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“Importance of Ahara in Different Age Group of Children: A Review”

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Abstract:

Ayurveda is holistic science of life which mainly aim to preserve and promote the health of individuals. Acharyas have mentioned Ahara, Nidra, Brahmacharya as Tryoupsthamba of body. Ahara has been Enumerated first as it has great importance to maintain health and sustain life. In Recent Era, Life style and dietary habits are most influencing factor for health of individuals. Ayurveda specially Emphasis on Ahara and believes that healthy Ahara nourishes Sharir, Atma, Mana. The healthy body as well as diseases are nothing but outcome of Ahara. Children are in Ajatvyajana Awastha . Children being in developing phase, Ahara plays a great role in life of children. So, Parents should be made aware regarding Ahara required by children in different ages. Ayurveda has described Ahar kalpana in different age group of children and having proper Ahara will be helpful for proper growth and development of children.

KEY-WORDS: Ahara , Tryoupsthamba, Brahmacharya, Ajatvyajanawastha

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INTRODUCTION:

Ayurveda is science of life, which mainly aims to promote and preserve the health of individuals [1]. Acharyas have mentioned *Ahara*, *Nidra*, *Brahmacharya* as *Tryoupsthamba* of body. *Ahara* has been Enumerated first as it has great importance to maintain health and sustain life. In Recent Era, Life style and dietary habits are most influencing factor for health of individuals. Ayurveda specially Emphasis on *Ahara* and believes that healthy *Ahara* nourishes *Sharir*, *Atma*, *Mana*. *Ahara* is the main causative factor for all diseases as *Sarva Roga Karanama*. *Ahara* is termed as *Mahabheshaja* by *Acharya Kashyapa*. Hence *Ahara* has so much importance in our life. In *Astanga Ayurveda*, a one of the main branch *Kaumarabhritya* which deals with proper development of healthy child and treatment of diseased child. [2] Healthy and brilliant Children are Nation's wealth so it is important to give babies healthy start and healthy life. Good eating habits and nutrition has great role in growth and development of children. Nourishment of children begins in mother womb itself. Poor nutrition during pregnancy period may result in stunted fetal growth and poor brain development. After birth also, child growth depends on mother diet, later period on own diet. Proper Diet and healthy lifestyle from early age leaves high impact on Health to have healthy and long life of children.

In Ayurveda, Children are classified into 3 groups as per the diet [3] are as follows:

1. ***Ksheerap Awastha*** : Upto 1 year Consuming only breast Milk^[4].
2. ***Ksheerannada Awastha*** : Upto 2 year of life ,Solid food along with milk^[5]
3. ***Annand Awastha*** : After 2 years of life where child consumes all like adults^[6].

Ahara According to the different age group of Children:

Ksheerap Awastha Ahara: Breast milk are advised exclusively for 6 months by some of the Acharyas. Breast milk is like *Amruta* for new born. Ayurveda praises *Sthanyapana*. The mother should start feeding the child from first day only^[7]. Mother's Milk along with proper nutrition to babies it also provides protection against several diseases. First 3 days there is secretion of *Piyush*, necessary for development of immunity in children. According to *Acharya Kashyapa* breast feed result in good growth, strength, longevity and good health of child as well as not causing any trouble or disease to child^[8]. The benefits of *Sthanyapana* are *Jeevaniya* (longevity), *Deepaniya*^[9], *Balakarak* (develop immunity), *Satmya* (congenital)^[10], *Sthairyakara* (stability), *Dehavridha*^[11] (aids digestion), *Dosha Shamana* (maintains *Dosha Samyata*), *Vrisha* (Harsha). "*Dhatri Kalapana*" is mentioned in Ayurveda in absence of mother milk to child or as a substitute of mother milk. If is *Dhatri* not available than animal milk like cow, goat milk is advisable. There is also "*Lehya Kalpana*" mentioned, if child is not consuming any kind of milk. *Acharya Kashayapa*

has mentioned many *Lehana* preparations^[12]. In recent Era, Human Milk Banks are available. Despite many advances in infant formulas, human breast milk provides a bioactive matrix of benefits that cannot be replicated by any other source of nutrition formula^[13]. If mother does not have enough Breast Milk or if she is sick or her milk is grossly vitiated, in this case *Dhatri* would be required. Likely, *Dhatri* newly developed human milk banks aims for nutrition of newborn babies. It is Like Human milk will replace Human milk So, Human milk bank can be correlated with *Dhatri*, the fundamental of ancient science^[14].

Ksheerannad Awastha Ahara:

Period of 6 months to 2 years comes under this category. Eruption of teeth begins around six months and it is an indication, child is ready to eat food other than milk. Ayurveda broadly classifies them in two *Ahara Sansakara* as follow:

Phalaprasan Sansakara – *Acharya Kashyapa* has mentioned *Phalaprasan sansakara* and it is performed at 6 months^[15]. Infants are given fruits rich in Vitamin C, which is absent in mother's milk. Fruit juices are rich source of nutrition, relieve constipation in child and keeps them hydrated. Freshly prepared and consumed juices are always better than packed juices. Packed juices contain extra amount sugar, additives which may cause dental carries in child.

