

# Ayurvedic Treatment of Children

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One of the eight branches of Ayurveda, known as *Bala Tantra* or *Kaumarabhritya*, deals with paediatrics and includes aspects such as the care of the newborn, infant feeding, management of childhood diseases, as well as childhood *samskaras* (religious rites and ceremonies to purify body, mind, and spirit). Because the *dhatu*s are still immature, special care during childhood is essential. The physical development and the mental state during this period play a major role in the foundation of the rest of a person's life.

## The 3 Doshas.

We are all born with our own particular balance of *doshas* which creates our individual constitution and that remains unaltered throughout our lives. The predominant *dosha*, or *doshas*, determine our physique, our mental and emotional tendencies and our predisposition to certain health problems. We generally have a predominance of one or two of the *doshas*. To be alive and well we need all three *doshas* and all five elements. When our *doshas* are in balance, that is they remain in the proportions we were born with, they maintain our health and well-being and when unbalanced we become unwell.

Our constitution (*prakruti*) is largely determined when we are conceived and depends on our parents' constitution, the balance of their *doshas* and their mental and emotional state at the time of conception, and of course *karma*. One of the most important factors to consider for the health of a newborn is the health of the parents. For this reason, Ayurveda recommends that both parents undergo *panchakarma* before they wish to conceive a child. This helps to prevent their *vikruti* (current state of health) from being passed on to the baby.

Once conception is achieved, the mother should be relaxed during pregnancy, reading spiritual books, chanting mantras, eating a *doshic* diet, receiving regular *abhyanga*, doing gentle and restorative *yogasana*, and meditating. From conception onward, Ayurveda places great emphasis on care for the mother to balance *vata* and promote her health and vitality, as well as to ensure the healthy development of the foetus. After birth, both the newborn infant and the mother are cared for throughout the first 40 days with the utmost attention. Traditionally, these duties consist of daily oil massage, bathing, and other herbal therapies.

<u>Qualities of the Doshas</u>	
Vata	cold, light, dry, subtle, mobile, sharp, hard, rough, clear
Pitta	hot, a little wet, light, subtle, flowing, mobile, sharp, soft, smooth, clear
Kapha	cold, wet, heavy, gross, dense, static, dull, soft, smooth, cloudy

### Vata traits

- A thin frame, erratically proportioned, tends to be underweight or lose weight when under stress
- Rough, dry skin which can crack easily
- Eats irregularly and quickly, erratic appetite
- Erratic memory, takes things in quickly and forgets easily
- Prone to anxiety, fear, insecurity; light sleeper, prone to insomnia

- Active, restless, thinks and does things quickly, changeable mood, intense feelings
- Difficulty sustaining energy, concentration, activity.
- Feels the cold, often dislikes wind. Symptoms worse in cold weather
- Dreams of running, jumping, flying, often fearful

#### Pitta Traits:

- Medium build and weight; regular features, well proportioned body
- Smooth oily skin, often with moles and freckles, which burns easily
- Good, regular appetite, but not prone to gaining weight easily
- Tends to be warm to the touch, gets hot easily, pink cheeked, sweaty
- Dislikes intense heat, symptoms often worse in hot weather or if over heated
- Prone to inflammatory problems, fevers
- Highly intelligent, good memory; decisive, leadership qualities, competitive, likes to win games
- Tends to be shy, strong willed, irritable, angry, perfectionistic, intolerant and judgmental
- Dreams of fire, fighting, competition, being out of control,

#### Kapha traits:

- Large frame, heavy bones, big muscles, prone to overweight, feeling heavy
- Thick lustrous, oily skin and hair, large clear eyes
- Tendency to over sleep, to be lazy and inactive
- Resistant to change, slow to react
- Loyal and dependable, calm, affectionate forgiving and compassionate
- Slow to learn and slow to forget
- Symptoms worse in cold, damp weather
- Dreams of water, nature, birds and gentle romantic images

### The Six Tastes

Ayurveda also classifies foods and remedies according to six tastes: sweet, sour, salty, pungent, bitter and astringent. Understanding the effects on mind and body of each taste and how this relates to the balance of the *doshas*, means that food and herbs can be used as a powerful tool for prevention and treatment of imbalance and disease.

