

## ABHYANGA A DAILY ROUTINE PROCEDURE FOR MAINTENANCE OF HEALTH

Diksha Dhiman<sup>1\*</sup>, Ravi Raj Singh<sup>2</sup> and Devesh Panwar<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>M.D Scholar, Department of Ayurved Samhita Evam Siddhanta, PatanjaliBhartiya  
Ayurvigyaan Evam Anusandhaan Sansthaan Haridwar Uttarakhand.

<sup>2</sup>M.D Scholar, Department of Panchkarma, Gurukul campus (Haridwar) U.A.U

<sup>3</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Ayurved Samhita Evam Siddhanta, Patanjali Bhartiya  
Ayurvigyaan Evam Anusandhaan Sansthaan Haridwar Uttarakhand.

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### \*Corresponding Author

**Dr. Diksha Dhiman**

M.D Scholar, Department of  
Ayurved Samhita Evam  
Siddhanta, PatanjaliBhartiya  
Ayurvigyaan Evam  
Anusandhaan Sansthaan  
Haridwar Uttarakhand.

### ABSTRACT

Ayurveda the traditional science of medicine elaborated by various ancient researchers encompasses enormous information related to health, disease and their management. *Ayurveda plays a significant role in managing* health of a healthy person *by practicing a combination of corrective Ahar (diet), Vihaar (exercise) and Aushadhi (medicines)*. Lifestyle (or *Vihar*) is a cumulative product of our natural physical capacity at co-ordination with its mental functioning; consisting of habits, behaviour, everyday diet and living pattern, family history and the environment in which you grow. The modern world is currently facing an epidemic of lifestyle related diseases like diabetes, obesity, heart diseases, etc., which primarily result from stress, improper diet and irregular or sedentary lifestyle (lack of discipline

and physical activity), for maintenance of health of a healthy person and curing the disease of an ill Ayurveda emphasizes on to practice a healthy *Vihar*. Some of these prominent practices are *Dinacharya (Daily regimen), Ritucharya (Seasonal regimen), Nidra (sleep) Sadvritta (Code of Conduct)*. Ayurveda proclaims that those individuals who are desirous of being healthy and happy should perform Abhyanga as part of Dinacharya, Abhyanga is adopted for healing, relaxation and as a treatment modality in many diseases. Massage is not a new concept, almost every culture has employed massage, But the oldest and most scientific scripture is Ayurveda only. Massage is a systematic rubbing and manipulation of the body to prevent stiffness, promoting circulation and positive health. In Ayurveda it is clearly

mentioned that the *Abhyanga* controls *Vata* *Dosha* and the person develops strength both physically and mentally. Here an attempt has been made to compile the importance of *Abhyanga* in day today life to keep the society healthy.

## INTRODUCTION

*Dinacharya* means healthy and sustainable pattern of life style obeying the biological cycles of nature. To achieve this, Ayurveda prescribes a specific routine in general, also taking into consideration the *Prakriti* or constitution of every individual.

The number one procedure in *Dinacharya* is *Abhyanga* (Oil massage), which can treat many diseases and for maintenance of health it heals and rejuvenates the individual. Worthy to note here that *Abhyanga* controls the *Vata* *Dosha*, *Abhyanga* is one among the *Dinacharya* and is an ancient Indian Ayurvedic approach adopted for healing, relaxation and treating various diseases. It is one of the most important day today activities of causative factor for a host of diseases. *Abhyanga* means applying oil and lightly massaging the body. Often medicated and usually warm, the oil is massaged into the entire body before bathing. It can be beneficial for maintaining health and used as a medicine for certain disorders. It can be incorporated into a routine appropriate for almost everyone. *Abhyanga* therapy is an ancient practice which predates the Vedic period. Early humans practiced life-sustaining ways for manipulating the body to produce strength, mobility, flexibility and memory which interlaced with the cosmos. Application of oil to the skin followed by massage in specific directions is well known by the name *Abhyanga* in Ayurveda. Massage in specific direction improves blood circulation, facilitates removal of the toxins from the tissues, relieves physical and mental fatigue, improves the functioning of musculoskeletal system, clears stiffness and heaviness of the body and leads to feeling of lightness. It assists development of healthy body, helps in improvement of body figure, recuperates the body tissues and reduces body weight as well as fat. The logic behind circular movements over the joints may be the presence of lymph nodes and co-lateral venous networks around the areas. Massaging these areas may be improving the lymphatic drainage as well as venous drainage of the respected areas.

In this article review an attempt has been made for, collection of materials that expound the significance and functionality of *Abhyanga* to avoid stress and create a healthy lifestyle everyday.

