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# Puberty - An Ayurvedic care

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## ABSTRACT

The functionality of Ayurveda reproductive system in women is initiated by onset of menstruation is menarche. The peak time being 12 years to 16 years, these are probable ages. There may be slight variation in individual cases because of age, that can be influenced by specific *Ahara* and *Arogya*. It is only in our country refers to the phase specific practices based on religion, community, geographical, area the practices differ. But these practices have root in Ayurveda. A playful girl menstruates for first time though indicative of reproductive system. Thus this period requires a special care, which could be a simple household remedy or specific nutritious food based on resources of local ate. There is Ayurvedic text refers to the ad vocation of regime. This article discusses the relevance's of such practices. Further suggest simpler regime to enhance the further growth and development of individual. And also focus on the medical conditions occurs during this period. It is also important to give psychological support.

**Key words:** Puberty, Rajaswala, Rajaswala Paricharya, Achara Rasayana.

## INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is ultimate science of life focusing every minute aspect of various stages of woman life. Puberty entails a progressive nonlinear process starting from prepubescent to full sexual maturity through the interaction and co-operation of biological, physical and psychological changes. So consuming healthy food during all phases of life i.e. infancy, childhood, puberty appears necessary for normal pubertal. Menstruation is indicative of reproductive system, the growth yet to be completed, thus this require a special care. The preparation of the future motherhood starts right from puberty. Some

medical conditions may worsen or first become apparent at puberty.

### What is puberty?

- Puberty is the stage of physical development when secondary sex characteristics develop and sexual reproduction.<sup>[1]</sup>
- Puberty involves a series of physical, psychosocial and emotional, social development.<sup>[2]</sup>

### When does puberty occur?

- The onset of puberty varies among individuals. Puberty usually occurs in girls between the ages of 10 to 16 years.<sup>[3]</sup>
- Nutritional and other environmental influences may be responsible for this change.
- Body fat and body composition may play a role in regulating the onset of puberty.

### Changes during puberty

Following changes are occur during puberty,<sup>[4]</sup>

- Physical Changes
- Emotional Changes
- Menstruation / Cramps

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- Social development

### 1. Physical changes

#### Stage one (upto age 8-12yrs)

- Childhood stage; no visible signs of puberty

#### Stage two (may begin at age 8-14yrs)

- Height and weight increase rapidly
- Breast buds develop; nipples will be tender and elevated.
- Pubic hair coarse, curly or fine and straight.
- Body gets rounder and curvier

#### Stage three (may begin at age 9-15yrs)

- Height continues to increase
- Breasts growth increase
- Pubic hair - coarse, darker
- Hips widen
- Vaginal discharge
- Menstruation for some girls

#### Stage four (may begin at age 10-16yrs)

- Underarm hair
- Nipple and areola more prominent
- Pubic hair starts (Triangular pattern of growth)
- Menstruation for many girls

#### Stage five (may begin at ages 12-19yrs)

- Breast development complete
- Pubic hair thick
- Adult height probably reached
- Menstruation occurs regularly.

#### Emotional development<sup>[5]</sup>

- An increase in self-awareness, self consciousness and self appraisal.
- Hormones can cause teenagers to become sad, angry and unhappy during puberty.

#### Social development<sup>[6]</sup>

- Femininity develops rapidly. Increased interest in the opposite sex
- Self-consciousness about changing body appearance.

#### Rajaswala (menstruation)<sup>[7]</sup>

'Rajo' in sanskrit means 'blood' and 'Darshana' means 'to see'. The female who is menstruating is termed as 'Rajaswala'.

#### Rajasrava Kala

Artava is excreted out in the *Rajasrava Kala* and the duration varies according to different authors.

- Bhavamishra - 3 days<sup>[8]</sup>
- Vagbhata - 3 nights<sup>[9]</sup>
- Charaka - 5 nights<sup>[10]</sup>
- Harita - 7 days<sup>[11]</sup>
- Bhela - 5 days<sup>[12]</sup>

#### Shuddha Raja Laxanas<sup>[13]</sup>

- Intermenstrual period of one month
- Duration - 5 days
- Not associated with pain and burning
- Colour resembles red lotus flower
- Not excessive, nor scanty
- No smell

#### Laxanas of Rajaswala<sup>[14]</sup>

- Stimulation in breasts
- More sweating
- Increased interest in the opposite sex
- Pains in lower abdomen, lumber region and thighs
- Hotness in vagina
- Mental instability and mood swings
- Irritation and nervousness
- Sleep disturbances