Sweet, sour and salty substances increase *kapha* and decrease *vata*,

Pungent, bitter and astringent tastes decrease *kapha* and increase *vata*,

Sweet, bitter and astringent taste decrease *pitta*

Pungent, sour and salty increase *pitta*.

#### Treatment of Vata problems:

- Routine
- Relaxation and rest
- Minimising stress and anxiety
- Internal and external use of oils particularly sesame oil followed by application of heat or a warm bath/shower. Oils used for external use include:, sesame oil, mahanarayan oil, castor oil, coconut oil.
- Light purgation using triphala, flax/psyllium seeds, castor oil with ginger tea.
- Breathing exercises (*pranayama*)
- Herbs particularly aimed at balancing *apana vata*: Ashwagandha (*Withania somnifera*), Shatavari (*Asparagus racemosus*) Brahmi (*Centella asiatica/Bacopa monieri*), Bala (*Sida cordifolia*), Gokshura (*Tribulus terrestris*), Guduchi (*Tinospora cordifolia*), Garlic, Ginger,
- Western Herbs: *Avena sativa*, *Althea off.*, *Glycyrrhiza*, *Ocimum basilicum/sanctum*, *Angelica off.*, *Cardamom*, *Cinnamon*, *Linum usitatissimum*, *Ulmus fulva*,
- Formulae: Sitopaladi, Triphala, Hingwastaka, Talisadi, Trikulu

- General Rasayanas: Ashwagandha, Chayawanprash; for digestion: Trikatu

### Treatment of Pitta problems:

- Gentle laxatives such as dandelion root or triphala to reduce excess *pachaka pitta*  
 Massage oils for external use: sunflower oil; coconut oil; bhringaraj (Eclipta alba) oil; brahmi (Centella asiatica) oil  
 Meditation/ talking/singing/counselling/exercise/ relaxing in cool areas, eg by water to release suppressed emotions/anger.
- Soft words/music, uncompetitive activities
- Herbs: Coriander, cumin, fennel, sandalwood, lemon grass, Aloe vera, Amalaki (Emblica off), Turmeric, Shatavari (Asparagus racemosus), Guduchi (Tinospora cordifolia), Punarnava (Boerhavia diffusa), Manjistha (Rubia cordifolia),
- Western herbs: Rose, Arctium lappa, Chamomilla recutita, Rumex spp., Verbena off., Sambucus nigra, Galium aparine, Scutellaria laterifolia, Achillea millefolium, Stachys betonica, Melissa off.  
 Formulae: Chandanadi (Sandalwood, Cardamom, Piper cubeba, Acacia catechu, Amalaki (Emblica off), Gokshura (Tribulus terrestris)); Also Pippali (Piper longum) with Amla (Emblica off);  
 General Rasayana: Amalaki (Emblica off); Guduchi (Tinospora cordifolia); Aloe vera.  
 Brain Rasayana: Brahmi (Centella asiatica/ Bacopa monieri).

Medicines prepared in ghee are good nerve tonics for *pitta*, as ghee is considered to nourish the brain and nerves. Ghee combines well with bitter herbs enhancing their properties by its *pitta* reducing properties.

