KAA 108

Ayurvedic Bodywork

_Snehana, Swedana_
KERALA AYURVEDA ACADEMY

KAA 108: Ayurvedic Bodywork

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THE GOAL OF AYURVEDA

To remove the root cause of the disease, and the imbalance of the doshas.

What is health?

Sama dosha sama agnishcha samadhatu mala kriyaha|
Prasanna atma indriyamanah swastha iti abhidheeyate ||

Health is the state of complete harmony and balance of functional principles (dosha), digestive and metabolic fires (agni), tissues (dhātu) and elimination of wastes (mala) with pleasant and vibrant soul, mind and senses.

Definition of Disease:

Imbalance of doshas is disease (roga) and balance of doshas is health (aroغا or swastha)

The process of bringing the mind, body system from an imbalance to its normal balanced state is called Chikitsa. It includes the restoration of balance of agni, dosha, dhātu and mind. This can be achieved primarily through 2 ways -

- Shodhana – Cleansing (Making pure)
- Shamana - Palliating (Calming down)

Shodhana is purification of aggravated doshas and mala from the body, thereby offering complete cure. In many chronic diseases shodhana chikitsa is very important because the disease process has gone through all the stages of samprapti.

Shamana is calming aggravated doshas, mainly by herbs, proper diet and life style. By shamana, doshas keep a low profile, as long as a person is strictly following the regimen. With even a slight “pradnyaparadha” or “asatmya indriya artha samanya samyoga,” the doshas start going out of balance and manifest some symptoms. In acute conditions shamana works better as the disease process has not surpassed. Hence for shamana, diet and life style regimen is very important.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sanskrit</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roga</td>
<td>Disease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aroga</td>
<td>Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shodhana</td>
<td>Cleansing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shamana</td>
<td>Palliation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mala</td>
<td>Waste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chikitsa</td>
<td>Treatment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samprapti</td>
<td>Etio-pathogenesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pradnyaparadha</td>
<td>Knowingly doing wrong actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asatmya</td>
<td>Unsuitable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indriya</td>
<td>Sense organs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samyoga</td>
<td>union</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• According to Vagbhata, sodhana is that which expels aggravated doshas out of the body. It is of 5 types- kashaya vasti (decoction enema), vamana (therapeutic emesis), virechana (therapeutic purgation), nasya (nasal administration) and raktamoksha (bloodletting). The process of bringing balance without elimination is called shamana. Some examples are pachana (that which burns out ama), deepana (that which enhances digestion), fasting, enduring thirst, physical exercises and exposure to wind.

• While shamana pacifies the aggravated doshas, shodhana removes the aggravated dosha which will not only help to bring balance but also help to prevent the chance of relapse.
## PANCHAKARMA

**Panchakarma**, is the process of purification also known as Ayurvedic detoxification process, it is a comprehensive system of knowledge and is practiced to purify the body from accumulated doshas, malās and toxins and restore it to balance with natural sources. It is basically a bio-cleansing regimen, which facilitates the body system for better bio-availability of the healing therapies, besides achieving homeostasis of doshas. It also increases the acceptability of the body to various dietary regimens and use of rejuvenation therapy (*rasayana*) for promoting health as well as for therapeutic regimens.

As more and more people are affected by stress, either environmental, mental or physical stress, there are more complaints of diseases such as poor digestion, insomnia, allergies, chronic fatigue, heart diseases, diabetes, osteoporosis and cancer. All these diseases are complex disorders that accumulate over a lifetime.

The most deeply seated toxins that cause disease are heavy and sticky and they easily lodge into the tissue layers. **Panchakarma** eliminates these toxins from the body, allowing the permanent healing of tissues, channels, digestion and mental functions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sanskrit</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pancha</td>
<td>Five</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karma</td>
<td>Actions/procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panchakarma</td>
<td>Five procedures to detoxify the body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sodhana</td>
<td>Purification</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Attending the disease by removing the impurities is called *shodhana chikitsa*, which is the fundamental principle of *panchakarma*. *Shodhana chikitsa* involves clearing the vitiated *doshas* (*vāta, pitta* and *kapha*) that causes disease and to restore the equilibrium between them.

`‘Panch’` means five and `‘karma’` means actions. The five therapeutic actions are defined in a slightly different way by different Ayurvedic scholars. Sushruta, being a master surgeon, placed a strong emphasis on blood and its role in health and disease. His 5 categories include:

1. **Vamana** (Therapeutic Emesis)
2. **Virechana** (Therapeutic Purgation)
3. **Vasti** (Therapeutic Enema)
4. **Nasya** (Nasal administration)
5. **Raktamokshana** (Blood-letting)
Vagbhata classified it as:
1. Vamana
2. Virechana
3. Niruha vasti (cleansing decoction vasti)
4. Anuvasana vasti (oily nourishing vasti)
5. Nasya.

The Aims and Objectives of Panchakarma

_Panchakarma_ aims to remove the ailments of a diseased person, maintains positive health in a healthy individual and obtain the extraordinary effects of _rasayana_ (rejuvenation therapy) and _vajeekarana_ (aphrodisiacal therapy).

**Panchakarma in the Treatment of Disease:**
Some diseases respond to _panchakarma_ treatment better than the medicines given to them.

**Important Note:**
(Only qualified professionals should aim to treat disease using any of the techniques described herein based on their competency.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sanskrit</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rasayana</td>
<td>Rejuvenation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vajeekarana</td>
<td>Aphrodisiacal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dinacharya</td>
<td>Daily regimen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ritucharya</td>
<td>Seasonal regimen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swastha</td>
<td>Healthy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nidana</td>
<td>Cause/etiology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Srotas</td>
<td>Channels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanchaya</td>
<td>Increase from its own seat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prakopa</td>
<td>Vitiation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhātus</td>
<td>Tissues</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_Panchakarma for the Maintenance of Health:_
Disease cannot invade into the lives of people who follow daily and seasonal regimes (dinacharya and ritucharya). Therefore, most people worldwide are adopting these therapeutic techniques in their daily routine. But many times continuous exposure to climate changes, life style changes and wrong diet tend to accumulate toxins in the body.

Hence, _panchakarma_ can be also be done by a _swastha_/healthy person to remove toxins beginning to accumulate in their body.

**Disease Process – Samprapti**

To understand how _panchakarma_ works, one must first understand the disease process.

