



ADOLESCENT GIRL HEALTH CARE THROUGH AYURVEDA

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ABSTRACT

Adolescence is a very important stage of life and includes individuals aged 10-19. It is a vital stage of growth and development. Adolescence is a period of transition from childhood to adulthood. Adolescent health encompasses changing transitions within multiple domains, including the physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and intellectual. Today adolescents are tomorrow's parents, teachers, and community leaders. The negligence to health in adolescents may give rise to many health problems in their later lives. *Ayurveda* prescribes some set of principles and guidelines that can help make this period more enjoyable and disease free for adolescents. *Ayurveda* helps us to reduce these changes related to physical, mental, and reproductive health problems. There have been advised specific diet (nutrition), lifestyle modification, *Rajaswala paricharya*, menstrual hygiene, sex education, and health-promoting herbs, medicine, and therapeutic procedures which should follow by an adolescent during the specific time of life span.

KEYWORDS: Adolescence, Reproductive health, diet. Lifestyle modification, *Rajaswala paricharya*, health-promoting herbs, medicine, therapeutic procedure.

INTRODUCTION

India has the largest adolescent population in the world. The health status of adolescents determines their health status in their adulthood. Many Serious diseases in adulthood have their roots in adolescence period. *Ayurveda* believes that giving adolescents the right care is similar to nurturing a tender bud so that it blossoms into a bright flower. To achieve wholesome adolescent health, we need to have a multidimensional approach covering all the adolescent health problems with special emphasis on physical health, mental health, behavior changes, communication towards a healthy lifestyle, and a positive social environment to acquire life skills.

Adolescence is a transitional phase of growth and development between childhood and adulthood. Many specialists consider adolescence to be an intense and often stressful developmental period characterized by specific types of behavior.

The exact term for the adolescent period is not found in *Ayurvedic* literature. Most of the *Ayurvedic* literature considers *balyaavastha* for up to 16 years. The adolescent period can be taken as the last stage of *balyaavastha* or the adjoining point of *balyaavastha* and *yuvavastha*. *Kapha dosha* is predominant in

balyaavastha. Balance of all five subtypes of *Kapha dosa* *Avalambaka*, *Kledaka*, *Bodhaka*, and *Trapaka Kapha* responsible for proper growth and development in early adolescence period 10 to 14 years. Disturbances in the subtype of *Kapha Dosha* are the cause of childhood diseases. The late phase of adolescence period 14 to 19 years *Pitta Dosha's* dominant stage. All five subtypes of *Pitta* are *Alochaka*, *Bhranjaka*, and *Sadhaka*. *Pachaka* and *Ranjaka* should be balanced. *Pitta dosha* is responsible for proper metabolism, and sexual and reproductive maturation. Disturbances in these subtypes of *pitta dosha* cause various types of metabolic, hormonal, and reproductive disorders.

From 10 to 19 years (as per WHO standards) an adolescent body changes drastically. They enter into puberty and experience many changes physical as well as emotional. Thus from physical shape to personality and behavior, will also change dramatically. Part of this is due to an awareness of sexuality, which is caused by monthly periods. and other physical changes in the body and parts are due to an increase in hormones that affect mood.

Puberty is the first, part of adolescence the remainder being concerned with the mental and emotional

adaptation to several functions and with the development of full maturity. Puberty is characterized by physical and sexual differentiation and by the onset of activity of the sex organs.

In girls, sexual development starts between the ages of 8 and 13 and has a growth spurt between the ages of 10 and 14. In boys, sexual development starts between the ages of 10 and 13 and continues to grow until they are around 16.

During childhood, the anterior pituitary is concerned mostly with physical growth. It is capable of gonadotrophic activity but is inhibited by the hypothalamus until the higher centers of the brain are more mature.

At puberty as a result of the increased secretion of releasing factors by the hypothalamus, and the increased responsiveness of the pituitary gland to these factors, all activities are increased.

Growth hormone, Insulin-like, and growth factor 1 (IGF-1) gonadal steroids play major roles.

To achieve wholesome adolescent health, we need to have a multidimensional approach covering all the adolescent health problems with special emphasis on mental health, behavior change, communication towards a healthy lifestyle, and a positive social environment to acquire life skills.

The majority of adolescents still do not have information about menstruation hygiene, puberty-related changes, sexual health, and reproduction.

Adolescents' health care through Ayurveda refers to the care of future generations with special recommendations of special Diet/ Nutrition, lifestyle modification, *Rajaswala paricharya*, menstrual hygiene, sex education, and health-promoting herbs, medicine, and therapeutic procedures.

Objectives of Adolescent Girl Health Care

- To promote and maintain the health of adolescents.
- To facilitate healthy growth and development of adolescents.
- To prevent psychological disorders in adolescents.
- To protect reproductive health in adolescents.
- To minimize complications and disorders during adolescents.
- To reduce the burden of disease in the later life of adolescents.

