



NUTRITION IN BALAYAWASTHA – A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is mainly based on preventive aspects rather than the curative that is “*swsthasyaswasthrakshanam*.” *Ahara* (food) is considered as the first pillar among three. *Ayurveda* emphasizes good nutrition at every stage of life care of pregnant lady, infant nutrition, breast feeding, complimentary foods with due applied aspects. Every infant or child has a genetic potential for physical, mental and emotional growth. Providing nutrition that fulfills all aspects of that growth potential represents optimal nutrition. While adequate nutrition is important through out childhood, it is the crucial period during the first five years of age particularly so in the first two to three years when rapid growth occurs and when the child is entirely dependent on the mother and family for food.^[1]

KEYWORDS: Nutrition, *Ahara*, Growth and Development, breast feeding.

INTRODUCTION

According to the World Health Organization, malnutrition is the biggest contributor to child mortality, present in half of all cases.^[2] million children die of hunger every year.^[3] underweight births and intrauterine growth restrictions cause 2.2 million child deaths a year. Poor or non-existent breastfeeding causes another 1.4 million. Other deficiencies, such as lack of vitamins or zinc. Childhood is the formative period which lays the foundation of adult life, so need good nutrition for growth and development. Most of the children fall into the pit of malnutrition during the weaning and post weaning phase. Malnutrition in infants and young children typically develops during the period between 6 month to 18 months of age, and is often associated with intake of low nutrient and energy dense diet. Hence, need to discuss and understand the requirements and importance of dietary nutrients with respect to age. *Ayurveda* emphasizes good nutrition at every stage of life in case of pregnant lady, infant nutrition, breast feeding, complimentary feeding with due applied aspects.

In fetal life baby receives nutrition through placenta, so for the healthy children *Acharya* described in various *sahitas masanu-masik garbhini paricharya* for good nutrition of both mother and baby. Pregnant women should be supplemented with folic acid, iodine, iron, and also potentially with other critical micronutrients. In *Ayurveda* food is considered as *mahabhaishajya*.^[4] after birth, even the age classification (*vayovibhajan*) in children is mainly done on the basis of food they consume as—^[5]

Ksheerapa- the children upto one year of age and main diet is milk.

Ksheeranada- the children upto 2years of age and diet both milk and semisolid food.

Annada- the children above 2 years of age, and who takes solid food as a main diet.

Ksheerapaawastha

For new-borns mothers milk is ideal.^[6] Classical texts of *Ayurveda* advises the intake of *stanya* from the day of birth continued until the age of 2 years. The appropriate amounts of carbohydrate, protein and fat, breast milk provides vitamins minerals, digestive enzymes and hormones. Breast milk also contains antibodies and lymphocytes from the mother that help the baby resist infections. Health organizations, including the world health organization (WHO), recommend breastfeeding exclusively for six months. This means that no other foods or drinks other than possibly vitamin D are typically given. *Acharya kashaypa* told that *stanyapana* results in good growth, strength, longevity, and good health of child as well as not causing any trouble or diseases to child.^[7] In *Ayurveda* described *jatakara* is the first sacrament done after birth. *Acharya chakra* stated that on the first day neonate feed with *madhu* and *ghrita*. *Acharya sushruta* advised to lick, *madhu*, *ghrita* and *anata* with index finger on second, on third day *lakshmana* with *ghrita*, while on fourth day *shavpanitalsamitta* (amount which fills the neonate palm) *madhu* and *ghrita*.^[8]

Ksheeranada

At the age of 5 month infant gain the weight double from birth weight, so demands of the infant becomes double and breast milk not enough to fulfil the requirement of growing child. First meal offer to infant would be easily digested, light and soft as advised by *Kashyapa*. So, it is the accurate time to introduction of supplementary feeding as *phalprashan*.^[9] means Fruit juices should be given to the child from sixth month which are source of vitamins especially vitamin C Breast milk is deficient in iron, vitamin A, D, K and calcium.^[10] so by offering *phalprashan* and *annprashan* ceremony at this time with breast milk, we can reduce the deficiency of related essential vitamins.

