



## Holistic Approach to Preconception Care: A Conceptual Framework

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### Abstract:

Reproduction is one of the basic requirements for any species to ensure its existence in the universe. Human reproduction involves step-by-step procedures that lead to the formation of a new individual. Any simple deviation in this finely calculated sequence of events can lead to drastic pathological conditions. Ayurveda, the extract from the entire Vedas, dreams of add (good progeny). The human birth process with its knowledge of the time before and after the event is explained by (branch dealing with obstetrics), which is an integral part of (branch dealing with paediatrics). Pre-natal care in Ayurveda has been described centuries ago to have a disease-free and good offspring by following the rules and rituals. Recent research shows that every ejaculation during sexual intercourse depletes the body energy of the male partner. Therefore, to preserve the quality and energy of sperm, the observance of celibacy was planned for one month before conception. The aim of Aharaniyama before conception was to enhance the qualities of sperm and ovum. Garbhadhana and Puthreshti speak of preparing the mindset of the prospective parents and arousing the zeal to have a good offspring. Antenatal care is an extension of prenatal care to ensure optimum health of mother and child. So this study helps to explore Ayurvedic measures to get a Shreyasipraja.

**Keywords:** Preconception health, Ayurveda, Holistic Conceptual framework

### Introduction:

Antenatal care can be defined as the provision of biomedical, behavioral, and social health interventions to women and couples prior to conception. [1] It aims to improve maternal, paternal, and infant health in both the short and long term. [2] Adequate and comprehensive prenatal care can be achieved by providing lifestyle advice to optimize maternal health, by providing advice to optimize maternal chronic health problems, by identifying couples at risk of having a baby with a genetic or chromosomal abnormality, and by equipping the couple with sufficient knowledge to make informed decisions. Preconception care is the care or counseling of couples planning a pregnancy long before the actual conception. When a couple is seen and counseled about pregnancy long before actual conception, the outcome is fantastic. Data shows that 3%–5% of all births result in congenital malformations, 20%–30% of all neonatal deaths are due to genetic disorders, 30%–50% of postpartum deaths are due to genetic disorders, 18.5% have congenital malformations and 50% of mental retardation cases are genetic.

Ayurveda takes care of all aspects of the human being. It is a holistic way of life. To conceive a Shreyasipraja, couples planning to become parents can apply Ayurvedic principles. Ayurvedic prenatal care prepares couples physically and mentally. The divine blessing of motherhood can be made more blissful with Ayurveda. The main aim of Ayurveda is to maintain the health of the healthy person and

cure the disease of the sick person. According to the Shrimad Bhagavat Geeta, procreation is one of the most important properties of the living organism. Pre-natal care is one such preventive measure to maintain Shreyasipraja. It helps in early detection of risk factors and prevents the adverse effects of these factors [3]

### Objectives:

The aim of this study was to collect the literary sources on antenatal care in Ayurvedic treatments and its utility in modern day obstetrics.

### Materials and Methods:

The literary study of the concepts of antenatal care was carried out using classical Ayurvedic texts, especially Caraka Samhita—Shareera sthan and Susruta Samhita—Shareera sthan for healthy progeny. They were analyzed and comprehended.

### Rajaswalacharya (way of life during menstruation):

During the first three days of menstruation, women should remain isolated. On the fourth day of menstruation, they should wear white or new clothes and jewelry and then, while chanting religious hymns, they should first see their husband in white clothes. Havishya (meal of ghee, shali rice and milk) and yawaka (meal of barley and milk) are indicated. Tikshna (pervasive), Katu (pungent), Lavana (salty) substances and Nasya (nasal medicines), Swedana (fomentation) and Vamana (vomiting) are contraindicated during this period.

**Vivahayogya Ayu (criteria for marriage):**

Acharya Sushruta mentions that the marriageable age for husband and wife is 25 and 12 years respectively, while Acharya Vagbhata states 21 and 12 years respectively. Acharya also mentioned the qualities of a girl for marriage i.e. she should not belong to the same Gotra or Atulyagotra (same family), should not have contagious diseases, beautiful, modest, with complete body parts, delicate and so on. [4] Recent updates also state that the consanguineous marriages carry recessive traits.

**Garbhadana Yogya Ayu (Appropriate age for conception):**

Age plays an important role in producing good offspring because biologically a person (woman or man) is capable of producing a healthy child only after reaching sexual maturity. Acharya Charaka says that a man becomes sexually mature at the age of 16, while Acharya Sushruta says that men are fully mature at the age of 25 and women at the age of 16 and should therefore try to conceive. Since both partners at this age are full of valor and vigor, the child born also possesses these qualities.