Common Problems in Adolescents in Different Aspect

Morphological problems – an overweight, underweight, overgrowth of hair, hair loss. Skin color problems, abnormal growth of genitalia and breasts.

Nutritional problems – malnutrition, obesity, iron deficiency, Iodine deficiency, Calcium deficiency, vita-A deficiency Zinc deficiency.

Eating disorders – Anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa.

Growth and development problems – precocious puberty, delayed puberty, short stature, and stunted growth.

Reproductive health problems – Sexually transmitted diseases, Reproductive tract infections, Abortions, Polycystic ovarian disease, Uterine fibroids, Ovarian cysts, Endometriosis, fibrocystic disease of the breast.

Menstrual problems – Delayed menarche, Premenstrual syndrome, Puberty menorrhagia, Secondary amenorrhoea, Dysmenorrhoea.

Hormonal problems – Hypothyroidism, Diabetes mellites, Acne vulgaris, Hirsutism.

Psychological problems – Depression, Mood swings, Sleep disturbances, Anxiety, Suicidal thoughts, and behavioral disorders.

DIET (Nutrition)- Nutrition is an important factor and fundamental need for proper health in adolescent girls.

Better nutrition means

- Better Health
- Less illness
- Strong immune system
- Better quality of life

Proper nutrition in adolescents from childhood to adulthood is very important not for the individual but for that matter for the whole family and the health of the whole nation. Life is nourished by food and food substances. These are also known as nutrients. These nutrients provide the energy and building materials that are essential to the growth and survival of living things. The nutrients include proteins, fats, carbohydrates, vitamins, and minerals. the diet from where we get these nutrients are classified into five groups: cereals, legumes, vegetables-, fruits, animal products like dairy items, flesh foods, poultry, and nuts-oil seeds.

During adolescence caloric and protein requirements are maximal. Increased physical and mental activity with poor eating habits changes their nutritional needs.

Failure to consume a well-balanced and adequate diet at this time can retard physical growth, and intellectual capacity and delay reproductive maturation. inadequate intake of nutrients due to frequent magic diets or skipping meals, frequent use of fast food, rejection of dairy products, fruits, vegetables, and lack of supervision by the parents. Commercial advertisements of products such as anabolic steroids, weight-reducing drugs, and body modulators on television, newspapers, magazine,

and posters in public places are influences adolescent nutrition in a negative and unhealthy way.

Adolescent females required approximately 2200 calories per day. Total nutrient needs are higher during adolescence than at any other time in the life cycle. A failure to consume an adequate diet at this time can potentially retard growth and delay sexual maturity. An adolescent girl often suffers from anemia because of menstruation, worm infection, recurrent infection, and poor consumption of an iron-rich diet. Adolescents should be encouraged to consume an iron-rich diet like green leafy vegetables, jaggery, and meat, complemented with vitamin C sources like citrus fruits. A zinc-deficient diet results in growth failure and delayed sexual maturation so a zinc-rich diet like beans, whole grains, nuts, cereals, dairy products, red meat, and poultry should be advised.

Eating habits also influence nutrition in adolescence, so eat slowly, chew properly, hygiene maintenance during eating. Avoiding breakfast skipping, avoiding overeating, and avoiding TV viewing or reading while eating are good eating habits and all should be followed.

Junk the junk food because it is the opposite of a balanced diet and is also known as empty calories. Generally, junk food offer little in terms of vitamins, proteins, and minerals, and is loaded with calories from sugar or fat with poor nutritional value. Snacking is part of adolescent food behavior so it should also be prevented. Suggestions for nutrient supplements are offered with particular emphasis on fulfilling the unique needs of the obese, athletic, or pregnant adolescent. Supportive dietary counseling is mandatory for adolescent girl health care.

Lifestyle Modification

Living healthy is the fundamental component to achieve optimal physical, mental, and spiritual health. Adolescence is probably a key factor in determining the future health of individuals, individual families, and thus the contrary. According to Ayurveda, some major practices are described as *Dinchariya*, *Ratrichariya*, and *Rhituchariya* for healthy living. It is important to wake up before sunrise. It is that time of the day when there is a certain amount of energy, peace, and freshness present in the environment that is necessary for the body and soul. Adolescent girls should consume warm water in the morning it enhances peristalsis and also flushes the kidney of any harmful toxins and free radicals. Yoga practices are also a very important part of a healthy lifestyle. Yoga brings body-mind coordination and helps to release stress in adolescents. Yoga stabilized the heart rate and activates PNS which reduced anxiety and nervousness. It improves immunity and infectious diseases. *Bhramary* pranayama is also very beneficial for adolescents because the humming sound creates vibrations that increase the efficiency of brain cells. It removes mental conflicts in adolescents. *Kapalbhati*,

various *Yogasan*, and *Suryanamaskar* should be advised to prevent obesity, metabolic disorders, and hormonal disturbances in adolescent girls. Meditation should be practiced because it will maintain a balance between mind, body, and soul. Adolescent girls should be advised of enough physical activity (at least 60 minutes per day) to provide benefits to cognitive development, academic performance, musculoskeletal health, and overall well-being. Swimming cycling, jogging aerobics, Zumba, dancing, and gymnastics are common interesting physical activities that should be advised to adolescent girls.

