



PRECONCEPTION CARE – AN AYURVEDIC APPROACH

Dr. Prasanna V N

Professor and HOD, Department of Prasutitantra & Striroga
Vaidyaratnam Ayurveda College, Ollur.

Abstract

Pregnancy and motherhood are the most happiest moments in a women's life. Achieving pregnancy has become one of the challenging issues for woman in today's era due to various reasons which could be due to nutritional status, environmental, or even sometimes social background. Preconception care is defined as a set of interventions that aim to identify and modify biomedical, behavioral and social risks to the woman's health or pregnancy outcome through prevention and management. Ayurveda describes certain charyas to be followed before pregnancy by both the partners that will help for becoming garbha, maintaining that Garbha and for producing healthy pregnancy. Ayurveda gives great importance for the preconception care so as to ensure a healthy and successful progeny. For healthy young couples as well as couples facing fertility issues, the preconception care as per Ayurveda ensures a physically, mentally, intellectually healthy progeny. To prepare for the desirable and quality pregnancy outcome, preconception care is essential and may reduce the risk of adverse outcomes such as congenital anomalies, abortions and preterm delivery.

Key words : Pregnancy, Motherhood, Preconception care, Ayurveda, Garbha.

Introduction

Preconception care is the provision of social, behavioural, environmental, and biomedical, health interventions to women and couples before conception occurs. Its aim is to improve their health status, and reducing behaviours and individual and environmental factors that contribute to poor maternal and child health outcomes¹, risks to a woman's fertility and pregnancy outcome and then reducing these risks through education, counselling, and appropriate intervention, when possible, before conception. It is defined as specific care given for men and women that is focused on reducing maternal and fetal morbidity and mortality, increasing the chances of conception when pregnancy is desired²

To prepare for the desirable and quality pregnancy outcome, preconception care is essential and may reduce the risk of adverse outcomes such as congenital defects, miscarriage and preterm delivery. To prepare for the desirable and quality pregnancy outcome, preconception care is essential and may reduce the risk of adverse outcomes such as congenital defects, miscarriage and preterm delivery.

In Ayurvedic classics give much importance to the care and preparation of both partners before pregnancy prior to pregnancy.

Garbhadhana samskara

The garbhadhana is a multifactorial process, according to Ayurveda this process is a samskara called Garbhadhana samskara. This includes age for marriage, criteria for marriage, contraindicated conditions for

marriage, rajasvalacharya, ritukala, putriya vidhi or putreshtiyagya, mantra prayoga, normal and abnormal postures for coitus and their effects, factors essential for conception, shadgarbhakara bhavas.

Age for marriage

Age factor plays a significant role in achieving a healthy baby because biologically a person is capable of producing a healthy child, only after attaining sexual maturity.

	Susrutha		Vagbhata	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Age	25	12	21	12

पुमानेकविंशतिवर्षः दशवर्षदेशीयाम् ।³

पञ्चविंशतिवर्षाया षोडशदशवर्षा पत्नीमावहेत् ।⁴

Acharya Susruta mentioned that the appropriate age for men and women is 25 and 12 years respectively while Vagbhatacharaya explained it as 21 and 12 years respectively. Both the partners attain the optimum physiological functioning of the organs at this age.

Criteria for marriage³

Athulyagothram, Athulyabhijanam, desiyam	Should not be of same gothra Should be of same desa
Asancharirotakulaprasutha	Born in a family which is not having any contagious disease
Rupaseelalakshanasampannam	Beautiful and has modest character
Anunam	Possesses good qualities with complete body parts.
Avinashtadanthoushtakarnanakhakesasthaneem	Complete body parts like teeth, lips, ears, nails, hair and breast.
Mrudumarogaprakrutheem	Soft, delicate and good or healthy nature.
Akapilamapingalam	Colour has neither excessive tawny nor golden complexion.
Aheenamadhikangeem	Neither less or nor more body parts

