

Abhyanga: As Best External Snehana Karma

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INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is a science of life. According to Ayurvedic traditions, “Prevention is better than cure” is the basic concept of Ayurveda. This idea of prevention explained for the first time in Ayurveda and is the basic concept for a healthy society. To keep fit and healthy, one should adopt a proper, healthy lifestyle and one should understand the importance of biological clock or circadian rhythm. The ideal lifestyle for a day is called daily regimen *i.e.* Dincharya.

Abhyanga is Ayurveda's principal healing tool and the mother of all massages. It is a whole-body massage given with herbal oils customized to your body type to detoxify, nourish and revitalize the body tissues (Dhatus). Abhyanga has much deeper and more far-reaching effects than ordinary massage using mineral oils and lotions. Abhyanga achieves deepest healing effects by naturally harmonizing Mind Body & Spirit. This massage is usually given by two therapists for one hour and is usually followed by a herbal bath or medicated steam bath (Sweda). It is one of the most rejuvenating treatments of Ayurveda. It is one of the upakrama in dincharya.

The Abhyanga described in detail by all Acharya in the different sthanas and chapters. In Charaka Samhita sutr 5th Matrashitiya Adhaya and in Sushrut samhita Chikitsa 24th Anagatbadha pratishediya and Abhyanga has been mentioned as the part of Dincharya *i.e.* daily routine in Ashtanghrudaya sutr 2nd Dincharya. It is very useful before performing the physical exercise.

Snehan Drugs

As per different acharyas, the different snehan drugs used for Abhyanga and have the following properties (ch.su. 22/15 A.H.su.16/1)

Drava – Liquid, **Sukshma** – Subtle, **Sara** – Fluid, **Snigdha** – Unctous, **Pichhil** – Slimy

Guru – Heavy, **Sheetal** – Cold, **Manda** – Sluggish, **Mrudu** – Soft

Indication

- Neuromuscular disorders: Pakshaghat, Shaishaveeya vata (Polimyelitis), Pangu and Gridhrasi etc.
- Rheumatological problems: - Arthritis, Lumbago etc.
- Vriddhavastha

- Shirashula
- Angamarda
- Rejuvenation etc.

Contra Indication

Immediately after Vaman and Virechanadi Panchkarma

- Tarunjwar
- Amadosha
- Raktapitta, Atisar
- Garbhini etc.

METHODS OF ABHYANGA

Abhyanga should be done with lukewarm medicated oil or Ghrit, prepared with Doshaghna drugs suitable to the season, prakruti, dosha and disease. It should be applied slowly gently in the direction of hair. It should be done in round pattern on joints like elbow, shoulder, knee, Ankle and lumber joints. Abhyanga is done particularly on head, leg and ear daily.

Positions	of	Abhyanga	Karma:
1) Sitting Position	Rt. lateral lying position		
2) Supine position			
3) Lt. lateral lying position			
4) Sitting position			
5) Prone position			

Duration of Abhyanga and Effects on Body

Dulhanacharya the commentrator of sushrut has described the effect of Abhyanga according to the duration.

(1 Matra = 19/60 seconds)

- 300 Mantra (94 sec.) upto hair root + (Romanta)
- 400 Mantra (133 sec.) upto skin (Tvacha)
- 500 Mantra (160 sec.) upto blood (Rakta dhatu)
- 600 Mantra (190 sec.) upto flesh (Mamsa dhatu)
- 700 Mantra (228 sec.) upto fat (Meda dhatu)
- 800 Mantra (240 sec.) upto bones (Asthi dhatu)
- 900 Mantra (285 sec.) upto bone marrow (Majja dhatu)

Totally ABHYANGA upto 5 minutes for each part of the body is ideal.

Mode of Action of ABHYANGA

The drugs used in the Abhyanga have the sneha property so the mode of action of Abhyanga can be understood by the properties of snehan drugs in the following way.

- 1) Snigdha Guna - Snigdha guna acts through its vatahara and kaphakara properties.
- 2) Guru Guna – It increases the bodily strength and kapha.
- 3) Sheeta Guna – It keeps the mind healthy by increasing pleasure, decrease perspiration.

- 4) 4. Mrudu Guna – Mrudu means soft. This is opposite virtue to kathinya, i.e. hard, by this property Abhyanga reduces the stiffness.
- 5) Drava Guna – Drava means liquid. By this property the snehan drugs propagates swiftly all over the body.
- 6) Pichhil Guna – Pichhil means slimy. It causes longevity, increases body strength and maintain the structure at molecular level. It increases the kapha and produces the heaviness.
- 7) Sara Guna – The meaning of sara is to slip or mobility. Because of this property it mobilizes the doshas and Malas, i.e. waste products.
- 8) Manda Guna – It is indicative of sluggishness. The snehan drugs diffuses slowly, by this property it remains in the contact of doshas, dhatus and malas for long time.
- 9) Sukshma Guna - Sukshma means subtle and it helps the drug to enter in the fine channels of the body.

In this way Abhyanga acts through the above properties of sneha. Because all the above properties are opposite to Vata. Abhyanga is considered useful treatment in the disease produced due to aggravated Vata.

Benefits of ABHYANGA

*“Abhayangamachirenyam sa jarashramavataha i
Dushtiprasadpushtyayu; swapnsutvakatvadardyakrita ii” (A.H.Su2/8)
Jarahara, Shramahara, Vatahara , Drusthi Prasadakar , Pusthikar , Ayushyakar
Swapnakar, Tvak Dhardyakar, Kleshasahatva, Abhighatsahatva, Kaphavata
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It Increases tissue strength, improves blood circulation, Rejuvenates the whole body, removes cellulite, beautifies the skin, Anti-aging, helps sleep better, promotes vitality, Reduces Vata imbalance, stress and toxins.

Physiological Effects of ABHYANGA

- 1) Increase arterial, venous and lymphatic flow.
- 2) Improve skin function.
- 3) Stimulates the nerves.
- 4) Eliminate waste products.
- 5) Breakdown adhesions.
- 6) Reduce swollen tissues.
- 7) Improve nutrition.

Importance of Abhayanga

- 1) A person should resort to Abhyanga every day if he wants to keep healthy. It is very useful before performing physical exercise.
- 2) The importance of Abhyanga has been shown by the way of different metaphoric illustration.
- 3) By the oil massage. The human body becomes strong and smooth skinned. It becomes unsusceptible to the disease of vata and resistant to exhaustions and exertions.

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