



TRADITIONAL LIFESTYLE AND ADOLESCENTS

**Dr. Abha Khetarpal
Mrs. Parul Singh**



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AYURVEDA'S PIVOTAL ROLE IN PROMOTING HEALTH AND WELLNESS AMONG ADOLESCENT GIRLS (A REVIEW)

Dr. Prabhjot Kaur¹, Mrs. Saroj Bala²

¹Assistant Professor, Dept of Foods & Nutrition, Guru Nanak Girls College, Yamuna Nagar.

²Post Graduate, IGNOU.

ABSTRACT

Adolescence is one of the crucial phases of human development and transitional phase of growth and development between childhood and adulthood. Many problems related to health and fertility can occur in adolescent girls due to negligence to the health hence proper care is essential. Local treatment modalities have wonderful effects on adolescence health. Ayurveda believes that health and wellness depend upon a fragile balance among mind, body and spirit. The ancient Vedic literature by sages has clearly proposed directions to maintain health as well as fighting illness through therapies, massages, herbal medicines, diet control and exercise. In order to explore the pivotal role in maintenance of health among adolescent girls, various researches were analysed. It has been revealed by various studies that ancient traditions if followed will have wonderful effects on your adolescent daughter's health. Research studies in ayurveda have proven the efficacy of these methods. It helps improve her reproductive health too. This paper briefly reviews the parallels in Ayurveda and biomedicine. It also highlights the need for a deeper involvement with traditional therapeutic system of Ayurveda. It also emphasizes to recreate our connection with Mother Nature so as to enable the holistic health approach and treatments based on Ayurveda.

Keywords: Ayurveda, Adolescent, Menstrual, Health, Wellness, Doshas.

INTRODUCTION

The world is undergoing a rapid change in all spheres; the ecosystem, nature and living beings are under strong survival stress due to severe pollution, climate change, population rise and other socio-economic reasons. At this complex juncture, human beings are struggling to overcome these odds for survival. Maintaining the integrity of nature and human health is a big challenge in front of the world and it cannot be ignored either; the governing agencies all over the world are spending billions of dollars and coming out with stronger policies to improve public health day by day. To achieve the goal of public health, just by taking the measures such as, bringing doctor-patient gap closer, invention of new molecules for the challenging diseases and sophisticated medical aids are not adequate, may be it needs a more comprehensive approach of many aspects which could influence and improve human health in far better way. Traditional as well as holistic medical systems like Ayurveda offer a window of opportunity emerging from the entire world in the present scenario.

Ayurveda, which literally means the science of life (Ayur = Life, Veda = Science), is an ancient medical science which was developed in India thousands of years ago (Sharma, P. V. 2004 and Shroff F.M., 2017). Believed to have been passed on to humans from the Gods themselves, Ayurveda developed and evolved into what it is today from several ancient treatises, most notably Atharva Veda which dates back to five thousand years. The ancient Vedic literature has clearly laid out instructions for maintaining health as well as fighting illness via therapies, massages, herbal medicines, diet control and exercise. According to Ayurveda, health and wellness depend on a fragile balance among mind, body and spirit. Ayurvedic medicine primarily focuses on promotion of good health, rather than mere treatment of disease

Ayurveda is an ancient Indian system of medicine, which stresses principally on prevention of body ailments rather than simply relieving pathological problems or symptoms. Ayurveda believes in the treatment of an individual as a whole. The real essence of Ayurveda lies in its basic principles, including its unique concepts of Panchamahabhuta (Five elements), Prakriti (Constitution), Guna (Quality), Rasa (Taste), Agni (Gastric fire), Dosha (Humour), Dhatu (Tissues), Mala (Feces), Srotas (Channels), and its personalized approach to Nidan (Etiology), Cikitsa (Treatment) and Rasayana (Macrobiotics/Life lengthening drugs) (Murthy, 2001, Patwardhan, B. 2010 and Payyappallimana U. et. al. 2015). Various principles described in the classical texts of Ayurveda hold good value even today. The present day Ayurveda has undergone several changes as per the changing needs, but important principles have remained unaltered.

Ayurveda is believed to be the oldest medical science of human civilization. It is more clearly the science of life because it transcends the mere treatment of disease and embraces a wide array of principles and practices that deals with every individual in entirety. Ayurveda elites have proposed various postulations of perennial relevance and these are found to be true in present times as well. Same age old principles and practices of Ayurveda apply to the contemporary concepts of today to full extent (Samal J.,2013).