### Treatment of Kapha problems:

- More exercise/activity  
 Reduction of sleep if excessive  
 Expectorant herbs
- Inhalation of oil/steam, application of heat
- Herbs: Punarnava (Boerhavia diffusa); Turmeric (Curcuma longa); Ginger (Zingiberis off); Pippali (Piper longum); Asafoetida (Ferula asafoetida); Haritaki (Terminalia chebula); Guduchi (Tinospora cordifolia), Aloe vera
- Western herbs: Thymus off, Inula helenium, Sambucus nigra, Glechoma hederacea, Angelica off., Ginger, Cinnamon, Cardamom, Black pepper, Cloves, Coriander, Garlic, Marrubium vulgare, Dill, Tussilago, Euphrasia off., Rosmarinus off., Achillea millefolium.  
 Formulae: Trikatu; Triphala; Sitopaladi, Talisadi with lime juice  
 Rasayana: for digestion Pippali; Trikatu;
- Hot drinks and foods

## General Treatment of Children

Infections: Garlic, Ginger, Cinnamon, Pau d'arco, Cardamom, Chamomile, Echinacea, Hyssop, Elderflower, Licorice, Cleavers, Eucalyptus, Thyme, Cloves, Turmeric, Red clover, Thyme, Wild indigo, Elderberry.

Dysbiosis: Cat's claw, Garlic, Burdock, Turmeric, Ginger, Myrrh, Cinnamon, Andrographis, Goldenseal, Grapefruit seed extract, Olive leaf, Reishi mushroom, Oregon grape, Elecampane, Dill, Bearberry, Calendula, Echinacea, Fennel, Amalaki, Kelp, Aloe vera juice, Rose, Thyme, Oregono.

Fevers: *Babies*: Teas: Chamomile, Elderflower, Lime flowers, Catmint, Yarrow, Ground ivy, Holy Basil

*Children:* Basil, Boneset, Borage, Chamomile, Echinacea, Elderflower, Ginger, Ground ivy, Hyssop, Lavender, Lemon balm, Lime flowers, Meadowsweet, Tulsi, Peppermint, Vervain, Violet flowers, Yarrow, Cinnamon, Catmint, Garlic, St John's Wort.

Colds: Boneset, Hyssop, Chamomile, Elderflower, Melissa, Yarrow, Rosemary, Peppermint, Thyme, Ginger, Echinacea, Cardamom, Cinnamon, Cloves, Coriander, Holy basil.

Catarrh: Hyssop, Mullein, Thyme, Licorice, Garlic, Echinacea, hot lemon and honey, Onion & honey, Elderflowers, Eyebright, Plantain, Ground ivy, Ginger, Cinnamon, Pepper, Cardamom, Meadowsweet, Holy basil.

*Teas to loosen sticky mucus:* Chamomile, Thyme, Peppermint, Ginger, Hyssop.

*Oils for inhalations/ baths/ massage:* Chamomile, Lavender, Peppermint, Eucalyptus, Lemon, Pine.

Sore throat/Tonsillitis: *Immune enhancers:* Echinacea, Turmeric, Pau d'arco, Wild indigo, Garlic, Onion, Sage, Thyme, Burdock, Mullein, Cat's claw, Andrographis, Holy basil.

*Gargles:* Thyme, Lemon juice, Raspberry leaf tea, Sage tea & 1 tsp Cider vinegar, Myrrh, Propolis.

*For lymphatic system:* Cleavers, Poke root (small doses), Blue flag, Calendula.

*For fevers:* Agrimony, Chamomile, Elderflower, Ground ivy, Plantain, Raspberry leaves, Lime flowers,

*Demulcents for painful throat/tonsils:* Coltsfoot, Comfrey leaf, Marshmallow, Mullein, Licorice.

Laryngitis: Chamomile, Andrographis, Thyme, Coltsfoot, Marshmallow, Pau d'arco, Echinacea, Holy basil

*Infusions:* Chamomile, Coltsfoot, Thyme, Catmint, Echinacea, Marshmallow, Licorice, hot lemon and honey.

*Honeys:* Garlic, Thyme, Lavender, Ginger, Cinnamon

*Gargles:* Sage, Thyme, salt, lemon.

Croup: BFR Rescue Remedy, Chamomile tea, Catmint, Coltsfoot, Horehound, Marshmallow, Wild cherry bark, Blood root (Small doses), Thyme, Hyssop, Holy basil, Licorice, Slippery elm.

*Essential Oils:* Chamomile, Lavender, Eucalyptus, Pine.

