

Food In Pregnancy

An Ayurvedic Overview

VAIDYA R. M. NANAL

102 Anand Bhuwan, Gore Wadi,
Pt. Satavalekar Marg, Mahim,
Mumbai - 400 016
Email: rmnanal@indiainfo.com

Ramesh Nanal is a practicing Ayurveda physician for the last 35 years and known for his puritan stand on Ayurveda. He is an honorary advisor to planning commission, Govt. of India (AYUSH), King Edward Memorial Hospital (Ayurvedic Research Centre) Mumbai and several other organizations. He guides Ph.Ds in Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapeeth and lectures extensively in Ayurveda Universities across Maharashtra. He is a prolific writer (Marathi, Hindi and English) and has numerous books and hundreds of articles to his credit. He brings out an Ayurvedic bimonthly, MADHUUJEEVAN. He is actively involved as an Ayurvedic advisor with several governmental and non governmental organizations.

ABSTRACT

This paper outlines the various kinds of diet to be followed during pregnancy month by month based on the teachings of Ayurveda.

“The life of all living things is food; the entire world seeks food, Complexion, clarity, good voice, long life, understanding, happiness, Satisfaction, growth, intelligence etc. are all because of food.”(CS)

Pregnancy period is a very special time in a woman's life. This is the condition of having a child developing inside the body. The first trimester is the most critical period. If the mother has harmful substances present in her blood, the baby may have birth defects. It is the best rule to use no medicine during this period (first trimester) unless prescribed by a physician / Vaidya.

The fetus's movements can be felt by the mother at the end of Fourth month. The fetus begins to crowd the mother's internal organs and may cause various kinds of discomfort, such as back pain, shortness of breath, piles, muscle cramps, constipation etc. Prenatal care under skilled Vaidya's supervision can make it possible to prevent or treat most of the

physically and mentally for the easy birth of her healthy baby. This paper will provide guidelines for the aforesaid purpose.

MONTHLY FOOD REGIMEN

The first trimester: Sweet, cold, (cooling to the body) and liquid forms are helpful in this period – says Sushrut. (Because the foetus is unstable in the uterus in the early months) Some examples of the dietary substances are: -

Singhoda (Trapa natans) (Water chestnut) - This is a 'Garbhasthapan food (stabilizes fetus). It helps to fix the placenta. Singhoda powder 1 table spoon with luke warm milk and ghee is very useful. If possible, she should take 3 to 4 cups of whole milk every day. Daily use of Cow's ghee with milk is useful at this time of the pregnancy.

In the **third month** rice with milk is advised to be taken frequently and in more quantity in the first course of the meals like early breakfast and lunch.

Fourth Month: Heart of the foetus starts working in this month. More pure kahpa and rakta is essential for the fetus here. Curds with rice and ghee are to be consumed more in this month. More quantity of food is to be taken in a day time like breakfast and lunch.

Fifth Month: Mana or mind becomes promptly active. All 'Hridya' (wholesome to Mana and heart) are to be provided to develop mental faculties in proper manner. Rice with cow's milk is advocated by Ayurveda. This milk is boon to the making of mind.

Sixth month: *Smriti* (recollecting power) *buddhi* (power of perception) starts functioning hence cow's ghee is recommended in this month. One should consume a judicious amount of ghee with rice.

Seventh Month: The genesis of all the body organs is c body components like *rakta* (Blood), *asthi*(Bones) *medhya* (intellect) etc. This requires a specific prescription for each individual body constitution.

AVERAGE DIET FOR PREGNANCY

Cereals (*Anna Varga*): Rice, Jowar, Barley, Wheat, Ragi, Maize, Bajra.

Pulses (*Shimbi Varga*): Green gram, green pea, black gram, bengal gram, soya bean, red gram, cluster beans, kidney beans (red), french beans, double beans.

Fruit Vegetables: (*Phala–Shaka Varga*): Bottle gourd, snake gourd, cucumber, tinda, lady's finger, parwal, ridge gourd, red pumpkin, drum stick, ash gourd, tomato.

Root and Tubers (*Mool - Kanda Varga*): Potato, sweet potato, carrots, radish, onion, garlic, ginger, yam, turmeric, beet root, tapioca (sago)

Green Leafy vegetables: Spinach, Lettuce, Cauliflower leaves, Curry leaves, Coriander leaves, Mint, Cabbage, Fenugreek, Drum stick leaves, Amaranth leaves.

Milk and milk products (*Dugdha Varga*): Whole milk, Ghee, Butter, Paneer, Buttermilk, Curds, Cheese, Shrikhand, Ice creams can be consumed. Cow's milk and ghee is the boon to expecting mother.

