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## Ahara for children health

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### ABSTRACT

Appropriate nutrition is an important pillar for healthy lifestyle. A child body requires energy to perform all basic functions of body like inducing growth and maintaining a healthy immune system. Healthy dietary habits from childhood are basic prerequisite for longevity and productivity. Nutrition offers the building elements for the development of new *Dhatus*. *Dhatus* are continually being broken down to extract energy. So, replenishing good quality *Dhatus* is essential for this. In Ayurveda, eating foods are energizing the mind. Let my food be my medicine. *Acharya Kashyapa* described healthy diet habits as fundamental unit for longevity of an individual. Effect of food with different *Rasa* has been described in detailed and scientific manner for improvement of health with optimum and healthy growth of child and longevity which is actual purpose of Ayurveda as *Dirghayu*. Health depends on the food we intake. Strength, health and life depend on *Agni* but *Agni* is also constantly replenished from the nutrition. So, to maintain *Sama Agni* eating balanced foods are essential. Toddlers and preschoolers need adequate intake to achieve full growth and development. There are some basic principles in Ayurveda that apply to provide essential nutrition to kids. When we talk about feeding children, there are various healthy food options reflecting all the six tastes that are sweet, salty, sour, pungent, astringent and bitter. Each of them has a significant effect on the body and when children's diet is all taken care of their body gets all the nutrients it needs for growth.

**Key words:** Ahara, Nutrition, Growth, child

### INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is a living science that promotes and maintains people's health. Good nutrition and dietary practises are essential for a child's growth and development. The three *Upastambhas*, or "sub-pillars," that are recognised as being necessary for the smooth operation of life are *Ahara*, or diet, *Nidra*, or sleep, and *Brahmacharya*, or abstinence. *Ahara* is regarded as the best life-sustainer among the three *Upastambhas*.<sup>[1]</sup> *Kashyapa Samhita* one of the main territory of *Kaumarabhritya* narrate the importance of

good dietary habits at every stage of life, to maintain the health of children. The new born is solely dependent on breastfeeding up until the age of six months, but after that point, breast milk alone is insufficient to meet the developing baby's nutritional needs. The new born is solely dependent on breastfeeding up until the age of six months, but after that point, breast milk alone is insufficient to meet the developing baby's nutritional needs. After six months, the baby is introduced to semi-solid foods in addition to breast milk, which is essential for the child's proper growth and development and to prevent malnutrition (by providing adequate and appropriate supplements).<sup>[2]</sup> In the modern world, altered habits of food consumption may lead to various diseases. The regulations of do's and don'ts about diet and food items are described in the Ayurvedic writings titled *Aharavidhi*, which provide a wealth of instructions. So, it is important, to keep our children on proper good dietary habit. Prenatal nutrition affects a child's entire life, including his growth and development. Poor maternal dietary practises during pregnancy may limit foetal growth and result in poor brain development.

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Many more modern, harmful to humans food processing techniques are currently in use. That's why Ayurveda suggest that one should follow these guiding principles to prevent various diseases.<sup>[3]</sup> According to *Acharya Charaka*, food determines the appearance, clarity, good voice, longevity, genius, pleasure, satisfaction, sustenance, strength, and intellect of all living things. A list of recommended and prohibited dietetics is provided by Acharya Charaka. Let my food serve as my medication. Pre-schoolers and toddlers must consume enough food to reach their full growth and developmental potential. Children's cognitive development and ability to explore their surroundings are both hampered by malnutrition.<sup>[4]</sup>

#### Importance of good diet

- The best diet for living things isn't balanced, but it may help all the *Indriyas* and nourish *Dhatu* while also facilitating and gratifying them.
- Proper nutrition increases intelligence, skin clarity, *Oja*, and longevity in humans, but incorrectly used food inherently causes resentment.<sup>[5]</sup>

#### Necessary nutrients requirement<sup>[7]</sup>

Age Group	Thiamin (mg/d)	Riboflavin (mg/d)	Niacin (mg/d)	Vit B6 (mg/d)	Folate (µg/day)	VitB12 (µg/day)	Vit C (mg/d)	Vit A (µg/day)	Vit D (IU/d)
Infant									
0-6 month	0.2	0.4	2	0.1	25	1.2	20	350	400
6-12 month	0.4	0.6	5	0.6	85	1.2	30	350	400
Children									
1-3yr	0.7	1.1	7	0.9	120	1.2	30	390	
4-6yr	0.9	1.3	9	1.2	135	1.2	35	510	600
7-9yr	1.1	1.6	11	1.5	170	2.2	45	630	
Boys									
10-12yr	1.5	2.1	15	2.0	220	2.2	55	770	600
Girls									
10-12yr	1.4	1.9	14	1.9	225	2.2	50	790	600

