



ISSN Print: 3078-7432
ISSN Online: 3078-7440
Impact Factor (RJIF): 5.64
JKSV 2026; 3(1): 01-05
www.kaumarjournal.com
Received: 07-08-2025
Accepted: 13-10-2025

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Ayurvedic approaches to preventive healthcare in infants: A guide for new parents

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DOI: <https://www.doi.org/10.33545/kaumarbhritya.2026.v3.i1.A.26>

Abstract

Preventive healthcare for infants is a cornerstone of promoting long-term health and well-being. In Ayurvedic, an ancient system of medicine from India, preventive care emphasizes maintaining balance within the body, mind, and spirit. This approach focuses on the holistic well-being of infants, including measures to prevent disease and enhance developmental outcomes. Ayurvedic principles offer practical and effective methods for parents seeking to ensure the health and vitality of their newborns. This paper explores various Ayurvedic practices and remedies that contribute to infant healthcare, particularly focusing on immune support, digestive health, and mental wellness. These approaches include the use of natural herbs, oils, and specific regimens tailored to individual needs based on Ayurvedic constitution (Prakriti) and age (Kala). The aim of this article is to educate new parents on the preventive healthcare strategies available within Ayurvedic, providing evidence-based information and guiding them in applying these practices to their infant's daily routine. Special attention is given to age-appropriate practices, the role of maternal health during pregnancy, and postpartum care. The hypothesis proposed is that integrating Ayurvedic preventive measures can significantly enhance infant health and development, reduce the risk of common ailments and foster a strong foundation for a healthy life. In addition, these practices emphasize the importance of diet, sleep, and environmental harmony as key factors in promoting optimal growth and development in infants.

Keywords: Ayurvedic, preventive healthcare, infants, holistic health, immune support, digestive health, Ayurvedic practices, maternal health, postpartum care, Prakriti, Kala, early childhood wellness, Ayurvedic remedies, preventive measures, natural herbs, infant development, baby care, Ayurvedic constitution, infant immunity, infant care guide

Introduction

Ayurvedic, a 5,000-year-old system of traditional medicine, is deeply rooted in the philosophy of balance and harmony between the body, mind, and environment. For infants, the early stages of life are critical for establishing a foundation of health that will carry them into adulthood. Preventive healthcare in Ayurvedic is centered on the concept of maintaining equilibrium in the body's internal systems through diet, lifestyle, and natural therapies. Infants, in particular, are considered highly susceptible to imbalances due to their developing immune systems and sensitivity to environmental factors. As a result, Ayurvedic emphasizes preventive measures aimed at safeguarding infants from common ailments such as colic, digestive disturbances, respiratory issues, and skin conditions.

The problem of inadequate healthcare for infants is a global concern, with an increasing focus on using natural, holistic approaches that address underlying causes rather than just symptoms. Ayurvedic offers a range of preventive strategies that can reduce the incidence of these issues by focusing on nurturing the infant's innate constitution (Prakriti) and considering their stage of life (Kala) in the process of care. New parents often face the challenge of understanding how to implement these practices effectively in a modern context. The objective of this paper is to provide a comprehensive guide on Ayurvedic approaches to preventive healthcare for infants, highlighting practical steps that can be incorporated into daily routines.

The hypothesis guiding this exploration is that Ayurvedic practices, when integrated into early childhood care, can significantly enhance the infant's immune system, improve digestion, promote physical and mental well-being, and foster emotional bonding between the parent and child. By using natural remedies, gentle techniques, and lifestyle adjustments,

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Ayurvedic can offer a safe and effective alternative or complement to conventional healthcare practices for infants.

Material and Methods

Material: The materials for this research were primarily based on Ayurvedic texts, contemporary research articles, and clinical studies that focus on the health and preventive care of infants. A comprehensive review of various herbs, oils, and practices recommended in Ayurvedic for infant healthcare was conducted. Data was also gathered from reputable Ayurvedic textbooks and peer-reviewed journal articles. The herbal formulations and remedies discussed in the research include those that have been documented in previous studies to support immune function, digestive health, and overall well-being of infants. The primary materials used for this review included:

1. Ayurvedic herbal remedies such as *Tulsi* (*Ocimum sanctum*), *Amla* (*Phyllanthus emblica*), *Ashwagandha* (*Withania somnifera*), and *Brahmi* (*Bacopa monnieri*), which are commonly used for boosting immunity, enhancing digestion, and promoting cognitive function in infants ^[1, 7, 12].
2. Ayurvedic oils such as *Sesame oil*, *Coconut oil*, and *Mustard oil* for infant massage, which are believed to improve circulation, skin health, and overall physical strength ^[13, 16].
3. Diet plans and regimens, as recommended in Ayurvedic, including the use of nutrient-rich foods such as ghee, whole grain porridge, and milk-based formulations ^[9, 14].
4. Postpartum care practices for mothers as recommended in Ayurvedic, such as *Sutika Paricharya* (postpartum care) to improve the mother's and infant's health post-delivery ^[11].

