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# Garbhini Paricharya (Antenatal Care) - An Approach through Ayurveda

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## ABSTRACT

Pregnancy is the most beautiful and challenging period in the reproductive life of a woman. The aims and objective of safe motherhood bestows upon the creation of healthy progeny with devoid of anomalies following an easy delivery and safe guarding of health of mother which in other words term as *Gharbhini Paricharya*. It refers to the ante-natal care including *Ahara-Vihara* for pregnant women for the benefit of both mother and fetus. As per WHO report in 2020, everyday almost 800 women died from preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth. To reduce this rate, proper *Garbhini Paricharya* is the need of the day. *Ayurveda* considers food to be the best source of nourishment as well as medication for *Garbhini*. The monthly diet for nine month is unique concept of *Ayurveda*.

**Key words:** *Garbhini Paricharya, Garbhini, Ahara*

## INTRODUCTION

*Garbhini Paricharya* or antenatal care is originated from time immemorial, which is evidenced from our ancient texts. It constitutes general advice about nutrition and lifestyle concentrating on the prevention and cure for ailments which can be harmful to mother and fetus. This is aimed at culminating pregnancy in a normal way with the achievement of a healthy progeny by a healthy mother. During pregnancy mother's nutrition is considered to be an inevitable factor for the growth and development of fetus. This current review aims to focus on all measures which are explained in *Ayurveda* by different *Acharyas* to protect and ensure the health of pregnant women and to achieve a healthy

progeny.

## Month wise Dietic Regimen

The *Ahara* consumed by *Garbhini* has threefold action i.e. providing nourishment to the body elements of mother, to the growing fetus and for the formation of breast milk.<sup>[1]</sup> Whatever the diet consumed by the pregnant woman becomes congenial to the fetus. So the *Ahara* of *Garbhini* should be given considering the place of living, time, season and digestive capacity.

Month wise dietary regimen for *Garbhini* according to different *Ayurvedic* classics:

Month	<i>Charak Samhita</i> <sup>[2]</sup>	<i>Sushrut Samhita</i> <sup>[3]</sup>	<i>Astanga Samgraha</i> <sup>[4]</sup>	<i>Harita Samhita</i> <sup>[5]</sup>
1 <sup>st</sup> month	Non-medicated milk	Sweet, cold and liquid diet	Medicated milk in specific quantity	<i>Madhuyastri, Parusaka, Madhukap uspa</i> with butter honey and sweetened milk
2 <sup>nd</sup> month	Milk medicated with	Same as in 1 <sup>st</sup> month	Milk medicated with	Sweetened milk

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	<i>Madhura Rasa</i> drugs		<i>Madhura Rasa</i> drugs	treated with <i>Kakoli</i>
3 <sup>rd</sup> month	Milk with honey and ghee	Same as in 1 <sup>st</sup> month	Milk with honey and ghee	<i>Krisara</i>
4 <sup>th</sup> month	Milk with butter	Cooked <i>Sastika</i> rice with curd, pleasant food mixed with milk and ghee	Milk with 1 <i>Tola</i> (12gm) of butter	Medicated cooked rice
5 <sup>th</sup> month	Ghee prepared with butter extracted from milk	Cooked <i>Sastika</i> rice with milk, <i>Jangala Mansa</i> along with dainty food mixed with milk and ghee	Ghee prepared with butter extracted from milk	<i>Payasa</i>
6 <sup>th</sup> month	Ghee prepared from milk medicated with <i>Madhura</i> drugs	Ghee or rice gruel medicated with <i>Gokshura</i>	Ghee prepared from milk medicated with <i>Madhura</i> drugs	Sweetened curd
7 <sup>th</sup> month	Same as in 6 <sup>th</sup> month	Ghee medicated with <i>Prithakparn yadi</i> group of drugs	Same as in 6 <sup>th</sup> month	<i>Ghritakhan da</i>
8 <sup>th</sup> month	<i>Kshira Yavagu</i> mixed with ghee	<i>Asthapana Basti</i> with decoction of <i>Badari, Bala, Atibala, Satapuspa, Patala</i> , milk, ghee, <i>Mastu</i> , oil salt, <i>Madanapha la</i> , honey	<i>Kshira Yavagu</i> mixed with ghee, <i>Asthapana Basti</i> with decoction of ghee, <i>Anuvasana Basti</i> with oil medicated with	<i>Ghritapura ka</i>

