

# Healthy Lifestyle Modification - An Ayurvedic Outlook to Prevent Male Infertility

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## Abstract

In present century people are with fast moving attitude in every aspect of life leading to increase of stress and strain. Thus improper lifestyle has become reason for many conditions. One among them is male infertility. Our body is evolved to be 'in tune' with their environment. Male fertility is influenced profoundly by our environment, including lifestyles and food intake.

As per *Ayurveda*, *Shukra* in male can be correlated to ejaculated semen which is responsible for production of healthy progeny. It has its own *Panchabhoutik* constitution which maintain its normalcy. Change in lifestyle bring about change in propertywise equilibrium maintained by this *panchamahabhutas* leading to infertility. Simple lifestyle changes are all what you need to correct this. These can make a big difference to your wellbeing and maintenance of your fertility.

This paper is trying to scientifically analyse the influence of environmental factors on *Shukra* leading to male infertility and thereby trying to prevent its prevalence with slight lifestyle modifications.

**Keywords:** Lifestyle, *Ayurveda*, *Shukra*, Infertility

## Introduction

Mankind has been concerned about his health, protection from evils of diseases and suffering since the dawn of civilization. Since then he believed that nature alone could help in conquering these afflictions and sought remedies in nature.

*Ayurveda* the eternal medical science, has its roots in Indian philosophy. It deals with health and illness of human beings and it also throws considerable light on socio religious and philosophical aspects with its object of attainment of *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kama*, and *Moksa*. *Kama* means not only materialistic desires of human but also includes sexual life. Sex or sexual desire is a natural phenomenon in human beings. Multiplication of living beings, animals or plants for existence and propagation of the species is a biological phenomenon. In the

present century people are having fast moving attitude in every aspect of life leading to increased stress and strain. The improper lifestyle has become a reason for many conditions, of which male infertility is one among them.

Infertility is defined as the absence of conception after one year of regular intercourse without the use of any contraceptive<sup>1</sup>. Men are responsible for this problem at least 40 percent of the time. There are a myriad of factors that can affect male fertility, among which lifestyle choices plays a key role.

Living a healthy lifestyle is important to our fertility. Lifestyle factors can affect a man's fertility, and many of these factors are things that a man can control. Leading a healthy lifestyle improves not only your chances of conceiving but also your

overall health. Here is an attempt to explore the treasure of knowledge of Ayurveda to modify our lifestyles to lead a healthy life and to give birth to a healthy generation.

#### Prevalence of male infertility<sup>2</sup>

Approximately 15-20 percent of all cohabiting couples are infertile. Of these, in up to 50 percent of cases it is the male factor or the husband who is responsible for the infertility.

This means that nearly 7.5 to 10 percent of all men in the reproductive age group are infertile i.e. incapable of fathering children. This, by any yardstick, is a stupendous figure but one that very few know about.

#### What Lifestyle Factors May Affect Male Fertility??

Researchers and specialists often ignore male fertility, but it plays a key role in many couples' conception difficulties. A small percentage of these men suffer from particular disorders, which causes their infertility. However, a large number of men actually have no apparent reason for their infertility. Some of these men may be practicing certain lifestyle factors that are contributing to their fertility issues. Common lifestyle factors that influence fertility include:

- Poor diet
- Obesity
- Smoking
- Exposure to environmental toxins
- Stress

**Diet:** If you are not eating a properly-balanced diet, your body is not getting the nutrients that it needs to engage in sperm production. Contemporary Science says in particular, your body needs appropriate levels of Zinc, Vitamin B12, and Vitamin C to produce healthy, viable sperm.

**Weight:** Recent studies show that men with a higher-than-normal body mass index (BMI) are more likely to suffer from

fertility issues. This is because weight influences how the body produces certain hormones. Sufficient levels of testosterone are needed to produce high levels of motile sperm.

**Smoking:** Both first and second-hand cigarette smoking have been shown to reduce sperm count in men, and can also affect sperm morphology, which has the potential to lead to birth defects. A recent study performed at the University of Buffalo concludes that nicotine and tobacco impair the ability of sperm to bind to the outer layer of the egg, impeding fertilization.

**Alcohol:** Heavy alcohol consumption has been linked with reduced sperm count and poor sperm motility. Even men who drink moderate amounts of alcohol have been shown to have weaker and slower sperm compared with non-drinkers. Alcoholics often have problems with achieving and maintaining an erection. Additionally, because alcohol damages the liver, alcoholics are more likely to have higher levels of estrogen in their body, which can severely suppress sperm. Moreover, alcohol abuse has been linked with damaged sperm and reduced sperm counts.

