



Ayurveda-Based School Health Programs and Their Role in Promoting Physical and Mental Wellness among Children: A Narrative Review

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ABSTRACT

School health programs play a crucial role in promoting the physical, mental, and social well-being of children. In recent years, increasing academic pressure, sedentary lifestyles, unhealthy dietary habits, and psychological stress have contributed to a rise in lifestyle disorders and mental health concerns among school-going children. Ayurveda, the traditional system of Indian medicine, offers a holistic and preventive approach toward child health through principles such as *Dinacharya* (daily regimen), *Ritucharya* (seasonal regimen), *Sadvritta* (ethical conduct), balanced nutrition, Yoga, meditation, and lifestyle modification. The present narrative review aims to explore the role of Ayurveda-based school health programs in enhancing physical and mental wellness among children. Relevant literature from classical Ayurvedic texts, peer-reviewed journals, and contemporary school health studies was reviewed to assess the potential applications of Ayurvedic principles in school settings. Evidence suggests that Ayurveda-based interventions can improve immunity, nutritional status, concentration, emotional stability, sleep quality, behavioral regulation, and overall quality of life in children. Practices such as Yoga, meditation, mindfulness, herbal support, healthy dietary habits, and routine-based living may contribute to stress reduction, cognitive enhancement, and prevention of lifestyle-related disorders. Furthermore, integrating Ayurveda into school health initiatives may promote preventive healthcare awareness and healthy behavioral patterns from an early age. The review highlights the relevance of Ayurveda as an integrative and sustainable model for child wellness and emphasizes the need for multidisciplinary research and policy-level implementation of Ayurveda-based school health programs to support holistic childhood development.

Keywords: Kaumarbhritya, School Health Programs, Child Wellness, Ayurveda Preventive Healthcare

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INTRODUCTION

Childhood is a crucial phase for physical growth, cognitive development, emotional stability, and the establishment of healthy behavioral patterns. The health status of children significantly influences their academic performance, social interactions, and future quality of life. In recent decades, rapid urbanization, unhealthy dietary habits, sedentary lifestyles, excessive screen exposure, academic pressure, and reduced physical activity have contributed to increasing physical and psychological health concerns among school-going children. Rising incidences of childhood obesity, anxiety, stress, sleep disturbances, behavioral disorders, and poor concentration have become major public health concerns globally. Therefore, school health programs have gained importance as effective platforms for promoting preventive healthcare and holistic wellness among children. [1]

The World Health Organization recognizes schools as important settings for health promotion because children spend a substantial portion of their developmental years in educational institutions. School-based health interventions not only improve physical fitness and nutritional awareness but also contribute to emotional resilience, mental well-being, and social development. However, many contemporary school health models primarily focus on disease prevention and basic health education, often lacking a holistic perspective addressing mental, emotional, and lifestyle-related dimensions of health. This has created a growing interest in integrative and traditional systems of medicine such as Ayurveda, which emphasize preventive healthcare and balanced living. [2]

Ayurveda, the ancient Indian system of medicine, describes health as a state of equilibrium among body, mind, senses, and spirit. The Ayurvedic approach toward child healthcare is explained under *Kaumarbhritya*, one of the eight classical branches of Ayurveda. It emphasizes promotion of growth, immunity enhancement, disease prevention, proper nutrition, mental discipline, and behavioral regulation from early childhood. Ayurvedic principles such as *Dinacharya* (daily regimen), *Ritucharya* (seasonal regimen), *Sadvritta* (ethical conduct), balanced diet, adequate sleep, physical exercise, Yoga, meditation, and mindfulness practices provide a comprehensive framework for promoting holistic wellness among children. These principles are highly relevant in the present era, where unhealthy lifestyle patterns and psychological stress are increasingly affecting school-aged populations. [3]

Among the various Ayurveda-based interventions, Yoga and meditation have received significant scientific attention for their positive effects on children's mental and physical health. Studies have demonstrated that school-based Yoga programs improve concentration, emotional

regulation, stress management, self-awareness, flexibility, and overall psychological well-being in children and adolescents. Yoga practices have also shown beneficial effects on attention span, resilience, mood, behavioral control, and academic performance. Furthermore, mindfulness-based interventions integrated within school environments have been associated with reduced anxiety, improved self-esteem, and enhanced coping abilities among students. [4,5]