		and ghee followed by <i>Anuvasana Basti</i> of oil medicated with milk and decoction of <i>Madhura</i> group drugs	<i>Madhura</i> drugs	
9 <sup>th</sup> month	<i>Anuvasana Basti</i> with oil prepared with drugs of <i>Madhura</i> group <i>Yoni Pichu</i> with this oil	Unctous gruels and <i>Jangala Mansa Rasa</i> up to the period of delivery	<i>Anuvasana Basti</i> with oil prepared with drugs of <i>Madhura</i> group <i>Yoni Pichu</i> with this oil	Varieties of cereals

#### Dietetics in first trimester

First trimester is associated with nausea, vomiting, fatigue etc. and cannot take proper diet which results in dehydration and loss of nutrients. The dietary regimen during this period is in liquid state, cold, *Madhura Rasa* and having high nutritional value which helps to replenish the nutrients and corrects the dehydration. The drug of *Madhura Rasa* being anabolic helps in maintenance of proper health of mother and fetus.

During the 1<sup>st</sup> eight weeks after fertilization, the process of embryogenesis occurs. *Vata* is responsible for the cell division<sup>[6]</sup> during embryogenesis. Vitiating of *Vata dosha* may hamper in the normal function and process of cell division. The drugs used in 1<sup>st</sup> trimester are having *Vatasamaka* properties. *Godugdha*<sup>[7]</sup> is *Madhura Rasa*, *Sheeta Virya*, *Mrudu*, *Snigdha*, *Rasayana*, increases *Oja* and best among *Jeevaniya* drugs. Milk<sup>[8]</sup> is the best and complete food. It is the blend of all nutrients necessary for growth and development. Milk contains all the essential amino acids. It is the good source of protein, fat, sugar, vitamin and minerals. It contains retinol, vitamin D, calcium phosphorus, sodium, potassium, magnesium, cobalt, copper, iodine. Milk contains proteins like

casein, lactoglobulin, lactalbumin, lactoferrin which provides immunological benefits.<sup>[9]</sup>

Milk when medicated with different drugs, its quality has been potentially increased. On gradual increase in the temperature of the milk, solubility of fats and proteins also increases, which may enhance the extraction of the active principles.

*Madhuyasti*<sup>[10]</sup> has *Madhura Rasa*, *Sheeta Virya*, *Tridosahara*, *Balya*, *Rasayana*, *Chhardivinasini*, *Jeevaniya*, *Sandhaniya*, *Sonithasthapana* properties. It has been described by *Acharya Charak*<sup>[11]</sup> both in *Chhardinigrhana* and *Vamanopaga Mahakashaya* as it is ant-emetic in lower dose and emetic in higher dose. *Parushaka*<sup>[12]</sup> has *Pittashamaka*, *Trishnashamaka* and *Hridya* properties. *Parushaka* is rich in iron, calcium, potassium, sodium and vitamin C.<sup>[13]</sup> It is useful in anaemia due to the presence of iron. *Madhuka*<sup>[14]</sup> has *Madhura Rasa*, *Sheeta Virya*, *Vatapittaghna*, *Brimhana* properties. It contains albumin, saponin and act as galactagogue.<sup>[15]</sup> *Kakoli*<sup>[16]</sup> has *Madhura Rasa*, *Sheeta Virya*, *Vatashamaka*, *Dahashamaka*, *Brimhana*, *Soshajwarapaha*, *Balya*, *Stanyajanana* properties. It is a *Jeevaneeya Dravya* described both in *Jeevaniya Mahakasaya*<sup>[17]</sup> by *Acharya Charak* and *Jeevaneeya Gana* by *Bhavaprakash*.

*Ghrta*<sup>[18]</sup> is *Madhura*, *Sheeta* and *Sahasravirya*. It is *Vatapittashamaka*, *Medhya*, *Agnivardhaka*. Ghee<sup>[19]</sup> is a complex lipid of glycerides, free fatty acids, phospholipids, sterols, sterol ester, fat soluble vitamins, carbonyls, hydrocarbons and carotenoids. It contains vitamin D which is essential for the development of skeleton of fetus. And vitamin E which is essential for normal pregnancy, delivery and breast milk production. Ghee is a good source of milk protein and calcium.