**Environmental Hazards:** Certain chemicals and pollutants in your environment may also be contributing to your infertility. These pollutants can be found in the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the food we eat. Frequent exposure to pesticides, lead, gases, and heavy metals can have adverse effects on fertility, impairing sperm production and motility.

**Heat:** Sperm need to be kept at a cooler temperature than the rest of the body; this is why your testicles are located outside of your body. Strenuous exercise, whirlpool baths, or tight underwear can increase the temperature of your scrotum, damaging and even killing your sperm.

**Stress:** Physical and emotional stress can also play a role in male factor infertility. Stress causes your body to release certain hormones. Continued stress can cause hormonal imbalance, which could effect your sperm production.

### **Ayurvedic Views**

Ayurveda is a unique science which took its origin from Lord Brahma & has its own unique concepts. According to it, *Sharira* is composed of *Doshas*, *Dhatus* & *Malas* which itself is a combination of *Panchamahabhutas*. Their state of equilibrium is responsible for the normalcy of the body.

*Shukra* is considered as the seventh *Dhathu*<sup>3</sup> as well as Sara of all *Dhathus*. The term *Shukra* is derived from the root word *Sucha-Kleda*, which means purity. The other meanings of *Shukra* are bright, shining, radiant, fire, venous planet, semen, sperm etc.

In *Ayurvedic* Classics, various words have been used synonymously to denote *Shukra* as semen or as androgens. Screening of classics revealed that some of synonyms may also represent the sperms which are actually a part of semen itself. *Shukra* is included under *Kaphavarga*. As it is included under *Kapha Varga*, the articles having *Jalaguna Pradhana*<sup>4</sup> and having *Snigdha*, *Madhura*, properties will enhance *Shukra*. The *Vishesha Karma* attributed to *Shukra* is *Garbhotpaadana*.<sup>5</sup>

*Acharyas* also clearly mentions about the causes for *Shukra Kshaya* like *Chintha*, *Jara*, *Vyadhi*, *Karmakarshana*, *Anashana*, *Athisthreenishevana*, *Bhaya*, *Shoka*, *Visrambha*, *Asevana*, *Athiharsha*, *Athisthoulya*, *Malopachaya*, *Shrama*, *Sthreena Akoushalata*, Though the concept according to *Ayurveda* is entirely different, the net effect of following an *Ayurvedic* lifestyle is found to improve the quality of our life & health.

How to change ourselves to be fertile?

As we have already seen each of our day to day activities has direct impact on our fertility, it is necessary to have an outlook towards ourselves to maintain a fertile life. If we are adopting an *Ayurvedic* lifestyle, we can be away from this health problem to a great extent because all our classics clearly explains a healthy daily regimen. Among them many regimens are mentioned as having *Vrishya Guna* which means they have impact on our fertility. So adopting slight changes in our diet and activities can do a lot on our fertility. Following are some of those changes need to be adopted with its classical reasoning.

Intake of Diet which enhances the production of *Shukra Dhathu*. Food should be of *Madhura Rasa*, *Snigdha*, *Guru*, *Pichila*, *Avidaahi*, etc like Milk, Butter, Ghee, etc. It shouldn't be *Katu* , *Ushna*, *Teekshna*, *Ruksha*, *Sukshma* etc like Spices, Fast foods etc. The reason behind this is, *Shukra Dhathu* is having *Gunas* like *Madhura*, *Snigdha*, *Guru* etc . So *Samanya Guna Dravyas* will cause *Vrudhi* of *Shukra Dhathu* and vice versa.

Avoid intake of alcohol and smoking. According to *Ayurveda*, *Madhya* is having *Gunas* like *Teekshna*, *Ruksha*, *Sukshma*, *Amla*, *Vyavaayi*, *Aashukari*, *Laghu*, *Vikaashi*, and *Vishada* .<sup>7</sup> These are the properties completely opposite to that of *Shukra*. Similarly is the case of smoking also.

Avoid use of tight underwear or pants, athletic or swim spandex materials. These type of dresses increases the temperature of scrotal region and *Vrushana* is one among the places where *Swedana* is contra indicated.

Waking up at *Brahma Muhurtha*. *Brahma Muhurtha Uthana* is given very much importance in classics. This is essential for the wellbeing of *Sapta Dhathus*. As *Shukra Dhathu* is the Sara of

*Sapta Dhathus*, this regimen should be followed.