Annaprashana Sanskara- After 6 months, child require more calorie rich food which is essential for adequate velocity of growth and development. So, we can introduce Semisolid

mashed food in diet of child for 4-5 times in little quantity. Alone Breast Milk is no longer sufficient to meet nutrition as birth weight doubles^[16]. Child Teeth begins to erupt, a biting movement started and tendency to throw solid food out of mouth decreases and digestive system is also mature enough to digest food.

The one knowing *Desha, Agni, Bala* observes the child as hungry, should be given food according to the congeniality^[17]. *Acharya Kashyap* has mentioned food preparation as below^[18] '*Payasa*' by old, husk free and properly washed rice mix with ghee and salt. *Acharya Vagbhatta* mentioned some specific type of food preparation called '*Modaka*'^[19].

1) *Modaka* prepared by using *Priyal, Yastimadhu, Madhu, Laja, and Sita* . It is combination of Proteins, Carbohydrates and helpful in improving nutritional status of infants.

2) *Modaka* prepared by *Bilva, Ela, Sita, Laja* are given infants with weak digestive system

3) *Modaka* prepared by *Dhatki, Pushpa, Sharkara, Laja* is indicated in infants suffering from indigestion and who repeatedly suffers from *Atisara* . Rice is considered ideal for child as it is rich in carbohydrate and good source of Vit B complex. Rice is easily digested and gives energy when used with milk. Wheat is good source of carbohydrate, minerals and vitamins. Wheat is also good natural laxative. Barley is Nutritious and also contains dietary fibers which strengthens bones. In *Ksheerannada Awastha* infants should be provided *Ahara* from *Laghu to*

Guru Ahara. Even various Regional can be used as complementary like Ragi halwa, Nachni halwa, Rajgiri laddu , Idli, Dosa, Mung kheer, khichadi, Mixed millet.

Annada Awastha Ahara:

Child from the age of 2 years is considered in *Annada Awastha* [20]. Child can be shifted to all form of food i.e *Lehya, Peya, Bhojya* . In this stage, children are in growing age, they need foods rich in energy and proteins such as legumes, pulses, nuts, edible oil, ghee, sugar, milk and eggs. Green leafy vegetables and seasonal fruits should be part of their diet. Older children and adolescents should consume plenty of milk to fulfil the high calcium requirement, oil/ghee should be consumed [21]. First sweet should be consumed to pacify the aggravated *Vata* due to excess hunger. Sour and salt in the middle which increases *Agni* so digestion of food is easy. Bitter and Astringent in the end, reduces *Pitta*.

Important Food in Annada Awastha:

Vegetables:

Children should be encouraged to have variety of vegetables; they are great source of nutrients for development of children. Vegetables are low in calories and fat hence they are helpful in reducing risk of obesity in children. They are also helpful in proper functioning of digestive system

Ghee- Incorporate ghee in child diet, ghee helps in improving memory, concentration, boosts digestion, relieves constipation, strengthens immunity, complexion, colour [22].

Fruits-The vitamins, minerals, fibers and antioxidants are found in fruits which are helpful to promote good health and protect against disease now and in future. Pomegranate is good for heart, improves intelligence, immunity and body strength. Apple boosts immunity, keeps bone and teeth strong and healthy. Grapes are rich source of micronutrient minerals like copper, iron, manganese, Vitamin C and supports immune system. Banana is rich source of carbohydrates and helps to build up power muscles.

Dry Fruits –Dry fruits are beneficial as they have high content of micronutrients that would help in proper growth and development of your child. Dry fruits almonds, figs, pistachios, cashew, Apricot, dates rich in Vitamin A, E, Potassium, Iron, Folate and Magnesium helps to keep hair, skin and internal organs Healthy. So, advisable to handful handful of dried fruits in diet of children.

Foods to Avoid:

- Bakery food items
- Deep Fried foods
- Frozen foods
- Food made from refined food
- Stale food
- Packed foods

DISCUSSION:

Ayurveda *Acharyas* have classified different age group of children as per the diet . This shows how much importance is given to *Ahara*. Children health solely depends on the food they are being

provided. So, providing balanced diet is foremost important for children. Now, Human milk bank will be great help for many infants for early age nourishment and parents must thus be aware about possibility for their children to receive donor breast milk. Many Nutritional deficiencies is seen due to improper nutrition. The quantity of food depends on Digestion pattern of children. Digestion and Metabolism depends upon season and different age group of children. Parents should be made aware about children's dietary requirements. Best nutritious food will facilitate and will give pleasure to all *Indriyas* and nourishes *Dhatu* additionally. Appropriate Meals in Children will increase *Oja* and will provide immunity for longer period of time. Balanced diet is one of the pillars of fitness essential for growing children.

CONCLUSION:

Children are future of world hence healthy Child means steps toward healthy world. *Ahara* is considered as important to maintain and sustain a healthy life. Care from pregnancy period is necessary. Up to 6 months exclusive breast milk is important and in absence of breast milk, we can look for Human milk bank. Mother's should be encouraged for breast feeding child till 2 years of age. Children from 6- 2years can be feed with semisolid food, fruits, vegetables. After 2 years of age, children can be shifted to normal diet. Parents providing wide variety of *Ahara* according to *Ahar Kalpana* described by Ayurveda in different age group of children will be helpful for growth and development of children from young

age and children will be less likely to develop nutritional deficiencies in long term.

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