Eruption of teeth becomes started around this age hence, according to *Acharya's* this is accurate time to start *annaprashansanskara* with continuation of breast feeding.¹¹ In *annaprashan sanskara* choice of food should be *laghu*, *brihandravays* in the form of *peya* and *aveleha*. *Acharyakashyapa* also says that diet should be given according to *Desh Bala*, *Agni*, and *Satmyata* of the child.^[12]

According to modern science, continued breastfeeding beyond six months should be accompanied by consumption of nutritionally adequate, safe and appropriate complementary foods that help meet nutritional requirements. When breast milk is no longer sufficient. From 6-12 months, breastfeeding – if implemented optimally – should continue to provide half or more of the child's nutritional needs, and from 12-24 months, at least one-third of their nutritional needs. In addition to nutrition, breastfeeding continues to provide protection to the child against many illnesses and provides closeness and contact that helps psychological development. Appropriate complementary foods can be readily consumed and digested by the young child from six months onwards and provides nutrients - energy, protein, fat and vitamins and minerals to help meet the growing child's needs in addition to breast milk.^[13]

Annada

The exact term for toddler and adolescent is not found in *Ayurvedic* classics. Most of the *ayurvedic* classics consider *balayawastha* upto 16 years. According to *sushruta bala* upto 16 years is called *ksheerapa*, *ksheeranada*, and *anandavastha*.^[14] *Anandavastha* starts from two years onwards. In *kashyapsamhita*, 1 to 16 years is considered as a *koumara* stage.^[15] According to *Acharya charaka*, the *balayawastha* divided into two parts in which first was *Aparipakwadhatunaavastha* upto 16 years. Hence, the period of toddler to adolescent can be taken up to 16 years of age.

In toddler growth is slower than infancy by the toddler years; young children are able to self feed and begin to develop eating habits and preferences. The energy requirements for ages two to three are about 1000 to 1400 calories per day, and in general a toddler needs to

consume about 40 calories for every inch of height. Growth slows during the toddler years, but children are more active at this stage and undergo a great deal of intellectual, emotional, and social development. Hence, national guidelines advise eating a varied diet of four to five food groups.^[16]

1. Fruits and vegetables.
2. Whole grains and starchy foods.
3. Health lean proteins and dairy foods.
4. Limited intake of sugar, fat and salt.

Childhood and adolescence are period of continuous growth and development, should be given less bulky foods, rich in energy and protein such as legumes, pulses, nuts, edible oil, ghee sugar, and eggs, vegetables including green vegetables available seasonal fruits should be given. ghee helps in improving memory, concentration, boosts digestion, relieves constipation, strengthens immunity, complexion, colour.

Adolescent period is spread almost over a decade. It is characterized by rapid increase in height and weight, hormonal changes, sexual maturation and wide swing in emotions. Development of critical bone mass is essential during this period as this from the ground for maintaining mineral integrity of the bone in later life. The pattern and proportion of various body components like body water, muscle mass, bone and fat increase during the entire childhood. Adolescence girls are greater physiological stress than boys because of menstruation; so adolescence girls have higher iron requirements. All these rapid anabolic changes require more nutrients per unit body weight, growing children and adolescent require more calcium the recommended dietary allowances for calcium are about 600 to 800 mg per day. To achieve high peak bone mass it is recommend consuming calcium rich foods like milk and milking products etc. Non dairy products like sardines, spinach, and beans are good sources of calcium. Dietary sources of calcium should be encouraged over calcium supplementation because of good bioavailability and to promote healthy dietary habits.^[17]

CONCLUSION

Healthy children are the foundation for healthy life. Nutrition is the basic need for healthy life. Any failure during this period may lead to physical and mental adverse effects. Provision of extra food and health care during pregnancy is necessary. Breast milk and breastfeeding provide optimal nutrition for healthy full term infants. Breastfeeding enhances brain development, visual development and visual acuity leading to learning readiness, so encourage and promote for breast feeding. Breast milk is low in iron and zinc, so complimentary foods rich in these micronutrients should be introduced at about 6 months of age. Diet and nutrition play a key role in brain development right into childhood so, food rich in energy and proteins such as legumes, pulses, nuts, edible oil, ghee, sugar, milk and eggs. Vegetables including green leafy vegetables, available seasonal

fruits should be given, for normal growth and development.

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