Health is defined as a state of equilibrium with one's self (*svasthya*) but which is inextricably linked to the environment. Ayurvedic principles, such as the *tridosha* (three humours) theory, provide the relationship between the microcosm and the macrocosm that can be applied in day-to-day practice. This paper briefly reviews the parallels in Ayurveda and biomedicine. It also highlights the need for a deeper involvement with traditional therapeutic system of Ayurveda. It also emphasizes to recreate our connection with Mother Nature so as to enable the holistic health approach and treatments based on Ayurveda (Payyappallimana U. and Venkatasubramanian P. 2016)

American doctor, Halbert Dunn (1959) developed the concept of "wellness" and its philosophy by stating it as a special state of health comprising an overall sense of well-being which considers man as integration of body, spirit and mind who is dependent on his environment. This condition of great personal contentment was termed as "high-level wellness" by him. The four main principles of wellness referred by Adams (2003) comprise: (1) Wellness is multi-dimensional, (2) Wellness research and practice should be oriented towards identifying causes of wellness rather than causes of illness, (3) Wellness is about balance and (4) Wellness is relative, subjective or perceptual. According to Myers et. al. (2000), Health and Wellness is defined as a "Gateway to emotional, spiritual and psychological well-being. It is an approach towards attainment of optimal health and well-being wherein integration of body, mind and spirit enables the individual to live fully with his community and environment".

Specific health and developmental needs and rights characterise the period of adolescence. It is also a time to develop knowledge and skills, learn to manage emotions and relationships acquire attributes and abilities that will be important for enjoying the adolescent years and assuming adult roles. Adolescence is the age of major physical, intellectual and emotional growth.

Gynaecological Issues with Adolescent Girls

The ability to reproduce makes females not only beautiful but also one of the most important creations of God. But this blessing sometimes becomes a curse for her on the verge of infertility which is the most disastrous gynaecological

problem. There are many other gynaecological disorders found in women especially after marriage that need to be timely diagnosed and cured to avoid major problems (Kour, B. 2016)

Various gynaecological disorders faced by the females can be:

- Insufficient or delayed menstrual periods (amenorrhoea)
- Painful Menstrual periods (dysmenorrhoea)
- PCOD/PCOS
- Uterine fibroids
- Leucorrhoea
- Vaginitis
- Cervix and uterus infections
- Uterine and ovarian cancers
- Lower back pain

Adolescent Girls' Health Care and Wellness by Ayurveda

Adolescence is a critical juncture in the adoption of behaviours that are relevant to health. Many of the behaviours that are linked to poor health habits and early death in adults begin during adolescence. Promotion of the health and safety of adolescents is of critical importance for the future of the Nation. For smooth and safe transition from childhood to adult, authentic and accurate guidelines are required as these adolescents stand at the threshold of adulthood. Owing to multi-dimensional nature of the problems of adolescent, a holistic approach is mandatory however modern medical science lacks this approach. Thus Ayurveda can successfully probe into the field of adolescents' health by offering the principle of Prakriti to inculcate healthy practices in adolescent in order to achieve smooth transition to adulthood (Amrutha, B.L. et. al. 2016).

Ayurveda, the invaluable system of medicine, helps adolescent girls in journey towards better health throughout different phases of life and add quality to her life. This is accomplished with Paricharyas – modes of life to be performed during the different phases like menstruation (Rajaswala), fertile period (Rutukal), pregnancy (Garbhini), postpartum (Sutika). Owing to drastic physical and psychic changes during these periods, she has affinity towards various diseases (Gujarath et. al., 2014). Ayurveda believes that giving adolescent girls the right care is similar to nurturing a tender bud so that it blossoms into a bright flower. Taking special note of how her health is progressing in this transitory phase is quintessential. Genetic factors, lifestyle and stress will play a role in stress level of these girls. Medical standards indicate that the adolescent period is from 11 to 17 years. This includes the pre-pubertal stage i.e. before the beginning of menstrual cycles and the stage of menarche which is after menstruation sets in.

Menstruation is a natural phenomenon, but it is also related with biology, psychology, society and religion for women. Menstruation is considered to be a mirror of reproductive health. The present day lifestyle and ideology towards launching female in society might have changed the traditional Indian culture of adopting the age old rituals. Traditions related to menstruation varies from ban of certain activities during cycle, to performance of certain rituals at the end of menstruation.

Ayurvedic Health Tips for Adolescent Girls

Ayurveda has two basic aims: first, to preserve the health of healthy adolescent girls and to help them attain the four principle aims of life i.e. virtue, purpose or wealth, pleasure, and release or liberation from cycle of rebirth; second, to treat illness and disease (Arnold, 1993).

Health, according to ayurvedic theory, is defined as an uninterrupted physical, mental, spiritual happiness and fulfilment; a true balance of organ/systems, psyche and spirit, and balanced and creative relationship with fellow creatures and nature as a whole, family, friends, work, climate, ideas and customs, truth and ourselves, the universe and ourselves; balance and harmony of the three doshas (Arnold, 1993). According to the Charaka Samhita, well-being is a disease free state to be pursued for the attainment of virtue, wealth and gratification (Gupta, 1976). A person whose self, mind and senses are harmonious and cheerful is healthy. In Sanskrit, svastha means healthy; sva means self and stha means established hence healthy individual is established in self. Self has three parts — body, mind and spirit (Heyn, 1987).

