

CONCEPTS OF SHIROABHYANGA

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ABSTRACT

Shiro Abhyanga is a Sanskrit term Comprised of two words Shiro (Head) and Abhyanga (massage) Shiroabhyanga essentially means a complete massage of the Head, Neck, and Shoulders using Ayurvedic herbal oils. Shiroabhyanga every day reduces dryness and itching. It is a part of snehan therapy as it nourishes the senses of the mind and gives strength. Shiroabhyanga is the most Ideal form of Indian Head Massage. The set of four procedures named; Abhanga, Seka, Pichu, and Vasti commonly termed as 'Murdha tail'.¹ Abhyanga is the most commonly indicated and extensively applied treatment procedure amongst the Bahiparimarjan Chikitsa. Regular Application of Oil will delay the process of senility, appeases, fatigue and vata. It nourishes the body, prolongs lifespan, induces sound sleep, and makes the skin healthy and body strong.²

Keywords: Shiroabhyanga, Murdha taila, Snehan, Head Massage.

INTRODUCTION

In Ayurveda various Acharyas have explained dinacharya as a preventive aspect for various diseases, Shiroabhyanga is one of the major upakrama described in Dincharya³. According to Charaksamhita, 'Shiroabhyanga' helps to promote Nidra i.e., good sleep. Daily practice of

Shiroabhyanga prevents headache, balding, graying, and hair fall & it also gives strength to the skull, strengthens hair roots & makes the hair black & long. It helps in maintaining the health of the scalp. It also nourishes the sense organs, softens the skin & provides luster to the face. In Charaksamhita,

Abhyanga is mentioned as one of the 'bhavas' ⁴.

The etymology of Shiroabhyanga: According to Amarkosha, 'Abhi' upsurge and 'Anga' dhatu together make the word "Abhyanga". It means to induce specific & special movements.

Sthana of Abhyanga:⁵ Special places like shir (head), Shraavan (karna) or ear and pada i.e., legs are explained for Abhyanga.

Indication of Abhyanga: According to Charaka Samhita⁶ Shiroabhyanga helps to prevent Shirahshoola (headache), Khalitya (hair fall), Palitya (graying of hair). It gives strength to the scalp, and the forehead strengthens the hair root and makes the hair black and long.

According to Sushruta Samhita⁷ Shiroabhyanga cures diseases of Shirah (head), softens the hair, and increases density and black (Krushna) color of hair. It nourishes the sense organs.

According to Ashtanga Sangraha⁸

Shiroabhyanga is indicated in dry scalp associated with itching. It is also indicated in Khalitya, Palitya, and Vata roga. It gives strength to swara, hanu, and Shirah (head).

Contraindication of Abhyanga⁹

It is contraindicated in Ajeerna, Nav/Taruna Jwara because if performed in this condition, becomes Krucchra Sadhya or Asadhya. It is contraindicated after Samshodhana i.e., immediate after Vamana, Virechana & Niruha basti, as it causes Agnimandya. It is contraindicated in a person suffering from Netra, Karna Roga, Atisara, Adhmana, Peenasa, Agnimandya & other Saama-dosha conditions. It is contraindicated in a person suffering from Pittaroga, Trishna, Raktapitta, Prameha & Atikshudhita. It is contraindicated in Kaphaja Roga & Santerpita Roga if done, gets aggravated. It is contraindicated immediately after consumption of food, accustomed to ruksha & Abhishyandi Ahara. It is contraindicated immediately after Snehapana & Tarpana kriya. It is also contraindicated after Snana, Vyayama, Divaswapna, Vegdharana, Prajagarrana.-

Time of Abhyanga: Abhyanga should be practiced once a day or once in 2 days or once in 3 days regularly as it does not vitiate any dosha. Daily

Abhyanga is advised in children during nighttime.

Abhyanga Dravya: Abhyanga should be performed with lukewarm medicated oil prepared with doshaghna drugs. Generally, oil is used for abhyanga. The oil should be lukewarm in general conditions, but cold oil may be used.