Contraindicated conditions for coitus

Vagbhatacharya & Carakacharya 5,6			
अत्याशिता	Over eating	शोकार्ता	Sorrow – stricken
क्षुधिता	Hungry	क्रुद्धा	Angry
पिपासिता	Thirsty	अन्यमनस्कान्यंच पुमांसमच्छन्तिमैथुने	Longing some one else
भीता	Frightened	मैथुनेचाऽतिकामाम्	Excessive desire for sex
विमना	Averse	दीर्घरोगिणी	Chronic ill health

Susrutha and Bhavaprakasa ^{7,8}			
रजस्वलां	During menstruation	हीनाङ्गीं	Less body parts
अकामां	Doesn't interest in sexual act	गर्भिणीं	Pregnant lady
मलिनां,	Dirty	योनिदोषसमन्वितां	Gynecological diseases
अप्रियां	Unloving	सगोत्रां	Same gotra
वर्णवृद्धां	Higher cast	गुरुपत्नीं	Wife of guru
व्याधिप्रपीडितां	Suffering from disease	द्वेष्यां	Jealous

नगर्भदत्तेविगुणांवाप्रजांजनयति⁶ – Complications may occur when coitus was performed during these contraindicated conditions. One of the complication is Infertility and other one is abnormal development of baby.

Avoidable age ⁶		Avoidable place ⁹		Avoidable time ⁹	
अतिबालां	Very young age	लज्जासमावहेदेशे	Place likely to cause embarrassment	सन्ध्यां	Twilights
अतिवृद्धा	Old age	विवृते	In open place	पर्वस्वगम्यांच, गोसर्गे	Festival days Early morning

		अशुद्धे	Unclean place	अर्द्धरात्रेतथामध्यदिनेषुच	Mid night Mid day
--	--	---------	---------------	----------------------------	----------------------

Rajaswalacharya.

The female is advised specific mode of living during menstruation which is termed as rituchraya. It will start from the onset of menstruation for a period of 3 days. The charya will help women to become healthy both physically and mentally during the menstrual cycle. This charyas also helpful to prevent gynecological diseases and safeguards reproductive health.

AHARA ^{10,11}	
Pathya	Apathya
Havishya	Tikshna, Katu, Lavana
Yavaka	

Ahara is having the property of agnideepana is indicated during this period which is helpful for proper digestion. हविष्यंसघृतशाल्योदनादि^{10,11} It is made up of ghee, sali rice and milk. Ghrita has vata-pitta shamana qualities and is having sitavirya. It is balya and ojaskara. It also has the quality of rasayana and agnideepana. Sali alleviates pitta dosha. It is having madhurarasa, snigdha, balya, vrishya and brimhana properties.

Yavakam : क्षीरसंस्कृतंयवात्रमित्येके^{10,11} – It is prepared with yava and ksheera. Yava is having the properties of guru, seetha, madhura and sara. Dhathuvaradhanam, vrishyam, rasayanam, balyam, ojaskaram and vatapithaharam are the properties of milk. It will help women to become healthy. These should directly receive over palm or leaf or earthen utensils. Acharyas stated that avoid theekshna, kadu and lavana foods during menstruation because it will increase pitta dosha. There by it may increase the amount of menstrual bleeding.

Acharyas mention that during the time of menstruation for first three days, she should sleep on the bed made of darbha spread over the ground with completely avoiding sexual contact. From the vedic time onwards, darbha is having its importance in rituals. Darbha grass protects the body from negative energies and from toxicity. It may purifies the menstrual blood.

Avoidable acts : During these three days she should avoid Divaswapna (day sleep), Anjana (application of collyrium) , asrupatha (tearing), snana (bathing), anulepa (anointing), abhyanga (massaging), nakhachedana (paring of nails), pradhavana (fast racing), hasana (laughing), kadhana (over talking) athisabdasravana (hearing loud sound) avalekhana (combing) maruthayasasevana (exposure to sun light) . In Kasyapasamhitha acharya advised to avoid nasyakarma(medication through nostrils), vamana (medicated emesis) and swedana karma (sudation). These three days. she should avoid coitus¹¹. On 4th day she should take bath in cold and clean water and wear white clean undamaged cloths, anointing the fragrant pastes. Adorn her with garlands, flowers and ornaments¹⁰.