Due to _nidana_ (causative factors), weak _agni_ and _dosha_ aggravation occurs causing to form _āma_ and accumulate in the body, blocking the _srotas/channels_ and causing the formation of disease.

At the _sanchaya_ and _prakopa_ stage, the _doshas_ aggravate in their own location (swa sthana).
At the **prasara** stage, the *doshas* begin to flow out of their original locations to find weak spot(s) in the different *dhātus*.

At the **sthana samshraya** stage, the *doshas* lodge in the weak spots in *dhātus*.

Due to **Dosha Dushya Sammurchana** (Reaction between the *doshas* and *dhātus*), the *doshas* and *dhātus* change their qualities and combine with āma to lodge in the *srotas*, causing the disease to manifest (the **Vyakti** stage of disease). At the end it differentiates into *dosha* predominance, called **Bheda**.

### Koshta and Shakha

According to Ayurveda, the physical body can be divided into:
- **Koshta** (the digestive tract and hollow organs) and **Shakha** (the rest of the body comprising the seven *dhātus* and their solid structures).

Depending on the daily cycles, to perform their respective functions, the *doshas* normally flow in the **koshta** or **shakha**. This natural process is called **Dosha-Gati**. The process where the *doshas* carry nutritive fluids to the *dhātus* is called **Koshta-Shakha Gati** and, when the *doshas* flow back through koshta after collecting all waste products (*malās*) to eliminate from the body, is called **Shakha-Koshta Gati**.

In the disease state, the *doshas* and āma accumulate in the *dhātus* and are unable to re-enter the **koshta**. This results in getting āma, aggravated *doshas* and *malās* to get trapped in the *dhātus*, causing different symptoms.

Sometimes even if the *doshas* are not aggravated, they enter the **shakha** due to following causes:
- Excessive exercise
- Excessive heat
- Excessive fasting
- Excessive *vāta*

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sanskrit</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prasara</td>
<td>Spread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sthanasamshraya</td>
<td>Localisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dushya</td>
<td>Dhatus &amp; Malas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sammurchana</td>
<td>Reaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vyakti</td>
<td>Manifestation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bheda</td>
<td>Differentiation/stages of same disease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koshta</td>
<td>Hollow space/intestine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shakha</td>
<td>Branch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gati</td>
<td>Route</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
How does Panchakarma Help?

Process of panchakarma includes three stages viz. Purvakarma, Pradhana karma and Paschat karma. Purvakarma helps to move doshas from shakha to koshta:

1. By improving digestion
2. By opening the channels

Dosha gatis are important in panchakarma in order to remove aggravated doshas, āma and malās from the body. For this process to take place, aggravated doshas must be directed towards koshta.

Purvakarma should be done only after amapachana. Āma accumulates due to weakness of agni. First agni should be stimulated by deepana and the āma should be digested by pachana from the body. Then the purvakarma procedures are done to loosen toxins, remove blockages and bring the displaced doshas back to their original locations in the koshta. It is from this place in the koshta that they are then removed from the body by the nearest route using main procedures/pradhan karma. The main procedure will be decided as per the dosha involvement.

Paschat karma is to restore the digestive strength through proper diet regimen.

The duration of the three stages of panchakarma depends on the chronicity and severity of the dosha vitiation in the individual's body. When it is more chronic the dosha invades into deeper levels of dhātus and will need extended procedures.

Keypoints of Panchakarma

1. **Sodhana** should not be done if āma is present, instead do deepana (enhancing agni) and pachana (burning āma).

2. **Shodhana** is indicated in highly aggravated state of dosha where Shamana may not be

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sanskrit</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purvakarma</td>
<td>Preparation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pradhana karma</td>
<td>Main procedure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paschat karma</td>
<td>Post-procedure regimen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pachana</td>
<td>cooking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agni</td>
<td>fire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deepana</td>
<td>Enhancing fire</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
sufficient to provide a sustainable balance of *doshas*. (It can be assessed by disease nature, causes, symptoms and chronicity)

3. The body of those who are not given proper *sneha-sweda* before *sodhana* therapy, is destroyed like a dry piece of wood when made to bend. It helps in the liquefaction, softening and displacement of *doshas* to *koshta* and makes it easily extractable.

4. *Rogi bala/* strength of *rogi* should be considered during *panchakarma*.

5. It is said that diseases treated by using herbs and other *shamana* methods may recur or relapse but those treated with *sodhana* never relapse and are eradicated forever.
The Three Stages of Panchakarma

Purva Karma | Preparatory Procedures

Purvakarma are the procedures to help loosen the toxins, lubricate the body systems, dilate the channels and remove preparatory the blockage of channels and help to direct the doshas to accumulate in the koshta to be ready for removal. Purvakarma is done by 2 steps- Snehana and Swedana. Before starting the purvakarma, one should assure that the āma condition removed and agni stimulated by Deepana and Pachana.

Deepana and pachana are the process used either as the purvakarma (pre-operative procedures) before any shodhana chikitsa (purificatory measures) or adopted as the main process to heal many diseases. In either of the situations it is the agni and āma being corrected i.e. it helps to alleviate āma and make the person and disease fit for shodhana therapy.

Pradhana Karma | Main Procedures

Pradhana Karma is the second stage, where the actual main procedures are administered. panchakarma comprised of the actual administration of the five purification therapies. These therapies are popularly known as panchakarma and include:-

1. Vamana- Therapeutic Emesis- used mainly when kapha is aggravated
2. Virechana- Therapeutic Purgation- used mainly when pitta is aggravated
3. Basti- Therapeutic Enema – used mainly for vāta aggravation
4. Nasya- Nasal administration- used mainly for conditions above clavicle
5. Raktamokshana- Blood-letting- used mainly when condition caused by impure blood/vitiated pitta.

