

# Unani Medicine and Child Vitality: Unravelling Comprehensive Care Principles

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## Abstract

*Each phase of an individual's life holds significance, particularly in the initial years as they play a pivotal role in molding a child into a robust adolescent and adult. Due to their less developed immune systems, children are more vulnerable to infections and illnesses than adults. Ancient Unani physicians recognized the importance of child health, addressing childhood diseases, management strategies, and health maintenance regimens. The comprehensive guidelines for childcare are encapsulated in the concepts of Tadabeer-e Naumaulood and Amraze atfal, covering aspects, such as newborn care, infant feeding, dentition management, disease management, and treatment principles in children. Various Unani literature texts, including Firdaus-ul-Hikmat, kitab-ul-Mansoori, Kamil-us Sanaah, Al Qanoon Fit Tib, Kitab-ul-Mokhtarat Fit Tib, and Kitab-ul-Kulliyat, provide extensive information on childcare. This paper aims to present a holistic approach to Unani medicine in fostering a child's well-being.*

**Keywords:** Unani Medicine, child health care, tadabeer-e-naumaulood, tadabeer-e-atfal, childhood

## INTRODUCTION

Childhood stands out as a crucial developmental stage in any society, constituting 40% of the total population and serving as the foundation for future chronic diseases and health behaviors. This phase, encompassing the formative years, plays a vital role in shaping an individual's health and well-being. With 90% of the 136 million annual global births occurring in developing countries, attention is drawn to the concerning infant mortality rates, particularly in regions with impoverished tribal communities in remote rural areas. Prevailing strategies, rooted in international guidelines, have shown limited success in India, necessitating a context-specific approach [1, 2].

This paper advocates for the integration of formal indigenous healthcare systems, such as Unani medicine, into existing healthcare structures to address the unique challenges faced in India. The Unani system emphasizes children's holistic health, aiming to achieve physical, mental, and social well-being, thereby alleviating the economic burden on the nation. Ancient Unani physicians recognized the significance of child health, providing insights into childhood diseases, management strategies, and regimen for optimal health [3, 4].

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The significance of child health has long been acknowledged by ancient Unani physicians, who discussed childhood diseases and their management and provided regimens for sustaining optimal health in children [5–8].

They comprehensively categorized childcare's preventive and therapeutic aspects under four headings:

- Regimen for Newborn and Infants at Birth

(Tadbir-i Naumolood), and

- Regimen for lactation and weaning.
- Regimens for children.
- Regimen for young ones/ adolescence.

### REGIMEN FOR NEWBORNS AND INFANTS (TADABEER-E-NAUMOLOOD)

Infancy, the earliest stage of life from birth to childhood, is a critical period where each day plays a vital role in growth and development. According to the Unani System of Medicine, infancy and childhood are characterized by a Mizaj (temperament) of Har Ratab (hot and wet) [9]. Renowned Unani scholars like Ibn Sina, Ibn Hubl Baghdadi, and Rabban Tabri have extensively discussed child health and recommended specific regimens and remedies for the well-being of infants [5, 6, 10–13]. Key guidelines include:

- *Maternal Health:* The health of lactating mothers should be prioritized, as a healthy mother ensures a healthy baby.
- *Umbilical Cord Care:* Cut the four fingers' length from the umbilicus and tie it with a soft, clean, lightly twined woolen thread. Dress the cord with a clean piece of gauze dipped in olive oil. Apply a fine powder made from equal parts of turmeric, Indian kino, Anzaroot, cumin seeds, and lichen to the wound.
- *Cleaning and Hygiene:* Clean the ears and nose using cotton buds.
- After birth, cleanse the baby's face and skin with saline water and salt to tone the skin, taking care to prevent the saline from entering the nose or mouth. Clean the nostrils gently using the tip of the little finger.
- *Anus and Bathing:* Dilate the anus using a little finger.
- Bath the baby with lukewarm water, ensuring the body is clean.
- *Eye and Head Care:* Regularly wipe the eyes with a soft piece of linen. Cover the baby's head with a properly fitted cap.
- *Urine and Limb Positioning:* Gently press the bladder to aid in the voiding of urine.
- At the end of care sessions, position the baby's arms alongside their thighs.
- *Seasonal Bathing Guidelines:* Journal of AYUSH: Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy Bathe the baby with tepid water in summer and moderately warm water in winter. Baths should ideally be given after a long sleep and when the baby's stomach is empty.

These practices aim to ensure the proper health and development of newborns and infants during this delicate stage of life.

### REGIMEN FOR LACTATION AND WEANING

According to Ibn Sina, infants should ideally be fed primarily on mother's milk, as it provides the necessary nutrients that meet the infant's needs [5, 6].

