

Review Article

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"POST NATAL CARE THROUGH AYURVEDA" A CRITICAL REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Background post-natal period is a very sensitive phase in a woman's life that begins immediately after delivery and continues for about six weeks. During this period the body undergoes several physiological, hormonal, and psychological changes while returning to its normal state. In Ayurveda this phase is described as *Sutika Kala*, and special care of the mother is emphasized to restore strength, improve lactation, and prevent complications. Classical Ayurvedic texts explain that due to loss of blood, physical exertion, and emptiness created in the body after delivery, aggravation of *Vata Dosha* commonly occurs. Proper post-natal management through *Sutika Paricharya* helps in balancing *Dosha*, promoting tissue nourishment, and maintaining overall maternal health. **Aim** To review the principles and importance of post-natal care through Ayurveda. **Objectives** To study the concept of *Sutika Paricharya* described in classical Ayurvedic texts. To understand dietary and lifestyle measures recommended for post-natal care. To analyze the role of Ayurvedic practices in restoring maternal health and preventing complications after delivery. **Methods** The present study is based on a classical literary review of Ayurvedic texts including *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, and *Ashtanga Hridaya* along with relevant Ayurvedic and modern publications. The available information related to post-natal care, diet, regimen, and

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therapeutic measures was collected, compiled, and analyzed. **Results** Ayurvedic post-natal care mainly focuses on *Vata Shamana*, strengthening of the mother, proper digestion, and enhancement of breast milk production. Practices such as *Sutika Paricharya*, use of medicated preparations, suitable diet, abdominal binding, oil massage, and adequate rest help in faster recovery of the mother and support healthy lactation. These measures also reduce the risk of post-partum complications and improve overall well-being. **Conclusion** Ayurveda provides a systematic and holistic approach for post-natal care through *Sutika Paricharya*. Proper dietary regimen, lifestyle modifications, and supportive therapies help restore strength, balance *Dosha*, and promote the physical and mental health of the mother. Integrating Ayurvedic principles in post-natal care can play an important role in improving maternal recovery and long-term health.

Keywords *Sutika Paricharya, Sutika Kala, Vata Dosha, Post-natal Care, Ayurveda, Maternal Health.*

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda describes the post-natal period as *Sutika Kala*¹, which refers to the time following delivery when the woman is called *Sutika*.² Classical Ayurvedic texts emphasize that this period requires special attention because the mother experiences loss of blood, physical exhaustion, and emptiness in the body after childbirth. These conditions lead to aggravation of *Vata Dosha*, which is considered the dominant pathological factor during this stage. To restore balance and promote proper recovery, Ayurveda recommends a specific regimen known as *Sutika Paricharya*,³ which includes dietary guidelines, lifestyle measures, and therapeutic practices.

The concept of *Sutika Paricharya* aims to support the mother's recovery by improving digestion, nourishing body tissues, and strengthening the reproductive system. Ayurvedic texts such as *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, and *Ashtanga Hridaya* describe detailed guidelines regarding food, rest, herbal preparations, oil massage, and other supportive measures during the post-natal period. These practices help in pacifying aggravated *Vata*,⁴ promoting proper involution of the uterus, enhancing breast milk production, and preventing post-partum complications. By following these guidelines, the mother regains strength and overall well-being.

The post-natal period⁵ is a crucial phase in a woman's life that begins immediately after childbirth and continues for about six weeks. During this time, the mother's body gradually returns to its pre-pregnancy⁶ state while adapting to the new physiological and emotional responsibilities of motherhood. Proper care during this period is essential to restore physical strength, maintain hormonal balance, and ensure adequate lactation. If the mother does not receive appropriate care and nutrition, it may lead to weakness, delayed recovery, infections, and other health complications. Therefore, post-natal care⁷ plays an important role in safeguarding the health of both the mother and the newborn.