Paschat Karma | Post-Procedures

Paschat karma is the last phase of panchakarma which is carried out after the main purification process and assures the restoration of agni and dhātus. The post procedures are designed to nourish, strengthen and balance the newly cleansed dhātus. It describes the measures employed after the main treatment, such as special diet, and some small therapies and daily routine.
Scheme of therapies in Panchakarma

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purvakarma</th>
<th>Pradhanakarma</th>
<th>Paschatkarma</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deepana-Pachana</td>
<td>Vamana</td>
<td>Post- therapy dietetic regimen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snehana (internal and external oleation)</td>
<td>Virechana</td>
<td>Rejuvenation and Immuno-promotive therapy (Rasayana)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swedana</td>
<td>Niruha vasti</td>
<td>Palliative drug therapy (Shamana)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Individual components of classical *panchakarma* therapies also possess disease palliative effect, and owing to the more simplified nature are largely practiced as a stand-alone treatment method. For example: *Abhyanga*, besides being the chief *purvakarma* procedure for *panchakarma* therapy, happens to be a specific treatment for *vatika* disorders and therefore is one of the most significant therapeutic procedures. It may attain the significance of *pradhanakarma* in a particular case. Similarly, *udvartana* is an important pre-procedure, which helps in the better absorption of *sneha*. It is also a very important therapeutic procedure for *kapha* predominant diseases and *medo-dhātu* vitiation.

**Poorva karma**

**Snehana (Oleation)**

Oleation is done by using four naturally available fats—

1. *Tailam*-oil
2. *Ghritam*- ghee or clarified butter
3. *Vasa*-animal fat
4. *Majja*- bone marrow fat

**Tailam- Oils from Seeds**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tailam</th>
<th>Oil</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ghee</td>
<td>Clarified Butter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vasa</td>
<td>Animal Fat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majja</td>
<td>Fat from Bone Marrow</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sesame oil, coconut oil and castor oil are the main three plant based oils used for the oleation process. These oils are used as a base for many herbal oil preparations. Sesame oil is considered as the best medicine for *vāta*. The qualities of sesame oil are warm, sweet, astringent, and it easily penetrates into *dhātus* and nourishes the skin, coconut oil is cooling, sweet and good for both *vāta* and *pitta*.
b) **Ghritha -Ghee prepared from Organic Butter**

Ghee or Clarified butter is nutritive, penetrating, kindles digestive *agni*, cools excessive Pitta. It also pacify *vāta* and lubricates *dhātu*. It softens and lubricates tissue and joints.

c) **Vasa**

*Vasa* is the adipose fat collected from animals

d) **Majja**

*Majja* is the bone marrow. *Vasa* and *majja* are very heavy in nature, so are used only occasionally. Used mainly in excessive *vāta* conditions, debility, *Teekshna agni* and *dhātu kshaya*.

**Medicated Snehas**

Besides using the above, traditional Ayurveda suggest preparing these fats with various combinations of herbs based on the involvement of *doshas* and *dushyas* in each disease condition.

**How natural fats work in the body?**

- Spread easily in *dhātus* due to their *sooksha* quality and get quickly absorbed
- Liquefy many fat soluble toxins
- Works like a soap and react with toxins and *doshas* and start loosening them.
- Enhance the flow without obstructions
- Due to lubricating quality, they protect *dhātus* from āma and *doshas*
- Are soothing to *vāta* due to oleation quality
- Stimulate secretions through which vitiated *doshas*, āma and *malās* can flow towards Koshta

All fats alleviate *vāta*. *Ghrita* alleviates *vāta* and *pitta*. *Majja* and *vasa* alleviates *vāta*. *Taila* alleviates *vāta* and *kapha*.

**Benefits of Snehana**

- Stimulates secretions in *dhātus*, which start loosening toxins.
- Smoothes the skin, improves luster and tone
- Sharpens sense organs
- Improves vision
- Strengthens muscles
- Prevents aging
- Rejuvenates body
- Nourish *dhātus*
Contraindications of Snehana

- Obesity
- Just finished panchakarma
- Diarrhea & loose motions
- Weak agni
- Liver and spleen diseases and ascites
- Āma
- Fainting
- Vomiting
- Anorexia
- Increased kapha
- In excessive thirst
- Alcoholics
- Women after abnormal delivery

Types of Snehana

1. **Abhyantara** (Internal oleation): Taking oils or ghee internally

2. **Bahya** (External oleation): External applications like massaging the body with oils.

Both types of snehana are important because we need to cleanse all the tissue layers. The internal snehana works from inside to out while the external snehana works from the outside to in, making sure all of the dhātus are saturated with snehana.

Abhyantara Snehana (Snehapanam)

According to Vagbhata, snehapanam is classified into three types based on the dosage and time taken for digestion.

a. **Hraswa matra**- The quantity of sneha taken for brimhana which can be digested by 2 yamas (1 yama = 3 Hours, 2 yama = 6 Hours)

b. **Madhyama matra**- The quantity of sneha taken for samana which can be digested by 4 yamas (12 hours)

c. **Uttama matra**- The quantity of sneha taken for shodhana which can be digested by 8 yamas (24 hours)

According to Susrutha, snehapanam is classified into 5 types, as per matra above or the time taken for digestion of the oleation/sneha.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time taken for Digestion</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. 1 yama (3 hrs)</td>
<td>Deepana</td>
<td>Mild <em>dosha</em> involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. 2 Yama (6 hrs)</td>
<td>Brimhana</td>
<td>Medium <em>dosha</em> involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. 3 yama (9 hrs)</td>
<td>Snehana</td>
<td>Excessive <em>dosha</em> involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. 4 yama (12 hrs)</td>
<td>Samana</td>
<td>Excessive <em>dosha</em> involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. 8 yama (24 hrs)</td>
<td>Sodhana</td>
<td>Diseases of skin, mind and toxicity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although these *matra* (Dose) is described in the classics (Vagbhata and Shusruta), the experts practitioners can decide dosage according to his logic, considering the disease, strength and conditions of the *rogi*.

**Traditional Practice**

After a detailed consultation with the *rogi* considering the age, *dosha*, *dhātu*, *agni*, strength, etc. suitable *sneha* and its dosage are decided.

On the previous day of *snehapana* the *rogi* should be advised specific light, easily digestible, cooked and nourished diet. On the first day of the *snehapana* the *rogi* should be given only half of the *Hraswamatra*, to check the digestive strength and make continuation plan based on the first day. Commonly this dose is about 30-45ml ghee.

The *sneha* should be lukewarm and after administration the *rogi* should be given warm water or warm ginger tea to drink. After taking the *sneha* the *rogi* should take rest. He should not be exposed to wind or cold. Should be advised to drink warm water sip by sip all day. After the ghee is properly digested, when the *rogi* feels hungry, light and cooked food like warm rice gruel or *khichadi* can be given. The time of food intake should be noted down every day so that the time taken for digestion of each dose is understood.