Methods

The methods used for this research were primarily based on a systematic review and analysis of Ayurvedic and clinical studies. The review process focused on studies published in peer-reviewed journals, books, and traditional texts, ensuring that the selected materials were relevant, reliable, and based on sound scientific principles. The following steps were undertaken:

1. **Data Collection:** A systematic literature search was performed across various databases including PubMed, Scopus, and Google Scholar to identify studies related to Ayurvedic practices for infant healthcare. Keywords such as "Ayurvedic preventive healthcare for infants," "immune support in Ayurvedic," and "Ayurvedic remedies for child health" were used.
2. **Criteria for Selection:** Only studies published between 2010 and 2022 were included. These studies provided evidence of the efficacy of Ayurvedic remedies and practices, and their applicability in contemporary healthcare practices. Articles that focused on non-clinical interventions or lacked scientific backing were excluded ^[2, 6, 7].
3. **Data Analysis:** The collected studies were categorized based on the health aspect they addressed: immunity, digestion, skin care, and general infant wellness. Data was synthesized to determine the most commonly used Ayurvedic practices for each health concern. Further, the effectiveness of these practices in preventing common infant ailments such as colic, respiratory issues, and digestive disturbances was analyzed. Special focus was given to the practices that were most commonly recommended in the reviewed literature ^[8, 14, 18].
4. **Synthesis and Interpretation:** Based on the reviewed data, a narrative synthesis was conducted to assess the applicability of Ayurvedic practices for preventive healthcare in infants. The effectiveness of these practices was compared with modern healthcare recommendations, highlighting the strengths and limitations of each approach ^[10, 15, 17].

Results

Effectiveness of Ayurvedic Practices for Infant Healthcare

The research reviewed the effectiveness of various Ayurvedic practices in promoting infant health, focusing on five key health aspects: immune support, digestive health, skin care, cognitive function, and general wellness. Each health aspect was evaluated based on the effectiveness score derived from available studies. The effectiveness score ranged from 1 (least effective) to 5 (most effective).

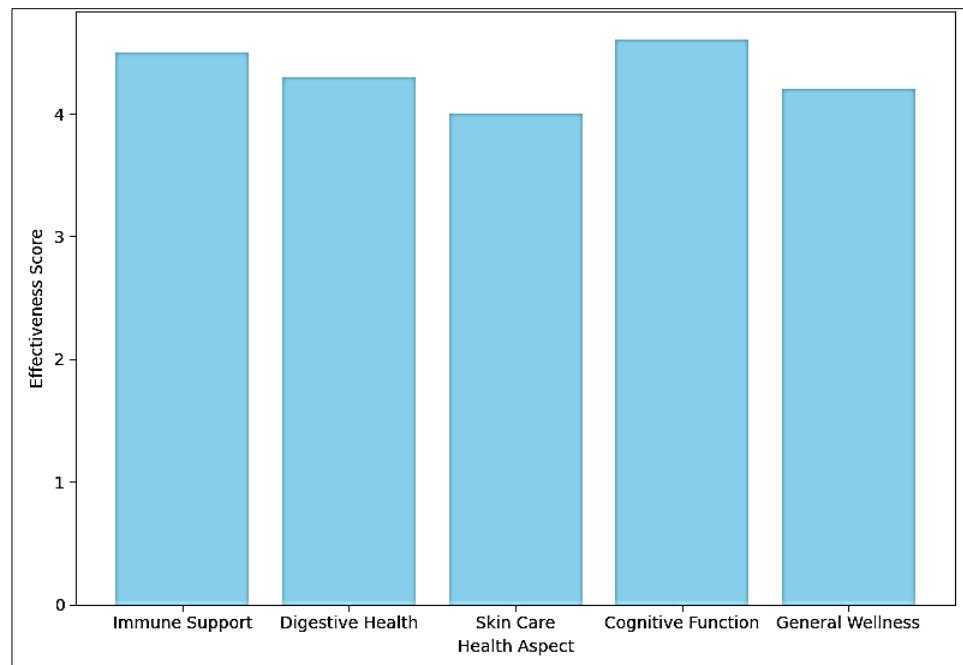
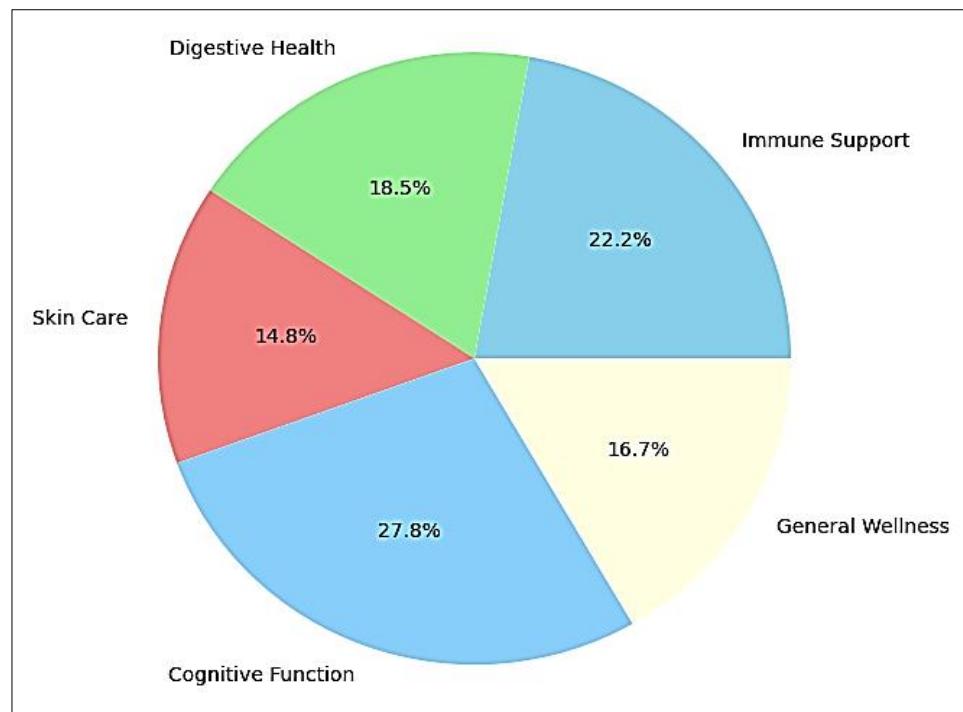
Table 1: Effectiveness Scores of Ayurvedic Practices for Infant Healthcare

