

ROLE OF AYURVEDA IN PRECONCEPTION CARE

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ABSTRACT :

Conception or fertilization means the fusion of gametes to produce a new organism. Preconception care is an opportunity for couple to improve their health before they start trying for a baby. It involves finding and taking care of any problems that might affect the couple and their baby in future. The American college of obstetricians and gynaecologists recommend that all health encounters during a woman's reproductive years, particularly those that are a part of preconception care, should include counselling on appropriate health behaviours to optimize pregnancy outcomes and prevent maternity mortality. "What you do before pregnancy is just as important as what you do during pregnancy". To prepare for the best pregnancy possible, preconception planning is essential and may reduce the risk of adverse outcomes such as birth defects, miscarriage and preterm delivery. *Ayurvedic* texts have very systemic description of various facts responsible for better progeny like-prescribed dietetic regimen for both partners, mode of life and unvitiated qualities of *Shukra*, healthy *Garbhashaya* and unvitiated *Shonita* for conception thus ultimately a better offspring. *Ayurveda* gives immense significance to the preparation of both partners prior to conception. This article describes that how *Ayurveda* plays an important role in preconception care.

Key words: Conception, health, pregnancy.

Already known about this topic: *Ayurvedic* texts have given very systemic description of various facts responsible for better progeny like-prescribed dietetic regimen for both partners, qualities of unvitiated *Shukra* and *shonita*, healthy *Garbhashaya* for conception thus that can proceed to ultimately a better offspring. The regimen followed during pre pregnancy period to achieve conception is called *Garbhadhana vidhi*. There is detail description of this *Garbhadhana vidhi* in our classics by which man and woman can get excellent progeny.

What adds This study: In this topic we have collected the references from Samhitas related to this topic that how *Ayurveda* can play role in preconception care. In this topic these points are mentioned-age for marriage, selection of

suitable or right partner, age for conception, four vital factors responsible for conception, regimen for couples, time for conjugation, method and position for conjugation, diet for couples. Our aim is not only to improve the chances of conception, but to also improve the chances of a natural and healthy pregnancy.

INTRODUCTION: More than a mere system of treating illness, *Ayurveda* is science of life. It offers a body of wisdom intended to help people stay vital while realizing their full human potential. According to *Ayurveda*, health is a state where the mind is with the body and both working together in harmony. *Ayurvedic* principles are guided by the faith that what is within our body is that which is in the universe. Our body has all the five basic

elements (*Panch mahabhutas*) found in the Universe like the Earth, Water, Fire, Air and Ether. When all these elements are in balance and working together, the mind and the body achieve the highest state of existence. *Ayurveda* gives immense significance to the preparation of both partners prior to conception. Preconception care is defined as a set of interventions that aim to identify and modify biomedical, behavioural and social risks to the woman's health or pregnancy outcome through prevention and management. The preconception care through *Ayurveda* prepares the couple to welcome a new life and to contribute towards healthy community.

Ayurvedic preconception care: The regimen followed during pre pregnancy period to achieve conception is called *Garbhadhana vidhi*. There is detail description of this *Garbhadhana vidhi* in our classics by which man and woman can get excellent progeny. These are following-

- Age for marriage
When a man of twenty five years marry a female whose age is twelve years, he can obtain righteousness, money, pleasure and children and also able to perform duties to his fore-fathers¹.
- Selection of Suitable or right partner
Ayurveda recommends that everyone should choose his or her partner with a different constitution to his or her own so they can help to balance the qualities in their children. For example, a *Kapha* dominant person has a tendency of oily skin and a *Vata* dominant person has dry, rough skin. Any offering of this union is likely to have normal skin because the dryness and roughness is neutralized by oiliness. The other thing that should kept

in mind that the partner should not belong to the same family.

- Age for conception

Male at the age of twenty five and female at the age of sixteen are fully mature, hence they should attempt for attainment of conception². In *Sushruta sharir sthana* it is mentioned that if a man less than twenty five years makes a girl of less than sixteen years conceived, the foetus is destroyed in uterus itself; even if born, it does not live long or if lives it possess debilitated organs³. He also stated this age as *Samatvagataviryau* means those who have attained the fullness of all seven *Dhatus* mentioned in our classics⁴. As both the partners are full of valour and vigor at this age, the born child also possesses these qualities. Chances of neurological defect in the foetus of a girl of fifteen years or less and increasing incidence of Down syndrome in first pregnancy after thirty years onwards age of woman are noted.

- Four vital factors responsible for conception

In classics it is mentioned that for a better progeny four factors should combined properly. This are⁵-

1. *Ritu* (woman's period of ovulation),
2. *Kshetra* (healthy uterus),
3. *Ambu* (*Rasa dhatu* from digested food),
4. *Bija* (ovum and sperm of woman and man).