Ayurveda-based school health programs may also contribute to the prevention of lifestyle disorders by encouraging healthy dietary practices and routine-based living. Traditional Ayurvedic dietary concepts emphasize fresh, nutritious, and balanced meals that support digestion, immunity, and cognitive functioning. In addition, lifestyle practices such as adequate sleep, regulated daily activities, physical exercise, and avoidance of unhealthy habits are considered essential for maintaining optimal health. These approaches align closely with modern preventive medicine strategies that advocate healthy lifestyle behaviors during childhood to reduce the future burden of non-communicable diseases. [6]

Mental health among school-going children has emerged as a critical concern worldwide. Academic competition, social pressures, family expectations, and excessive digital engagement have contributed to emotional instability and psychological distress in children. Ayurveda considers mental well-being an integral component of overall health and advocates practices that promote emotional balance, self-control, positive behavior, and mental clarity. Techniques such as meditation, *Pranayama*, and Yoga can help regulate stress responses and improve emotional resilience in children. Integrating such practices within school health programs may provide a cost-effective and sustainable approach for improving mental wellness and fostering positive behavioral development. [4,5]

In recent years, several countries have shown growing interest in incorporating Yoga, mindfulness, and traditional wellness approaches into educational systems. School-based Yoga interventions have demonstrated promising outcomes in improving psychosocial functioning, classroom behavior, attention, and stress reduction among children. These findings support the potential role of Ayurveda-inspired school health models in promoting comprehensive child wellness. Nevertheless, there remains limited consolidated literature specifically addressing the role of Ayurveda-based school health programs in enhancing both physical and mental health outcomes among children. [5,6]

Therefore, the present narrative review aims to explore the significance of Ayurveda-based school health programs in promoting holistic wellness among children. The review highlights the preventive and promotive aspects of Ayurvedic principles, including Yoga, lifestyle

modification, nutrition, behavioral discipline, and mental health practices, within school settings. Furthermore, it seeks to emphasize the relevance of integrating traditional Ayurvedic wisdom with contemporary school health initiatives to support healthy childhood development and long-term well-being. [1-6]

METHOD

The present study was conducted as a narrative review to evaluate the role of Ayurveda-based school health programs in promoting physical and mental wellness among children. Relevant literature related to Ayurveda, school health promotion, child wellness, Yoga, mental health, preventive healthcare, and lifestyle interventions was explored systematically from both classical Ayurvedic literature and contemporary scientific publications.

Classical Ayurvedic concepts related to *Kaumarbhritya* (Ayurvedic pediatrics), *Dinacharya*, *Ritucharya*, *Sadvritta*, nutrition, Yoga, meditation, and preventive healthcare were reviewed from standard Ayurvedic texts. Contemporary literature was collected from electronic databases including PubMed, Scopus, Google Scholar, and other peer-reviewed academic sources. Articles published in English focusing on school health programs, child wellness, Yoga-based interventions, mindfulness practices, nutrition, and integrative health approaches among school-aged children were considered for review.

The inclusion criteria comprised review articles, clinical studies, observational studies, school-based intervention studies, and policy reports related to physical and psychological health promotion among children through Ayurveda-oriented or holistic interventions. Studies focusing exclusively on pharmacological treatment without relevance to school health or preventive wellness were excluded. Relevant articles were screened based on title, abstract, and thematic relevance to the objective of the review.

The collected literature was analyzed qualitatively to identify major themes related to physical health promotion, mental wellness, lifestyle modification, stress management, behavioral regulation, nutritional practices, and preventive healthcare strategies within school settings. The findings were organized systematically to explore the potential integration of Ayurvedic principles into contemporary school health programs for holistic child development.