Essential factors for conception

1. Prepared mentally and physically both partners by dietetic regimen and mode of life style.
2. Presence of healthy Sukra and Arthava (sperm and ovum).
3. Should have a healthy genital tract.

Age for conception

According to Vagbhatacarya in Ashtanga sangraha and Sushrutacarya the appropriate age of conception is 25 years for a male and 16 years for a female. But in Ashtanga hridaya the age for conception for male is 20.

Regarding the age for female, Acarya had the same opinion ie 16. At this age all the dhatus and the reproductive systems are fully formed and mature. Both the partners attain the optimum physiologic functioning of all the organs.

Vagbhata I ¹²		Susruta ¹³		Vagbhata II ¹⁴	
Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
25	16	25	16	20	16

Ritukala

ऋतुश्च निषिक्तस्य बीजस्य फलप्रसवानुगुणः कालः ।¹⁵

This is an appropriate time for conception. Acharyas have different opinions regarding duration of rithukala^{16, 17}.ie. 12-16 days or considered as whole month. Counting from 1st day of menstruation rithukala is 16 days. Counting from 4th day of menstruation it is of 12days. During rithukala, proliferation of endometrium and ovulation occurs. During this period kapha dosha acts predominantly. By means of upachaya karma of kapha proliferation occurs on these days. During the proliferative phase Pitta dosha acts and by its ushnaguna and pakadi karma helps in maturation of the graffian follicle and ovulation will occur at the end of the phase. The woman conceived on successive days of rithukala has long life, good health and fortune, power of supremacy, energy, complexion and better specific motor or sensory organs. In further delay for conception all these qualities will gradually decline.¹⁸

*Puthriya vidhi*¹⁹

Both the partners should observe brahmacharya for one month before attempting coitus. First of all both man and woman should undergo snehana and swedana and thereafter shodhana karma should be performed such as vamana ,virechana, asthapanavasthi and anuvasanavasthi. After these purifying measures the man should use gritha and milk medicated with the drugs of Madhura varga and the woman should consume tilataila (oil) and masha(black gram).

The Ghee(ghruta) has the property of balya, sukrala, agnideepthikaram. It nourishes the body it has the property of rasayana and vrishya . It promotes jatharagni which in turns increase dhatwgni resulting in the formation of all dhatus, including shrukra dhatu . So that the consumption of ghee and milk increases the quality & quantity of sperm. Milk is having the property of dhathuwardhana, vrishyam, rasayanam, balyam, it increases ojus. It will alleviate vathapitha doshas. When milk medicated with drugs of Madhura varga has anabolic action.

Sesamum oil or tilataila has vata & kapha samana action due to its rasa & virya.it has also the action of rakthapittakara and lekhaana . There by it has the property of garbhashayavishodana. It helps in regularizing the menstruation & hence promotes ovulation. It is also a best balya & vrushya due to its snigdha guna. Black gram(Masha) is balya, vrushya, alleviates vata& promotes vigor. It has the property of vatahara, snigdha, ushna virya, and madhura rasa. Tilataila and masha by its qualities will increase arthava.

*Putreshti yajna*²⁰

PutreshtiYajna is nothing but preparing the couple mentally to conceive. It will provide specific spiritual environment to achieve conception. Ayurveda states that the couple should prepare themselves before conception mentally. Normalcy of psychology or happiness of couple is most important for conception.

The priest should search a space in the north or east direction of the house which is slopy towards north or east, be smear it with cow dung and water ,rewipe the same with water and establish an altar. He should sit on the west side of the altar and should lit the fire in the altar with the woods of palasa, ingudi, udumbara or madhuka, spread all around kusa, and strew laja (parched paddy) and fragrant white flowers.