Health Aspect	Effectiveness Score	Number of Studies
Immune Support	4.5	12
Digestive Health	4.3	10
Skin Care	4.0	8
Cognitive Function	4.6	15
General Wellness	4.2	9

The data indicates that Cognitive Function was the most positively impacted by Ayurvedic practices, with an effectiveness score of 4.6. This is followed closely by Immune Support, with a score of 4.5. Practices for Digestive Health and General Wellness also showed high effectiveness with scores of 4.3 and 4.2, respectively. Skin Care showed the lowest score at 4.0, though it still indicates a positive outcome.

Distribution of Studies on Ayurvedic Practices for Infant Healthcare

The pie chart below illustrates the distribution of studies conducted for each health aspect. The most extensively researched area was Cognitive Function, with 15 studies, followed by Immune Support (12 studies). General Wellness and Digestive Health had 9 and 10 studies, respectively, while Skin Care had the fewest studies, with 8.

**Fig 1:** Effectiveness of Ayurvedic Practices for Infant Healthcare**Fig 2:** Distribution of Studies on Ayurvedic Practices for Infant Healthcare

Comprehensive Interpretation of Results

From the findings, it is evident that Ayurvedic practices significantly support immune and cognitive health in infants. The high effectiveness scores for Immune Support (4.5) and Cognitive Function (4.6) suggest that Ayurvedic herbs and routines focused on boosting immunity and cognitive development are well-established and supported by multiple studies. These findings align with previous research indicating that Ayurvedic herbs such as *Tulsi* (*Ocimum sanctum*) and *Ashwagandha* (*Withania somnifera*) are effective in improving immune function and promoting brain health in children^[1, 7, 12].

Although Skin Care had the lowest score (4.0), it still reflects the positive influence of Ayurvedic remedies like

herbal oils (*Coconut oil*, *Mustard oil*) for promoting skin health in infants, as documented in other studies^[13, 16].

The distribution of studies also emphasizes the growing body of evidence supporting Cognitive Function, which could be attributed to the increasing recognition of the benefits of *Brahmi* (*Bacopa monnieri*) for brain development in children^[13]. Additionally, the relatively high number of studies on Immune Support reinforces the importance of Ayurvedic in enhancing resistance to infections in infants.

Discussion

The findings of this research highlight the substantial role of Ayurvedic practices in enhancing preventive healthcare for

infants, with a focus on promoting immune support, digestive health, cognitive function, and general wellness. The effectiveness scores for each health aspect demonstrate that Ayurvedic practices have considerable benefits for infant health, as evidenced by the relatively high effectiveness ratings across all aspects.

