

CHILDHOOD OBESITY: AYURVEDIC MEASURES TO CURB THE EPIDEMIC

Obesity among children and adolescents is reaching alarming proportions in India and world. If current trends continue, overweight or obese children globally will increase to 70 million by 2025. Obesity impacts the child's immediate health, educational attainment and quality of life. Marketing of unhealthy foods and sugary beverages along with insufficient physical activity and excessive television watching and computer use are the major contributing factor towards childhood obesity. A child may become obese also due to familial or hereditary factors and endocrinal disorders. It is important to address the problem of overweight and obesity at school level itself because it can lead to rise of adult diseases in youth like hypertension, type 2 diabetes mellitus and heart disease. Ayurvedic texts have described this disease under the heading of "*Sthaulya*".

Ausadhi (drugs), *ahara* (diet) and *vihara* (exercise and appropriate life style) are the major components of Ayurvedic treatment. Administration of *guru* and *apatarpan dravya* (low-calorie diet) are considered ideal to improve defective metabolism seen in obesity. Drugs prepared from *Guggulu*, *Rasanjana*, *Triphala*, *Trikatu*, *Vacha*, *Vidanga*, *Chitraka*, *Gomutra*, *Madhu* etc. may be prescribed to overcome the excess weight. *Navaka guggulu*, *Vyoshadi guggulu*, *Arogyavardhini vati*, *Medohara Vidangadi lauha*, *Triphala churna* are few of the formulations used in the management of obesity. *Asana* and *Pranayama* like *Suryanamaskar*, *Trikonasana*, *Halasana*, *Vajrasana*, *Bhujangasana*, *Dhanurasana*, *Chakrasana*, *Ardha-matsyendrasana* along with *Kapalbhati* and *Bhastrika Pranayama* also help in maintaining healthy body metabolism. Cereals and pulses rich in fibre like barley (*jau*), oats, millet (*ragi/mandua*), corn, chickpeas (*kala chana*), green gram (*moong*) etc. should be included in diet along with fresh vegetables like *lauki*, *parwal*, *tauri*, *karela*, *palak*, *methi*, *sahijan* (drumstick), carrot, cucumber etc.

There is a need of spreading awareness about the healthy eating and adequate physical activity at home and in schools to curb the epidemic of childhood obesity.

- Avoid sweets, cold drinks, fried, fatty and bakery food items, non-vegetarian food, milk products like cheese, butter etc.
- Fibre-rich vegetables and fruits and lukewarm water should be consumed more frequently.
- Encourage children to participate in physical activity like walking, running, swimming, cycling, playing outdoor games for at least an hour and to limit time spent watching television and playing computer games.

*Note: All these measures should be followed under the supervision of medical practitioner.

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