In the present era, lifestyle changes,⁸ inadequate nutrition,⁹ and lack of awareness¹⁰ often lead to neglect of proper post-natal care. This may result in long-term health problems such as fatigue, hormonal imbalance, and musculoskeletal weakness. Ayurvedic principles of post-natal care offer a holistic approach that focuses on diet, lifestyle, and natural therapies for the restoration of maternal health. Therefore, understanding the classical concept of *Sutika Paricharya* and its practical application can help in promoting safe recovery and improving the quality of life of post-natal mothers.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

Aim

To review the principles and importance of post-natal care through Ayurveda.

Objectives

- To study the concept of *Sutika Paricharya* described in classical Ayurvedic texts.
- To understand dietary and lifestyle measures recommended for post-natal care.
- To analyze the role of Ayurvedic practices in restoring maternal health and preventing complications after delivery.

CONCEPTUAL STUDY

***Sutika Kala*¹¹**

In Ayurveda, the post-natal period is described as *Sutika Kala*, which refers to the time immediately after childbirth when the mother undergoes gradual recovery and restoration of physiological balance. A woman after delivery is known as *Sutika*. Classical Ayurvedic texts explain that this stage is extremely delicate because the body has undergone major physical and hormonal changes during pregnancy and labor. During childbirth, there is significant loss

of blood, physical exertion, and depletion of body tissues, which results in weakness and instability in the body. Ayurveda emphasizes that this stage requires special care because improper management may lead to several disorders affecting the reproductive system, digestive system, and overall health. Therefore, proper management during *Sutika Kala* is considered essential to restore strength, maintain health, and ensure proper nourishment for the mother and the newborn.

Sutika Kala

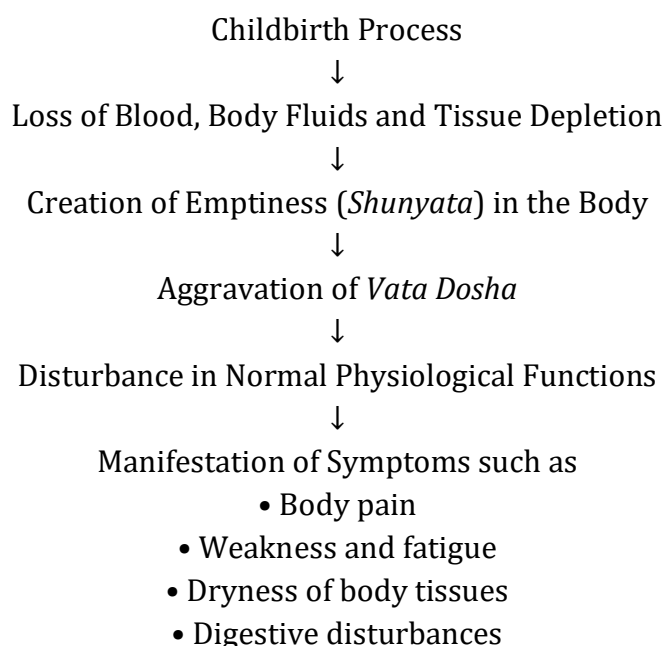
S. No.	Period after Delivery	Recommended Regimen / Diet	Purpose
1	Day 1–3	Light and warm liquid diet such as thin rice gruel, warm water, and easily digestible preparations	Helps stimulate digestion, restore energy, and reduce aggravated <i>Vata Dosha</i>
2	Day 4–7	Slightly thicker gruel, medicated ghee preparations, and warm soups	Improves digestive power and supports gradual nourishment of tissues
3	Day 8–12	Soft cooked rice, vegetable soups, and nourishing foods with mild spices	Provides strength and supports recovery of the mother
4	Day 13–21	Nutritious diet including milk, ghee, cereals, and wholesome foods	Promotes tissue regeneration and improves overall vitality
5	Day 22–30	Balanced diet with adequate proteins, grains, vegetables, and fluids	Maintains strength and supports lactation
6	Day 31–45	Normal healthy diet with emphasis on warm and nourishing foods	Helps complete recovery and restoration of body strength

