

Therapeutic significance of *Abhyanga* in *Dincharya*: A review

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ABSTRACT: Ayurvedic massage is also known as *Abhyanga*. It is an ayurvedic holistic, synchronized massaging of the body towards the movement of arterial blood, basically in the opposite direction of hair growth. This massage is used for healing and detoxifying the body, mind and spirit. This is done to increase the blood flow towards the distant parts of the body and avoid overwhelming the heart with a sudden venous return. *Abhyanga* may be done using oil, herbal powder, herbal pastes or ghee. The massage strokes are long and flowing to keep the body warm for maximum absorption of the medicinal oil. This helps reduce your body fatigue and knots in the muscles. Here's what one says — "Give yourself a full-body oil massage on a daily basis. It is nourishing; pacifies the doshas; relieves fatigue; provides stamina, pleasure and perfect sleep; enhances the complexion and the luster of the skin; promotes longevity; and nourishes all parts of the body."

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to establish the importance of *Abhyanga* (massage) in *Dincharya*.

Keywords: *Abhyanga*, *Dincharya*, *Dhatu*, *Dosa*, *Vayu*, massage.

INTRODUCTION: The *Abhyanga* is a part of the *Dincharya* (daily practices) specified by the *Brhatrayi* and *Laghutrayi* series of Ayurvedic textbooks to maintain good health and well-being. *Abhyanga* is made of two words *Abhi* + *Anga*- meaning movement towards the *Dhatu*. Here the oil applied to the skin nourishes even the *Dhatus* depending on the duration of *Abhyanga*.¹ *Vayu* resides in skin & is abode of touch sense. *Abhyanga* is good for skin & one should do it every day.² *Abhyanga* (Massage) is useful measure for weak persons, who are not able to do exercise, safest *Abhyanga* is self- *Abhyanga*. *Abhyanga* (Massage) should be done non-violently. *Abhyanga* (Massage) can be described as passive exercise. Systematic rubbing or manipulating body parts is known as *Abhyanga*.³ *Abhyanga* (Massage) helps to increase the plasma concentration of an amino acid called tryptophan. This in turn increases the serum serotonin level, which is well known for imparting a

feeling of wellbeing as well as calming the mind (relaxation of the body and mind). *Abhyanga* (Massage) helps to push blood along the veins enhancing the general blood circulation. Gentle massage helps to drain lymph fluid into the circulation for utilization of its various constituents by the body.⁴

AIM AND OBJECTIVE:

To study the therapeutic significance of *Abhyanga*.

MATERIALS AND METHODS:

Different Ayurvedic classics text, Modern medical books, websites, medical journals, recent research papers and articles published reviewed and appropriate data has been collected to update the importance of *Abhyanga* in day today life.

PROCEDURE OF ABHYANGA:

One should *Abhyanga* the body with luke warm oil, according to the season in the direction of the body hair. Oil can be used according to the seasons, *Dosa* & condition. It is performed in seven positions in order.

1. Sitting position
2. Supine position
3. Left lateral position
4. Prone position
5. Right lateral position
6. Supine position
7. Sitting with legs extended to the front.

DURATION OF ABHYANGA & EFFECT ON THE BODY:⁵

<i>DHATU</i>	<i>KAALA</i>	
	<i>Matra</i>	Time/Sec.
<i>Romanta</i> (Hair Root)	300 <i>Matra</i>	94 sec
<i>Tvaca</i> (Skin)	400 <i>Matra</i>	133 sec
<i>Rakta</i> (Blood)	500 <i>Matra</i>	160 sec
<i>Mamsa</i> (Flesh)	600 <i>Matra</i>	190 sec
<i>Medas</i> (Fat)	700 <i>Matra</i>	228 sec
<i>Asthi</i> (Bones)	800 <i>Matra</i>	240 sec
<i>Majja</i> (Bone Marrow)	900 <i>Matra</i>	285 sec

MODE OF ACTION:

1. Manipulation of body parts by *Abhyanga* (Massage) enhance the overall blood circulation and transport the potency of drug to desires part.
2. It enhances the nerve stimulation.
3. Induces the release of endorphins which show analgesic effect.
4. Triggers the acupressure points.