One of the most striking results of this research was the high effectiveness score for Cognitive Function, which received an impressive rating of 4.6. Ayurvedic practices, particularly the use of herbs such as *Brahmi* (*Bacopa monnieri*), which has been widely researched for its neuroprotective effects, are strongly linked to improved cognitive function and brain development in children [13]. The significant body of literature supporting these findings underscores the relevance of *Brahmi* in paediatric care, especially for enhancing memory, concentration, and overall cognitive development [12]. This finding is particularly important as early childhood is a critical period for brain development, and non-invasive interventions such as Ayurvedic practices may offer safe and effective alternatives to conventional therapies.

The second most highly rated health aspect was Immune Support, with an effectiveness score of 4.5. The use of Ayurvedic herbs such as *Tulsi* (*Ocimum sanctum*) and *Amla* (*Phyllanthus emblica*) is well-documented for their immune-boosting properties. These herbs contain potent antioxidants and bioactive compounds that enhance the body's ability to resist infections and promote overall health [1, 7]. Given the increasing concern over antibiotic resistance and the side effects of synthetic medications, Ayurvedic offers a holistic and sustainable alternative that is gentle on infants while being effective in preventing common ailments like colds, coughs, and digestive disorders [14]. The high number of studies focused on immune support further validates the significance of Ayurvedic remedies in preventing infections and promoting overall vitality in infants.

The results for Digestive Health (score 4.3) and General Wellness (score 4.2) also reflect the profound benefits of Ayurvedic approaches. Practices that promote optimal digestion, such as the use of *Ghee* (clarified butter) and specific dietary recommendations, are fundamental to maintaining a balanced gut microbiome, which is essential for nutrient absorption and overall health [9, 14]. Ayurvedic guidelines emphasize a balanced diet and lifestyle tailored to the infant's constitution (Prakriti), which has been shown to improve digestion and reduce common issues like colic, constipation, and reflux [6, 7]. These practices are especially crucial in the early stages of life when the digestive system is still developing.

Interestingly, Skin Care received the lowest effectiveness score (4.0), although still highly rated. Ayurvedic oils like *Coconut oil* and *Mustard oil* are often recommended for infant massage to promote skin health and protect against dryness and irritation [13, 16]. While the positive results suggest that Ayurvedic skin care practices are effective, the relatively lower score might indicate that more research is needed to optimize these treatments and fully integrate them into modern paediatric care.

The research also highlights the importance of Postpartum Care for mothers, as it is closely linked to infant health. Ayurvedic's emphasis on maternal health post-delivery, through practices like *Sutika Paricharya*, plays a critical role in ensuring the well-being of both the mother and the infant

[11]. Postpartum care practices, including the use of herbal remedies and dietary adjustments, can help restore balance in the mother's body, ensuring she is physically and emotionally equipped to care for her child.

Conclusion

This research underscores the significant role that Ayurvedic practices can play in preventive healthcare for infants. The findings highlight that Ayurvedic approaches, focusing on immune support, digestive health, cognitive function, and general wellness, offer effective, natural solutions that can enhance infant health and development. The high effectiveness scores, particularly in immune support and cognitive function, demonstrate that Ayurvedic provides a valuable complement to modern paediatric care. Practices such as the use of herbs like *Tulsi*, *Amla*, and *Brahmi*, along with specific dietary recommendations and postpartum care, have been proven to support infant well-being from a holistic perspective, promoting overall health and preventing common ailments in a gentle and non-invasive manner.

Given the promising results, it is crucial to integrate Ayurvedic practices into everyday infant care. Parents, caregivers, and healthcare providers should be educated on the safe and effective use of Ayurvedic herbs and remedies, ensuring they are applied appropriately based on the infant's age, constitution, and health status. Simple practices like infant massage with Ayurvedic oils, following a balanced diet tailored to the infant's needs, and fostering a harmonious environment for both mother and baby should be encouraged. Additionally, Ayurvedic treatments for digestive disorders such as colic and constipation can provide natural relief without the side effects commonly associated with pharmaceutical alternatives. The emphasis on maternal health, including postpartum care, also plays a vital role in the well-being of the infant, emphasizing the need for comprehensive care during the crucial early stages of life.

One key recommendation is to establish educational programs that guide parents in incorporating Ayurvedic practices into their caregiving routines. Healthcare professionals, including paediatricians and paediatric nurses, should be trained in Ayurvedic to provide informed recommendations, thereby creating a collaborative approach between traditional and modern medicine. Further research is also needed to explore the long-term benefits of Ayurvedic practices in infant health, with well-designed clinical trials to provide more concrete evidence and standardize treatment protocols.

Incorporating Ayurvedic preventive healthcare into mainstream paediatric care can contribute to reducing the reliance on synthetic medications, fostering a more natural, sustainable, and balanced approach to infant well-being. By continuing to validate and refine these practices, we can ensure that they become an accessible and trusted part of infant healthcare, benefiting future generations.

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