MANAGEMENT OF SEASONAL PADASPUTANA (DRYNESS AND FOOT-CRACKS) AND POSSIBLE ROLE OF PADAABHYANGA: A CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda guides society with daily and seasonal regimens as an integral part of maintenance of life with the concept of prevention. A daily and seasonal regimen is explained with their four fold benefits like health promotive, preventive, curative and restorative. Tridoshas undergo seasonal changes as Chaya – Prakopa – Prashama which are the three natural stages responsible for health and ill health. These vitiated DOSHA will produce specific signs and symptoms. Dry skin is a very common skin problem and is often worse during the winter when environmental humidity is low (i.e., "winter itch"). It can occur at all ages and in people with or without other skin problems. Certain regimens were explained to overcome these by our scholars in the classics. In this article importance of Padaabhyanga, one such daily regimen explained in the context of Dinacharya and its beneficial in Pada Supthi (foot numbness), Stambha(stiffness), Sankocha (shrinkaning), Pada Sphutana (cracking of foot ) which are few of Vridha Vata Lakshanas are explained. Padabhyanga is one of the simple, cost effective, less time consuming and can be practiced easily by individual in their busy schedule also.

Keywords: Padasputana, foot dryness and cracks, abhyanga, ritucharya

INTRODUCTION

Shishira Ritu constitute the winter season as per Ayurveda, English months Jan.14 to Mar.14 (Indian calendar months of Magh and Phalgun) constitute the shishir Ritu. Shishira marks the onset of aa-daana kala (Aadaan means taking away the period of dehydration). Cold becomes severe and dryness intensify further. Occasional clouds, wind and rainfall are also features of late winter. According to Ayurveda during this period, the ‘Sharir-bal’ or physical strength and ‘jathragni-bal’ or digestive fire is at their maximum, by virtue of the Sun just coming out of its Southern cycle and moving into the Northern cycle. It is also the time when ‘Vata’ dosha tends to get aggravated. This is a prime time to build strength and stamina in our bodies. It is also the time to build the foundation for immunity (Ojus) for the spring months to come. This ritu is domniant of excessive cold and dryness due to chill wind. Because of the excessive cold and dryness in the external environment, the moisture in the body is absorbed by the environment. Hence the skin becomes excessively dry and cracked. Pada Sphutana is thus seen commonly in this season. A
new survey from the Institute for Preventive Foot Health shows that nearly 80 percent of people ages 21 and older have dryness associated with foot cracks in winter season.

**EFFECT OF WINTER ON SKIN:**

Dry skin is a very common skin problem and is often worse during the winter when environmental humidity is low (i.e., "winter itch"). It can occur at all ages and in people with or without other skin problems. Everyone is familiar to some degree with the appearance of dry skin. The normally fine lines in the skin become more visible, the skin feels rough and appears dull and flaky. In more advanced cases, fish net-like cracks resembling the fine fracture lines of cracked porcelain can occur. Dry skin occurs most commonly on the arms and legs, but can also affect the trunk of the body. Dermatologists often call dry skin "xerosis" or "asteatosis". Chapped hands and feet in winter are a result of the reduction of needed water in the skin. The top layers of your skin normally retain a regular amount of water. With constant exposure to drying conditions, the water decreases and makes the skin less supple and easier to crack. People of all ages may display this condition but if most often occurs with people who have chronic dry skin. Effects of cold and dry air of the winter season on the skin will cause dry and chapped effect. There are a number of reasons, both external and internal, why the skin gets dry and itchy during winter. Hence it is clear that during winter and cold seasons the skin requires special care. There are a number of reasons, both external and internal, why the skin gets dry and itchy during cold weather.

**External Causes:** Low humidity during winter, both outside and inside the house, enhances the drying effect on the skin. Exposure to dry wind, cold water or drying soaps further increase the skin dryness.

**Internal Causes:** When the skin becomes cold, the blood vessels supplying the skin become constricted. This reduces blood flow to the skin and sweat glands and oil producing glands in the body. When the water content of the skin diminishes, both inside and outside, the skin cells become shrunken and dry. This produces flaking of the superficial skin cells. This irritates the nerves beneath and produces itching. Most people, because they do not feel thirsty during winter, do not drink enough water or fruit juices during winter. This produces low volume of the circulating blood causing dehydration, another cause for skin dryness. Dry skin very commonly produces itching, which can be severe and interfere with sleep and other daily activities.

**Abhyanga - ‘Padabhyanga’:** One who is willing to attain good health should follow regimens of Charya Traya i.e., Dinacharya, Ritucharya, Ratricharya. Various regimens which are explained in the context of Dinacharya includes Abhyanga and Padabhyanga is one among them. Twacha is Sthana for Vata and Abhyanga is a procedure to overcome the Vridha Vata in Twacha. Taila is best Vatahara and tila Taila is drug of choice for Snehana Karma. Padabhyanga is one of the simple, cost effective, less time consuming and can be practiced easily by individual in their busy schedule also. Benefits of practicing Padabhyanga as Dinacharya helps in pacifying Vata Dosha Lakshanas like Rukshatha, Padasputana, Kharathva, Vedana etc. Shishira Ritu which is characterized by extreme
cold and dry climate, due to which Kapha
will be in sanchayavastha. 6,7
Daily practice of Abhyanga brings the
beneficial effects like Snigdhatara, Balya,
rejuvenates the body. 8 While explaining
Dhatugata Vata Dosha lakshana, it is said
vitiated Vata in Twacha leads to Rukshata
and Sputana of the same 10, 11. Snehana
Karma is vatahara. Hence Padabhyanga
will be beneficial in Pada Sputana 12.

Tila Taila is best among the Tailas for the
purpose of Snehana Karma. 13

Procedure of Padabhyanga: Foot mas-
sage with sufficient Til oil of required after
cleaning the foot. 1 ½ to 2 hour before
going to bed for a period of 20 - 30 min for
both the feet daily at night time (Start mas-
saging from hind– mid– fore foot with
mild pressure). Avoid bare foot walking,
Keep feet clean, and avoid exposing more
to dry and cold weather.

CONCLUSION

Padabhyanga is one of the simple,
cost effective, less time consuming and
can be practiced easily by individual in
their busy schedule also. This procedure is
not restricted to shishira ritu , it can be
practiced in all the seasons as a preventive
procedure to prevent the foot related prob-
lems and to get the other beneficial effect
from Padaabhyanga.

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