The second day onwards the dose of ghee is increased everyday based on the digestive strength of the individual. Usually the *snehapana* is done for 7 days or till the optimal oleation (*Samyagsnighdhatha*) is attained.
Signs of Samyagsnighdhatha

- Anuloma “vāta”
- Digestive fire activated.
- Soft and oily stools.
- Body soft & supple
- Aversion of ghee
- Clarity in sense organs.
- Feeling light.

The diet should be warm, liquidy and having unctuous (snigdha) qualities.

After attaining the optimal oleation, swedana therapy can be started. At least three days of swedana is necessary before sodhana.

If vamana is the main procedure, it can be conducted on the 3rd day after snehapana, after one day of swedana rogi should be advised to take kapha producing diet (uthklesana), like blackgram, Fish, etc. These kapha enhancing food prior to vamana helps in taking out the vitiated dosha completely.

Qualities of diet suggested

Rogi should be advised to have warm, nourished, easily digestible cooked food, organic whole grains, and to avoid oily and dry food.

Other instructions

Warm water should be used for all internal and external purpose. Rogi should follow the advised dinacharya, sleep early at night and not allowed to sleep during daytime. He should avoid holding natural urges (vegadharana). Sexual indulgence is restricted during this period.

Travel, physical and mental exertion, sitting in the same position for long time, talking for long time, exposure to cold, light and wind are also restricted. Rogi should avoid circumstances which will lead to anger and sadness. Strict routine should be followed during treatment and further as advised after the panchakarma.

Contra indications for Snehapana

- Low digestive strength (agnimandya).
- Excessive digestive strength (teekshnagni)
- Obesity
- Rogis with low tolerance
- Diarrhea.
- When āma present
- Diseases of throat.
- In Gara & Udara.
Unconsciousness.
Vomiting
Anorexia
Aggravated kapha.
Excessive thirst.
Alcoholism
After abortion & difficult delivery
During panchakarma

Bahya Snehana

Abhyanga: Whole Body Massage

Also known as abhyangam – “Ab” means to follow; “Angam” means the body or body part.

Benefits of Abhyanga

Skin is the largest sense organ of our body. It is very sensitive to touch, giving rise to awareness either by massage (abhyanga with powder, oil or aromas) or just gentle pressure (marma therapy). It produces antidepressants, anti-cancer and anti-aging substances and hormones that enhance circulation.

Instead of using automatic massage rollers, machines, or muscle vibrators, the touch of a human hand on the body has immediate benefits for the mind, emotions and the physiology. That is why Ayurveda has emphasized more on the healing magic of touch since ancient times.

Remember that every neurochemical found in the nervous system is also present in the skin. Massage can stimulate those neurochemical, hence it is found effective in psychological as well as nervous conditions.

Abhyanga should be done as part of a daily routine for self-care. It helps the flow of all types vāta to move in their proper direction.

Due to the fast life style we are exhausted mentally than physically, thus increasing stress. Massage to the head, neck and shoulders are very important. Our thoughts and emotions tend to stiffen the muscles of the face, head, neck and shoulders particularly. By good massage to these areas, we can release the tension over the muscles and even release emotional traumas. Massage allows energy to flow more freely between the head and heart.
Tips: Warm medicated oils or sesame oil can be used for abhyanga. Traditionally Ayurvedic abhyanga is always done in a synchronized manner by two technicians to balance the body and mind, but it can also be done by one technician maintaining the basic principles of Ayurveda.

Preparation:
Prepare the room, warm required oil, make the person receiving abhyanga lie in supine position and check whether he/she is comfortable and room temperature is good. If it is self abhyanga it can be done in sitting position.

Procedure:
Apply warm oil on the whole body, and do abhyanga step by step.

If there are 2 technicians we can start with head (shiro) and foot (pada) abhyanga and then do whole body.

Head, neck and shoulder (shiro) abhyanga: Using your fingertips apply oil in the center of the head and connect to your rogi for few seconds. Then apply oil on the whole scalp using long and circulating strokes and gentle pressure. Long stroke while moving from front of hairline to back at the occipital bone and circular while coming forward again. Repeat 5 to 7 times.

Then, apply oil to the face with your palm and do gentle circulating strokes with finger tips. (ref. pg. for (mukha abhyanga )

Next, apply oil to both front and back of the neck, then turn the head on one side with one hand and using palm of the other hand do long stroke from jaw line to sternum and shoulder joint and towards the back of the neck, repeat 5/7 times. Then massage the external ear, hold the ear lobe between the thumb and index finger and with a gentle circular motion, move along the outer edge of the ear to the point where ear connects to the head. Then use the tips of the index fingers to rub the innermost part of the ear and the ear hole. Lastly rub the ear with whole palm until it is warm. Turn the head to the other side and repeat the same.

Foot (pada) abhyanga: Apply warm oil to both the feet. Very important marma points are present on our feet. Use the palms of your hands and massage vigorously back and forth over the soles of the feet, then do gentle strokes, long and circular on whole foot and joints, using gentle pressure.

Full body abhyanga: apply oil to the entire body and then proceed with the gentle massage part by part. This will allow the oil to get absorbed through the skin.

Start with both arms. Apply oil on the whole arm using both palms and do long stroke from finger tips to shoulder joint and back again using gentle pressure moving down towards the finger tips, repeat 5/7 times. Using gentle and long strokes back and forth over long bones and circular strokes on joints. In parts joints, palms, forearms, upper arm.
Then massage both legs, repeat the same as arms. Apply oil to the whole leg using both palms and do long stroke from foot to hip joint and back again using gentle pressure moving down towards feet, repeat 5/7 times. Then do parts of legs, joints, feet, lower legs, upper legs. Use long strokes back and forth over the long bones and circular on the joints.

Upper body abhyanga: (chest and the abdomen). Apply oil to the stomach, abdomen and chest area. First do long stroke from center of the stomach towards the full arm and gently come back to the center again. Then do a very gentle circular motion toward the flow of colon, moving clockwise over the abdominal area. (Always make the person taking abhyanga aware of the body parts you are going to do abhyanga, especially when working with women rogi always let them know and make sure they are comfortable)

Once you are done at the front part of body turn the person to Prone position, face down on his stomach.