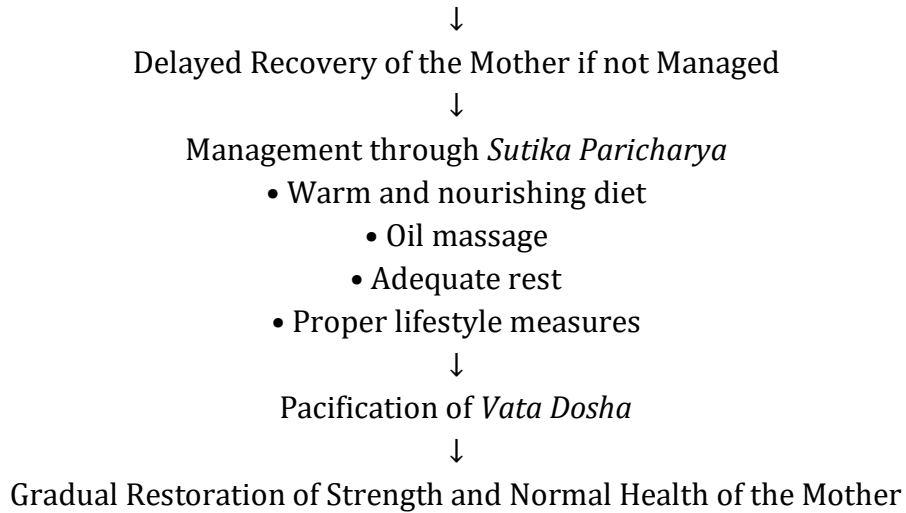
Sutika Paricharya¹²

The regimen followed during the post-natal period is known as *Sutika Paricharya*. Classical Ayurvedic texts clearly state that careful management during this period helps in restoring the normal physiological state of the mother.¹³ The aim of *Sutika Paricharya* is to strengthen the body, improve digestion, promote proper lactation, and prevent diseases that may arise due to the disturbed physiological state after delivery. According to Ayurveda, after childbirth the body becomes empty and weak, making it susceptible to various disorders, particularly those related to *Vata Dosha*.¹⁴ Therefore, the main objective of post-natal care is to pacify aggravated *Vata*, nourish depleted tissues, and gradually restore the strength and vitality of the mother.

Role of *Vata Dosha* in the Post-Natal Period¹⁵

Ayurveda considers *Vata Dosha* as the most dominant factor during the post-natal period. During labor and delivery, excessive physical strain and loss of body fluids lead to aggravation of *Vata*. This aggravated *Vata* may cause symptoms such as body pain, weakness, fatigue, dryness, digestive disturbances, and delayed recovery if not properly managed. Classical texts explain that the empty space created in the body after delivery further increases the activity of *Vata*. Therefore, post-natal care primarily focuses on pacifying *Vata* through warm food, oil massage, adequate rest, and nourishing therapies. By balancing *Vata*, the body gradually regains stability, strength, and proper physiological functioning.

Role¹⁶ of *Vata Dosha* in the Post-Natal Period



Dietary Regimen¹⁷ in *Sutika Paricharya*

S. No.	Stage after Delivery	Recommended Diet	Purpose / Benefits
1	Immediately after delivery (1st-2nd day)	Warm liquid diet such as rice gruel, thin porridge, or light soups	Helps restore digestive power, prevents indigestion, and provides easy nourishment
2	Early post-natal period (3rd-5th day)	Light and easily digestible foods such as medicated gruels and warm herbal preparations	Improves digestion, pacifies <i>Vata Dosha</i> , and supports gradual recovery
3	First week after delivery	Soft foods like cooked rice with ghee, vegetable soups, and mild spices	Enhances digestion, replenishes energy, and promotes tissue nourishment
4	Second week after delivery	Nutritious foods including milk preparations, medicated ghee, and wholesome cereals	Strengthens the body, supports tissue regeneration, and improves vitality
5	During lactation period	Balanced diet including milk, ghee, whole grains, vegetables, and adequate fluids	Promotes breast milk production and provides nourishment to the mother
6	General dietary guidelines	Warm, freshly prepared, and easily digestible food; avoid cold, dry, and heavy food	Maintains digestive health and helps balance <i>Vata Dosha</i>
7	Foods to avoid	Excessively spicy, stale, refrigerated, or difficult-to-digest food items	Prevents digestive disturbances and protects maternal health
8	Supportive dietary practices	Regular meal timing, adequate hydration, and moderate food intake	Supports recovery, improves metabolism, and maintains overall health

