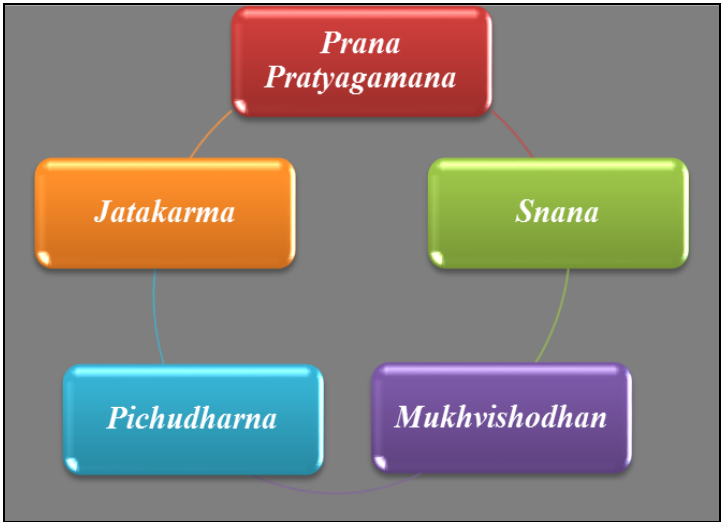


Figure 1: Ayurveda approaches of new born care.

**Prana pratyagamana**

*Prana pratyagamana* is practices of reviving newborns after birth. These methods were outlined by *Acharya Charaka* and *Acharya Vagbhata*; they emphasize the importance of taking immediate measures for the revival of the baby right after birth.<sup>[4-7]</sup>

**According to acharya charaka, the following measures should be taken to revive the baby:**

1. Striking stones near the foundation of the baby's ears, this action produces a loud sound that stimulates the vestibule cochlear nerve, a sensory nerve responsible for carrying sensations related to balance and hearing. This stimulation helps the baby regain consciousness.
2. Sprinkling cold water in summer and boiling water in winter on the baby's face, the sensory fibers of the facial nerve are stimulated by the action of cold or hot water being sprinkled on the baby's face. This stimulation, in turn, activates the respiratory center in the brain, helping the baby start breathing.

**Acharya Vagbhata, provides additional measures for the revival of the baby:**

1. *Parisheka* with *Bala* oil, this involves pouring *Bala* oil over the baby's body, providing material sensation, maintaining the baby's body temperature, and giving strength to the child.
2. Striking two stones near the foundation of the baby's ears, similar to *Charaka's* advice, this action stimulates the sensory nerve and helps in initiating breathing.<sup>[6-8]</sup>

**Snana**

According to *Acharya Charaka*, once the baby's breath is stable, the oro-pharynx should be cleaned with water, followed by giving the baby a bath. *Sushruta* suggests washing the child after the *Jata karma*. The bath can be given using various substances such as decoction of laticiferous trees, water infused with fragrant herbs, or water warmed with silver or gold, depending on the season.

*Acharya Vagbhata* advises that the bathing process should be tailored based on the baby's *Dosha*, *Kala* and *Bala*. *Vagbhata* also mentions different substances that can be used for the bath, including lukewarm water, decoction of *Ksheerivriksha*, aromatic herbs, medicated water, water in which silver or gold has been heated, or a decoction of *Kapith patra*.

The clinical significance of bathing the baby lies in maintaining cleanliness and hygiene. The use of medicated or infused water during the bath may promote the healing of the umbilical stump and possess soothing properties. Many of the substances prescribed by the ancient *Acharyas* have antimicrobial, analgesic and anti-inflammatory properties, which can contribute to the overall well-being of the baby during this important post-natal period.<sup>[7-9]</sup>

**Mukhvisodhan**

According to *Acharya Charaka*, the oral cavity of the child, including the palate, lips, tongue, and throat, should be cleaned using properly cut, well-cleaned, and soft cotton swabs on the specialist's finger. The head's anterior fontanel should be covered with an ointment-coated cotton swab. *Acharya Vagbhata* provides a similar description of this practice. Additionally, both *Sushruta* and *Vagbhata* recommend using ghee and rock salt for oral cleaning.