*Madhu*<sup>[20]</sup> is *Madhura*, *Sheeta*, *Raktapittakaphaghna*, *Kasaya* and *Madhura in Rasa*. Honey<sup>[21]</sup> is primarily a high energy carbohydrate food and has anti-inflammatory, immune-booster, broad spectrum antibacterial activity. *Krushara*<sup>[22]</sup> is *Balya* and *Vatashamaka*. It is boiled and cooked gruel of different cereals, acts upon excretory system as it is *Malamutrakari*.<sup>[23]</sup>

### Dietetics in 2<sup>nd</sup> trimester

Formation of muscular tissues of foetus speeds up in fourth month which requires a protein rich diet in 2<sup>nd</sup> trimester. The required protein is fulfilled by butter with cooked rice and *Mansa Rasa* (meat soup). *Mansa Rasa* provide nourishment to the fetus and help in muscular growth based on the principle of *Samanya Vriddhi Karanam*.<sup>[24]</sup> *Shastika* rice is rich in carbohydrate, niacin, vitamin D, calcium, iron, fibre, thiamin and riboflavin.<sup>[25]</sup> *Krutodana* i.e., medicated cooked rice comprises of carbohydrate which is primary component for the growth of fetus.<sup>[26]</sup> *Payasa* acts *Balya*, *Brimhaniya* which is necessary in fifth month as the *Garbhini* becomes *Krishna* in this period as well as for the growth of the fetus.<sup>[27]</sup>

By the end of 2<sup>nd</sup> trimester, the pregnant women suffer from edema of feet and complications of water retention due to the pressure on the intestine and bladder by the enlarging uterus. *Gokshura* being a diuretic prevents the edema, hypertension and toxemia of pregnancy. *Gokshura*<sup>[28]</sup> has *Madhura Rasa* and *Vipaka*, *Sheeta Virya*, *Vatapittashamaka*, *Garbhasthapana* properties. Butter has *Vatapittashamaka*, *Avidahi*, *Rochana*, *Medhya*, *Balya*, *Brimhana* properties. It is rich in vitamin A, E, riboflavin, niacin, pantothenic acid, calcium, phosphorus, potassium, sodium.<sup>[29]</sup> According to *Harita*, sweetened curd is given to *Garbhini* in sixth month. Curd is rich in vitamin A, D, calcium, protein and probiotics.<sup>[30]</sup> It cools down the body temperature and calms the emotional center in order to prevent anxiety. It also prevents *Kikkisa* (striae gravidarum).

### Dietetics in 3<sup>rd</sup> trimester

Most of the pregnant women experience constipation in late pregnancy due to the pressure of the gravid uterus over the bowel and effect of progesterone. Use of *Basti* (enema) in 8<sup>th</sup> month will relieve the constipation as it is *Vata Anulomana* besides may also affect the autonomous nervous system governing myometrium and help in regulating their function during labour.<sup>[31]</sup> Use of tampon might influence autonomic fibres governing myometrium and help in regulating their functions. Besides this might soften the

perineum and helps in its relaxation during labour. Tampon of oil may destroy pathogenic bacteria of vaginal canal and prevent puerperal sepsis.

*Vidarigandhadji*<sup>[32]</sup> group of drugs are *Pittavatashamaka*, diuretic, anabolic, relieve emaciation and maintains the health of mother and fetus. *Ghritakhand* itself comprised of *Ghrita* which contains good fat to create brown fat in order to maintain the body temperature of fetus.<sup>[33]</sup> *Ghritapuraka* also contains *Ghrita* which is required for the formation of *Oja* as it become unstable in eighth month.<sup>[34]</sup> In ninth month, all the system has been completed and the fetus is now able to all type of *Ahara* so in order to a balanced diet schedule, different varieties of cereals has been given to *Garbhini*.<sup>[35]</sup>

