

## **ROLE OF ABHYANGA (OIL MASSAGE) TO LEAD A HEALTHY LIFE**

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Received: 27-06-2012; Revised: 25-11-2012; Accepted: 27-11-2012

### **Abstract:**

Ayurvedic system of medicine approaches in a particular way to prevent and promote a healthy life by following certain methods and therapies in day today activities (dinacharya) which could be considered as a part of a health promotion among the fast moving people of this 21<sup>st</sup> century. Abhyanga (oil massage) which is one among the dinacharyas, is an ancient Indian approach adopted for healing, relaxation and treating various diseases. It is one of the most important day today activities of life, as how early to bed and early to rise, then brushing of tooth etc. are important. 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 and role of abhyanga in day today life which reduces the stress and keeps the society healthy.

**Keywords:** Abhyanga; Oil massage; Dinacharya; Stress.

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### *Cite This Article*

Roshy Joseph C, Anu Cherian, Joseph CT. Role of Abhyanga (oil massage) to lead a healthy life. *Ayurpharm Int J Ayur Alli Sci.* 2012;1(7):163-167.

## INTRODUCTION

Stress and health are inter-linked. It is a known factor that stress causes body–mind disorders. Disorders like anxiety, tension, sleeplessness etc. may latter result in chronic health disorder like insomnia.<sup>[1]</sup> Stress is increasingly becoming accepted as a workplace phenomenon negatively affecting the health of the society. Stress is a common problem in today's workplace. About one-third of workers report high levels of stress. With continued stress at the workplace, workers will develop psychological and physiological dysfunctions and decreased motivation in excelling in their position.<sup>[2][3]</sup>

For weeks together without rest, working to complete the projects, sitting in front of computers for longer duration have created today's youngsters as healthless. There are many youngsters who never care about their aching muscles, loss of appetite, restless sleep and exhaustion till they achieve the goal of their project given to them by the management. In the beginning he may try to ignore the problems, but latter he may become short-tempered and irritable. The signs of job stress vary from person to person. It depends on how long the individual has been subjected to the stressors and the intensity of the stress . Typical symptoms of job stress can be Insomnia, Loss of concentration, Anxiety, Stress, Absenteeism, Depression, Extreme anger and frustration, Physical illnesses such as heart disease, migraine, headaches, stomach problems and back problems.<sup>[4]</sup>

According to Ayurveda, those who are desirous of health and happiness should do abhyanga (massage) to the body. Abhyanga is one among the dinacharyas 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 life, as how early to bed and early to rise, then brushing of teeth etc. are important.<sup>[5]</sup> Here an attempt has been made to

compile how abhyanga can create a healthy society.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

Various Ayurvedic classics and article published till date are reviewed to update the importance of abhyanga in day today life.

### Importance of Abhyanga

Abhyanga means massaging the body with any snehas (fats) in the same direction of hair follicles. Abyanjana and snehana are paryayas (synonyms) of abhyanga.<sup>[6]</sup> Ayurveda says abhyanga (oil massage) should be performed daily or if not daily, atleast applying oil to the head, ears and foot is must to lead a healthy life<sup>[7]</sup> thus showing the importance of massage to the most important parts such as shira (head), sravana (ears) and paada (foot). By oil massage the sarira (body) becomes strong and gains resistance to exhaustion caused by stressful jobs. One who applies tila taila (sesame oil) on his head regularly does not suffer from headache, graying of hair and gets a sound sleep. But once the person is diagnosed as insomnia or as suffering from neurological disorders etc, and then it is good to use medicated oils for abhyanga. The massage has a very soothing effect on the nervous system, which is governed by Vata dosha - one of 3 basic principles of Ayurveda. Therefore, it is very important for people who have a tendency to be nervous or who are always under the influence of stress or who travel a lot.

Generally tila taila (sesame oil) is best for all prakruthis (body constitution), because it is considered as the best among all the tailas in Ayurveda.<sup>[8]</sup> It is tridoshagna (subsides all three doshas) and nourishes the body. Sesame oil has a unique value because it comes under poly unsaturated fats and contains unusually large amounts of linoleic acid.<sup>[9]</sup> Linoleic acid is a powerful anti-inflammatory agent and is known to inhibit pathogenic bacteria.