The clinical significance of this method is to ensure the cleanliness of the oral and nasal cavities to prevent the aspiration of any secretions into the respiratory tract when the baby starts breathing. By avoiding the risk of aspiration pneumonia, this practice contributes to the baby's respiratory health. Furthermore, placing a ghee-soaked cotton piece on the baby's anterior fontanel helps retain body heat, especially from the large surface area of the baby's head, and also provides protection from potential injuries.

**Pichudharna**

*Acharya Sushruta* has advised the use of a tampon soaked in *Ghrita* after *Mukhavishodhan* to be applied on the *Murdha* of the newborn. Similarly, *Acharya Vagbhata* recommends covering the *Talupradesha* with *Sneha pichhu*, which involves applying a medicinal oil-soaked cotton pad. The clinical significance of this practice lies in the fact that the *Murdha* or anterior fontanelle is a delicate intracranial structure in newborns, and it remains unprotected at the time of birth due to the unfused cranial bones. It serves as a protective measure to safeguard this vulnerable area. This application acts as a barrier, helping to shield the delicate structures underneath and providing additional protection to the baby's head.

**Garbhodaka vamaana**

According to *Acharya Charaka's* perspective, after performing *Pichhudharana*, the child should be given *Vamana* using a combination of *Saindhava* and *Ghrita* to cleanse the gastric contents. *Acharya Vagbhata* advises the use of *Saindhava* and *Ghrita* along with specific herbs such as *Vacha* for the same purpose.

The clinical significance of *Garbhodaka vamaana* is that it helps prevent the chances of regurgitation and aspiration of the expelled contents. It also reduces the likelihood of vomiting after feeding, which may occur due to irritation caused by amniotic fluid present in the stomach.

As per the *Acharyas*, *Saindhava Lavana* (rock salt) and *Vacha* have several beneficial properties, such as providing a sweet taste, aiding digestion, promoting appetite, having cooling effects, balancing the three *Doshas*, inducing emesis, purifying stool and urine, and treating conditions like *Vibanda* and *Adhymana*. Hence,

these medications are recommended for *Garbhodakavamana* to achieve these therapeutic effects.

### **Nala chedana**

According to Ayurvedic practices, the cutting and care of the umbilical cord are performed with careful consideration for the newborn's well-being. *Acharya Charaka* recommends performing *Naalchedan*, which involves cutting the umbilical cord after the *Garbhodakavamana* procedure. On the other hand, *Acharya Sushruta* suggests cutting the cord after the *Mukha vishodhana* and *Pichu dharana*. *Acharya Vagbhata* describes cutting the umbilical cord after the *Ulva parimarjan*.

According to *Charaka*, the umbilical cord should be cut at a distance of eight *Angula* from the child's umbilicus using an *Ardhadhara* instrument made of gold, silver, or iron. The cut end should be tied with a clean string, and the loose end of the cord should be tied around the baby's neck. If there is any discharge formation on the umbilical cord, oil prepared with a paste of *Lodhra*, *Suradaru* and *Haridra* should be applied.

The clinical significance of these practices is that the umbilical cord provides nourishment and blood supply to the baby, and cutting it is recommended after the completion of resuscitative measures and ensuring the baby's stability. Tying the cord helps prevent bleeding, which can lead to hypovolemic shock. Attaching the cord to the baby's neck helps prevent bleeding and also protects against cord infections caused by urine and stool.

The use of medicinal herbs serves to prevent infections due to their antibacterial and anti-inflammatory properties. These traditional Ayurvedic practices are aimed at ensuring the well-being of the newborn and reducing the risk of infections and complications related to the umbilical cord.<sup>[8-10]</sup>

### **CONCLUSION**

Ancient *Acharyas* have provided concise information on neonatology. Ayurveda texts have covered all the major aspects of *Kaumarbhritya* such as the care of newborns, breastfeeding, neonatal nursery and child protection, etc. Various proponents of Ayurveda have described infant care in their own ways, understanding *Navjata Shishu Paricharya* serves as the foundational and fundamental principle of neonatal care.

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