*Infusions:* Chamomile, Catmint.

Middle ear infection/Glue ear: *Oils for ear drops:* Mullein, Garlic, St John's wort, Chamomile/ lavender oil.

Tinctures of chamomile, eucalyptus, golden seal, or myrrh can be added or taken internally.

*Pain relief:* Pasque flower, Skullcap, Chamomile.

*Decongestants:* Elderflower, Ground ivy, Plantain, Garlic, Chamomile, Ginger, Eyebright, Hyssop, Thyme, Holy basil.

*Immune support:* Echinacea, Thyme, Licorice, Rose, Pau d'arco, Cat's claw, Wild indigo, Chamomile, Hyssop, Holy basil, Andrographis, Cinnamon, Ginger.

*For tonsils, lymph glands:* Cleavers, Calendula

*Steam inhalations:* Chamomile, Eucalyptus, Lemon, Pine, Lavender.

Coughs: *General:* Elecampane, Garlic, Hyssop, Thyme, Catnip, Marshmallow, Licorice, Mullein, Angelica, Horehound, Garlic, onion juice

*Essential oils:* Eucalyptus, Friar's balsam, Lavender, Pine, Thyme.

*Catarrhal Cough:* Aniseed, Cinnamon, Holy basil, Long pepper, Black pepper, Ginger, Hyssop, Thyme, Horehound, Coltsfoot, Elecampane, Licorice, Garlic.

*Essential Oils:* Cinnamon, Eucalyptus, Ginger, Lavender, Pine, Thyme.

*Dry Irritating Cough:* *Demulcents:* Coltsfoot, Comfrey leaf, Linseed, Licorice, Marshmallow, Mullein, Wild cherry bark, Chamomile, Catmint, Cowslip flowers.

*Expectorants:* Coltsfoot, Elecampane, Thyme, Hyssop, Horehound Holy basil.

**Whooping Cough:** Coltsfoot, Elecampane, Squills, Thyme, Licorice, Wild cherry bark, Wild lettuce, Red clover, Garlic, Slippery elm.

*Bach flower remedy:* Rock rose

*Essential oils:* Basil, Cypress, Eucalyptus, Lavender, Marjoram.

**Asthma:** *Expectorants:* Elecampane, Hyssop, Holy basil, Grindelia, Mullein, Thyme, Cardamom, Ginger.

*Demulcents:* Slippery elm, Borage, Comfrey leaf, Marshmallow, Mullein, Plantain

*Nervines:* Chamomile, Lemon balm, Skullcap, Vervain, Hops, California poppy, Passiflora, Bach flower remedies.

**Hay Fever:** Echinacea, Chamomile, Elderflowers, Yarrow, Eyebright, Marshmallow, Nettles, Ginger, Garlic, Baikal skullcap, Holy basil

*Preventatives:* Ashwagandha, Guduchi, Ginseng, Astragalus, Licorice, Wild yam, local honey,

*Teas:* Elderflower, Yarrow, Nettle, Eyebright, Chamomile, Lemon balm

**Worms:** Garlic, raw onion, Pumpkin seeds, raw carrots, carrot juice, apples, coconut,

Wormwood, Southernwood, Balmony, Gentian, Vervain, Sage, Peppermint, Thyme, Aniseed, Fennel, Echinacea

*Laxatives:* Burdock, Dandelion root

*Externally:* Calendula ointment to apply to anus

*Essential oils:* Eucalyptus, Lavender, Tea-tree,

**Chicken Pox:** Garlic, Echinacea, Boneset, Chamomile, Yarrow, Catmint, Skullcap, Burdock, Elderflower, Heartsease, Lavender, Calendula, St John's Wort, Witch hazel,

*Decoctions:* Burdock, Yellow dock,

*Essential oils:* Lavender, Peppermint, Tea tree

*Externally:* Rose water, Comfrey ointment

**Mumps:** Garlic, Echinacea, Boneset, Yarrow, Lime flower, Red clover, Cleavers, Calendula, Poke root (low doses).

*Oils:* Chamomile, Eucalyptus, Lavender, Thyme,

*Externally:* Mullein, Lobelia, Cayenne.