DISCUSSION

Ayurveda-based school health programs provide a holistic framework for improving the physical, mental, emotional, and behavioral health of children. In the present era, school-going children are increasingly exposed to sedentary lifestyles, unhealthy dietary practices, excessive digital exposure, academic stress, and psychosocial challenges. These factors contribute to the

rising prevalence of obesity, anxiety, sleep disturbances, poor concentration, and behavioral disorders among children. Ayurveda emphasizes prevention-oriented healthcare through balanced lifestyle practices, proper nutrition, mental discipline, and maintenance of physiological harmony, making it highly relevant for contemporary school health promotion. [7]

The concept of *Kaumarbhritya* in Ayurveda highlights the importance of early childhood care for optimal growth and development. Ayurvedic principles such as *Dinacharya* and *Ritucharya* encourage structured daily routines, adequate sleep, physical activity, seasonal adaptation, and healthy eating habits, all of which are essential for maintaining health during childhood. School-based implementation of these principles can promote discipline, improve digestion and immunity, and reduce susceptibility to lifestyle-related disorders. Studies have shown that healthy routine-based living during childhood positively influences metabolic health, cognitive functioning, and emotional stability. [8]

Yoga is one of the most widely researched Ayurveda-associated interventions in school health programs. Several studies have demonstrated that Yoga-based school interventions improve flexibility, balance, physical fitness, respiratory function, and musculoskeletal health in children. In addition to physical benefits, Yoga has significant psychological effects, including stress reduction, improved emotional regulation, enhanced self-awareness, and better concentration. Regular Yoga practice among school children has also been associated with improved classroom behavior, social interaction, and academic performance. These findings support the integration of Yoga into school health curricula as a preventive and promotive healthcare strategy. [9]

Mental health promotion is another important area where Ayurveda-based school health programs may play a significant role. Increasing academic competition, peer pressure, social media exposure, and changing family dynamics have contributed to psychological distress among children and adolescents. Ayurveda considers mental wellness an essential component of overall health and advocates practices that enhance *Sattva*, emotional balance, and self-control. Techniques such as meditation, *Pranayama*, mindfulness, and behavioral discipline can help reduce anxiety, improve attention span, and enhance emotional resilience among school children. School-based mindfulness interventions have demonstrated positive outcomes in reducing stress, aggression, and hyperactivity while improving emotional intelligence and coping mechanisms. [10]

Dietary regulation forms another important pillar of Ayurvedic child healthcare. Ayurveda advocates consumption of fresh, balanced, and easily digestible foods that nourish body tissues and maintain digestive fire (*Agni*). Modern dietary patterns among children often involve

processed foods, excessive sugar intake, irregular eating habits, and nutritional imbalance, contributing to obesity and metabolic disturbances. Ayurveda-based nutritional education within school health programs may encourage healthier food choices, mindful eating habits, and improved nutritional awareness among children. Such interventions can contribute to better physical growth, immunity, and cognitive development. [11]

Table 1. Major Components of Ayurveda-Based School Health Programs and Their Expected Outcomes

Ayurvedic Component	School-Based Application	Physical Health Benefits	Mental and Behavioral Benefits
Dinacharya	Structured daily routine	Improved sleep, digestion, immunity	Better discipline and time management
Ritucharya	Seasonal lifestyle and diet modifications	Enhanced adaptability and disease prevention	Improved resilience and well-being
Yoga	Daily school yoga sessions	Flexibility, fitness, posture improvement	Reduced stress, improved concentration
Pranayama	Breathing exercises	Improved respiratory health	Emotional regulation and calmness
Meditation & Mindfulness	Guided mindfulness sessions	Reduction in physiological stress	Better attention and emotional stability
Ayurvedic Nutrition	Healthy school meals and nutrition education	Improved growth and immunity	Better cognitive performance
Physical Activity	Exercise and outdoor activities	Prevention of obesity and sedentary disorders	Improved mood and social interaction
Sadvritta	Value and behavior education	Healthy lifestyle habits	Ethical conduct and behavioral development

The preventive approach of Ayurveda also aligns closely with modern concepts of lifestyle medicine and public health promotion. School health programs based on Ayurvedic principles may help establish healthy behavioral patterns at an early age, thereby reducing the long-term burden of non-communicable diseases. Physical activity, sleep hygiene, stress management, and healthy dietary practices introduced during childhood often continue into adulthood and influence lifelong health outcomes. Integrating Ayurveda into school systems may therefore provide a sustainable and cost-effective strategy for preventive healthcare promotion. [12]