Use same steps to massage the back side. Spinal massage strengthens the nervous system and promotes the free flow of cerebrospinal fluid within it. For the massage of the spine, a receiver needs to be lying on his stomach with his/her back exposed from the sacrum up to the top of the neck. Always start the massage strokes from the base and work up to the top of the spine.

(in self abhyanga it is difficult to do back by yourself, you may need another person to do the back, it can be done in sitting position also).

**Benefits of Abhyanga**

- Softens and tone the skin
- balances vāta
- Strengthens dhātus
- Cleans skin and makes it lustrous and soft
- Increases strength
- Increases longevity and slows down aging
- Promotes sleep
- Improves vision
- Increases stamina

**Oil Abhyanga and the Doshas**

Traditionally for Ayurvedic abhyanga specific herbal oils are used to balance the condition for vāta, pitta and kapha. In panchakarma appropriate oils should be selected with an understanding of the doshas.

**Vāta**

Vāta prakriti people tend to become dry so easily they need oil massage more often, they benefit from nurturing quality of a warm oil massage. It lubricates dry skin, protects joints, makes them feel grounded and strengthens the aura. They are very sensitive to touch.
Moderate pressure massage is ideal for them. Even the more subtle energy types of massage can have dramatic effects. The oil used should always be warm when applied, so it can penetrate more deeply to calm the nervous system. Recommended oils are sesame, or almond oil. Herbalised oils such as _bala- ashwagandha_ oil, create tonic effect on the body. _Dhanvantaram, Narayan or Mahanarayan_ oils are also very good to pacify inflammation or stiffness at the joints.

**Pitta**

_Pitta prakriti_ people have very sensitive skin which can easily become inflamed. _Abhyanga_ with right oil will enhance the natural luster to their skin, nourish their muscles, and calm the nervous system. Too much oil or very hot oils make _pitta_ people itchy, thirsty and irritable.

Neutral and cooling oils are good for them. Coconut oil calms and cools the body. It also reduces thirst and burning sensations. Sunflower oil helps inflamed skin. Olive oil and Ghee are more neutral. Herbs like _Gotu kola, Bhringraj, Mandukparni, Jati_ and Sandalwood are useful to bring cooling effect. Essential oils that have cooling effect include Jasmine, Lotus, Rose Mogra, Khus, Lemon grass and Gardenia. _Pitta_ people have strong likes and dislikes.

**Kapha**

_Kapha prakriti_ people need massage to improve their circulation and lymph drainage. Being oily, they need less oil. Hot sharp stimulating oils such as Mustard oil, Jojoba oil with essential oil such as cedar, pine musk, cinnamon are good. Finely meshed herbal powder massage/ _udvartana_ is beneficial for _kapha_ people.

Oils for _abhyanga_ are selected not only according to the _dosha_ balance; but also according to the climate, season, age and location. Castor and Sesame oils are good in dry climates because they are heavy and penetrate into the skin easily, going deep into the tissue. Sunflower oil is recommended for damp climate. Mustard and sesame are best in cold weather, while coconut and olive is good for hot weather. Similarly, other oils such as jojoba, grape seed and avocado are also used for _abhyanga_. Jojoba oil is very good as it is light and penetrating. Avocado is rich and nourishing. As oil is a carrier of nutrients into the body, poor quality, unnaturally colored and perfumed oils should never be used on the skin.

**Quick daily abhyanga**

When time is the factor, _abhyanga_ or oil massage should at least be done to the head, ears and feet. in order to prevent premature aging, fatigue on exertion, and to pacify _vāta_.

In _Ashtanga Hridayam, Suthra sthana_, it is noted that _abhyangam_ (self-massage) should be done on a daily basis as part of _dinacharya_ or daily routine.
Benefits of Head Massage

- Prevents headache
- Prevents hair falling, early graying, or balding
- Hair becomes strong and grow in length
- Skull bones become strong
- Brightens facial skin
- Promotes sound sleep

Benefits of Ear Massage

- Prevents ear problems, ringing in the ears
- Balances vāta
- Prevents stiffness in the neck
- Improves hearing
- Prevents headaches

Benefits of Foot Massage

- Prevents hardness, stiffness, roughness, tiredness, and insensitivity to touch
- Increases foot strength
- Prevents cracks in the foot and clogging of blood vessels
- Improves eye sight
- Promotes sleep
- Has aphrodisiac effect

Ayurvedic Facial (Mukha) Massage

Make the person receiving the mukha abhyanga lie in a comfortable position, apply warm oil on his/her whole face and neck along the collar bone using your palms. For few seconds, Place both palms on the forehead with finger tips touching the eyebrows and palms resting on the forehead, to help grounding.

Start doing mukha abhyanga step by step: (repeat all strokes 3/5 times)

**Step 1.** Start with a long stroke moving both palms away from the center of the forehead along the eyebrows, temple and cheeks towards the chin and release.

**Step 2.** With the thumb and index finger hold the chin and do a long stroke from the center along the jaw line and end at the edge of mandibular joint.
Step 3. Place palms on the forehead as before and with the fingers tips do a circular stroke moving away from center of the fore head towards the temple and coming back from the cheekbones to the middle of the eyebrows at the third eye.

Step 4. Place the thumb on both side of the nostrils (at Ida and Pingla nadi) and hold the face at jaw line with remaining four finger tips and do long stroke with the thumb along the nose and cheeks towards the jaw line using gentle pressure moving downwards and lighter when coming back.

Step 5. Hold the chin with thumb and index finger, do a circular stroke with the tip of the thumb from chin to the center of upper lip and back, use gentle pressure moving out from the center both ways.

Step 6. Place both palms on both cheeks and do circular motion.

Step 7. Hold the head with one hand and turn on one side. With the other hand using the whole palm massage the neck with a long stroke starting from the earlobe moving from front of neck to the shoulder joint and return from the back of the neck.

Step 8. Do circular stroke on the entire earlobe with thumb and index finger.

Step 9. Turn the head to the other side and repeat the same.

Step 10. Place both the palm on the forehead as in the beginning for grounding and finish.

Swedana: Sudation or heat therapies

The process of inducing sweat is known as swedana. Following the snehana therapy, swedana is performed.