**Indications of *abhyanga***

1. *Abhyanga* in daily routine: Regular practice of *Abhyanga* is advised to maintain the physical fitness.
2. *Abhyanga* in different seasons: *Abhyanga* is advised to protect the body from the biting cold of *Hemant Ritu*. as well as dry weather of *Shishira Ritu*.
3. *Abhyanga* in trivial manifestations *Abhyanga* is advised for the treatment of symptoms caused by holding or suppressing the urges of *Adhovata*, *Shakrit*, *Mutra*, *Kshut*, *Nidra*, *Shrama swasa*, *Vamathu*, *Shukra* etc.
  - *Adharaniya Vega* (*Mutra*, *Purisha*, *Retasa*, *Nidra*)<sup>1</sup>
  - *Pittaja Gulma*<sup>[2]</sup>
  - *Apasmara*<sup>[3]</sup>
  - *Vatodara*<sup>[4]</sup>
  - In *Atiyoga* of *Vamana*<sup>[5]</sup>
  - Scorpion bite<sup>[6]</sup>
  - *Vataja Hrudroga*<sup>[7]</sup>

**Some specific medicated oils indication in various disorders**

1. *Dhanvantara taila*: Cures *Kampa*(tremors), *Akshepa*(convulsions), *Unmada*(insanity), all types *Vataja Rogas* (neurological disorders)<sup>[8]</sup>
2. *Narayana taila*: Cures all types of *Vataja Rogas*<sup>[9]</sup>
3. *Bala taila* cure *Kasa* (cough), *Swasa* (dyspnoea), *Jwara*(fever), *Chardi*(vomitting), *Murcha* (fainting), *Ksaya* (emaciation),
4. *Pinda taila*: *Vata Rakta* (rheumatoid arthritis)<sup>[10]</sup>
5. *Sahacharadi taila*: Cure *Kampa* (tremors), *Akshepa* (convulsions), *Unmada* (insanity), *Vataja Rogas* (neurological disorders).<sup>[11]</sup>
6. *Ksheera bala taila*: Cure *Rasayanam* (rejuvenator), *Vatasruk* (gout), Neurological disorders, Good for sense organs.<sup>[12]</sup>
7. *Lakshadi taila balya*: (Improves strength), *Apasmara* (epilepsy) and all neurological Disorders of children and pregnant women.<sup>[13]</sup>

In most situations, *Tila Taila* (Sesame oil) is recommended, as it can be applied to all *Prakriti* persons and it is one of the best *Taila* mentioned in *Ayurvedic* texts.<sup>[14]</sup> It is *Tridosha ghana* (Subsides all the three *Doshas*) and gives nourishment to the body. *Tila Taila* unique property is that it is a polyunsaturated fat which contains large amounts of linoleic acid.<sup>[15]</sup> Linoleic acids are a well-known anti-inflammatory agent and is also known to inhibit pathogenic bacteria. Generally, many medicated oils are utilized in *Abhyanga* some in specific diseases of the head.

### Method of *abhyanga*<sup>[16]</sup>

- ❖ The *Abhyanga* can be done either in standing or sitting or lying position. Massage should be done in the direction of hair with the palms.
- ❖ Early morning massage with slight warm oil should be started by applying a small amount of oil on the scalp and massaging the head gently.
- ❖ The open palms of the hands and the flat surfaces of the fingers should be used rather than the finger tips for the whole massage. The massage should be in circular way so as to stimulate the Marma points which influences all the parts of the body.
- ❖ Massage the face and the ears, using the fingers. Applying oil and mild stimulation by fingers to the ears is very important.
- ❖ Massage the neck and the upper part of the back with flat surfaces of open palm and fingers.
- ❖ Massage the arms vigorously. For the joints use a circular motion for massaging.
- ❖ Gently massage the chest, stomach and pectoral areas.
- ❖ Massage the back and spine vigorously.
- ❖ Massage the legs vigorously in the circular motion for joints and straight motion for long bones. Then massage the feet. Bath should be with lukewarm water.

### The *Abhyanga* should be done in the following seven positions

- ❖ Sitting Position - Head, Ear, Face, neck
- ❖ Supine Position - Anterior aspect of the body.
- ❖ Left lateral Position - Rt. side of trunk, Inner aspect of Rt. arm and outer aspect of Lt. leg
- ❖ Right lateral Position - Lt. Side of trunk, Inner aspect of Lt. arm and Outer aspect of Rt. leg
- ❖ Prone Position - Posterior aspect of the body
- ❖ Sitting Position

## ❖ Supine Position

**Mode of action of *abhyanga***

*Acharya Dalhana* has indicated that *Abhyanga* should be done for specified times, also a description of the penetration of *Sneha* at various levels are given in the table below.<sup>[17]</sup> Thus, *Abhyanga* should be performed for at least 5 minutes in each position if the desired outcome is to effect deeper tissues like *Majja*.<sup>[18]</sup> According to *Ayurveda*, oil etc. used for massage does not have their actions confined to skin alone. The drugs with which these are boiled permeate through the skin and reach different tissue elements of the body. The medicated oil used for massage remain in the skin for 300 seconds (*matras*) and gradually and consecutively permeates through different tissues elements like *Rakta*, *Mamsa*, *Meda*, *Asthi*, *Majja*, the medicated oil takes about 100 *Matras* each, to persuade and permeate through these different categories of tissue elements.