Lifestyle and Daily Regimen during the Post-Natal Period

Ayurveda emphasizes that along with proper diet, a suitable lifestyle is essential for the well-being of the mother. Adequate rest is considered very important because the body requires time to recover from the physical stress of childbirth. Activities that cause excessive strain or fatigue should be avoided during this period. The mother should remain in a clean, warm, and comfortable environment that protects her from exposure to cold and infection. Gentle movements and gradual return to daily activities are recommended only after the body regains sufficient strength. Proper hygiene and emotional support also play a significant role in maintaining physical and mental health during the post-natal period.

Role of Oil Massage and External Therapies¹⁸

External therapies are an important part of post-natal care in Ayurveda. Oil massage is commonly recommended because it helps pacify aggravated *Vata*, relieve body pain, and improve circulation. Massage also helps in strengthening muscles, reducing fatigue, and promoting relaxation. In addition to massage, certain traditional procedures such as warm fomentation and abdominal support are used to assist the recovery process. These measures help in restoring normal body posture, improving comfort, and enhancing overall physical recovery after childbirth.

Promotion of Lactation¹⁹ and Nourishment²⁰ of the mother



Prevention of Post-Partum Disorders²¹

One of the major objectives of Ayurvedic post-natal care is the prevention of complications that may occur after delivery. Improper management during this period may lead to several disorders such as weakness, digestive disturbances, backache, joint pain, and reproductive problems. By following the principles of *Sutika Paricharya*, the body gradually regains balance and the chances of such complications are reduced. Proper diet, rest, hygiene, and supportive therapies help maintain the health of the mother and prevent long-term health issues.

Ayurvedic Approach in Post-Natal Care

Ayurveda adopts a holistic approach in managing the post-natal period by addressing physical, physiological, and psychological aspects of health. The principles of *Sutika Paricharya* focus not only on physical recovery but also on emotional well-being and overall vitality of the mother. Through proper diet, lifestyle regulation, therapeutic procedures, and supportive care, Ayurveda aims to restore balance in the body and promote long-term health. This holistic approach ensures safe recovery of the mother while supporting the healthy growth and development of the newborn.

POST NATAL CARE

Post-Natal Period²²

In modern medical science, the post-natal period is commonly referred to as the postpartum period. It begins immediately after childbirth and usually continues for about six weeks. This period is also known as the puerperium. During this time the mother's body gradually returns to the non-pregnant state through a series of physiological adjustments. The uterus undergoes involution, hormonal levels change significantly, and several body systems begin to regain their normal function. Proper care during this period is extremely important because the mother is physically weak and vulnerable to infections and other complications. Medical supervision, adequate nutrition, and proper rest are essential for safe recovery of the mother and proper care of the newborn.

Physiological Changes²³ during the Post-Natal Period

After delivery, the female body undergoes many physiological changes to restore its normal structure and function. The uterus begins to shrink gradually through a process known as uterine involution. Immediately after delivery the uterus weighs about 1000 grams, but

within six weeks it returns close to its normal size and weight. Hormonal changes also occur rapidly during this period. The levels of estrogen and progesterone decrease significantly after childbirth, while the hormone prolactin increases to support breast milk production. Other systems such as the cardiovascular, urinary, and digestive systems also undergo adjustments. These physiological changes require adequate rest, nutrition, and medical care to ensure healthy recovery.