Another important aspect of Ayurveda-based school health programs is their emphasis on moral and behavioral development through the concept of *Sadvritta*. Ayurveda encourages ethical conduct, social responsibility, emotional control, cleanliness, respect, and positive interpersonal behavior. These principles can contribute to the development of emotionally balanced and socially responsible individuals. In the current educational environment, where behavioral problems, aggression, and emotional instability are increasingly observed among children,

incorporation of such value-based health education may improve psychosocial well-being and school environments. [7]

Despite the growing scientific evidence supporting Yoga, mindfulness, and lifestyle-based interventions, the integration of Ayurveda into mainstream school health programs remains limited. Lack of standardized implementation models, insufficient awareness, limited interdisciplinary collaboration, and inadequate large-scale clinical studies represent major challenges. Further evidence-based research is required to evaluate the long-term effectiveness of Ayurveda-based school interventions on physical fitness, psychological health, academic performance, and quality of life among children. Policy-level support and collaboration between healthcare professionals, educators, and public health authorities are also necessary for successful implementation. [9,12]

Table 2. Comparative Understanding of Ayurvedic School Health Concepts and Modern Child Wellness Approaches

Ayurvedic Principle	Description in Ayurveda	Modern School Health Equivalent
Kaumarbhritya	Holistic child healthcare	Comprehensive child health programs
Dinacharya	Daily health-promoting routine	Healthy lifestyle education
Ritucharya	Seasonal adaptation	Seasonal health and environmental awareness
Ahara	Balanced nutrition	School nutrition programs
Yoga	Physical and mental discipline	Physical education and wellness programs
Pranayama	Breath regulation	Stress management techniques
Dhyana (Meditation)	Mental relaxation and concentration	Mindfulness-based interventions
Sadvritta	Ethical and behavioral discipline	Social-emotional learning and character education
Swasthavritta	Preventive healthcare	Health promotion and disease prevention
Ojas	Immunity and vitality	Physical resilience and immune health

Overall, Ayurveda-based school health programs represent a holistic and integrative approach for promoting child wellness. By combining preventive healthcare strategies, lifestyle regulation, mental health practices, Yoga, nutrition, and behavioral education, Ayurveda offers a comprehensive framework for supporting healthy physical and psychological development among children. Such programs have the potential to strengthen school health systems and contribute significantly toward the development of healthier future generations. [7-12]

CONCLUSION

Ayurveda-based school health programs offer a comprehensive and preventive approach for promoting the physical, mental, emotional, and behavioral wellness of children. In the modern educational environment, where children are increasingly affected by sedentary lifestyles,

unhealthy dietary habits, academic stress, psychological disturbances, and lifestyle-related disorders, the principles of Ayurveda provide a holistic framework for maintaining health and enhancing quality of life. Concepts such as *Dinacharya*, *Ritucharya*, *Sadvritta*, balanced nutrition, Yoga, meditation, and mindfulness encourage healthy living patterns that support optimal growth and development during childhood.

The findings of the present review indicate that Ayurveda-oriented interventions can positively influence physical fitness, immunity, concentration, emotional stability, stress management, sleep quality, and behavioral regulation among school-going children. School-based Yoga and mindfulness practices have shown promising outcomes in improving mental well-being, academic performance, and psychosocial functioning. Similarly, Ayurvedic dietary and lifestyle recommendations may help prevent childhood obesity, nutritional imbalance, and other lifestyle-associated disorders. These preventive strategies align closely with contemporary public health approaches emphasizing early intervention and wellness promotion.

Furthermore, Ayurveda emphasizes not only disease prevention but also the cultivation of positive values, discipline, emotional balance, and social responsibility, which are essential for healthy personality development. Integrating Ayurvedic principles within school health systems may therefore contribute to the development of healthier, more resilient, and socially balanced future generations.

Despite its potential benefits, large-scale implementation of Ayurveda-based school health programs remains limited due to insufficient awareness, lack of standardized models, and limited evidence-based policy integration. Further multidisciplinary research, clinical validation, and collaborative efforts between educators, healthcare professionals, and policymakers are necessary to establish effective and sustainable Ayurveda-based school wellness programs. Overall, Ayurveda presents a valuable integrative approach for strengthening holistic child healthcare and promoting lifelong wellness from an early age.

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