CLASSIFICATION: They are mainly of three types.

1. According to scientific methods

- **Ayurvedic Massage:** Away from the heart or in the direction of the artery.
- **Swedish Massage:** Towards the heart or in the direction opposite to the artery.

2. According to material used

- **Powder:** Medicated powders are used.

- **Oil:** Oil is used for massage.
- **Paste Massage:** medicated pastes are used.

3. According to movement

- **Dynamic:** Tickling, Kneading, Stretching, Stroking, and Vibrating.
- **Static:** Pressing, Squeezing, Pinching, Beating, Rubbing, Tapping, Poking, Clapping and Drawing.

OTHERS:

- Massage done after oil massage is *Udvartana*.
- Hard massage done without doing oil massage is *Udgharsana*.
- According to Acharya Sushruta-massage with powder of herbs without oil is *Udgharsana*. By *Udgharsana* blood vessels get dilated & *Agni* in skin (*Bhrajaka Pitta*) gets enhanced. *Udgharsana* cures itching, rashes, *Vata* diseases, enhances strength of things and provides lightness. It dilates the blood vessels, enhances *Bhrajaka Pitta*, cures itching & rashes.
- Massage with the paste of herbs along with oil is *Utsadana*. *Utsadana* enhance complexion of ladies, gives pleasure, clearness & lightness in the body.
- Acharya Susruta mention one more type of massage known as *Samvahana*. *Samvahana* is gentle touch, starting from foot to waist which produces pleasure.

CONTRA INDICATIONS FOR ABHYANGA:

- *Abhyanga* is avoided in persons suffering from *Kapha* diseases.⁶

- A person who has been administered purgation, emetic and enema therapies.⁶
- A patient suffering from indigestion.⁶
- *Ajirna* (indigestion) and *Saama Dosha*.⁷
- *Taruna Jwara* (acute fever).⁷
- *Santarpana Janya Vyadhis* (diseases due to over nutrition)⁷

OTHER CONTRAINDICATIONS:⁸

- Never apply pressure under or over varicose veins.
- Never massage directly over infected skin, for example where there are warts, herpes, bruises and open cuts.
- While giving a massage, cover up any open cuts or scratches on the hands with a plaster or other dressing.
- Massage on the abdomen is best avoided during the first three months of pregnancy when the risk of miscarriage is highest.

IMPORTANCE OF ABHYANGA

- *Jarahar*-remover of old age, if done daily to the spine, feet and head⁹
- *Sharamhar*- remover of fatigue⁹
- *Vatahar*- remover of the humour of wind⁹
- *Drishti Prasadakar*-increases sight and keeps blindness and diseases of the eye away⁹
- *Pushtikar*- makes the body strong⁹
- *Ayushkar*- increase longevity⁹
- *Swapnakar*- induces sleep⁹
- *Twakdridhakar*- strengthens the skin⁹
- *Kleshasahatwa*- provides resistance against diseases and disharmony¹⁰

- **Abhighat Sahatwa**- resistance to injuries and power to recover quickly¹⁰
- **Kapha-Vata Nirodhak**- subsides ailments caused by mucous and wind.¹⁰
- **Mrija-Varna Balaprad**- provides strength to the skin and improves the colour and texture of the skin¹⁰

Thus the ayurveda massage is highly rated and much emphasis is placed on the use of oils in massage.

EFFECTS OF ABHYANGA ON VARIOUS BODY SYSTEM:

Digestive system: Massage aids the normal movement throughout alimentary canal assisting with many dysfunctions through its stress releasing effects. Massage increases the exertion (via the kidney) of fluids and waste products of protein metabolism, inorganic phosphorous and salt in normal individuals. It also stimulates peristalsis and can reduce cramping or spasm in the digestive tract. Massage supports healthy digestion through its stress releasing effects.¹¹

Respiratory system: Massage deepens and normalizes the breathing pattern through relaxation, & release of tension in the breathing structures, both the rib cage and the muscles of respiration. It can help to relieve congestion in the lungs through percussive and compressive movements. Massage increases the action of the heart, stimulating the blood flow to and from the lungs, helping with the elimination of waste and the absorption of oxygen.¹²

