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# Role of Agni in growth and development in children

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## ABSTRACT

*Ahara* is considered as *Bahyaprana* in *Ayurvedic* science as it plays prime role in maintaining homeostasis of the body. In *Ayurveda* the term *Agni* is used in the sense of digestion of food and metabolic procedure. Nutrition is the basic fundamental need of every living organism also the human beings. To cope up the need of all physiological functions of human body, an uninterrupted supply of nutrition is necessary. It is more essential and subject of concern for infant and children during period of their growth and development. Growth is physical increase in size; development is growth in function and capability. Both processes highly depend on genetic, environmental factors and nutrition i.e. *Ahara* which is digested by *Agni* for its absorption. *Agni* is force of intelligence within each cell, tissue and system and it plays key role in growth and development of children.

**Key words:** *Ahara, Agni, Children, Growth, Development.*

## INTRODUCTION

*Agni* is invariable agent in the process of digestion, transformation. Ingested food is to be digested, absorbed and assimilated, which is necessary for the maintenance of life and this function is performed by the *Agni*. The entire basic physics and biology of *Ayurvedic* science are greatly differ from the modern science. *Ayurveda* has its own theories like theory of *Triguna*, theory of *Panchmahabhuta*, theory of *Tridosha* and the concept of *Agni*. *Ahara* is one among the three pillars of the body (*Ahara, Nidra, Bramhcharya*). Food nourishes the body and gives stability to all the living beings. Growth and

development are the normal biological phenomenon of all living beings; this journey begins from juvenile stage to the status of a complete organism.

## OBJECTIVE

To know the superiority of *Agni* role in growth and development of child.

## AGNI

*Susrutacharya* declared that 'we can't find any *Agni* other than *Pitta*'.<sup>[1]</sup> This *Agni* is not in the form of flame as the terrestrial fire but it is in the form of liquid which is called as '*Pitta*' in *Ayurveda*. *Charakacharya* also considered *Pachaka Pitta* as *Agni*.<sup>[2]</sup> This clears all confusions and *Agni* in the body prevails in the form of *Pitta*. *Pittadhara Kala* is situated between the *Amashaya* and *Pakwashaya* (mainly duodenum) is considered as the site of *Agni*.<sup>[3]</sup> *Agni* enhances life span (*Ayu*), colour & complexion (*Varna*), strength (*Bala*), state of good health (*Swasthata*), enthusiasm (*Utsaha*), nourishment, growth & development (*Upachaya*), grace (*Kanti*), Immunity (*Oja*), *Dhatvagni* and *Panchmahabhut Agni* also depend on *Jatharagni*.<sup>[4]</sup>

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### Ahara

Food is said to be cause of stability for all the living beings. There is nothing else than diet for sustaining the life of living beings. Any other medicament just like diet is not available. Food is capable to make man disease free, diet is said to be the great medicament.<sup>[5]</sup> Satisfaction, nutrition, patience, buddhi (critical understanding), enthusiasm, virility, strength, good voice, *Oja* (immunity), glow, life, geniusness and radiance etc. All such qualities in the human beings develop only from diet, that is why the person desires of long life should eat appropriate quantity of food with six *Rasas* in proper time.<sup>[6]</sup>

### Growth and Development

Growth and development is a journey from the juvenile stage to the status of a complete organism. Medical fraternity considered this journey in 2 aspects.

a) Growth implies a net increase in the size or mass of tissues and occurs due to multiplication of cells and increase in the intracellular substance.

B) Development is defined as maturation of functions. Depend on maturation and myelination of the nervous system and denotes acquisition of a variety of competence for optimal functioning of the individual.<sup>[7]</sup>

### Influence of Samskaras on the growth and development of children.

- *Jatakarma*- This *Sanskar* is to be performed immediately after birth of new born. The first licking with *Madhu* (honey) and *Ghrita* (ghee) gives sufficient stimulation to gastrointestinal system, intrinsic nerve plexus, so as to stimulate *Agni* and start digestion. *Madhu* and *Ghrita* preparation acting as *Medya*, *Ayushkara*, *Pushtikaram* and also stimulate immune system of child.<sup>[8]</sup>
- *Nishkarmana*- This *Sanskar* is done at third or fourth month of after birth. It is for the first time, child is exposed to some sort of external environment so that the responds to external

stimuli mainly visual and auditory like looking at sun, moon, sound of temple etc helps to confirm the proper functioning of the sense organs especially eye and ear.<sup>[9]</sup>

- *Phalaprashana*- This *Sanskar* is specially stated by *Acharya Kashyapa*. In this *Sanskar* child is supplemented with fruits, which are rich in vit c, which is absent in mother's milk. vit c is an essential component in *Agnivardhka* and development of immune system and it also has antioxidant property.<sup>[10]</sup>
- *Annaprashana*- Upto one year the child is considered as *Ksheerda* at second year known as *Ksheerannad* second year onwards turns as *Annanda*.<sup>[11]</sup> Above second year child starts getting food with required nutrients, so that requirement of tissues in the body get fulfilled leading to proper growth and development.

If *Agni* is hampered in the body obviously food digestion is hampered, child will not get sufficient nutrition for the normal growth and development, this may leads to many diseases in child which can be compared with protein energy malnutrition.

- a) *Karshya/Krushata* - In *Karshya* child having symptoms like anorexia loss of interest in food, emaciated buttocks, neck, abdomen and child look like skinny and bony.<sup>[12]</sup>
- b) *Balashosha* - Child suffers from lack of appetite, cough, fever, pallor of face and eyes.<sup>[13]</sup>
- c) *Phakka* - It is the condition when child is unable to walk by his own after completion of one year is grossly considered as *Phakka*.<sup>[14]</sup>

### DISCUSSION

*Agni* is considered as the life of living being. The quality of *Agni* is very much important for proper digestion. Similarly *Ahara* is considered as *Bahyaprana* as it gives nourishment to body and protects from the infection improves functioning of sense organs imparts physical and mental well-being and enhances process of growth and development in child. More than the food quality, the *Agni* role is

superior because if food is not digested then no matter how much nutritional value the food possess it cannot be utilized by the body, thus retarding the children normal growth and development. Disturbed *Agni* is hampering the food digestion, absorption process and leading to malnutrition in the child.

## CONCLUSION

Growth and development are normal biological phenomenon of all living beings. Child growth and development examines the physical, biological, Social and emotional growth of young child to adult. In this process family, playing, health and nutrition are vital theories which put impact on their normal growth and development. In *Ayurvedic* view *Agni* is the invariable agent in the process of digestion, transformation. Nutritional food ingested by the child is digested by *Agni* leading to normal growth and development in child.

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