Defining health promotion as lifestyle and behaviour which enhance wellness (Nikilananda, 1963), ayurvedic theory is highly sophisticated. Ayurvedic theory shares much with health promotion. The ayurvedic definition of health as embracing mind, body and spirit fits well with the broad definition of health used by health promotion advocates. A focus on wellness is another commonality, although Ayurveda has treatment and cure as additional part of its medicine. A focus on the environment and its connection to human health is another commonality. Ayurvedic nutritional guidelines would also make sense within the healthy eating focus of health promotion.

Ayurveda considers teenage as that governed by pitta dosha which is associated with transformation, heat and metabolism. To balance pitta, teenagers should eat cooling nourishing diet.

(A) Ayurvedic Remedies — Puberty

The symptoms of delayed puberty in adolescent girls are – lack of breast development by age 13, more than 5 years from the beginning of breast growth to the first menstrual period, lack of pubic hair by age 14, or failure to menstruate by age 16.

- 'Laddoos' made with gingelly and jaggery can be given daily at lunch time to physically underdeveloped thin girls. This will bring about puberty and regularise the menstrual flow. Decoction of gingelly can also be used to bring about quick puberty.
- A pinch of saffron, well crushed in a tablespoon of milk is another recipe for under developed girls.
- Green chutney made with coriander leaves, curry leaves, mint or fenugreek leaves helps in full growth of the adolescent girls. Mint is a good uterine tonic. These greens help in checking anaemia.

(B) Ayurvedic Remedies — Menorrhagia and Metrorrhagia

Abnormally heavy bleeding at menstruation which may or may not be associated with abnormally long periods is termed as menorrhagia. The causative factors include hormonal imbalances, inflammation or fibroids in the pelvic cavity, anaemia etc. Metrorrhagia is bleeding from uterus other than the normal menstrual period. It may be an indication of a serious disease and investigation should be done properly. According to Ayurveda, these conditions are due to imbalance of hormones, caused by aggravation of pitta in the body. Abnormal growths in the uterus may also produce profuse bleeding. Heavy bleeding may cause giddiness, head ache, pain in the calves and restlessness.

- Mint chutney or mint decoction decreases menstrual pain and cramps
- A decoction is made with boiling 100 grams of lady's finger in 1/2 litre of water for 20 minutes and then filtered. Sweetened doses of 60 to 90 ml. of this decoction administered frequently is beneficial for the patients.

- Fenugreek seeds, guava leaves, walnut leaves or even just warm water douches could reduce purulent discharge and clean the area.

(C) Ayurvedic Remedies for Leucorrhoea

The whitish or yellowish discharge of mucus from the vaginal opening is referred to as leucorrhoea. It may occur normally at all times but the quantity of discharge may increase before or after menstruation. An abnormally high rate of discharge is an indicative of infection of the lower reproductive tract by the protozoan *Trichomonas vaginalis*. The cause for leucorrhoea is vitiation of 'kapha' as advocated by Ayurveda. It easily affects weak, emaciated and anaemic women. Other causative factors are inflammation of womb following child birth, displacement of uterus or venereal diseases, unhygienic conditions. The other symptoms include pain in the lumbar region and calves, constipation, frequent headache and intense itching.

- ✓ Apply yoghurt on vagina to control itching and white discharge
- ✓ Make a paste of mango pulp and apply on the genitals to get relief
- ✓ Include yoghurt in your routine diet
- ✓ Drink the water residue which is used for preparation of white rice; which is best remedy to treat white discharge because of heat

Conclusion

A woman undergoes drastic physical, psychological and emotional changes throughout her life time. Menstruation is one of the important milestones in her life remarking the power of reproduction. An average woman menstruates almost quarter of her fertile life. There are many cultures and traditions associated with menstruation. Since time ages a menstruating female is considered to be impure and unclean and not only in Hinduism, but Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Judaism all hold beliefs regarding menstruation.

We can conclude that adolescent age is a crucial phase in which various mental and physical changes takes place in a child. It is a huge task of parents, teachers as well as paediatricians to counsel the child during this phase and explain properly about the normality of changes going on in this phase. Otherwise they may suffer from many psychological problems like depression; anxiety etc. leading to school abstinence, lack of concentration and confidence. Ayurveda can also help to reduce these kinds of health problems and changes during adolescent age by various adaptogenic and anti-stress herbs as well as Panchkarma therapy like nasya and shirodhara.

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