



Pregnancy and Child Birth

Dr. Maya Gopinath

Pregnancy and childbirth is one among the miraculous and mysterious processes in the entire universe. The spark of a new life is the perception of soul or God or a divine intervention. The period of pregnancy is very important for the fundamental growth of an individual. It requires utmost care, patience and perseverance. It needs intense tapas and sadhana.

Ayurveda being the most ancient scientific medicinal system has a significant contribution to pregnancy and infant care. Ayurveda emphasizes on the physical, emotional and social wellbeing of pregnant mother.

Ayurvedic tips for pregnant mother

- Pregnant women should be cheerful and happy since the thoughts and moods of the mother influence the foetal growth. Disputes and anger provoking thoughts can harm both mother and baby and that should be avoided.

- Personal hygiene is very important for a pregnant woman to avoid infections. Bathing with mild warm water boiled with nalpamara bark and tamarind leaves can alleviate pain and keep skin free of infections

- Regarding diet easily digestible light diets with plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables are advisable. Drinking plenty of water helps to keep the mother's body hydrated. Over eating meat, pulses, heavy and spicy foods, garlic, onions should be avoided. Eating excess fish can also be harmful since these days fishes are loaded with industrial and metallic contaminants. Fresh water fish in moderate amounts are advisable.

- Looking at stars, comets, eclipses etc should be avoided. Avoid UV exposure as much as possible

- A wide range of herbs are mentioned for garbhasthapana (stabilizing pregnancy) and to improve foetal oxygenation. Bala (Sida cordifolia) has been proven to improve foetal oxygenation even by modern pharmacodynamics.

- Gokshura (njerinjil) is given boiled with water to improve renal filtration and thereby prevent renal diseases.

- Pichu with dhanwantharam thaila can alleviate pain and help prevent infections

- In the first trimester jeevaniya drugs like shatavari, vidari etc are advised.

- Herbs like Aswagandha and guduchi are advised to strengthen uterine muscles and for nourishment of the embryo

- Application of sandalwood pulp and lotus paste can help prevent stretch marks. Paste of neem, basil, manjishta and jasmine oil can also be helpful.

- Tulsi tea is advised during pregnancy because of its anti-infective and anti-spasmodic properties.

- Drinking ginger tea can be helpful in morning sickness and anorexia.

- Pregnant women should avoid taking intoxicants like wine, alcohol etc.

- Pregnant women should avoid strenuous exercises, sleeping during the day and keeping awake late at night.

- According to Ayurvedacharyas pregnant women start to feel longings for special foods due to the second hridaya or chetana of the new life sparkling inside. This should not be prevented since it can be harmful for the foetus.

- The physical and psychological disturbances of the expectant mother should be taken care of immediately.

Masanumasika chikitsa, Pumsavana (special nasal medication to have baby of one's own choice) detailed description of management of delivery and ante-natal care can all be seen in the ancient texts like Charaka Samhitha, Susruth Samhitha, Ashtanga Hridaya etc

It is important to note the contributions of the rural and tribal people in pregnancy care and management. Therapeutic oil massages, warm water bath with boiled leaves of Moringa, Ajamoda etc are helpful in alleviating aches and inflammation. Dizziness and nausea are managed by oral administration of dhanyaka (coriander) and sugar is very popular in Kerala.

Management during delivery and aftercare are as important as the pregnancy period for the mother to regain her health and physique.

Today we live in an era of sophisticated diagnostic procedures where we can see how the baby moves, breathes and lives inside the womb. Advancement of technology has contributed to a great extent in obstetric management.

Even though Ayurveda emerged in an era of less technological advancement the management techniques of pregnancy and infant care are still very valuable for every expectant mother.