

A Holistic Guide for Maternal & Child Health Upto 2 Years

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ABSTRACT

A mother from conception to a child's second year represents a crucial period for physical growth, brain development, and long-term health. Proper nutrition and healthy lifestyle practices during this window can significantly reduce maternal and infant morbidity and mortality, prevent malnutrition, and promote optimal development. This article highlights recommended nutritional foods and healthy practices for pregnant women, lactating mothers, and children up to two years of age, with special reference to the Siddha system of medicine.

Keywords: Children; Nutritional foods; Pregnancy; Siddha system of medicine

INTRODUCTION

The period spanning from conception to the completion of the first two years of life represents a critical window that profoundly influences lifelong health and developmental outcomes. Adequate maternal nutrition and appropriate health practices during pregnancy and lactation are essential for optimal Fetal growth, neurocognitive development, immune maturation, and the overall well-being of both mother and child. Evidence indicates that nutritional deficiencies or inappropriate lifestyle practices during this formative phase may result in long-term adverse effects on physical and mental health. Traditional medical systems, particularly the Siddha system of medicine, emphasise the use of natural, region-specific foods, maintenance of digestive balance, and disciplined lifestyle practices to support maternal and infant health. These holistic principles aim to preserve physiological equilibrium during pregnancy and early childhood, thereby promoting healthy growth and development. Integrating such traditional knowledge with contemporary nutritional science may offer a comprehensive and culturally relevant approach to maternal and child health care during this crucial phase of life.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Lactagogue herbs:

These herbs regulates all the three humors (Vatham ,Pitham,Kabam) in siddha medicine and balance our body's health in a wise state.

1. Aamanakku – Ricinus communis
2. Iluppai -Madhuca longifera
3. Vetrilai -Piper betle
4. Venthayam – Trigonella foenum
5. Kalyanamurku – Erythine variegata

6. Ellu – Sesamum indicum
7. Orilai tamarai – Nervilia aragonna
8. Alisivithai – Linum usitatissimum
9. Pagal - Momordica charanti
10. Kattamanakku – Jatropha curcas

Nutritional Requirements in Early Pregnancy

Nutrient	Source	Benefits
Folic acid	Leafy greens, legumes, fortified cereals	Prevents neural tube defects in the developing baby
Iron	Lean meats, spinach, beans, fortified cereals	Supports increased blood volume and prevents anemia
Calcium	Dairy products, fortified plant milks, leafy greens	Builds strong bones and teeth for the baby and maintains maternal bone density
Protein	Lean meats, eggs, dairy products, legumes	Essential for fetal tissue growth and placental development
Omega-3 fatty acids	Fatty fish, flaxseeds, walnuts	Crucial for the development of the baby's brain and eyes
Vitamin D	Fortified dairy products, fatty fish, sunlight exposure	Supports bone health and immune function
Vitamin C	Citrus fruits, berries, bell peppers	Enhances iron absorption and strengthens the immune system
Fiber	Whole grains, fruits, vegetables	Aids digestion and prevents constipation

Physical Exercise During Pregnancy

Regular physical activity during pregnancy plays a significant role in maintaining maternal health and facilitating favorable birth outcomes. Among various forms of exercise, walking is considered one of the safest and most beneficial activities for pregnant women. Routine walking helps maintain uterine health, improves pelvic flexibility, and enhances overall physical endurance, thereby supporting the process of normal labor. Additionally, walking after meals promotes digestion and helps regulate metabolic functions during pregnancy.

Squatting is another important exercise that contributes to the facilitation of normal vaginal delivery. This posture strengthens pelvic and uterine muscles, promotes effective uterine contractions, and assists in the optimal descent of the fetal head into the pelvic cavity. Squatting exercises are generally recommended during the later stages of pregnancy, particularly from the eighth month onwards, and should be practiced under appropriate guidance to ensure maternal safety and comfort.