Drugs palasa etc having the properties of anti microbial, anthelmintic, anti inflammatory and make the environment free from microorganisms. The priest should start putreshti yajna for fulfilment of the desires of the lady by indicating prajapati to the yoni of the woman and reciting vishnuryoni etc hymn. By enchanting mantras, mental and emotional stress will reduce. Oblation material prepared with rice, barley etc mixed with milk and grtha which was already treated with mantras and put thrice in oblation fire and then hand over the water pot already sanctified with mantras to the woman and advise her to use the water where ever needed. After completion of this yajna, the lady should go around the fire with her husband. The grtha left over after sacrifice should be taken first by husband and then wife without leaving it.

Husband making the wife lie down on a comfortable bed should take Lakshmana (Ipomoea sepiaria) mix it with water, recite mantras hundred times “ somah pavana” and “savithrimantras” and give its inhalation to her reciting “apodevirupasrja” mantras . After coition act the wife retaining the same position for some time and later on, wash the external genitalia with cold water. After this she should avoid working near fire, hot sun, excessive physical labour, exercise and grief. Lakshmana is having the properties of putrajanani , streevandhyatwavinasi, rasayanakari and balya.²¹By means of all these properties the drug lakshmana may act upon the HPO axis and normalize the hormonal balance. There by proper fertilization , growth and implantation of fertilized ovum may take place.

Physical preparation for coitus²²

Snatha	After taking bath	Suvesa	Well dressed
Chandan anuliphanga	Apply chanadana	Samalankrutha	Well ornamented
Sugandha Sumanorchitha	Sainted by flowers or wears garlands	Thambulavadana	Chewing beetle leaf
Suvasana	Wear good & clean dress	Thasyanuraktha	Mentally prepared for coitus
Suklanivasana	Wear white dress	Adhikasmara	Fully affection to each other,

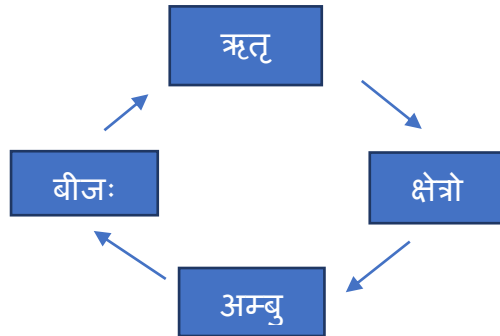
Mental preparation²³

Santhwayithwathadanyonyam	Loving word to each other
Saharsham	With happy
Sukhi	Well pleased to both before copulation
Sragvi	Dedicated to each other for coitus

Sumana	Psychologically with full affection
Chinthayasthwadabhikama	Think only about copulation and conception

Garbhasambhava samagri²⁴

The factors which are essential for becoming pregnant and produce a healthy progeny are garbhasambhava samagri. Four in number. Quality and quantity of garbhasambhava samagri are important to acquire good progeny.



ऋतु – अङ्गनायारजस्समयः - rithukala or garbhadhanayogya kala. The period from first day of menstruation to sixteenth day and is called ritukaala. This period is suitable for conception of Garbha.

क्षेत्रो-गर्भाशय - Kshetra comprises healthy reproductive system which plays an important role in fertilization and implantation. Condition of garbhasaya is important for proper implantation of garbha just like ploughed land sharpens the speed of germination of seeds.

अम्बु - पुनराहारपाकजोव्यापीरसधातुः - The term Ambu represents rasa dhatu (nutritional elements) which is formed after complete digestion of Ahar (food). The main function of rasa dhatu is prinana which means nourishment. It is the nutritional fluid which supplies nutrition to the fetus and it is formed from rasa dhatu which is formed out of the essence of food. If proper nutrition is not supplied will lead to garbhavikrutis.

बीजः - स्त्रीपुंसयोरार्तवशुक्रे - It is either ovum of woman and sperm of man. Healthy progeny is the outcome of healthy sperm and ovum.