#### Breastfeeding

The baby should be fed as much as possible with mother's milk, as it is the most suitable diet, closely linked to the blood from which the baby developed in the womb. Breastfeeding should be frequent, though prolonged sessions should be avoided in the early stages. When feeding, avoid excessive pressure on the breast, as it may cause strain that could lead to throat injury. Mild crying before breastfeeding can be beneficial.

Unani physicians recommend testing the consistency and quality of the milk before feeding: the milk should be white, have a pleasant odor, be sweet in taste, and have a uniform consistency. If these qualities are lacking, they can be improved with appropriate drugs and dietary adjustments.

#### Maternal Diet

The mother should consume nourishing food in both quality and quantity to prevent nutritional deficiencies, anemia, and lack of blood. Foods, such as barley water, grapes, wheat, millet, soft meat,

fish, lettuce, radishes, almonds, and hazelnuts are recommended. Murattib and haar (moist and hot) foods can be beneficial for lactating mothers. Boiled water should be provided for the child to drink.

### **Weaning**

Weaning should be done gradually, not abruptly. Light meals, such as soups, bread, almonds, and sugar cones are ideal. A dish made with rice, milk, sugar, and well-cooked chicken can also be made. Meals should be provided after a massage and bath to promote digestion and comfort.

### **REGIMENS FOR CHILDREN**

Prominent scholars like Razi, Ibn Sina, and Baghdadi have extensively explored dietary recommendations for children. Their insights highlight the need for providing essential nutrients alongside easily digestible foods [5, 11–15]. Addressing malnutrition – a widespread and critical health concern among children in India [16–20] – these scholars emphasize dietary practices that can effectively mitigate this issue.

### **Diet**

Dietary recommendations for promoting child health have been a cornerstone of Unani medicine for centuries and form an essential part of its treatment approach [5, 6]. Nutritional deficiencies are addressed through appropriate dietary interventions, known as Ilaj Bil Ghiza. Unani medicine aligns with the Hippocratic principle that *“food is medicine, and medicine is food.”*

Specific remedies, such as Ma-ul-Jubn (whey), Ma-ul-Laham (meat distillate), and Ma-ul-Asl (honey water), are recommended for managing nutritional deficiencies [5, 21]. Milk, especially from cows and goats, is regarded as an ideal food for children. Protein-rich and body-building foods like eggs, fish, pulses, and meat are vital for children’s growth and development [6, 11, 21].

Homemade dishes, such as Daliya (porridge), Daal (lentils), Khichdi, and Curd Rice are highly beneficial for promoting health in children. Affordable and easily available options, including honey water, barley water, buttermilk, and Hareera, are also recommended to meet nutritional needs. Additionally, seasonal fresh fruits and vegetables are rich in essential nutrients that help boost immunity and support overall health restoration [11, 12, 21].

Pure and uncontaminated water is essential for drinking, as waterborne diseases remain a leading cause of child mortality in children under five years of age [22]. Ibn Rushd also emphasized two primary causes of diseases: the su-i Mizaj (impaired temperament) of an organ and external factors, such as air, water, and food [21].

Fruits like pomegranate, guava, apple, and quince are particularly beneficial for children. Additionally, a drink made from fennel and sugar is commonly recommended for its health-promoting properties.

### **Exercise**

Exercise is necessary, especially in the transitional period between infancy and childhood but strenuous exercise should be avoided. Exercise duration and intensity should be increased gradually as needed [12, 13].

### **Teething**

During the eruption of canine teeth, the gums are gently massaged with items that ease the teething process. Butter is often applied to the gums, and a piece of liquorice (Rub al-Suos) can be given to help alleviate gum ulcers and teething discomfort [5, 6]. For similar benefits, a mixture of salt and honey may be rubbed onto the gums.

Additionally, lukewarm Aab Mako (*Solanum nigrum* Linn.) [23] combined with Roughan Gul can be applied to soothe the gums. Massaging the scalp and the nape of the neck with olive oil or Roughan Banafsha (Oil of *Viola odorata* Linn.) is also beneficial during this stage [24].

In cases where teething is accompanied by fever and swollen gums, Tabasheer (*Bambusa arundinacea* Retz.) and Tukhm Khurfa (*Portulaca oleracea* Linn.) are recommended, often administered with pomegranate for added efficacy [5, 6].

### Treatment of Common Diseases in Infants and Children

Infants and children are more vulnerable to illnesses compared to adults. Since ancient times, various remedies have been utilized to address common childhood ailments, using either single-drug formulations or compound preparations for both oral and external applications.