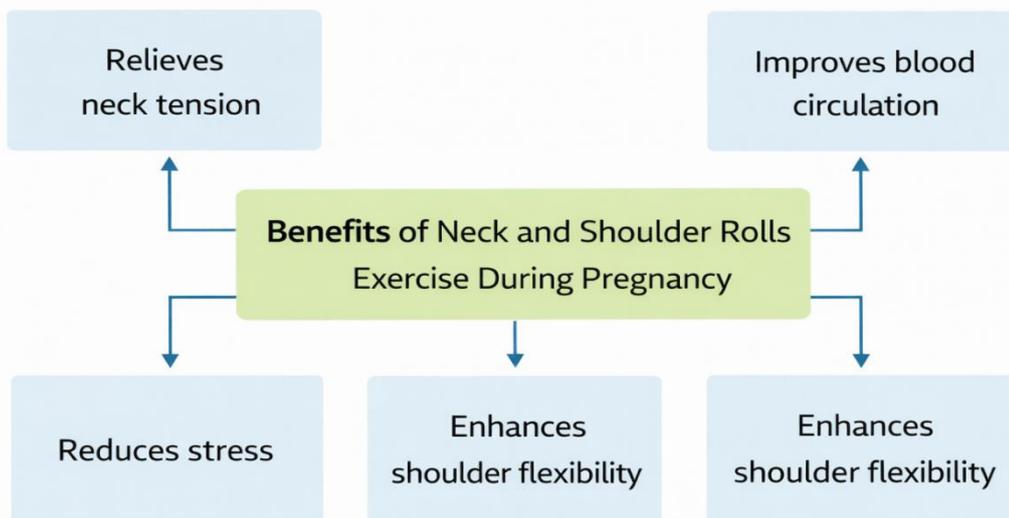
Pregnancy Exercises

Neck and Shoulder Rolls



Extension & Flexion

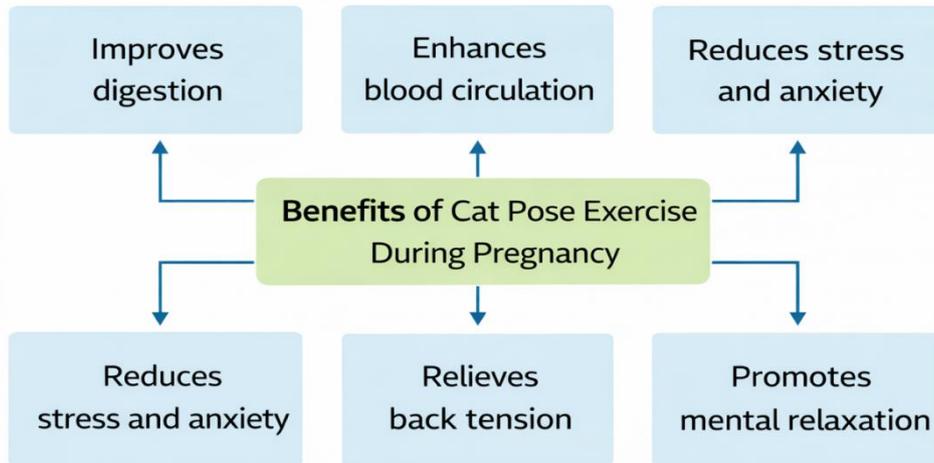
Gently roll the head forward and backward, then side to side, followed by circular movements in both clockwise and counterclockwise directions while breathing calmly. Similar circular movements should be performed with the shoulders. These exercises help relieve stiffness and improve circulation.



Cat Pose



Position the hands and knees on a mat. While exhaling, round the spine and bring the chin toward the chest. Return to a neutral spine position while inhaling. Hold the posture comfortably for up to 15 seconds. This pose improves digestion, enhances blood circulation, and promotes mental relaxation.

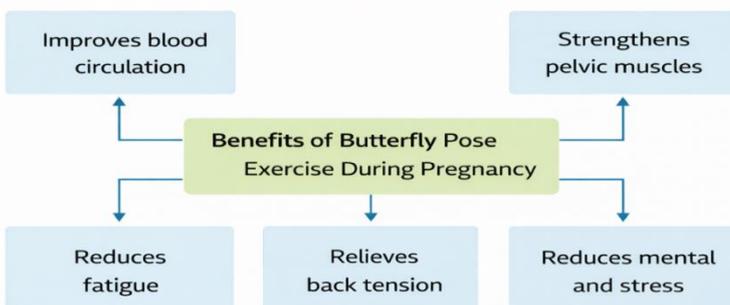


Butterfly Pose

Sit with legs extended, then bend the knees and bring the soles of the feet together. Hold the feet with both hands and gently move the knees up and down without force. Maintain the posture for up to five minutes as comfortably as possible.

Benefits:

- Improves blood circulation
- Stimulates cardiac function
- Reduces fatigue and anxiety



Benefits of Exercise During Pregnancy

- Helps maintain a healthy body weight
- Reduces the risk of gestational diabetes
- Lowers the risk of preeclampsia
- Improves overall physical fitness
- Supports healthy postpartum weight loss

DISCUSSION

Nutrition and Healthy Practices for Pregnant Mothers

Pregnancy is a phase of profound physiological change, characterized by increased Vatham according to Siddha principles. Management focuses on pacifying Vatham, supporting digestion, and strengthening the reproductive system. Appropriate diet, regular physical activity, and mindful lifestyle practices help maintain maternal balance and promote fetal well-being.

- Vatham
- Pitham
- Kabam

Lactagogue herbs regulates all the three humors (Vatham ,Pitham,Kabam) in siddha medicine and balance our body's health in a wise state.

CONCLUSION

The Siddha system of medicine emphasizes natural, locally available foods and disciplined lifestyle practices to ensure the health of pregnant women, lactating mothers, and infants. When integrated with modern nutritional science, these traditional principles provide a holistic approach to maternal and child health care. Promoting evidence-based traditional knowledge can effectively bridge the gap between ancient wisdom and modern medicine.

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