Quantity of Oil for Abhyanga¹⁰: Oil is applied thrice a day over the head instilled once into the ears, eyes, and nostrils.

Quantity of oil application based on Dosha predominance¹¹

In young adults, if the vata dosha prevails, one and a half palaj of oil is applied over the head, if pitta and kapha prevail one pala of oil is applied. For children and elderly persons, 1/4 pala of oil is applied.

Duration of performing Abhyanga at different seasons¹² In Hemanta rtu, abhyanga is carried out for two nadika (48 minutes) In Shishir, for 3 Nadika (72 Minutes), in Vasanta rtu, for 5 nadika (120 Minutes) In Grishma Rtu 2 hrs 24 minutes, In Varsha and Sharada rtu, one has to take bath immediately after oil application.

Methods of Shiroabhyanga¹³ :

A comfortable knee-high chair, 100ml oil capacity bowl, and lukewarm oil are the requirements for Shiroabhyanga.

Purvakarma: The patient is asked to sit on a knee-high chair. The body of the patient is wrapped with the cloth below the neck. Afterward, stand behind the patient to start the procedure.

Pradhankarma: Preheat the oil in a water bath (lukewarm) approximately up to 40°C & smeared ¹⁴ to the portion of the scalp above the neck, placing the specific strokes. After applying the oil to the head, it is spread all over the scalp including the neck and ear pinna. To spread the oil all over the scalp, the hair should be short-trimmed and then move the palms from before backward. The fingers have to be poked between the long hairs of the patient to smear the oil on the scalp. **Gharshanahasta** (Massage from before backward): After smearing the oil, massage the whole head & then neck by moving the palmer surface of the hand from before backward applying the oil gentle as well as with firm pressure. The vertex,

temporal & occipital area of the scalp should be massaged for desired time. *Mridvanguli Tadana* (Picking strokes): This method gives a pleasant sensation & does not cause any sort of discomfort or pain to the patient. The fingers of both hands are to be moved as if picking up a tuft of hair. The fingers are partially approximated & then gently, firmly placed on the scalp. This procedure is followed by withdrawing of fingers, simultaneously effective rubbing of the scalp. This method should be done gently & every area of the head produces a mild traction effect on the hair. *Dvihasta Tadana* (Flat palm strokes): Gentle strokes are placed with the palmar surface on all parts like vertex, occipital, and temporal regions by both hands simultaneously. *Tarangahasta* (Rocking strokes): Gentle strokes are given on the patient's head by rapid movements of both the palms simultaneously. The contact should be kept between the patient's head and the base of the little finger & the thumb while giving strokes. *Angulikridanahasta* (Finger strokes): Gentle strokes are given on the patient's head by making rocking movements of both the palms with fingers stretched. The contact should be kept between the patient's scalp and the palmar aspect of the little finger & the thumb. *Mrudumushtitadana* (Fist strokes): Gentle strokes are given on all areas of the head with the closed fist through the ulnar border. First, the strokes are placed with both the hands simultaneously & followed by placing the strokes alternatively with the right & left fists. *Ghatihasta* (Pressing): The flat surface of the palm is placed on the patient's head & is molded into the shape of the scalp so that the portion of the palmar aspect of the palm and fingers should be kept in contact with the head. This method exerts gentle and firm pressure on the head. *Squeeze strokes*: Grasping tuft of hair with hands followed by gentle squeeze & producing comfortable traction on the hair. The strokes are given on all regions of the head. *Karna Abhyanga* (Ear massage): The ear pinna is grasped between the thumb anteriorly & other fingers posteriorly. The pinna is rubbed between the fingers. Further, followed by supporting the pinna with the fingers posteriorly & the thumb is firmly

moved above downwards in the anterior of the ear pinna.

Duration: Each form of the stroke & each step is continued for about 4 to 5 minutes and the whole process takes about 30 to 40 minutes.

