

ABHYANGA IN INFANTS: A REVIEW STUDY**Dr. Aparna K. Chaudhari*¹ and Dr. D. B. Chavan²**

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ABSTRACT

Infancy is the period of fastest growth in our life time, which includes regular weight gain and development of brain tissues and hence demands continuous supply of nutrients. Just like other organs, skin which is the largest organ of the body and is the first barrier for any foreign invasion, also needs special care and attention. For proper health of skin, abhyanga is mentioned in ancient ayurvedic texts. other than skin health, it is also believed to perform other important functions in body depending on various factors. In *Ayurveda*, *abhyanga* is described as a daily routine practice to be followed for healthy individuals. Since ancient times, India has accepted *Abhyanga* as a

routine practice in infants, and is believed to increase strength, nourishes body, improves skin texture and accelerates growth, development and health of the newborn. The term *Abhyanga* includes application of oil or unctuous substances over either whole body or a part of it with optimum pressure and in a particular way. Abhyanga is said to be the method of gentle oil massage (oleation) all over the body followed by bath. Abhyanga in newborns is reported to improve weight gain by better thermoregulation.

KEYWORDS: *Abhyanga*, Infant, Oleation, Thermoregulation.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda has always given prime importance to the preventive as well as the curative aspect of health. *Abhyanga* is one of the very effective, popular and simple therapeutic procedure described in Ayurvedic texts. It is also included in the daily routine practice or *Dinacharya*, to be followed by healthy individuals. Infancy (28 days – 1 year) is the foundation of adult life.

Infant care is therefore very important area of health practices and practiced across the world since ancient time of human civilization. The dramatic growth of infant during the first year of life, like rapid weight gain, increase in length, development of gross motor and fine motor milestones imposes unique care during this period. *Abhyanga* is helpful to prevent premature aging and relieves the stress of daily activities. *Abhyanga* when performed in infants, is very helpful for healthy growth and development, health of their delicate skin. In *Ayurveda*, *snehan karma* is administered in two different ways; externally, it is known as *Bahya abhyanga* and internally, known as *Abhyantara Sneha pana*. In infants we cannot administer *Abhyantara snehana*, so *Abhyanga* is very useful in newborn babies and infants. *Abhyanga* results in increased peripheral circulation and vasodilation, also provides more oxygenated blood to the muscles as well as increased removal of waste products from the body.

Need of *Abhyanga* In Infants

Abhyanga in infant is a way of comforting skin inputs and nourishment for the healthy development of mind, body and spirit. In infants, application of oil reduces the stress, gives tactile stimulation, improves blood supply, protects from heat and water loss and also provides additional energy.

Benefits of *Abhyanga* In Infants

- *Abhyanga* induces sound sleep.
- Improve the strength of muscles and tendons.
- Reduces both mental and physical fatigue.
- Delays the aging process.
- Enhances immunity
- Accelerates healthy growth and development of the baby.

Indications

It is a safe procedure which can be performed on anyone who is 'vitality stable'.

Contra-Indications

- Immediately after feeding.
- Baby suffering from fever and indigestion.
- Sick neonates or infants.
- Baby with hypoglycemia.

Time of Abhyanga

- It should be performed only when the baby has digested food.
- Massage should be cold during summer season and warm during winter.
- In morning, before bathing is the appropriate time for *Abhyanga*.
- Each area of the body should be massaged for at least 5 to 7 mins.
- Whole body abhyanga can take 20 to 40 mins.
- *Abhyanga* can be performed 2 to 3 times a day.

Duration of Abhyanga

Dalhana has decoded the relation of time of *Abhyanga* with the nourishment of the *Saptadhatu* of the body i.e. how much time it needs to be done so as to nourish the respective *Dhatu*.

Dhatu	Kaala (time in Matra)
Romanta (hair follicles)	300
Twak (rasa)	400
Rakta	500
Mansa	600
Meda	700
Asthi	800
Majja	900

Principles of Abhyanga

- *Abhyanga* is performed towards the direction of heart i.e. from foot to hip, from hand to shoulders, from neck to the back and from hip to back of shoulders.
- *Abhyanga* should be started slowly and then the pace is increased gradually.
- Hands, chest, shoulders, legs and head should be massaged with firm pressure.
- Areas with less muscle mass as well as face and heart area should be massaged gently.
- *Abhyanga* should be performed in a closed room.
- *Abhyanga* should always be performed empty stomach.
- Baby should lie down on even surface.
- Circular massage is done on joint areas.

Procedure

- The massage should be done by using gentle pressure and smooth rhythmical movements.
- Place the baby supine and start from head, face, chest, abdomen, upper limbs-palms and lower limbs-soles from above downward.

- Provide gentle but firm rhythmic strokes from above downward.
- The procedure is repeated after placing the baby in prone position.
- The massage is followed by kinesthetic stimulation by performing alternate flexion and extension movement of major joints of upper and lower limbs.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

Information is collected from pub med, google, various journals articles, research papers, dissertation and thesis from different institutes and websites, textbooks on paediatrics and neonatology, *Ayurveda samhitas* and related texts, news-paper and other electronic media sources.

DISCUSSION

Abhyanga is one of the important part of *Jatmatra paricharya* which improves circulation and has a positive effect on the neurological and milestone development and better weight gain. It is very effective and economical method. Pre-bath gentle oil massage with non-irritating oil improves skin texture, muscle tone and strengthen maternal bonding.

CONCLUSION

Ayurveda newborn care protocols are very scientific. Researchers of the present era prove the scientific background of all these procedures. *Abhyanga* is very effective in fast weight gain, help reduce the pain, enhances immunity and accelerates the healthy growth and development of the baby. It should be performed with proper selection of oil and with certain precautions and under medical supervision. *Abhyanga* from birth to the infantile age doesn't have any harm is the key message to modern world.

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