**Table 1: Various medicated oils used for abhyanga to maintain health**

Sl.No.	Medicated oils	Indication
1	Dhanvantara taila	Cures Kampa (tremors), Akshepa (convulsions), unmade (insanity), all types Vataja rogas (neurological disorders) <sup>[15]</sup>
2	Narayana taila (Big)	Cures all types of vataja rogas <sup>[14]</sup>
3	Bala taila	Kasa (cough), Swasa (dyspnoea), Jwara (fever), Chardi (vomitting), Murcha (fainting), Ksaya (emaciation), Apasmara (epilepsy), Vatavyadhi (neurological disorders) <sup>[16]</sup>
4	Pinda taila	Vata rakta (rheumatoid arthritis) <sup>[17]</sup>
5	Sahacharadi taila	Kampa (tremors), Akshepa (convulsions), Unmada (insanity), Vataja rogas (neurological disorders) <sup>[18]</sup>
6	Ksheera bala taila	Rasayanam (rejuvenator), vatasruk (gout), Neurological disorders, Good for sense organs <sup>[13]</sup>
7	Lakshadi taila	Balya (improves strength), Apasmara (epilepsy) and all neurological disorders of children and pregnant women <sup>[19]</sup>

However, for Pitha prakruti (body constitution), or if it is a summer season narikela taila (coconut oil) is best. Generally many medicated oils are used for abhyanga in various disorders like neurological disorders etc. But in disorders like sleeplessness, neurological disorders, diseases of head etc few important tailas like Triphaladi taila,<sup>[10]</sup> Bhringamalakadi taila<sup>[11]</sup>, Chandanadi taila,<sup>[12]</sup> Ksheerabala taila,<sup>[13]</sup> Narayana taila (big)<sup>[14]</sup> etc. are used for shiroabhyangam (head massage). (Table 1)

#### Abhyanga procedure:

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 fingertips 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. 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. Bath should be with lukewarm water.<sup>[20]</sup>

#### Contra- indication of Abhyanga:

Abhyanga should be avoided by the persons suffering from aggravation of kapha, who have just undergone purificatory therapies like emesis, purgation, enema etc. and who are suffering from indigestion.<sup>[21]</sup>

#### 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>[22]</sup> How the tissues are nourished, to speak it hypothetically the knowledge about the seven layers of skin, its thickness and the time duration for the oil to reach the different dhatus are needed. The seven layers of skin are very clearly mentioned in Ayurveda.<sup>[23]</sup> The average thickness mentioned by modern science is 1.5-4 mm. Now the effect of abhyanga on different dhatus based on time duration should

be discussed to know how long the abhyanga should be performed as a part of daily routine to maintain a healthy life. The time duration taken by the oil to reach the hair follicles when abhyanga is performed is 300 matras (95 sec), the oil reaches the skin, rakta dhatu, mamsa dhatu, medo dhatu, asthi dhatu is 400 (133 sec), 500 (160 sec), 600 (190 sec), 700 (228 sec), 800 (240 sec) respectively and if the abhyanga is continued for 900 matras (280 sec) it reaches the majja dhatu.<sup>[24]</sup> Therefore as a daily routine 10 minutes is sufficient but for diseased condition 30 to 60 min of abhyanga is needed. In diseased persons medicated oils are preferred for curing the conditions. Hypothetically it can be said that the blood aminoacids like tryptophan increase after massage. Massaging reduces pain and stress. By abhyanga the nervous system gets stimulated, thus providing stimulation to the muscular system, vessels and glands governed by the particular nerve and keeps the human body healthy. Massaging also improves the circulatory system thus reducing the pain. Usually lukewarm medicated oil should be used for massaging. The warm oil stimulates the swedavahasrotas (perspiring body channels) thus causing dilatation of the blood vessels there by increasing the blood circulation, thus revealing pain, stiffness and contraction of vessels. Screening the blood supply and nerve supply of skin it's very clear that the skin is with a network of blood supply.

The human body is having 107 marma (vital points).<sup>[25]</sup> In marmas, the prana (energy) resides. By doing massage the vital points gets stimulated and produce positive energy, thereby protecting, rejuvenating and increasing the immunity towards environmental changes. It is scientifically proved that massage increases the production of white blood corpuscles and antibodies, which provide more resistance against the diseases. The soles of the feet are said to have marma points, which in turn stimulates the indriyas (sense organs). Thus massage is very

important to lead a healthy life and to create a healthy society.

## CONCLUSION

Stress is accepted as a workplace phenomenon negatively affecting the health of the society. By oil massage the sarira (body) becomes strong and gains resistance to exhaustion caused by stressfull jobs. Ayurveda says abhyanga (oil massage) should be performed daily or if not daily, atleast 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), sravana (ears) and paada (foot). Hypothetically it can be concluded that abhyanga should be done for 10 minutes daily as a part of dinacharya and to treat any condition depending upon the strength, age etc 30-60 minutes.

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Source of Support: Nil

Conflict of Interest: None Declared