Uterine Involution and Reproductive²⁴ System Recovery

One of the most important changes during the postpartum period is uterine involution. This process involves gradual reduction in the size of the uterus and healing of the uterine lining after delivery. The endometrium regenerates, and the placental site gradually heals. During the first few days after delivery, vaginal discharge known as lochia occurs. Lochia initially appears reddish due to the presence of blood, later becoming pinkish and eventually turning whitish as healing progresses. Proper hygiene and monitoring of abnormal bleeding are necessary to prevent infections or complications. The cervix and vaginal tissues also slowly regain their normal tone and structure during the postpartum recovery period.

Hormonal Changes²⁵ and Lactation²⁶

Hormonal regulation plays a significant role in the post-natal period. After childbirth, the sudden decrease in pregnancy hormones triggers various physiological processes in the body. Prolactin, secreted by the anterior pituitary gland, stimulates the production of breast milk in the mammary glands. Another hormone called oxytocin helps in the ejection of milk during breastfeeding and also supports uterine contraction, which helps in reducing postpartum bleeding. Breastfeeding not only provides essential nutrients to the infant but also contributes to faster recovery of the mother by promoting uterine involution and regulating hormonal balance.

Nutritional²⁷ Requirements during the Post-Natal Period

Nutrition is one of the most important aspects of post-natal care in modern medicine. After childbirth the mother requires additional nutrients to restore lost energy and support lactation. Adequate intake of proteins, carbohydrates, healthy fats, vitamins, and minerals is essential for tissue repair and overall recovery. Iron is particularly important to compensate for blood loss during delivery and to prevent anemia. Calcium is necessary for maintaining bone health and supporting the nutritional needs of the infant through breast milk. Adequate

fluid intake is also recommended because it supports hydration and helps maintain sufficient breast milk production.

Psychological²⁷ and Emotional Changes

The postpartum period is associated with significant emotional and psychological changes. Many women experience mood fluctuations due to hormonal changes, physical exhaustion, and adjustment to the responsibilities of motherhood. Some women may experience postpartum blues, which involve mild mood swings, anxiety, and emotional sensitivity. In certain cases more severe conditions such as postpartum depression may occur. Emotional support from family members, counseling, and appropriate medical care are important to ensure the mental well-being of the mother during this period.

Post-Natal Hygiene²⁸ and Infection Prevention²⁹

Maintaining hygiene is extremely important during the postpartum period to prevent infections. The reproductive tract is particularly susceptible to infections after delivery due to tissue injury and exposure during childbirth. Proper perineal care, regular cleaning, and maintaining personal hygiene help reduce the risk of infection. Medical professionals also advise monitoring of body temperature, vaginal discharge, and wound healing in case of surgical delivery or episiotomy. Early detection and treatment of infections are important for preventing serious complications.

Importance of Breastfeeding³⁰ and Infant Care³¹

Modern medical science strongly emphasizes exclusive breastfeeding during the first six months of life. Breast milk contains essential nutrients, antibodies, and immune factors that protect the infant from infections and promote healthy growth. Early initiation of breastfeeding also strengthens the emotional bond between the mother and the child. Additionally, breastfeeding contributes to maternal health by reducing postpartum bleeding, supporting uterine contraction, and lowering the risk of certain long-term diseases.

Post-Natal Exercise³² and Physical Recovery³³

Gradual physical activity is recommended during the postpartum period to improve circulation, strengthen muscles, and restore physical fitness. Light exercises such as walking and pelvic floor strengthening exercises help in improving muscle tone and preventing complications such as urinary incontinence. However, heavy physical exertion should be avoided during the early weeks after delivery. Proper guidance from healthcare

professionals ensures that exercise is performed safely according to the mother's physical condition.