Shadgarbhakara bhavas²⁵



For meeting the objective of a healthy progeny, Ayurveda scholars felt the importance of Six procreative factors (shadgarbhakarabhavas) such as matrija(maternal), pitrija(paternal), atmaja(soul), rasaja(nutritional), satmyaja(wholesomeness), and sattvaja(psych / mind). The conglomeration of these procreative factors is a must for healthy progeny.

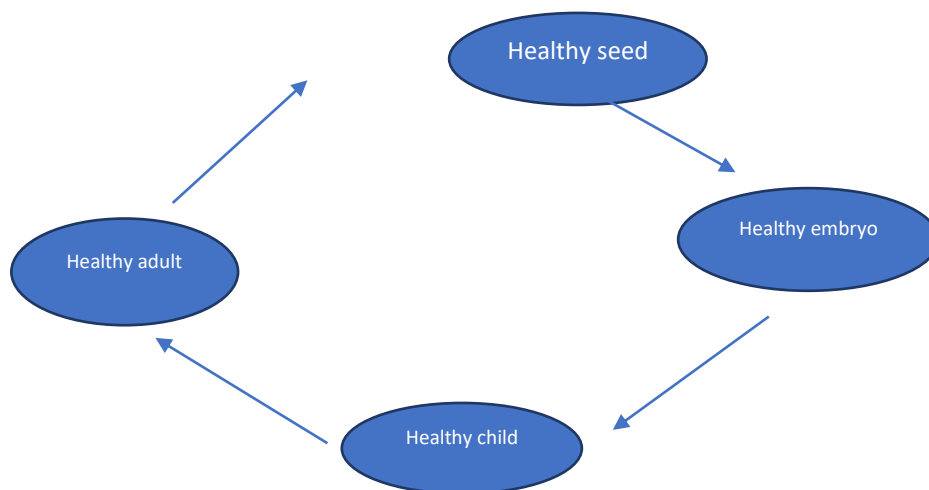
*Manasika vikaras*²⁶

सौमनस्यं गर्भधारणं - Normalcy of psychology or happiness of mind of the couple is one of the most important factors for conception.

दौर्मनस्यं अवृष्याणां²⁶ - Stress, anger, despair etc can disturb the phenomenon leading to diminution of sexual vigour. So avoid negative emotions like krodha, shoka, bhaya, dwesha etc and to maintain soumanasyam.

*Benefits*²⁷

रूपवन्ततः	Handsome
सान्त्ववत	endowed with goodness
चिरायुष	having long life
सुपुत्र	having good qualities

*Conclusion*

Garbhadhanavidhi can provide a solution in several life style related problems . It is very essential for the prevention of problems of mother & foetus. This charya also provide promotive health care for the couples. A healthy progeny can be achieved when couple followed all the regimens mentioned in Ayurvedic classics in proper way. For achievement of conception, proper functioning vayu (vatadosha), healthy mental status, healthy and proper functioning female reproductive system, well-prepared uterus and healthy genital organs, healthy sukradhatu (sperm), and sonita (ovum) are essential factors. By adopting the regimens stated by Ayurveda acharyas, prepares the couple for a healthy pregnancy and a healthy baby.

Reference

- <https://www.who.int/preconception>.
- www.aafp.org.
- Vagbhata, Astangasangraha, Sareerasthana verse 1/2, Sasilekha commentary of Indu, Chowkhamba Sanskrit series office, Varanasi 2008, pp 265
- Susrutha, Susruthasamhitha, Sareerasthana verse 10/53, Chowkhamba Krishnadas Academy, Varanasi, 2007, pp 392
- Vagbhata, Astangasangraha, Sareerasthana verse 1/55, Sasilekha commentary of Indu, Chowkhamba Sanskrit series office, Varanasi 2008, pp 272
- Agnivesa, Carakasamhitha, Sareerasthana verse 8/6, with the commentary of Cakrapanidatta, ChawkhambaPrakasan, 2007, pp 341
- Susrutha, Susruthasamhitha, Chikitsasthana, verse 24/110-123 ,ChowkhambaKrishnadas Academy, Varanasi, 2007, pp 311
- Pandit Brahma Sankaramisra, Bhavaprakasha by Bhavamisra, Purvakhanda, 5/300-302, Chawkhamba Sanskrit Bhavan, 2013, pp 336
- Ram;s Text book of Prasutitantra, Dr. Rambeer Sharma & DR. Anuj Priyadarshi Sharma, Vol.1, Chawkhambha Orientalia, Varanasi, ED; 2020. Pg - 87