Paschat karma: After completing the process, the patient is asked to rest on the chair for 15 minutes and take a hot water bath afterward using herbal products instead of soap.

Benefits of Shiroabhyanga:

1. It is useful in diseases of the central nervous system & head.
2. It helps in preventing headaches & induces sleep.
3. It gives strength to all the sense & motor organs.
4. It improves vision.
5. All the senses of the person become healthy when performed daily.
6. It prevents dryness & itching of the scalp.
7. It helps in the prevention of early graying & falling of hair.
8. It helps in improving the complexion of the hair on the face.
9. Facial massage with oil & application of cosmetics done to the face to improve the skin of the face preventing wrinkles & skin diseases such as pimples & strengthens the eyes & chicks also.
10. It helps in long, black & strong growth of hair.
11. A person who never suffers from hair fall does Shiroabhyanga as a daily regime.
12. With daily Shiroabhyanga, facial skin becomes soft

Effect of Shiroabhyanga:

The Abhyanga is followed in 2 parts of 400 matras Kala each. The 1st part consists of Shiroabhyanga of right & left parietal regions and the 2nd part consists of Shiroabhyanga of frontal, vertex & occipital regions. The procedures of the Shiroabhyanga give a gentle massage to the scalp by the patient's own fingertips without any friction and hair loss. It helps to do massage for 400 matrakala. Along with all these benefits, it also reduces abhyanga dwesha & helps in inducing sleep. The gentle massage improves blood circulation to kapala pradesha. The oiliness of the oil reduces the dryness & prevents sleeplessness. Thus,

Shiroabhyanga achieves the samprapti vighatana & thus alleviates the disease. The temperature created in the process makes the patient feel comfortable. This heat causes the blood vessels to dilate to increase the blood circulation and promotes healing. The effect of pressure & the effect of heat produced enhances the absorption of medicines through the skin. Skin becomes shiny and glows.

Effect of Abhyanga on Various Dhatu ¹⁵:

The commentator of Sushrutacharya Dalhana has described the effect of abhyanga is described according to its duration.

1. When the abhyanga is done for 300 Matras the oil reaches the hair root.
2. When done for 400 Matras the oil reaches the skin.
3. When done for 500 Matras it reaches in Rakta Dhatu.
4. The oil reaches in Mansa dhatu in 600 Matras, in Meda Dhatu in 700 Matras, in Asthi Dhatu in 800 Matras and it reaches to Majja Dhatu when the Abhyanga is performed up to 900

Mode of action of Abhyanga in Modern view:

Because of osmotic pressure, the internal fluids in the skin are subjected to move due to the massage. The massage causes mechanical hydrostatic pressure in the extracellular compartments. The forceful expulsion from peripheral vessels causes splanchnic pooling of the body. Massage helps the fluid to enter into viscera, and tissues & dilute the accumulated toxins. After the massage, when it refills the peripheral vessels, the diluted toxins are brought into general circulation & expelled out via elimination procedures or Shodhana. Abhyanga acts on the skin/twacha, as the skin is the site of Vata & Lasika. Thus, its effects on lymphatic drainage. Lymph exhibits a large amount of amino acids tryptophan. Hypothetically, tryptophan (amino acids) increases in the blood & it causes a parallel increase in serotonin, a neuron transmitter made from tryptophan in the body. This changes the conductivity of the nerves & it increases up to 100 meters/ second. The circular pattern of electricity is discharged into nerve fibers at regular intervals.

The momentum interruption in the state of disease is

pacified by a specific pressure massage.

CONCLUSION

The advantages and benefits of Shiroabhyanga are self-practicable, easy procedure, economic and effective. It improves arterial, venous, and lymphatic flow and in this way nourishes the skin and local tissues. It is a beneficial program for de-stressing the whole body, strengthening the nervous system, it improves blood circulation in previously congested muscles, helping oxygenate the brain, stimulating lymphatic drainage, and inducing sleep.

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