- Many chronic illnesses, which affect people over long periods of time and frequently advance gradually, can be prevented by addressing key risk behaviors (poor diet, sedentary lifestyle). Diabetes is one of them and is one of the main causes of death. However, for such initiatives to be successful, they must be founded on targeted fitness promotion, prevention, and early diagnosis.
- One of the cornerstones of fitness is a balanced diet, which is especially important for the developing young organism. In today's culture, people can consume nearly anything, making their consumption and consumer behavior a significant consideration. dietary routines established at a young age and maintained throughout all existence. The following factors have an impact: social circle, adults, manner of life, and customs.
- You must eat healthier meals every day because they are necessary for immunity, growth, and development. You should eat less of the less healthy foods. These are processed meals in particular, which contain higher amounts of fats, sugar, salt, and other ingredients.<sup>[6]</sup>

Boys									
13-15yr	1.9	2.7	19	2.6	285	2.2	70	930	600
Girls									
13-15yr	1.6	2.2	16	2.2	245	2.2	65	890	600

Group	Age	Protein g/day	Fat g/day	Calcium Mg/day	Iron mg/d	magnesium mg/d	Zinc Mg/d	Iodine µg/day	Net energy kcal/day
Infant	0-6month	8.0	-	300	-	30	-	100	108/kg
	6-12month	10.5	-	300	3	75	2.5	130	96/kg
Children	1-3yr	12.5		500	8	90	3.3	90	1240
	4-6yr	16.0	25	550	11	125	4.5	120	1690
	7-9yr	23.0		650	15	175	5.9	120	1950
Boys	10-12yr	32.0	22	850	16	240	8.5	150	2190
Girls	10-12yr	33.0		850	28	250	8.5	150	1970
Boys	13-15yr	45.0	22	1000	22	345	14.3	150	2450
Girls	13-15yr	43.0		1000	30	340	12.8	150	2060

### In Ayurveda importance of nutrition

All living things are food, according to *Acharya Charaka*, and the entire world is on the lookout for food. nourishment for children starts before birth. Poor nutrition during pregnancy may stunts fetal growth and leads poor brain development. Even after birth, the child growth depends on the mother diet, later period on own diet. So, the right diet and lifestyle from early years leave a permanent impact on the child physical and mental wellbeing. Complexion, clarity, good voice, long life, understanding, happiness, satisfaction, growth, strength & intelligence are all established in nutrition.<sup>[8]</sup>

In Ayurveda, children are classified into 3 groups as per their diet which are as follows:<sup>[9]</sup>

1. *Ksheerap Awastha* - Up to 1 year of life consuming only breast milk.
2. *Ksheerannada Awastha* - Up to 2 years of life along with milk child is consuming solid food.

3. *Annad Awastha* - After 2 years of life where child consumes all like adult.

### Diet according to different age group (*Awastha*) of Child

#### *Ahara in Ksheerap Awastha*

*Stanya* is regarded as an *Amruta* for newborns, and Ayurveda praises *Stanyapana*. From birth to six months, the majority of *Acharya* told exclusive *Stanyapana*. For an infant, mother's milk has the ideal amounts of fat, cholesterol, protein, and carbs. In addition to being the ideal food choice nutritionally, mother's milk also offers protection from a number of illnesses. In any unavoidable circumstances or in the absence of Mother's Milk, goat milk or cow milk may be given in appropriate quantity, without dilution and with proper hygiene.<sup>[10]</sup>

#### *Ahara in Ksheerannada Awastha*

From 6 months up to 2 years are considered in *Ksheerannada Awastha*. Rapidly growing baby needs extra energy and calorific food and only breast milk

can't suffice this need. Failure to which may lead to definite nutritional problems. Therefore, Breast milk should be continued as a main food along with complementary food in the beginning. *Phalaprashan* and *Annaprashan* ceremony should be done after completion of 6 months. After 6 months, easy to digest and nutrition rich (*Brimhana*) complementary foods comprising of fruits, liquid, semisolid, and solid food should be given in sequential order by considering digestion (*Agnibala*), demand, tolerance of the baby and teeth eruption. Various regional foods can be used as complementary food such as *Ragi-halwa* Mixed Millet and Drumstick Leaves, Dosa, Mung dal (green gram,) Kheer, Khichadi etc.

#### Ahara in Annada Awastha

A child from the age of 2 years is considered in *Annada Awastha*. In this *Awastha* child should be shifted on the cereals. Food should include different vegetables, milk, nuts and seeds, whole grains, lentils, beans and locally available seasonal fruits should be part of there daily menu. Older children and adolescents should consume plenty of milk to fulfil the high calcium requirement, oil / ghee should be consumed All types of food with all forms i.e., *Lehya*, *Peya*, *Bhojya* etc. can be given in this *Awastha* of children life.<sup>[11]</sup>

#### CONCLUSION

In nut shell, childhood period is the optimal window for promoting the development of healthy eating behaviours in children. We experience as per our Ayurveda Science dietary habit are the first and the main factor revolving around the development of child. The importance of parents and care givers as primary influencer and gatekeeper of children eating behaviours. Healthy eating behaviours will also need to be taught in family school and community.

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