## General Measures

### Exercises

Guidance for the exercises allowed during pregnancy is very important. A low impact exercise may be continued throughout the period of a normal pregnancy. Some limits of moderate intensity physical activity in pregnancy.<sup>[36]</sup> a) exercise should be regular, of low impact and as a part of daily activities. b) should avoid any symptoms of breathlessness, fatigue or dizziness, c) should be done in cool area without becoming uncomfortable and warm d) prolonged supine position, any compression to the uterus or risk of injury (fall) should be avoided. The pregnant women should be encouraged to continue with their domestic and social activities to maintain the fitness of the body physically. In order to alleviate the common problems during pregnancy, various exercises and relaxation postures are advised. *Yogasanas*<sup>[37]</sup> during pregnancy soothes the mind and body and prepare the *Garbhini* psychologically for the labour. Certain *Yogasanas*<sup>[38]</sup> practice like *Sukhasana*, *Padmasana*, *Vajrasana*, *Shavasana*, *Ekapada Utthanasana* in *Shayana Sthiti* are useful for pregnant woman. *Asanas* performed in *Vipareet Shayana Sthiti* are contraindicated. Practice of *Yogasanas* during pregnancy strengthens the pelvic floor, tones up the lower body, improves digestion, strengthen the bearing down muscles and helps in expulsion of fetus and relieve physical and mental stress.<sup>[39]</sup>

*Pranayam* and breathing exercises are very important for a normal delivery process. It works both on mind and body which provides extra oxygen to every cell and rejuvenates them. It tones up the nervous system, improves emotional stability and helps to eliminate anxiety, fear and phobia. *Anulom Vilom Pranayam*, *Bhramari Pranayam* are beneficial.<sup>[40]</sup> Such practice helps the patient for bearing down efforts at proper time and delivery of the baby with less effort. Vigorous exercises like jumping, lifting heavy weight, fast walking etc should be contraindicated as it may suddenly increase intra-abdominal pressure or overexertion leading to complications like premature labour.

### Sleep

On an average the pregnant lady should be in bed for about ten hours i.e. eight hours at night and two hours at noon is advisable especially in the last 6 weeks.<sup>[41]</sup> Lateral posture is more comfortable in late pregnancy.

### Bathing

*Garbhini* should take daily bath with cold decoctions of *Vataghna Dravyas*<sup>[42]</sup> like *Bilwa*, *Karpasa*, *Agnimantha Jatamansi*, *Eranda patra* etc. along with *Sarvagandha* drugs.<sup>[43]</sup>

### Care of breast and abdomen

Special care of breast should be taken during pregnancy. Breast engorgement may cause discomfort during late pregnancy. A well-fitting brassiere can give relief.<sup>[44]</sup> Breast and nipple should be washed with soap water. Application of paste of *Chandana* and *Ushira*<sup>[45]</sup> over abdomen to prevent *Kikkisa*.

### Bowel habit

Most of the pregnant women suffer from constipation due to generalized relaxation of smooth muscles and compression of the lower bowel by the enlarged uterus. Use of *Surana*.<sup>[46]</sup> plenty of fluids, vegetables, milk etc. can be given to relieve constipation.

### Clothing

Pregnant women should wear loose but comfortable garments. Daily change of cloth is necessary to avoid contaminations. Constricting belt should be avoided. It

is better to avoid high heel shoes in advanced pregnancy when the center of balance alters.<sup>[47]</sup>

### Dental care

Good dental and oral hygiene should be maintained.

### Travel

It is better to avoid travel by vehicles having jerks especially in first trimester and last 6 weeks. Long journey is preferably limited to the second trimester. Rail route is preferable to bus route. Travel in pressurized aircraft is safe up to 36 weeks. Prolonged sitting in a car or aeroplane should be avoided due to the risk of venous stasis and thromboembolism. Seat belt should be under the abdomen. Air travel is contraindicated in cases with placenta previa, preeclampsia, severe anemia and sickle cell disease.<sup>[48]</sup>

### CONCLUSION

As prevention is always better than seeking cure for derangements in body, various dietetic and lifestyle measures are described to maintain the health of a *Garbhini* and to get rid of the minor ailments due to pregnancy. The concepts described in different *Ayurvedic* classics are not only unique but also scientific. The appropriate use of diet and lifestyle mentioned in various texts of *Ayurveda* aims at excellence in the formation of fetus, its growth and development without anomalies and helps in safe and healthy motherhood.

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