10. Susrutha, Susruthasamhitha, Sarirasthana, verse 2/25 ,ChowkambaKrishnadas Academy, Varanasi, 2007, pp 346
11. Vagbhata, Astangasangraha, Sareerasthana verse 1/42,43, Sasilekha commentary of Indu, Chowkhamba Sanskrit series office, Varanasi 2008, pp 270,271
12. Susrutha, Susruthasamhitha, Sutrasthana, verse 35/13 ,ChowkambaKrishnadas Academy, Varanasi, 2007, pp 151
13. Vagbhata, Astangahridaya, Sarirasthana, verse 1/8,9, Sarvangasundara commentary of Arunadutta, Chowkhamba Orientalia, Varanasi 2005, pp 363.
14. Vagbhata, Astangasangraha, Sareerasthana verse 1/10 Sasilekha commentary of Indu, Chowkhamba Sanskrit series office, Varanasi 2008, pp 266
15. Susrutha, Susruthasamhitha, Sarirasthana, verse 3/6 ,ChowkambaKrishnadas Academy, Varanasi, 2007, pp 351
16. Vagbhata, Astangasangraha, Sareirasthana verse 1/38 Sasilekha commentary of Indu, Chowkhamba Sanskrit series office, Varanasi 2008, pp 270
17. Vagbhata, Astangasangraha, Sareerasthana verse 1/47 Sasilekha commentary of Indu, Chowkhamba Sanskrit series office, Varanasi 2008, pp 271
18. Agnivesa, Carakasamhita, Sareerasthana verse 8/4, with the commentary of Cakrapanidatta, ChawkambaPrakasan, 2007, pp 340
19. Agnivesa, Carakasamhita, Sareerasthana verse 8/5-7, with the commentary of Cakrapanidatta, ChawkambaPrakasan, 2007, pp 341
20. Agnivesa, Carakasamhita, Sareerasthana verse 8/10-11, with the commentary of Cakrapanidatta, ChawkambaPrakasan, 2007, pp 341
21. Acarya Vriddha Jeevaka, Kasyapasamhita, Sareerasthana verse 5/8-11, Edited by Prof.(Km) P.V.Tewari , Chowkhamba viswabharati, Oriental publishers and distributors, Varanasi, 1996, pp 138
22. Pandit Brahma Sankaramisra, Bhavaprakasha by Bhavamisra, Purvakhanda, 3, Chawkamba Sanskrit Bhavan, 2013, pp 336
23. Vagbhata, Astangahridaya, Sarirasthana, verse 1/34, Sarvangasundara commentary of Arunadutta, Chowkhamba Orientalia, Varanasi 2005, pp 368
24. Susrutha, Susruthasamhitha, Sarirasthana, verse 3/6 ,ChowkambaKrishnadas Academy, Varanasi, 2007, pp 351Susrutha 2/33 pg 348
25. Agnivesa, Carakasamhita, Sareerasthana verse 3/6 -11, with the commentary of Cakrapanidatta, ChawkambaPrakasan, 2007, pp 341
26. Agnivesa, Carakasamhita, Sutrasthana verse 25/40, with the commentary of Cakrapanidatta, ChawkambaPrakasan, 2007, pp 341
27. Susrutha, Susruthasamhitha, Sarirasthana, verse 2/34 ,ChowkambaKrishnadas Academy, Varanasi, 2007, pp351