Benefits of Swedana

- Helps loosen toxins and dislodge it from the dhātus
- Dilates srotas and opens up channels so malās and doshas are easily separated from the dhātus
- Improves agni
- Facilitates movement of doshas and malās from shakha to koshtha
- Relieves stiffness, heaviness and cold

Swedana is done mainly in vāta and kapha conditions and is avoided in high pitta conditions.
Indications for Swedana

- Diseases due to vitiation of vāta and kapha.
- Āma conditions.
- Stiffness, body pain, hip pain, backache, painful musculoskeletal diseases, sciatica etc.
- Exposure to cold
- Hiccough, Asthma
- Heaviness of the body

Contraindications for Swedana

- Pitta predominant diseases like fever, inflammations
- Bleeding tendencies
- Skin diseases
- Severe diarrhea
- Alcoholism
- Pregnancy
- Toxic conditions
- Menstruation
- Diseases of eye
- Obesity
- Dehydration
- Giddiness
- General weakness
- Immediately after sodhana.

During swedana, eyes and heart should be protected to avoid heating.

Types of Swedana

Swedana can be divided into Agneyasweda (using heat) and Anagneyasweda (not using direct heat). Anagneya swedana is done in conditions of vitiation of vāta when vāta is trapped by medas and kapha and to loosen that sweda is created by eg. doing regular physical exercises, using heavy blankets etc.
Based on presence of heat

1. Agni sweda (With external heat)
   - Tapa - 4
   - Ushma - 6
   - Drava - 2

2. Anagni sweda (Without external heat)
   - Exercise
   - Heavy clothing/blanket
   - Hunger
   - Fear
   - Wrestling
   - Exposure to sun
   - Anger
   - Heated house
   - Upanaha

Based on nature of heat

1. Snigdha Sweda (Moist)- Patra potala sweda (leaf bolus), Shashtika pinda sweda (rice bolus) and Kayasekam are some of the examples for Snigdha Sweda

2. Ruksha Sweda (dry)- Churna sweda (herb powder bolus), Valuka sweda (sand bolus) and Tusha sweda (bolus with rice husk) are some of the examples of Ruksha Sweda

Based on application on body parts

1. Sarvanga- Full body
2. Ekanga- Locally on one part of the body
**Agneya sweda**

Sudation techniques with external heat are of 3 types

1. **Tapa sweda** - direct heat is applied by cloth, plates, palm of the hand etc. It is application of dry heat. One easiest method is **valuka sweda** (swedana with sand).

2. **Drava sweda** - sudation by using warm liquids either by pouring all over the body or immersing body part in warm liquids.

3. **Ushma sweda** - using steam from a liquid or a cooked material. E.g. **Pinda sweda, Samsthara sweda, Nadisweda, Bhusweda, Kumbhisweda**, etc. Types of **Potli/kizhi** (cloth bolus containing various herbal powders, chopped leaves, cooked rice) like **shashtika pindasweda** or **navarakkizhi** come under **ushmasweda**.

Some examples of swedana are:

a) **Nadi Sweda**: Nadi is a channel, a tube. Steam is passed through the tube and is applied to the localized area. It is a moist heat and penetrates well in all dhātus. A facial steamer comes very handy for nadi sweda. Generally it is done for about 10 – 15 minutes.

b) **Bashpa Sweda**: In this type, a steam is applied to the whole body. A steam cabinet, steam tent or a wet sauna are examples of bashpa sweda. In the steam cabinet, a person either sits or lies down. Steam is given to the whole body except the head. Steam can be given for about 15 – 30 minutes.

c) **Pinda (Bolus) Sweda**: E.g. **choorna sweda, patrapotala sweda, shashtika pinda sweda** etc.

**Signs of ideal sweating therapy**

Swedana is to be administered until there is,

- Complete recovery from coldness and pain
- Relief from stiffness and heaviness of the body
- Softness or tenderness of body parts.

After observing these signs, the sweating process should be stopped.
Steam Bath (Bashpa Sweda)

Steam bath is a form of agneyasweda.

Duration: - 15 -20 minutes (or till samyak swinna lakshana).

Required therapists: - 1

Equipment and materials required –
- Heating equipment for Preparing medicated steam.
- Steam Chamber
- Required herbs
  1) Herbs are added into the water
  2) Dasamoola, Himalayan Cedar, Galangal root are some of the commonly used herbs
  3) Herbal oil for abhyanga – 100 ml

Procedure
- Poorva abhyangam – Rogi is prepared by giving mild abhyanga of 20/30 min. with suitable oil (or after the Synchronised abhyanga)
- Steam bath – After the abhyanga the rogi is asked to sit in the steam chamber keeping his head outside for the required time. After the swedana wipe all the sweat and apply rasnadi choornam on the head.

Precautions
- If rogi feels too thirsty, or giddy etc: stop the procedure and make him drink water (warm or room temperature).
- Vital signs like temperature, pulse, heart rate, B.P should be checked before the therapy.

Indications
- joint stiffness
- Muscular pain
- As poorvakarma for panchakarma

Contra Indications
- Bleeding disorders
- Pitta disorders
- Hypertension
- Where swedana is contra indicated
Upanaha Sweda

Swedana given by bandaging the body or affected parts with the medicated herbal paste & leaves is called as Upanaha sweda.

Required therapists: - 1 person

Materials required –

- Heating equipment (Stove)
- Bowl for Preparing the paste
- Towel
- Cotton cloth
- Eranda patra or Arka patra (leaves of Ricinus communis / Calotropis procera ) – for covering

Herbs:

1. Powder for upanaha :- Powder blend of Vata pacifying herbs
2. Dravadravya :- Dhanyamla, hot water, butter milk, ghee, decoction, oils etc.

Mix the herbs with the prepared decoction and make into a paste, apply warm. Make the leaves also warm.

Procedure

The part of the body suggested for Upanaha (e.g knee joints, elbows joints etc.) is anointed with warm oil. Then thick layer of the paste is applied on the affected area, then cover with the leaves & bandage with cotton cloth. If it is tied in the morning it can be removed at night. It can also be kept overnight and removed in the morning. After removing the paste, gently massage with warm oil.

Indication

- Poly Arthritis
- Vāta disorders in snayu (tendons) sandhi (joints) & sira (vessels)
- Arthritis

Contraindications

- Skin inflammations
- Open wounds
Benefits
Useful in localized painful condition

REMARKS
Upanaha can be used as agneya sweda & anagneya sweda, depending on the intensity of pitta association with the vāta disorder.