Rajaswala Parichriya

Rajaswala means girl or woman during menstruation. *Praichariya* means proper care and lifestyle. *Rajaswala parichariya* literary means to self-care and lifestyle to be followed during menstruation. Women pass through three stages in life *Bala*(childhood) *Rajaswala*(Menstruative or reproductive stage) and *Siddha* (old age). Among these *rajaswala* periods is the largest and most specific stage of life. *Rajaswala parichariya* acts as an important measure to enhance fertility and is told in *Ayurvedic* classics.

According to Ayurveda the menstrual flow is governed by Vata Dosha and helping monthly cleaning of the body, so the goal of *Rajaswala Parichariya* supports the process of cleansing.

An imbalance of *Vata* dosha can develop numerous gynecological disorders. Physical exertion, sleeping during day time, improper sleep during the night, intake of unhealthy food items, cold water, intercourse, and journeys should be avoided during menstruation. A light diet and lukewarm water are beneficial because the digestive capacity (*Agni*) is low during menstruation. *Hingu*, *Shunthi*, and *Ghrita* should be added to food items because these are igniting *Agni* and prevent *Dosha prakopa*. Mental stress is responsible for hormonal imbalance that leads to ovarian disease and infertility, so it should be avoided during menstruation. *Rajswala parichariya* is mainly a preventive measure, if an adolescent girl follows it she can avoid menstrual disorders and negative effects on reproduction in future life.

Menstrual Hygiene and Sex Education

Good menstrual health and hygiene can prevent reproductive tract infections.

Menstrual hygiene is defined as women and adolescent girls using clean menstrual management material to absorb or collect blood. It can be changed as often as necessary for the duration of the menstrual period. Most of the girls use sanitary napkins, tampons, and menstrual cups. Unclean sanitary pads/cloth material is a potential risk factor for infections. Changing pads infrequently or wet pads can cause skin irritation. Sanitary napkins can be used and disposed of in a much easier way as

compared to cloth because it decreases chances of infections and helps in mobility and ease of daily routine work. Every adolescent girl should be advised about menstrual hygiene-related Proper information.

Sex education is a very important part of adolescent girl health care. It should include information about puberty, menstruation, contraceptive, condoms, sexual violence prevention, gender identity, and body image. Sex education can educate adolescent girls on health issues related to sex and lower the rates of teenage pregnancy. It can enhance the psychological sexual and reproductive health of adolescent girls.

Health-promoting herbs, medicine, and therapeutic procedure

Ayurveda described various herbs and medicinal preparation for health promotion like *jeevaniya* and *Balya* herbs. *Amalaki*, *Guduchi*, *Shatawari*, *Kumari*, *Bala*, *Haridra*, *Ashwagandha*, *Ashok*, and *Lodhra* are important herbs that are useful for reproductive and physical health. Some nervine tonics and Medhya herbs like *Brahmi*, *Jatamansi*, *Vacha*, and *Shankhpushpi* are very beneficial for mental health in adolescent girls. Some ayurvedic formulations like *Shatavari kalp*, *Shatpushpa kalp*, *Dhatriloha*, *drakshavleha*, *Chyavanprashavleha*, *Ashwagandhadileha*, *Kushmandaveleha*, *Kumaryashava*, and *dhashmularitha* are useful in reproductive and menstrual health care as both preventive and curative measures in adolescents' girls.

Various therapeutic procedures like *Abhyanga*, *Nasya*, *Shirodhara*, *Matra Basti*, and *Yoga Basti* are very useful in reproductive and mental health care in adolescent girls.

CONCLUSION

Adolescence age is a very specific transition phase between puberty and adulthood in which various physical, mental, sexual, and social changes take place in a child. It is a unique stage of human growth and development which is a very important time for the foundation of future good health. There are various type of disorders physical, psychological, reproductive, social, and hormonal issues arises in adolescent girls. Ayurveda can maintain the health of adolescent girl through various modifications like Diet and lifestyle modification. *Rajaswala Parichariya*, menstrual hygiene, and sex education reduce reproduction-related problems. Health-promoting and antistress drugs protect adolescent girls from infections and psychological issues. *Panchkarma* therapy like *Nasya* and *Shirodhara* prevent hormonal imbalance in adolescent girls.

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