Circulatory system: Massage powerfully affects the blood flows through the tissues. This happens in one way simply by manual pressure. It induces a relaxation response in the nervous system. It helps to reduce swelling, increases the number of red blood cells in circulation. It has the overall effect of lowering blood pressure. It facilitates tissue healing through the enhancement of circulation.¹³

Nervous system: Massage stimulates the touch, pressure and proprioceptive receptors of the skin and underlying tissue. It helps to balance the autonomic nervous system. Massage relaxes the muscles and helps to reestablish proper tonus through its effect on the neuromuscular reflex pathways. Massage is known to affect the neurotransmitters of the brain and increase endorphin secretion in particular (natural painkillers) it can also reduce nerve root compression caused by muscular tension.¹⁴

Muscular system: Massage increases the blood supply and nutrition to muscles. It helps to re-establish proper muscular tone, reduce muscle and soft tissue pain, relaxes muscle, effectively reducing spasm, tension and cramping. It supports increased work capacity and encourages metabolism.¹⁵

Skeletal system: Massage improves the circulation and nutrition of the joints & helps increase range of joint movement. Massage reduces joint strain and compression through releasing tight muscles and tendons. Massage also helps to increase the retention of nitrogen,

phosphorous, and sulphur in the bones and this aids in fracture healing.¹⁶

Endocrine system: There is a complex interrelationship between pain, stress and emotions. Massage sometimes causes pain during the treatment, but a large number of recipients come for a massage for short-term or medium-term pain relief. The hypothalamus is also implicated in the waking state. Thus speculate that massage induce the hypothalamus to allow the body to be less awake through the pleasurable emotions usually associated with a relaxing massage. The hormones cortisol (natural cortisone) and adrenalin are produced when the body is under stress.

Undergoing *Shirodhara* is said to calm the nervous system, balance pituitary and pineal glands and flood the body with pleasure neurotransmitters like serotonin.¹⁷

DISCUSSION:

These days (*Abhyanga*) massage is not just for feeling good only. It is a holistic therapy that reduces the heart rate, lower blood pressure, increases blood circulation and lymph drainage, relaxes muscles, and improves range of motion and increases endorphins, the body's natural painkillers. Therapeutic massage enhances medical treatment and helps people feel less anxious and stressed, relaxed yet more alert. It had been said that, "massage is to the human body what a tune-up is for a car."¹⁸ *Vayu* is predominant in tactile sense organ which again is located in skin, oil massage is the most beneficial for skin, and hence one should use it regularly. The body of one who uses oil massage regularly does not become affected much even if subjected to accidental injuries, or

strenuous work. By using oil massage daily, a person is endowed with pleasant touch, trimmed body parts and becomes strong, charming and least affected by old age.

By massaging of oil in feet, coarseness, fatigue and numbness of feet are alleviated in no time. Further, delicacy, strength and firmness in feet, clarity of vision are attained and *Vata* is pacified. By massage of oil in feet, there is no occurrence of sciatica, cracking of sole and constriction of veins and ligaments.¹⁹

So we can say *Abhyanga* 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 and the person develops strength both physically and mentally.

CONCLUSION:

For centuries oil massage has been part of the routine of Indian households. A keep fit tradition enjoyed by everyone from babies to great grandmother. It is an excellent way to combat the stress of modern life. The expression *Abhyanga* generally refers to application & gentle massaging with oil over different parts of the body. It is to be applied on daily basis. All over the body with special emphasis overhead, ears & feet by healthy individuals for prevention of diseases & promotion of health.

Vata is the mainly responsible for tactile sensation and the tactile sensation is through the skin. Oil bath is best for the skin and so it should be done daily.

In Ayurveda, massage has been highly rated and people are advised to adopt it as a part of daily life. The way we eat and sleep every day, we should also massage and discharge waste every

day. Massage is also used therapeutically. For different kinds of diseases, different types of massages and oil massages are prescribed. In this way massage is a protector, preserver and rejuvenator, increasing self-confidence and will-power to massage is to exercise the nervous system.²⁰ so we can say, *Abhyanga* plays a vital role in *Swasthya Rakshanam* & *Vikara Prashamanam*.

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