**Measles:** Echinacea, Chamomile, Elderflowers, Calendula, Marshmallow, Red clover, Yarrow, Lavender, Holy Basil,

*Teas:* Burdock, Peppermint, Chamomile, Eyebright, Elderflowers, Calendula, Catnip.

**Eczema:** Chamomile, Borage, Echinacea, Licorice, Nettles, Wild yam, Red clover, Yarrow, Burdock, Fumitory, Heartsease, Nettle, Red clover, Chamomile, Vervain, Wild oats, Skullcap, Catmint, Dill

*Teas:* Chamomile, Borage, Peppermint, Burdock, Nettle

*Externally:* Hempseed//coconut oil, Aloe vera, Cider vinegar, Calendula, Chickweed, Turmeric, Rose water, Neem

*Compresses:* Chickweed, Calendula, Coltsfoot leaf, Witch hazel, Comfrey, Yellow dock

### Guidelines for Prescribing

The ways of prescribing herbal medicines vary considerably according to the condition being treated, the herbs employed, the age and build of the child, the constitution, even the time of year. The dosage, the herbs chosen for administration, the type of preparation, the timing of administration and the duration of treatment all need to be evaluated.

Chronic conditions generally require mild herbal remedies which can safely be given, generally three times daily, over months at a time if necessary, while acute conditions may require stronger herbs given up to every two hours. To illustrate, dandelion root has mild laxative properties which be given to regulate digestion and elimination over a period, while senna root or castor oil have stronger laxative action for acute constipation or to clear heat quickly during a fever.

Some conditions, particularly fevers, colds, catarrh and problems associated with cold, require herbs to be given in hot preparations. Others such as urinary problems are better suited to cool preparations. Skin problems may improve more rapidly through administration of herbal teas as opposed to tinctures, while tinctures may be preferable when more concentrated medicines are required such as the treatment of a virulent infection.

Hot/cold infusions and decoctions

Syrups

Powders rolled in honey, fruit concentrate, ghee, in smoothies, porridge, warm water or a variety of different milks.

Tinctures & glycerites

Herbal baths...dilute essential oils, infusions, fresh herbs in muslin over hot tap

Tablets/capsules for older children

Hand & foot baths

Inhalations

Massage...dilute oils/liniments, chest rubs etc

Ointments, lotions & creams

Compresses

Fresh juices

Hydrosols

Herbs as food

Suppositories

Babies :

Umbilical powdered herbs

Teas in bottles/off the spoon/in syringes

Baths/sponging

Oils/massage including foot massage

Burners in rooms/on radiators/light bulbs

In Ayurvedic medicine there are a variety of different vehicles (*anupans*) for giving medicines:

Ghee for *pitta* constitutions and during fevers

Sesame oil for *vata* constitutions

Honey for reducing *kapha*

Hot water for reducing *vata* and *pitta* and during fevers

Cold water for *pitta*

The herbs chosen may also dictate their method of administration. When giving teas, the aerial parts of a plant are prepared as infusions, while roots, barks and seeds are better suited to decoctions.

The length of time herbs need to be given and dosage will vary very much according to the nature of the condition as well as the age and constitution of the child. A predominantly *kapha* type child, well built with heavy bones and a comparatively sluggish metabolism, will generally require herbs in larger doses and over a longer period of time than a small framed, light weight predominantly *vata* type child with a more sensitive body and faster metabolism.

There are two rules that are employed by some practitioners:

Young's method: child's dosage = adult dose (generally 5mls) x age divided by the age +12

Cowling's method: child's dosage = adult dose x age divided by 24.

Alternatively dosage can be calculated according to weight: child's dosage= adult dose x child's weight divided by 150 lbs.

Generally remedies for *vata* problems are given before a meal, for *pitta* problems are given with a meal and for *kapha* problems are given after a meal.