**Rajaswala Paricharya<sup>[15]</sup>****Ahara**

*Madhura Rasa Pradhana Ahara* = *Madhura Rasa* promotes the growth of all *Dhatu*s and also *Oja*, gives strength, complexion to the skin.<sup>[16]</sup> It does *Vata Pitta Shamana* as in *Rajaswala*, *Vatavrudhi* is there. About 50 - 80ml of blood is lost during those days, it takes up some of physical strength of the body. As such, her body will be weak and less haemoglobin content, more susceptible to infections during this period, *Madhura Rasa* is useful in rejuvenating the injured and debilitated tissue. It gives nourishment to the tissue, provide instant energy and enhances immune system.

Food preparation like;

- *Saghrutha Shali Odana* (rice with ghee)
- *Sakshira Yavagu* (rice with milk)
- *Yavanna with Dugdha* (meal made of barley with milk)
- *Havisya* (meal made of ghee *Sali* rice and milk)
- Food should be taken less in quantity during these days as there is *Agnimandya*.
- *Draksha* and *Dadima Panaka* - *Balavrudhi* and *Sadhyotarpa*.
- She should take *Dugdha*, *Ghruta*, *Shali*, *Yava*, *Kharjura* etc. in her diet. Drugs like *Shatavari*, *Yastimadhu* etc.

**Vihara<sup>[17]</sup>****Dos**

- Concentrate on auspicious thing

**Don'ts**

- Stressful activities
- *Ratrijagarana* (staying awake at night)
- *Vyayama* (strenuous travels)
- *Kroda*, *Shoka*, *Rodana* (negative emotions)

All these things are bound to increase *Raja Guna* and make the woman's condition even worse. For this

reason the menstruating women were asked to remain in isolation and avoid any heavy activities.

**Acharya Rasayana<sup>[18]</sup>**

*Acharya Rasayana* literally means physical and mental code of conducts.

- Should not indulge in bad habits. Do not be angry
- Always keep the mental balance in any situation.
- Do not lose your temper.
- Be calm and Peaceful mind
- Positive attitude and self control
- Be courageous and do not lose patience in any situation.
- Gentle behaviour.
- Having sound sleep and regular eating habits
- Maintain always cleanliness
- Respect your teachers, elders.
- Maintain balance in waking and sleeping.
- Do not stay up long into the night and do not sleep in the daytime.
- Plan ahead to achieve goals

The principles of *Acharya Rasayana*, if implemented properly relieves mental stress and strain, helps for personality development, maintain better relations with family and even socially. It not only prevents the disease, but also reverses the stages of disease process. Personal hygiene and cleanliness are major indicators of good health and maintenance of hygiene and cleanliness during menstruation is most important.

**Hygiene**

Being healthy is necessary for an individual at any age. This becomes especially important during puberty. For this, she needs to be not only disease free. In fact, she should be physically as well as mentally healthy and fit. It is very important to maintain a good reproductive health for a healthy society and population. Puberty is that stage when she experiences growth and sexual maturity. Thus, it is

essential to practice good hygienic habits starting from this stage itself. In order to ensure proper health, one has to maintain hygiene at a personal level. Cleanliness of genital area and access to safe menstrual hygiene products can reduce the incidents of infection upto 97%.

1. **Reduced incidents of rashes in genitals:** If sanitary pads are not changed frequently or used dirty cloths, prolonged wetness, the vaginal skin may get infected with bacteria or fungus resulting in painful rashes.
2. **Reduced risk of urinary tract infections:** Dirty clothes or using a sanitary napkin for longer than 6 hours can produce environment for growth and multiplication of harmful bacteria and yeasts. These bacteria can invade urinary tract including urethra and urinary bladder, resulting to UTI.
3. **Minimizing risk of cervical cancer:** Unhygienic handling of menstrual waste can spread the infection easily.
4. **Ensuring good reproductive health:** Improper hygiene during periods can result in reproductive tract infections. Bacteria invade the mucosal layer of the reproductive tract and cause serious damage to uterine wall, ovaries and fallopian tubes. Vaginitis and abnormal vaginal discharge are preliminary symptoms of severe RTI.

#### Hygiene measures during menstruation

- Take a shower or bath at least once a day.
- Change pads or tampons regularly to prevent infections - change a sanitary pad once every six hours, for a tampon, every two hours.
- Use good sanitary pads - women with sensitive skin may avoid sanitary pads with plastic lining, may cause irritation, boils, itching
- Clean the vaginal area using warm water regularly, after each use of toilet and even after urination.
- Always pat the vaginal area dry after every wash. Also keep the area between the legs dry.