Anointing the body with oil (*Abhyanga*): *Abyanga Guna* includes *Dhathupushtikaratva*, *Pushti Janana*, *Balaprada* etc. All these have direct or indirect relation with fertility<sup>8</sup>

Do mild exercise daily: *Vyayama* causes *Agni Deepana* and *Meda Kshaya*<sup>9</sup>. *Agni Maandhya* and *Athi Sthoulya* can cause *Shukrakshaya*.

Taking bath daily: *Snana* is considered as *Deepana*, *Ayushya* and *Vrushya*<sup>10</sup> So bathing in water which is not too cold and not too hot is beneficial. At the same time *Ushnodaka Snana* is not good for males as it will alter the scrotal temperature which inturn affects spermatogenesis.

Proper sleep: This is very much essential as it is one of the main problem many of the software professionals are facing now a days. *Ayurveda* says that proper sleep during night imparts *Pumsatva*.

Say bye to stress forever: As we have seen earlier in *Shukra Kshaya Karanas*, *Manasika Truption* place a key role.

Some other regimens which are considered as *Vrushya* or which is good for maintenance male fertility are *Pada Prakshalana*<sup>11</sup> (keeping our foot always clean), good *Shayya* and *Asana*<sup>12</sup> (properly arranged and good chair and bed), *Samvahana*<sup>13</sup> (mild massage) etc.

Rules for doing a healthy sex: *Acharyas* mention that in all seasons wise person should engage in copulation once in 3 days and during summer, once in a fortnight.<sup>14</sup> Moreover *Acharya Susrutha* also mentions about the rules for selecting a partner and also the things to be followed immediately after having intercourse. It is as follows:

Person should not engage in copulation with woman who is in her menstrual period, who is not desirous of copulation, who is not clean, who is not liked, more aged, suffering for diseases, who has deficient body parts, who is pregnant, who is enemy, who has disorders of vagina, who belongs to same *Gotra*, who is the wife of preceptor, and who is committed to vows, during *Sandhyas*, days of eclipses, with forbidden woman, at midnight and midday, at place which creates shyness, which is very open, and which is dirty, when he is hungry, suffering from disease, disturbed in mind, when having urges of flatus, faeces, urine and thirst and when very weak. He also clearly mentions about the diseases occurring by breaking these rules.<sup>15</sup>

After engaging himself moderately with a women who is endeavoured with all good qualities, he should eat snacks containing sugar, drink milk or meat soup, after bathing and there after fanning and good sleep.<sup>16</sup>

### Discussion

So as we have already seen, for maintaining a healthy life, maintenance of equilibrium of panchamahabhutas, doshas and dhatus are very much important. Here lies the significance of adopting an ayurvedic daily regimen. If we critically analyse the *Shukra Kshaya karana*, we can see that many are related to our lifestyles, *Chintha*, *Bhaya* etc are the factors giving stress to mind which is a part of our busy schedules. The word *Adharma Keerthana* itself includes all other lifestyle modifications we are practising nowadays. And the word *Anashana* refers to food which donot possess the qualities which can improve *Shukra Dhātu*.

*Manasika bhavas* play a key role in maintenance of fertility. Contemporary science also has mentioned the role of stress in infertility. This is the main reason behind explanation of lakshanas of sthree with whom sex should be performed. One more reason is for attainment of a healthy

progeny the main factor is Shudha *Garbhashaya* with out any *vyapat*. Foods mentioned after sex like milk are having *Sadhya Shukrakara* property, which nullifies the effect of lost *Shukra* from our body.

### Conclusion

As male infertility is a big issue which this era is facing , it is necessary to change ourselves to be in a safer side. As *Ayurveda* is life science which is eternal, and our *Acharyas* are *Aaptas* , following those principles will help us to lead a healthy life. Specific charyas to be followed in each day, season etc are told with an intention to prevent even the mild illeffects

of physiological *chaya* , *prakopa* etc of doshas in our body. By adopting modern life styles, we are not at all considering any of these factors. So this leads to the total destruction of maintained equilibrium of *Dosha*, *Dhatu*s and *Malas* and there by *Roga utpatti*. So it is scientific always to follow a strict daily regimen to get away from all health problems including infertility.

That is why our Great *Acharya Charaka* advised that we are responsible for our *Sukha* and *Dukha* . So it is our responsibility to decide, whether to change ourselves for betterment or not.

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