Milk and milk products mixed with any fresh fruit is a bad combination hence to be avoided

Flesh foods (*Mamsa Varga*): Goat meat, Titer (Partridge, Bird variety), Chicken, Sardine fish, Crabs, Goat liver, Chicken liver, Eggs, Cod-liver oil and Salmon.

(Dry salted fish causes digestion problems hence better to avoid. Pork in excess should be avoided.)

Fruits: (*Phala Varga*) (**Fresh and Dry**) Banana, Apple, Dates, Grapes, Pomegranate, figs, Jackfruit, lime, oranges, Mango, Pear, Phalsa, Dried figs, Resins, Apricot, Almond, Dried dates, Fresh Amla is a boon for expecting mothers. One Amla every day is very useful in every aspect of nutrition in pregnancy. Dried amla powder can be used in off seasons. (Guava, Berries, Custard apple are not good for digestion hence it is better to avoid)

Other healthy foods: Garden cress seeds, Cardamom, Corriender leaves, Clove, Nutmeg, Onion, Tamarind, Dry

Ginger powder, Black pepper, Rock salt, Arrowroot, Sugar, Jaggery, (Mushrooms, Tea, Coffee, Soft drink, Wines and Alcohols should be avoided)

SOME HEALTH PROMOTERS

- **Garden cress seeds (Chandrashura / Ahaliva / Halim)** is used every where in India during last months of the pregnancy and to lactating mother. Seeds roasted in cow's ghee and mixed with milk and sugar is given as tonic for expectant mother. This helps in general debility and pregnancy anemia.
- **Crab, Corn and Egg soup** is very helpful after second trimester. This helps to build strong bones of foetus.
- **Soya milk and Egg yolk** is good for bone development.
- **Spinach soup** with **Onions** and **Carrots** help in pregnancy anemia and provides good nutrition to bones of both, expectant mother and foetus.
- **Apricots** with honey are a very effective nerve-tonic. It increases blood and cures constipation. It prevents infections and lowers the chances of degeneration of cells. It is a fruit rich in vitamin A according to modern nutrition. Hence it is a very valuable fruit in the prevention of all the diseases caused by its deficiency.
- **Banana** with **dates, figs and ghee** every day in pregnancy is one of the best natural tonic foods. It also improves and increases the blood during pregnancy and hence prevents pregnancy anemia to a great extent. (Milk and banana is not a healthy combination and it is best to avoid in pregnancy)
- **Black currents** are also rich nutrition for pregnant women. Black current Juice (prepared by soaking and grinding them with water) is an ideal soothing in all types of urine disorders in pregnancy. Scanty urination with hyper acidity can be very well prevented by this. It tones up the large intestine which helps in curing constipation. Addition of fresh dates to the mixture gives good results.
- **Dates-** Soak 4 to 6 dates in fresh cow's milk overnight and grind the mixture next morning. This preparation with a pinch of cardamom powder and one tea spoon honey is used regularly to generate blood and bones of foetus.
- **Mangoes** are very nutritious and preventive for frequent attacks of the common infections like sinusitis, colds etc. Drinking Mango juice (*Amra ras*) with ghee and milk two times a day during pregnancy prevents one from fetal abnormalities. It increases the resistance of the foetus against infections, helps in proper development, eases the delivery and prevents post-partum complications.
- **Fresh salads** can also be part of the diet of expecting mothers - Cabbage, Cucumber, Onions, Fresh Asparagus, Lettuce and Spinach are good to have in salad.

-
- **Spinach:** Regular use of spinach prevents threaten abortion and hemorrhage. Fresh juice of spinach leaves one ounce (6 tea spoons) with a bowl of liver soup, thrice a day is a perfect treatment in lack of breast milk, anemia's and general debility after delivery. Fresh juice and tender coconut water is a best diuretic. It can be safely given in pregnancy to remove all toxins.

The average regular diet (with some modifications with a view as to what is good for her and what is not) is adequate for the average expecting mother. She should be more concerned with the quality of what she eats. She should supply her body

with good nourishing diet and at the same time eat foods that will build her baby's body tissues.

Ayurveda understands food and nutrition in a different way than what is advocated by the modern science of nutrition. Only when Ayurvedic understanding becomes part of the common man/woman's psyche, that it will also become part of their every day living. Dietary measures for special situations like pregnancy or postpartum are only extensions of this grand science of nutrition. Till that time it is wise for the pregnant woman to attention to her diet under the supervision of a Vaidya.