**Table 1: Matra and Kaal for Reaching of *Tailato* different *Dhatu* or effect on *Dhatu*.**

<i>Dhatu</i>	<i>Matra</i>	Time/Secs
<i>Roma</i>	300	95
<i>Twak</i>	400	127
<i>Rakta</i>	500	159
<i>Mamsa</i>	600	190
<i>Meda</i>	700	220
<i>Asthi</i>	800	254
<i>Majja</i>	900	285

**Benefits of *abhyanga*****According to *charaka***<sup>[19]</sup>

- Regular *Abhyanga* helps to avoid *Abhihata* caused by *Abhighata* or heavy works it will not effect skin complexion.
- It makes the skin *Susparsha*, well grown body, *Balavana* (good strength), *Priyadarshana* (pleasing appearance) and *Alpajara* (signs of ageing develop slowly).

**According to *susrutha***<sup>[20]</sup>

- It helps *Mardhavakara* (softness of body) Pacifies *Kapha* and *Vata Dhatu Pusti* (promotes *Dhatu*) Provides *Mruja* (cleanliness), *Varna* (complexion) and *Balaprada* (strength).

**Contraindications according to *sushruta***<sup>[21]</sup>

- *Dosa* associated with *Ama*

- *TarunaJwara* and *Ajeerna* (Indigestion)
- Those who have been given *Vamana* or *Virecana* or *NiruhaBasti*
- If *Abhyanga* done in *TarunaJwara* and *Ajeerna* it causes severity or incurability of disease.
- If *Abhyangais* done in same day it causes *Agnimandhya* and produces diseases.
- In the diseases caused by *Santarpana* (over nutrition).

#### According to *astanga hrudaya*<sup>[22]</sup>

- *Abhyanga* should be avoided in persons,
- Suffering from aggravated *Kapha*.
- Undergone *Panchakarma* therapy.
- *Ajeerna*.

## DISCUSSION

If *Abhyanga* is followed daily it makes the man healthy. The *Taila* used for *Abhyanga* nourishes the tissues, gives strength and increases the *Agni*.<sup>[23]</sup> The medicated oils utilized during the process, nourishes the tissue, gives strength and stimulates the *Agni*.<sup>[24]</sup> The tissues are nourished when the oil penetrates the seven layers of the skin and the time duration has been mentioned in the table before.<sup>[25]</sup> *Abhyanga* reduces pain and takes away stress, it stimulates the nervous system which in turn effects the muscular system, glands and vessels. Usually, lukewarm medicated oils are used, which stimulates the *Swedavaha Srotas*, thus causing dilation of the blood vessels, thereby increasing the blood circulation, reducing pain, stiffness and contraction of vessels.

The human body has 107 *Marmapoints*. At these points, the *Prana* (energy) resides and by doing *Abhyanga* of these points, positive energy is generated. Hence protecting, rejuvenating and increasing the immunity toward external environmental changes which makes *Abhyanga* a very important part of daily activities.

During physical exercise or ordinary work, some metabolic products get accumulated in the neuro-muscular junctions leading to fatigue. If the neuro-muscular junctions are kept clean and if both nerve and muscle tissues are toned up, then the person could avert fatigue in spite of hard work and physical exercise. This is possible through massage therapy. The movement of soft tissue probably helps wastes (free radicals) and nutrition to flow in appropriate manner by helping to relax tension in the tissue. When waste and tension are removed then tissue and organs return to their ground-state status of natural functioning--a restful alertness where

sensory apparatus is ready and able to function. In this section an additional benefit is realized from deeper touching or massage. There is no evidence that this and the former section obtain benefits which are mutually exclusive. Rather, the idea is simply that stress may be released from different levels of the anatomy, depending upon the type of massage such as light or deep. This section does emphasize that the connection to healing can be through the body first and then the emotions and nervous system. Thus, another avenue of releasing stress and providing pleasure and well-being is added to the above aspects.

### **Benefits of abhyanga**

- It unleashes the ability of body to promote self healing
- The touch therapy of Abhyanga induces our hormones to get balanced.
- Stimulates nervous system
- Enhance the coordination between sensory organs and motor controls.
- The passive exercise provided by Abhyanga strengthens the muscle. That being said, the gentle pressure of this therapy also relaxes the muscle.
- Increases the luster of skin
- Diminishes the dry effect of skin
- Thanks to the presence of Vitamin E and other nutrients in massaging oil, it nourishes the skin and thereby renders anti-ageing properties.
- Reduces stress level in mind and hence promotes good sleep.
- Improves internal circulation of blood.
- Provides perfect lubrication for all joints and tissues.
- Augments stamina level
- Most importantly, detoxifies the body and renders excellent rejuvenation.

### **CONCLUSION**

*Abhyanga* (oil massage) should be performed daily or if not daily, at least applying oil to the head, ears and foot is must to lead a healthy life thus showing the importance of massage to the most important parts such as *Shira* (head), *Karna* (ears) and *Pada* (foot). *Abhyanga* should be done daily as a part of *Dinacharya* and to treat any condition depending upon the strength, age etc. The various kinds of *Abhyanga* (massage) therapies stimulate the nervous system to provide a soothing and relaxing effect to the patient or a healthy person. *Abhyanga* should be done in *Anuloma* (to the direction of hair growth) to prevent any damage to the hair roots.

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