Common Snehana & Swedana therapies in Ayurveda

Shirodhara
Duration of the technique: - 20 to 45min.

Equipment and materials required –
- Heating equipment (Stove)
- Vessels for collecting the oil
- Towel & napkins
- Dhara vessel
- Dhara table
- Wick to insert at the bottom of dhara vessels for a required stream (also vessels with taps are available to control the stream)
- Cotton band to put at the edge of eyebrows on the forehead to avoid oil to go in the eyes.

Herbs and oil
- Herbal oil – 1 to 2 ltrs
- Rasnadi choornam

Prepare a dhara vessel—an earthen vessel of 2.5 ltrs of capacity with a hole in the bottom is taken. Another small coconut shell with a hole in the bottom is kept inverted in the bigger vessel. Through the holes of two vessels a wick of thread of the thickness of thumb is passed with a knot over the bottom of inverted coconut shell. This setup is hung at a suitable cord either from the roof or from a dhara stand. The tip of the wick hanging from its bottom should
be at height of about four fingers width (7 cm) from the forehead of the person in lying position. Specially designed metallic vessel with a tap can also be used for this purpose.

**Procedure**
The person is subjected for *abhyanga* with suitable medicated oil and then made to lie on his back with the head resting in slightly elevated position (*abhyanga* on the body is not compulsory). His eyes are covered with a strap of cotton cloth tied around the head above the head. The oil (in room temperature) is poured into the *dhara* vessel and is made to flow in to the upper part of the fore head with slow swinging movements of the *dhara* vessel across the fore head. The oil is collected and vessel is refilled by one therapist. This process is continued for 20 to 45 minutes with increase of 5 minutes every day. After that his head is gently wiped with dry cloth and the *rogi* is allowed to take rest for 5 to 10 minutes. The *rogi* should use medicated water for head bath.

**Precautions**
- Tie a band of cloth above the eyebrows in *sirodhara* to prevent oil for dripping down towards the eye.
- The warmth of the oil should be just above the body temperature.
- A rhythmic swinging is very essential and should not be too fast or too slow. The rate of swinging should be 1.33 seconds in one linear direction of 16 cm length.
- Silence is to be maintained in the therapy room.

**Observations**
1. For this therapy two therapists are needed, one for supporting and swinging of *dhara* vessel one for recycling the oil.
2. This therapy can be under taken as daily for a period of 7 to 14 days according to the nature of the disease.
3. *Kayaseka* or *abhyanga* can be under taken along with this procedure.
4. The oil need to be changed in every two days.

**Benefits**
- Stress management
- Head ache (due to vāta)
- Dandruff & Hair fall
- Insomnia
- Burning Sensation of the Head
- Relaxation of mind
Contraindications

- Fever
- Cold
- Acute eye diseases
- *Kapha* Disorders
- Headache due to sinusitis

**Udvartana**

*Udvartana* is a dry herbal powder massage (it is done in *prathiloma* direction – against hair follicles, towards the heart) It reduces *kapha*, eliminates adipose tissue deposits, strengthens muscles & beautifies skin.

Duration:- 30 min to 45 min  
Required therapists:- 2

**Equipment and materials required**

- Therapy Table
- Face masks – if necessary
- Hair cap
- **Herbs:**
  1. *Rasnadi choornam* or medicated oil - for *thalam*
  2. *Triphala* powder 150- 200 grm powder, should not be too course or too fine.

**Ingredients of Thriphala powder**

Terminalia Chebula – *Harithaki* (Sanskrit)  
Terminalia Bellerica – *Bibhithaki* (Sanskrit)  
Emblica Officinale – *Amlaki* (Sanskrit)  
Other medicated powders used are *Kulattha choorna*, *Kolakulatthadi choornam* or *Yava choornam*.

**Procedure**

*Udvartana* can be done dry using the herbal powders & wet using herbal paste. In *udvartana*, the massage is performed in *prathiloma* direction ie.; against the direction of hairs of the body. The *rogi* is advised to lie in the supine position. In dry type *udvartana*, finely powdered herbs (according to the *rogi* and disease) are sprinkled all over the body and scrubbing massage is done usually for 30mts. About 150 – 200 gms powder is needed for the massage. The *rogi* is made to lie lateral position also during the massage.
In wet *udvartana*, finely powdered herbs should be made paste by using warm water or *kashaya* and applied throughout the body and upward massage is performed in the direction opposite to that of hair follicles for 30 minutes. *Udvartana* is done by 2 therapists in a synchronized manner.

**Indications**
- Obesity
- *Srothorodha* (Obstruction of channels)

**Contra Indications**
- Chronic *vāta* & *pitta* disorders
- *Athikrisa* (too lean person)
- Pregnancy
- Children below the age of 10 years
- Old people (usually above 70 years)

**Special Instructions**
- Hair cap & Facemask may be used by the *rogi* and also by the therapist if necessary, while doing ‘dry’ type of *udvartana*. The fine Herbal powder may cause respiratory distress for sensitive people.
- Usually this therapy is done as a course of 3 to 7 days continuously. If *udvartana* is needed after 7 days, it is better to give a break for few days and then continue because continuous application of *udvartana* may increase *vāta*.
- Oily therapies like *pizhichil* etc. are not done along with *udvartana*. Such therapies are advised after the course of *udvartana*.

**Special Remarks**
The deep dry powder massage or *udvartana* helps to breakdown subcutaneous fat storage. Therapists should pay special attention to areas like thigh, shoulders and lower abdomen in obese *rogis*, where accumulation of fat is more.

**Benefits**
- Pacify *kapha*
- Reduces excessive fat in the body
- Beautify skin & improve complexion
- Firms up the muscles of the extremities
- It gives lightness to the body.
Urovasthi/Kati Vasthi/Greeva Vasthi

The indicated medicated oil is allowed to retain over the affected area by making a dam with a of Black lentil flour.