- Regimen for couple

After the onset of menstruation, for three days and nights, the woman should abandon intercourse. On the fourth day after having taken purification bath and decorating herself with new cloths and having invoked good blessings she should meet her husband⁶. In our classics it is said

that whomsoever person the woman sees first just after the bath at the end of her menses the offspring would also resemble him. Hence it is advised that she should see only her husband at that time⁷. Intercourse on the first day of menstruation diminishes the life of the man. If conception occurs by this the foetus would die during delivery; by conception on the second day the child would die in the immediate post natal period; by conception on the third day the child would have incompletely formed body parts or a short life; and by conception on the fourth day, the child would have fully developed body parts and long life. Just as a floating substance thrown into the river against the current flows back and does not go up the stream, in the same way, it should be understood that the entrance of sperms is not productive while the blood is still flowing out. Therefore intercourse should be avoided for the first three nights⁸. First of all both man and woman should undergo *Snehana* (unction) and *Swedana* (fomentation) and thereafter purify themselves by *Vamana* (emesis) and *Virechana* (purgation) so that they come gradually to normalcy. Thereafter they should apply *Asthapana* and *Anuvasana basti* (enema)⁹. By these *Panchkarma* procedures the excess *Dosha* and *mala* of all the seven *Dhatus* are eliminated from the body.

Then the man should be managed with ghee and milk cooked with sweet drugs and the woman with oil and *Masha* (black gram)¹⁰.

- Time for conjugation (intercourse)

Those desirous of a male child should go to the woman on *Yugma dina* like fourth, sixth, eighth, tenth and twelfth days¹¹. Further, one who desires a female child

should go to the woman on *Ayugma dina* like fifth, seventh, ninth and eleventh day. The thirteenth and subsequent days are to be deprecated¹².

Apart from this the woman who has conceived on these days and is desirous of a male child, she should instil in the right nostril three or four drops of any one of *Lakshmana*, *vatahunga*, *sahadeva* and *vishvadeva* after crushing them in milk and this should not be spitted out¹³.

- Method and position for conjugation (Intercourse)

The man should go to the bed by keeping his right leg (*Dakshina pada*) first while the woman should left leg¹⁴. During the time of intercourse both of them must be with *Prasanna chittata*.

The woman should be in supine position during intercourse so she can receive the seed (semen) and in this condition *Doshas* remain in normal position¹⁵.

The couple should also be in a happy mood after intercourse, they are advised to take a cool bath or shower. Intercourse should be avoided after overeating; with any negative feelings or with a longing for someone else; with someone who has not had intercourse for a long time, who is chronically sick or who is suffering from obesity; and with menstruating women, or those suffering any gynaecological disorders.

- Diet for couples

Diet is a critical key to successful conception for both partners. A good diet and lifestyle is critical for at least six months before trying to conceive for both partners. In *Ayurveda* there are descriptions of many herbs and general tonics which can be useful for both the partners. Herbs such as *Ashwagandha* (*Withania somniferum*), *Shatavari* (*Asparagus racemosus*), *Gokshur*

(*Tribulus terrestris*), *Musali* (*Curculigo orchioides*), *Kaunchbeej* (*Mucuna pruriens*), *Shilajeet* (*Asphaltum*), *Vidarikand* (*Pueraria tuberosa*), *Mulethi* (*Glycerrhiza glabra*), *Bala* (*Abutilon indicum*), *Amalaki* (*Phyllanthus emblica*), drugs of *Prajasthapana* can be taken. General reproductive tonic foods like warm milk, ghee, yoghurt, black sesame seeds, *masha*, *mudga*, honey, dates, almonds and saffron should be used. Women planning for pregnancy should maintain good nutritional status prior to the conception. This will help to minimise health risks of both mother and infant. A woman must establish higher nutritional status that will essentially nourish herself and her embryo.

CONCLUSION

Ayurveda gives great importance to the preparation of both partners prior to conception. The pre pregnancy care through *Ayurveda* prepares the couple to welcome a new life and to contribute towards healthy society. The *Ayurvedic* preconception care (*Garbhadhana vidhi*) begins with the selection of the right partner, both constitutional and age wise. It then explains about the right mode of conception and the importance of diet, life style and many more factors in establishing a concrete foundation from the very beginning of pregnancy. It takes advantages of our body's natural ability to cleanse and renew. Preconception care involves knowing, identifying and tackling any problems that can arise and affect the mother and the baby, prepares the body for pregnancy, improves chances for a successful pregnancy and minimizes the risk factors for adverse maternal and fetal outcome.

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