- Wash your hands with warm water and soap after changing your pad/tampon.
- Wear comfortable, loose clothing, rather than jeans or tight-fitting during periods. This will ensure air flow around the sensitive areas as well as prevent sweating to a large extent.

#### Medical conditions appear at puberty

##### 1. *Atisweda* (excessive sweating)

Sweat glands will become larger and more active during puberty, so sweat more. When our bodies starts to change, roughly 3 million sweat glands become more active. This is especially true for glands in the armpits and groin and on the palms of the hands and soles of the feet. When the sweat comes in contact with bacteria on the skin, it can produce an odour.

#### Management

- Bath daily with soap
- Use medicines like *Chanadanasava*, *Ushirasava*, *Arogyavardini Vati*, *Sugandhi Dravya*.

##### 2. *Youvana Pidika* (acne)

During female puberty, the pores in skin produce more oil, especially on your face, this can cause acne. Oil and dead skin cells lead to acne. Mild acne may be normal in early puberty.

#### Management

- Drink a lot of water, about 8-10 glass per day.
- Use of *Lepa* like *Kumkumadi Taila*, *Haridra*, *Manjistha*.
- Oral medicine like,
  - *Mahamanjistadi Khashaya*
  - *Arogyavardini Vati*
  - *Chandanasava*
  - *Sarivadhyasava*

##### 3. *Pandu* (anemia)

When she starts menstruating, she runs a risk of becoming anaemic in case of a heavy menstrual flow.

Iron with onset of adolescence, the need for iron increases as direct consequences of rapid growth and the expansion of blood volume and muscle mass. The weakness is the common disease from which most of the adolescent girls suffer by anemia. These two diseases appear to be complementary to each other.

### Management

Iron to replace the blood lost during menstruation by medicines.

- *Punarnava Mandura*
- *Navayasa Loha*
- *Abraloha*
- *Dhatri Loha*

Certain food items that are rich in iron like jaggery, whole grain, leafy vegetables like spinach and beans, must be consumed.

### 4. *Sthoulya (obesity)*

During this time the amount of fat, muscle, bone changes quickly, as girl make the transition into womanhood. Puberty hormones cause fats to deposit in areas like breasts, hips and thighs. This make girls thinking that they are getting fat. Excess energy intake and minimal physical activity can lead to problems with overweight and obesity.

### Management

- Eat healthy food and limiting fast food
  - Regular exercise
  - Participating in sports
  - *Panchakarma* like *Udvardana, Virechana*.
  - Medicines
    - *Navak Guggulu*
    - *Triphala Guggulu*
    - *Varunadi Kashaya*
5. ***Kastarthava (dysmenorrhea)*** - Painful menstruation.

### Management

- Putting a hot water bag on her lower abdomen and back will help.
- Medicines are available to lessen the pain of menstrual cramps.
  - *Kulatta Yusha*
  - *Rajapravarthini Vati*
  - *Dashamularista*
  - *Latakaranj Mashi*
  - M2 tone

### 6. ***PCOS (Polycystic ovarian syndrome)***

### Management

- *Shodhana Chikitsa - Virechana*
- *Shamana Chikitsa - Latakaranja Mashi, Kanchanara Guggula*

### 7. ***Agnimandya***

### Management

- *Chitrakadi Vati*
- *Agnitundi Vati*
- *Ajamodadi Churna*
- *Hingwastaka Churna*
- *Trikatu Churna*
- *Panchakola Churna*

### 8. ***Drugs useful in Arthava Vaha Srotus***

- *Shatapushpa*<sup>[19]</sup>
- *Shatavari*<sup>[20]</sup>
- *Ashoka*
- *Yastimadhu*
- *Lodra*
- *Ashwagandha*
- *Kumari*
- *Triphala*
- *Amalaki*

**CONCLUSION**

Ayurveda has always given importance to care the *Stree* (woman) at every phase of her life in respect of *Rajaswala Paricharya* (menstrual care). Habits and behavior picked up during adolescence (risk taking behavior, eating habits and conflict resolution) have life long impact. Their nutritional needs are of particular importance as they have to prepare for motherhood. All these rapid anabolic changes require more nutrients per unit body weight. The negligence to the health in puberty may give rise to many problems related to the health and fertility, so the proper care is essential. In this health conscious era, through Ayurvedic care, woman would gain the mental, emotional and spiritual resources needed to carry her through all the demands of life, without feeling depleted.

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