Common health concerns in infants and children include vomiting, diarrhea, flatulence, irritability, coughs and colds, fear, and sleep disturbances, otorrhea and earaches, stomatitis, fever, and more as highlighted in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Some diseases which are common in infants and children.

| S.N. | Common Diseases           | Remedies                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|------|---------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1    | Skin Eruptions and rashes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bathing of infant with water in which barg Jhao (leaf of <i>Tamarix gallica</i> Linn) is boiled [5, 12].</li> <li>Tila (liniment) prepared with Mom (Wax) and Asfedaaj (Zinc oxide) is used for local application [12].</li> <li>Zaroor (fine powder for sprinkle) of barg jhao (leaf of <i>Tamarix gallica</i> Linn.), barg Hina (leaf of <i>Lawsonia inermis</i> Linn.) and Gul-i Surkh (<i>Rosa damascena</i> Mill.) are sprinkled over the skin rashes.</li> <li>Local application of Roughan Gul followed by sprinkling of zaroor (fine powder) prepared with Gul-i Surkh (<i>Rosa damascena</i> Mill.) and Aas [24–26].</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 2    | Constipation              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(Suppository) prepared with Turanjabeen (<i>Alhagi maurorum</i> Baker) or Namak (salt) and Khatmi (<i>Althaea officinalis</i> Linn.) is used [14, 26].</li> <li>Oral Administration of honey to infants or children.</li> <li>Natool (Irrigation of water from distant) of lukewarm water over the abdomen of infant.</li> <li>Roughan Zanaq (Jasmine oil) or olive oil is rubbed over the abdomen [5].</li> <li>Shafah (Suppository) prepared with Turanjabeen (<i>Alhagi maurorum</i> Baker) or Namak (salt) and Khatmi (<i>Althaea officinalis</i> Linn.) is used [27–29].</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 3    | Infantile diarrhea        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Frequent Oral administration of decoction prepared with Ushna (<i>Usnea longissima</i>), Resha Khatmi (<i>Althaea officinalis</i> Linn.), Gul Surkh (<i>Rosa damascena</i> Mill.), Belgiri (<i>Aegle marmelos</i> Correa), Badiyan (<i>Foeniculum vulgare</i> Mill), Habbul Aas (<i>Myrtus communis</i> Linn.), Tukhm Kanocha (<i>Phyllanthus maderaspatensis</i> Linn.) each 1 gm in case of diarrhea due to dentition [5, 14].</li> <li>Oral administration of Tukhm-i Khashkhāsh (Seeds of <i>Papaver somniferum</i>, Linn.) and Za'farān (<i>Crocus sativus</i>, Linn.) along with Rubbi Safarjal (Dried extract of <i>Cydonia oblonga</i>, Mill.) /Sharbat-i Ward [23, 28].</li> <li>Oral administration of mixture of Barg-i Pudina (<i>Mentha arvensis</i>, Linn.) and Dana-i Hil (<i>Elettaria cardamomum</i>) [29].</li> <li>Compound drugs used in this condition include Habb-i Rummān, Habb Mumsik Rummānī, Habb Kafuri, Habb-i Qabiz [5, 26].</li> </ul> |
| 4    | Flatulence                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Oral administration of Decoction of Pudina (<i>Mentha arvensis</i> Linn.) and Anisoon (<i>Pimpinella anisum</i> Linn.) with warm water and sugar is used [11, 14].</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 5    | Vomiting:                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Oral Administration of decoction of Nana (<i>Mentha arvensis</i> Linn.) with Aab Anar (pomegranate juice) and Arq Gulab (Rose distillate).</li> <li>Zimad (paste) prepared with Aqaqia (<i>Acacia arabica</i> Willd), Sandal (<i>Santalum album</i> Linn.), Amla (<i>Phyllanthus emblica</i> Linn) and ood (<i>Orchis officinalis</i> Linn.) is applied over the abdomen.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 6    | Conjunctivitis            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local application of Rasaut (<i>Berberis aristata</i> DC) mixed with milk over the eyelid [5, 6].</li> <li>Decoction of Fudnaj (<i>Mentha piperita</i> Linn.) is used for washing eyes. Decoction of Babuna (<i>Matricaria chamomilla</i> Linn.) and Rehan dashti (<i>Ocimum gratissimum</i> Linn.) is also useful Shiyaf Mameesa (compound) with Babuna (<i>Matricaria chamomilla</i> Linn.) and Rasaut (<i>Berberis aristata</i> DC) is applied in the eyes.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