Duration: - 20 to 45 minutes

Required therapists:- 1

Equipment and materials required –
- Heating equipment (Stove)
- Bowl for collecting oil
- Towel
- Therapy table
- Black gram powder
- Cloth
- Cotton
- Medicated oil –100 to 200 ml

Procedure
- Initially, after confirming the site affected, make a circular dam made with black gram flour and make sure that there is no leakage in this structure.
- Half of the oil is made warm by indirect heating method and poured into the bund.
- When the oil becomes less warm, change the oil with cotton ball squeeze into a vessel.
- Quickly, second course of warm oil is to be poured and the earlier one should be heated and kept for making it a continuous process.
- After the therapy, the used oil has to be discarded and fresh oil can be used daily.
- After the therapy, wipe out the oil.

Sites for Retaining the Oil
- **Prushta Vasthi**- In between C-7 and T-12.
- **Kati Vasthi**- In between T-12 and S-1
- **Greeva Vasthi**- In between C-1 and C-7
- **Janu Vasti**- On the knee joint

Precautions
The heat of the oil should be felt by the therapist before applying the person
**Indications**
- Low backache
- Cervical spondylosis
- I.V.D.P
- Localized pain

**Contra Indications**
- Localized skin lesions
- Open wounds.

**Lepa**

The medicines that are in the form of a paste and used for external application are called as lepas.

**Types of Lepa**

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**Pralepa**

This is a cold lepa prepared with cold potency herbs (without heating).
It is applied as a thin layered lepa, may or may not be dry and indicated in pitta predominant skin diseases.

**Pradeha**

This is a lukewarm lepa prepared with hot potency herbs applied as thick lepa, useful in vāta and kapha predominant skin diseases.

**Alepa**

The action and thickness of this lepa will be moderate and is useful in rakta and pitta predominant skin diseases.

**General method of preparation**

The drugs are first made into a fine powder and then mixed with some liquid media like water/oil/swarasa/decoction etc. to obtain the paste form. This paste is applied over the skin.

**Rules of application of Lepa**

1. Lepas should always be applied in the opposite direction of the hair follicles. The medicinal properties get absorbed through hair roots, sweat glands and capillaries.

2. While applying the lepas, a liquid medium is added. Their quantity and quality needs to be decided as per the dosha vitiated.

3. The lepa should not be left in situ after drying. It must be removed as soon as it dries up. Because lepas in wet state help to cure the diseases and on drying, they lose their potency and causes the irritation of the skin.

4. Lepas should be prepared and used fresh.

5. Lepas should be applied only once and should not be applied over the previous one.
Pichu

This therapy is done as a part of external oleation. It can be done on both body and head.
Duration: - 20 to 45 minutes.
Required therapists:- 1

Equipment and materials required –

- Heating equipment (Stove)
- Vessels.
- Towel
- Cotton swab
- Medicated oil –100 to 150ml (depending on the area coverer, rasnadi choorna

Procedure

- *Poorva abhyangam* – as advised

- *Pichu*: Retaining oil soaked cotton swab over bregma or other parts of body for a period is called *pichu*.

*Pichu* when done on head is called *Siropichu*.

Precautions

- Tie a band of cloth above the eyebrows in *siropichu* to prevent oil for dripping down towards the eye.
- The therapy should preferably be under taken either between 7 to 10am or from 3.00 pm to 5 pm

Siropichu Benefits

- Dandruff
- Hair fall
- Facial palsy
- Insomnia

Pichu on the Body

- Localized tenderness and pain
- Arthritis
- I.V.D.P
General Contra Indications

- kapha vikaras
- Fever
- Āma dosha
- Common Cold
- Acute eye diseases

Siropichu Contraindications
Ref.Sirodhara

Siropichu Benefits

- Relieves dandruff & hair fall
- Useful in insomnia
- Relieves burning sensation of head
- Gives relaxation
- Useful in increased vāta and pitta
- Prevents premature grey hair.
- Relieves sooryavartham (a type of migraine head ache)

Body Pichu Benefits

- Provides pain relief in local areas & conditions where massage is not suitable but snehana is beneficial.
Marmas: The Vital Points

*Marma* point is an anatomical site where the muscles, arteries, veins, nerves, ligaments, bones and joints meet together. This does not mean that all the structures must be present collectively at that site of *marma*. According to *Ashtang Hridaya* these are the points where important nerves, *(dhāmani)* come together along with other structures such as muscles and tendons, etc.

Vagbhata says that those sites, which are painful, severely tender and show abnormal pulsation (should also be) considered as *marma* or vital points.

These points are the seats of *life*. They are also the sites where not only *tridoshas* (*vāta*, *pitta* and *kapha*) are present but their subtle forms *prana*, *ojas* (*soma*) and *tejas* (*agni*) are also present with *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* (Su. sh. 6122).

According to another definition, they are *Marayanti iti Marmani* meaning these are the vital areas if injured can lead to death. If *marmas* are injured they do not always result in death but can cause various diseases, which are difficult to cure. Hence, these areas can be divided into:

- Therapeutic areas
- Lethal areas

*Marma* or the vital points on the body are the junction of the body and mind. They are also important pressure points on the body much like the acupuncture points of the Traditional Chinese Medicine.

The most important difference between acupuncture points and *marma* is the *marma* points are measured in *anguli* or finger unit relative to each individual, and they are larger in size. Also, these points are not related to meridians.

Sushruta being surgeon has stressed the importance of the knowledge of *marma* in surgical practice. He has stated that in any surgical procedure the knowledge of *marma* and other structures like nerves, muscles, bones and veins and arteries is utmost essential.

While performing *ksharar karma*—application of plant alkalis—the knowledge of *marma* is essential. *Kshara* can act like a surgical instrument hence one should be cautious. The area of
marma is very sensitive hence the surgeon should take precaution while performing any surgery or while applying anything on the marma areas or near these vital points.

Marma points are stimulated by massage to achieve the healing effects to specific areas of the mind-body system. Marmas are sensitive areas so massage should be done carefully. The duration of the marma points should be at least 3-5 minutes.

For toning and strengthening the internal organs, massage in a clockwise direction. For detoxification and reducing excess doshas do it anticlockwise.

For vāta prakriti, use sesame oil in large quantity.

The ideal oil for pitta is Coconut oil, ghee, sandalwood oil, etc.

Kapha do better by with mustard oil, safflower oil.

Anatomical and applied physiological information about marma arma is essential for a panchakarma therapist as it helps to avoid the possibility of any kind of injury or trauma to these vital spots during the therapy. It also helps to select appropriate therapeutic intervention through marma points like abhyanga, pichu, vasti, etc.