Prevention and Management of Post-Natal Complications

The postpartum period is associated with certain health risks that require careful monitoring. Common complications include postpartum hemorrhage, infections, anemia, thromboembolic disorders, and psychological disturbances. Regular medical check-ups help in early detection and management of these conditions. Monitoring vital signs, uterine involution, wound healing, and lactation status forms an important part of modern post-natal care. With proper medical supervision and supportive care, most women recover safely and return to normal health after childbirth.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

- Post-natal care described in Ayurveda under *Sutika Paricharya* plays an important role in restoring the physical strength and health of the mother after delivery.
- The post-natal period is characterized by predominance of *Vata Dosha* due to loss of blood, tissue depletion, and physical exertion during childbirth. Proper management helps in pacifying aggravated *Vata*.
- Dietary regimen consisting of warm, light, and nourishing food improves digestive strength (*Agni*) and supports gradual tissue nourishment.
- Proper nutrition during the post-natal period helps in the formation of *Rasa Dhatu*, which contributes to adequate production of *Stanya* (breast milk).
- Lifestyle practices such as adequate rest, maintenance of hygiene, and a warm environment promote faster recovery and prevent post-partum complications.
- External therapies such as oil massage help relieve body pain, reduce fatigue, improve circulation, and support musculoskeletal recovery.
- The principles of *Sutika Paricharya* help in proper uterine involution and restoration of the reproductive system after childbirth.
- Following Ayurvedic post-natal care measures helps improve maternal immunity, strength, and overall well-being.
- Proper post-natal care also supports healthy lactation, which is essential for the nourishment and growth of the newborn.

- Overall, Ayurvedic post-natal care provides a holistic approach that promotes both maternal recovery and healthy development of the infant.

DISCUSSION

The post-natal period is considered a very delicate and important stage in a woman's life because the body undergoes major physiological and structural changes after delivery. In Ayurveda this period is described as *Sutika Kala*, during which the mother requires special care to regain strength and restore normal body functions. Classical Ayurvedic texts emphasize that childbirth leads to depletion of body tissues and loss of blood, which results in aggravation of *Vata Dosha*. Therefore, the main objective of post-natal care is to pacify *Vata*, improve digestive strength, and support gradual recovery of the mother. The concept of *Sutika Paricharya* provides detailed guidelines regarding diet, lifestyle, and supportive therapies to ensure proper healing and restoration of health.³⁴

Dietary management plays a central role in Ayurvedic post-natal care. Warm, light, and easily digestible foods are recommended during the initial days after delivery to improve digestive power and prevent the formation of metabolic toxins. Gradually, nourishing foods are introduced to replenish lost energy and promote tissue regeneration. Adequate nutrition helps in the formation of *Rasa Dhatu*, which is responsible for the production of *Stanya* (breast milk). Proper nourishment of the mother therefore supports healthy lactation and ensures adequate nutrition for the newborn. Along with diet, external therapies such as oil massage and adequate rest help relieve body pain, improve circulation, and promote faster recovery.³⁵

From a modern perspective also, post-natal care focuses on restoration of maternal health, prevention of complications, and promotion of breastfeeding. The principles described in Ayurveda correlate with modern recommendations such as proper nutrition, hygiene, rest, and emotional support during the postpartum period. Ayurvedic post-natal care adopts a holistic approach by addressing physical, physiological, and psychological aspects of health. When the principles of *Sutika Paricharya* are followed properly, they help restore the balance of *Dosha*, improve maternal strength, enhance lactation, and support the healthy growth and development of the newborn.³⁶

CONCLUSION

Post-natal care is an essential component of maternal health because the body undergoes significant physical and physiological changes after childbirth. Ayurveda describes this period as *Sutika Kala* and provides a well-structured regimen known as *Sutika Paricharya* for proper recovery of the mother. This regimen mainly focuses on pacifying *Vata Dosha*, improving digestive strength, nourishing body tissues, and promoting adequate lactation. Proper diet, rest, hygiene, and supportive therapies help restore strength and prevent post-partum complications. Therefore, the Ayurvedic approach to post-natal care offers a holistic and systematic method for ensuring safe recovery of the mother and healthy nourishment of the newborn.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST -NIL

SOURCE OF SUPPORT -NONE

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