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|---|------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 7 | Earache          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shayf-i abyaz (wick) dipped in aab Gul Nilofar (<i>Nymphaea alba</i> Linn.) there after wool soaked in this water is kept in ear orifice or Roughan Gul is used as ear drops.</li> <li>Wool dipped into wine containing Shabb (Alum) or zafran (<i>Crocus sativus</i> Linn) is kept in the ear. (Ibn Sina, Majūsī) or wine containing Shabb (Alum) or Zafran (<i>Crocus sativus</i> Linn.) is used as eardrop.</li> <li>Drugs like <i>Berberis aristata</i>, Thyme, <i>Zataria multiflora</i>, myrrh, Seed of colocynth and Juniper are useful in earache. Any of these drugs heated with oil and then oil is used as eardrop [5, 6, 14].</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 8 | Cough and Cold   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Oral administration of Luaab Panba dana (<i>Gossypium herbaceum</i> Linn.). It is used as linctus for infants [5, 12].</li> <li>Matbookh (Decoction) prepared with Unnab (<i>Zizyphus jujuba</i> Linn), Banafsha (<i>Viola odorata</i> Linn.), Asl al-Soos (<i>Glycyrrhiza glabra</i> Linn), Gauzaban (<i>Onosma bracteatum</i> Linn.) is given orally (Arzānī).</li> <li>Turanjbeen (<i>Alhagi maurorum</i> Bake) and honey are also beneficial.</li> <li>Sharbat Khashkhash or Majun prepared with Alsi (<i>Linum usitatissimum</i> Linn.) or Zeera (<i>Cuminum cyminum</i> Linn) with honey is recommended in case of cold and cough and bronchitis.</li> <li>Lauq (Linctus) prepared with katira (<i>Astragalus gummifer</i>), Badam (<i>Prunus amygdalus</i> Batsch), Luaab behidana (mucilage of <i>Cydonia oblonga</i>) and sugar is also beneficial.</li> <li>Luaab Katan (<i>Linum usitatissimum</i> Linn) with honey is used as linctus.</li> <li>Mom (Wax) and Roughan Badam (Almond oil) are rubbed over the chest [5, 10, 23].</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 9 | Worm infestation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diet: Baqla, gram with vinegar, Drink clean and clear water, eat fruit after thorough washing. Avoid Murattib Ghiza. Maintaining personal hygiene is recommended [5, 13].</li> <li>Oral administration of Sheeh (<i>Artemisia maritima</i> Linn.), and Khurma (Dry fruit of <i>Phoenix dactylifera</i> Linn.).</li> <li>Oral administration of small amount of Aab Dirmana Turki (<i>Artemisia maritima</i> Linn.) with milk or Sugar is used in case of round worms.</li> <li>Zimad (paste) prepared with Afsanteen (<i>Artemisia absinthium</i> Linn.), Baobarang (<i>Embelia ribes</i> Burm.), ox-bile and Shehm Hazal (pulp of <i>Citrullus colocynthis</i> Linn.) is applied over the abdomen.</li> <li>In case of thread worms local application of roghan Badam talkh (oil of <i>Prunus amara</i>) around the anus.</li> <li>Local use of shayaf Siyah raal (Compound drug) is also beneficial in case of threadworm or shayaf prepared with Salt and Borax Anti helminthic drugs are Afsanteen (<i>Artemisia absinthium</i> Linn), Sarkhas (<i>Aspidium filix mas</i>), Dirmana (<i>Artemisia maritima</i> Linn.), Turmus (<i>Lupinus albus</i> Linn.), Qanbeel (<i>Mallotus philippensis</i> Muell.), etc. [28–31].</li> </ul> |

## REGIMEN FOR YOUNG ONES AND ADOLESCENTS

### Behavior and Emotional Supervision

- Encourage good habits.
- Monitor and manage behaviors, such as anger, fear, anxiety, and sleep patterns.
- Fulfill natural desires and address causes of irritability to prevent mental health issues.

### Daily Routine

- Wake up early in the morning.
- Take baths twice a day.

### Nutrition and Hydration

- Provide a balanced and nutritious diet.
- Ensure access to pure and clean water.
- Include cold and sweet foods in the diet.

### Physical Activity

- Promote regular exercise to:
  - Enhance innate body heat.

- Strengthen organs, joints, and ligaments.
- Reduce waste materials in the body.
- Stimulate nutrient absorption.

### **Avoid Harmful Substances**

- Prohibit smoking and alcohol consumption.
- Highlight alcohol's adverse effects, including bile production and negative health impacts on children.

### **Adaptability**

- Follow these regimens until the age of 14.
- Adjust routines and practices as needed to accommodate the growing child's day-to-day requirements.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The holistic approach presented in this paper, encompassing dietary guidance, exercise recommendations, and cultural considerations, aims to provide a well-rounded strategy for nurturing healthy children. As societies increasingly recognize the importance of early childhood in determining long-term health outcomes, the integration of traditional systems like Unani medicine may offer a nuanced and culturally sensitive approach to address the unique challenges faced by children in diverse social and economic settings. The insights from ancient Unani physicians, combined with contemporary healthcare practices, present a promising avenue for advancing child health comprehensively and sustainably.

The proposal to integrate Unani medicine serves as a novel and culturally tailored solution, addressing the unique challenges faced by impoverished communities. The future research, therefore, may contribute significantly to the discourse on child health, advocating for context-specific strategies.

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