



World Journal of Pharmaceutical Science & Technology

Journal homepage: www.wjpst.com

Review Article

BOOSTING IMMUNITY BY ABHYANG- AN AYURVEDIC PERSPECTIVE

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Received: 15-09-2020, Revised: 30-09-2020, Accepted: 27-10-2020

ABSTRACT

Ayurveda gives equal importance to cure the vyadhi and prevention of vyadhi by application of a healthy life style. In Ayurveda, Dinacharya is explained for healthy routine life and to avoid diseases. Abhyanga is an important part of dinacharya which means applying oil and massaging the body. It boosts the vyadhikshamta of the body which directly means boosting the immune system. It is not only effective in disease conditions but also beneficial in the prevention of disease and maintenances of healthy life by improving mental staus, physical capability, maintaining the equilibrium state of dosha, saptadhatus, mala, agni, and mana. In the present review, an attempt was made to compile the knowledge of abhayang in maintaining immunity.

KEYWORDS

Abhyanga, Dinacharya, Immunity, Massage, Oil

INTRODUCTION

Dinacharya described in Brihatrayi plays an essential role in the presentation of healthy life. In the prehistoric ages, Abhyanga or oil massage was an inseparable part of daily life. Abhyanga is the massage of the whole body with oil which helps to maintaining, caring, rejuvenate, improve blood circulation, and strength. The word Abhyanga is derived from Abhyanjana. Abhi means towards and Anjana means to smear, rubbing of body with unctuous substance, smearing the body with oil¹. Abhyanga means applying oil and lightly massaging the body. It can be advantageous for maintaining health and used as a medicine for certain disorders. Abhyanga therapy is an ancient practice that predates the Vedic period.

Immunity is defined as the ability of the body to resist the pathogenic agents. The body can resist the entry of different types of foreign bodies like bacteria, viruses, toxic substances etc². The biological system and processes undergoing inside the system are aimed at restoring an equilibrium. According to Ayurveda, the restoration of the biological equilibrium of three humors (Vata, Pitta & Kapha) and Dhatus (constitutional body tissues) is very essential for immunomodulation. From the therapeutic point of view, immunomodulation refers to a process in which an immune response is altered to the desired level. 'Oja' (the ultrafiltrate of healthy digestion and all constitutional tissues of the body) has been considered as the basis of immunity in the Ayurvedic system of medicine³.

MODE OF ACTION OF ABHYANGA

Anatomical knowledge of Shadanga Sharir is quite beneficial while attempting the process of Abhyanga. The various kinds of Abhyanga (massage) therapies have been practiced today following the single rule of increase the circulation of vital fluid in the applied part, as well as to stimulate the nervous system to provide a soothing and relaxing effect to the patient. Different acharyas have mentioned their different perspective regarding Abhyanga which are as follows:

Dalhana: commentator of Sushruta Samhita has described the effect of abhyanga according to duration.

Charka: Vayu dominates in the tactile sensory organ and this sensory organ is lodged in the skin. The massage is exceedingly beneficial to the skin. So one should practise regularly⁴.

Vagbhata: Vata mainly responsible for tactile sensation and tactile sensation is through the skin. An oil bath is best for the skin and so it should be done daily⁵.

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 remains in the skin for 300 seconds (matras) and gradually and consecutively permeates through different tissues elements like rakta, masna, meda, asthi, majja, the medicated oil takes about 100 matras each, to persuade and permeate through these different categories of tissue elements⁶.

ABHYANGA PROCEDURE

The abhyanga can be done either in a standing or sitting or lying position. Massage should be done in the direction of the 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 fingertips for the whole massage. The massage should be in a circular way 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. Then 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. The bath should be done with lukewarm water⁷.

ABHYANGA AND IMMUNITY

Abhyanga is beneficial in several diseases. Some of the beneficial effects of Abhyanga are Mrijaprada (cleanses dirt), Varnaprada (improves the body complexion), Twakdardiyakara (helps to maintain the elasticity of the skin), Vyadhikshamatwa (restore the natural immunity), Jarahara(rejuvenates body tissues, promotes health and Prevents aging process), Vatahara (alleviates Vata dosh), Kaphahara (alleviates Kapha dosha), Abhighata sahyatva (reduces the effect of trauma if any),

Kleshasaha (helps to overcome anxiety as well as stress), Shramahara (relaxes the muscle and relieves fatigue), Balavan(improves the physical strength), Dhatu pushti janana (promotes the excellence of body tissues), Priyadarshana (beautifies the body figure), Swapna kara (induces sound sleep), Drishti prasadakar (improves eyesight), Pushtikara (recuperates and nourishes the body tissues), Ayushkara (by nourishing the body tissues Abhyanga prolongs one's lifespan⁸).

Abhyanga is also important for boosting vyadhikshamatwa and for preventing the aging process. The concept of vyadhikshamatwa can be correlated with the immunity concept of modern science. With the help of Ayurveda, one can enhance the vyadhikshamatwa and can maintain the equilibrium state of dosha, saptadhatus, mala, agni, and mana. For attaining good vyadhikshamatwa, one should use various regimens and follow conducts as described in Ayurveda². Ayurveda places great importance on daily rhythms and offers the following morning routine. Over time, this context of predictability and safety encourages the nervous system to relax, reduces stress, encourages rejuvenation, and helps to preserve immune function.

Abhyanga helps to balance the Vata dosha by vata shaman. It is sharir drudhakara, Sutwakakara, Klesha Saha, Vyayam samhanana, Twakagata vata shamana. Due to regular Abhyanga, the flexibility of the

body is increased. It can tolerate any Abhighata janya Vyadhi. It also increases the bala by improving immunity, increases physical capability. Skin becomes much healthier, glowing, and soft. Abhyanga improves mental stability and increases enthusiasm for life.⁹

In Sushruta chikitsa Snehopayogaikam adhyaya, Sneha Dravya is administered in Abhyanga like Ghrita, taila, etc.¹⁰ Taila is most beneficial in Vata Prakopa. Tila taila is Pradhana sneha among all types taila. It improves the Balataila helps in Vata Shamana and also not leads to Kapha Prakopa, it improves the body temperature slightly by increasing the blood circulation.it stabilizes the body.¹¹

CONCLUSION

Abhyanga is an important part of Dinacharya Abhyanga particularly tailabhyanga has been practiced since the ancient period for maintenance of the health status. It is not only effective in disease conditions but also beneficial in the prevention of disease and maintenances of healthy life. Abhyanga helps in vata Shamana, the flexibility of the body, improves joint movement, physical capacity, increases immunity, etc.

Ayurveda teaches us that strong immunity is the natural outcome of good health, which depends on robust agni, a healthy diet, a supportive lifestyle, and a balanced nervous system for which abhyanga plays an important role. It can help in supporting and maintaining the immune system.

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