**Garbhasambhavasamagri (factors responsible for conception):**

Various factors play a role in a good conception. Ayurveda mentions the importance of four factors that are necessary for conception, namely

1. Ritu (time of ovulation when the chances of conception are highest)
2. Kshetra (the reproductive tract where fertilization and implantation take place)
3. Ambu (nutrition including all hormones)
4. Beeja (healthy sperm and eggs)

**Observations:**

Precautionary treatments during contraception according to Ayurveda [5]

- The couple should first undergo shodhana (cleansing) therapy starting with purvakarma (preparatory measures), snehana (oiling), swedana, then vamana, virechana (cleansing), asthapana (decoction enema) and anuvasana basti (oil enema).

- Both partners should observe Brahmacharya for a month before attempting intercourse.

- The man should eat shali rice with ghrita (ghee) and milk. The woman should eat taila and masha.

The reason for such a diet from a scientific point of view can be as follows:

**Male aspect:**

**o a. Ghrita:** It has Vata-Pitta Shamaka qualities and is Sitavirya (cold potency). It is conducive to rasa, shukra and ojas. It also has the quality of Rasayana. All these contribute to the smooth functioning of Shukra and thus helps in achieving conception.

**o b. Shali:** It alleviates the pitta dosha. It is Madhura Rasa, Snigdha, Balya, Vrishya, Brimhana, and so on, which promotes the qualities of Shukra.

**Feminine aspect:**

**o a. Masha:** It is Vatahara, Snigdha, Ushna Virya and Madhura Rasa. It has the qualities of Balya and Pumsatwa. It also chemically consists of proteins, carbohydrates, vitamin B, magnesium, calcium, iron and folic acid which are very important for conception and pregnancy. Calcium and magnesium play a good role in regulating estrogen levels. The folic acid it contains helps to prevent neural tube defects. All these properties help to promote the qualities of Artava.

**o b. Taila:** It is effective in vataja disorders and does not increase kapha. It promotes strength (balya) and helps in yoni vishodhana (cleanses the yoni marga). Tila Taila has a property of Garbhashaya Vishodhanam. So these properties help the female reproductive organs to function properly, leading to fertilization. A normal psyche or a happy mind of the couple is one of the most important factors for conception. Stress, anger and despair can disrupt this phenomenon and lead to a decrease in sexual vigor. The position of the couple during coitus also plays an important role in conception. The woman should lie supine so that all doshas remain in their normal place and Beeja can be better perceived [6,7]

**Discussion:**

Recent findings on Panchakarma therapies show that they can be used both for illnesses and for prophylaxis. The choice of partners and the age of marriage still applies today. Late marriages and late pregnancies are the main causes of congenital anomalies. Vital organs are formed in the early embryonic stage and any impairment during this time can lead to anomalies, which in turn places a burden on the nation as well as the parents. [8]

Black chickpeas in the preconceptional diet are a rich source of folic acid, protein and fiber. Thus, it helps prevent neural tube defects. As it is a powerful antioxidant, it helps to reduce oxidative stress. Rice contains more carbohydrates and rice bran contains the easily digestible vitamin B complex. Milk provides calcium. Ghee has the ability to add strength, improve tone and nourish the body [9]

Modern lifestyle leading to more and more stress is one of the major causes of infertility. [10] Along with lifestyle habits such as alcohol consumption and environmental toxins affecting sperm count, quality and motility, zinc levels in the body are also decreasing, while in women it affects ovulation and menstruation and leads to hypothalamic-pituitary ovarian dysfunction.

Consumption of masha, tila taila, milk and ghee by couples helps in the production of efficient sperms and eggs, which will lead to good progeny. All the methods of Ayurvedic contraception are affordable and the medicines are also easily available.

Ayurveda Panchakarma therapy ensures physical and mental fitness. It works on the hormonal level and keeps the hormones in balance. Therefore, the hormonal imbalances of infertility can be resolved through Panchakarma procedures. These also help in removing the accumulated toxins. The diet explained provides the expectant mother and the future child with essential micro and macronutrients.

In addition to the classic methods, some supplements such as taking folic acid, iron and calcium, paying attention to the body mass index, avoiding alcohol and tobacco and abstaining from narcotics would bring much better and desired results.

#### Conclusion:

People with a good mind and a healthy body can build a strong community. When the best quality sperm and eggs come together, a healthy offspring is born. The baby will grow up with a healthy mind and a healthy body. If every couple takes pre-conceptual precautions, the future generations will be wise and intelligent. The Ayurvedic measures for pre-conception care help to achieve the goal of preparing couples for a new life and contribute to a healthy society. The Ayurvedic remedies for healthy offspring re-emphasize the preventive aspect of Ayurveda.

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