APPROACH IN AYURVEDA TO KEEP HEALTHY EYE – PREVENTIVE ASPECTS

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ABSTRACT

According to ayurveda among eleven indriyas, eye is one of most important sense organ which is very much essential for social and intellectual development of a person. In ayurvedic literatures especially in Sushruta Samhita a wide description is available regarding eye diseases and its management. Acharya Sushruta has given much importance to eye as it is evident from the fact that the Uttara tantra of Sushruta Samhita starts with description of eye disorders and out of which initial 19 chapters are devoted only to eye diseases and their management. Thus one has to take necessary efforts to take care of the measures for prevention of eye from diseases. Hence to keep eye free from illness various aspects described in Ayurveda can be very helpful in this perspective. Concept of Ritucharya, Dincharya, various eye exercises and different yogic kriyas can be very fruitful in this regard.

KEYWORDS: Eye, Dincharya, Ritucharya, health, exercise, yoga.

INTRODUCTION

Eye is a precious sense organ of our body so preservation of its health and prevention it from diseases has become essential, as in present scenario changing lifestyle has resulted in various eye disorders and brought distress in routine life. Our acharyas have also given prime importance to eye by considering it as the most vital sense organ among all sense organs. In Ayurvedic texts there is wide description present related to eye health and its hygiene. So an attempt has been made to traverse the procedures for preservation of eye health in relation to certain factors like- relation of eye diseases with mental status, diet and daily activities,
sleeping habit, daily and seasonal regimen related to eye health, occupational eye health and disorders, aging process and poor vision and Rejuvenation i.e. Rasayan therapy for preservation of eye sight. Acharya Vagbhata quoted that, “Once the vision is lost, the different kind of things of the world will all become one kind only that of darkness”, this statement shows importance of eye (netra) and its health. Now a day’s ocular health has been challenged because of consequence of faulty lifestyle. Habit of smoking cigarette, tobacco chewing, consumption of alcohol, taking high calorie diet and junk food, excessive stress, prolong screen time on computer, continuous exposure to bright light etc. are some examples which may cause disturbance in ocular health.

**EYE EXERCISES**

Eye exercises are helpful to relieve asthenopic symptoms like headache, eye ache, heaviness in eyes. Head and other ocular disorders. There are some exercises advisable for example nine gaze exercise, convergence and divergence exercise, sunning early in the morning daily i.e. to see the sun at the time when it is rising(approximately for 5 min.), after sunning come to shade and rinses the eyes with diluted solution of triphala kashaya by the help of eye cups and palming etc.

**YOGIC KRIYAS/ ASANAS**

Routine exercise of certain yogasanas is very helpful to maintain ocular health and its action, e.g.

1. Matasyasanaas.
2. Sarvangasana.
4. Shavasana.
5. Trataka (sit a lotus posture and concentrate your sight in a minute object without blinking as more time as possible) etc.
6. Neti kriya

**Dinacharya (Daily Regimen)**

Acharya Charak, Sushuta, Bagbhat, Yogratnakar and Bhaishyaratnawalikar all described widely regarding Dinacharya and pathya-apathya in relation to maintain eye health. Acharya Charak stated daily regimen with anjana, Sushrut advised routine netraprakshalan. Dinacharya can be headed as follows:
Netraprakshalana (Eye Wash)
Eyes should be washed after rising in the morning and coming from outside, Acharya Sushrut also advised washing eyes with decoction of Symplocos racemosa (Lodhara kawath/kashaya) or with Amalaka(Emblica officinalis) swarasa (juice) early in the morning.

Anjana (Collyrium)
It is a procedure by which the medicine is applied with the help of Anjana Shalaka(rod made up of glass or metal) along the inner surface of the eye lid. Souveeranjan or Rasanjana can be mixed with honey and applied in the eye for kapha sodhana (as eye is pitta predominant in nature and should be protected from kapha dosha). So routine use of anjana is best simple ophthalmic medication to prevent ocular disorder. Mode of action of Anjana can be attributed as–by dissolving the accumulated vitiated kapha dosha and drains it out and maintaining netra srotas intact by dilating and increasing blood flow in the blood vessels.

Shiroabhyanga
It is a procedure in which oily preparation is applied over the head and it is the best remedy for vata dosha. Abhyanga nourishes all sense organs and acts as Dristiprasadana. The vata dosha confined to eye is pranavayu and the seat of pranavayu is in the head (murdha). When oil is applied over the head, the medicinal effect reaches up to the brain. The optic nerve which ends in Retina is the direct extension of brain stem. So the oil applied over the head, especially at the region of moordha acts on the dristipatalam through the optic nerve. So daily use of Abhyanga with oils according to “prakriti” of person can be a major preventive measure of various eye diseases.

Nasya
It is a procedure in which, various medicaments are instilled through the nasal cavity to nourish the urdhva jatrugata part of body. Nasal cavity anatomically communicate to the head and, hence it is considered as the natural route to the Shiras (head) Due to anatomical communications the medicine applied through the nasal cavity reaches all area of head, particularly strengthens the “Sringatak Marma” (cavernous sinus) which is the seat of all the centers of eye, ear, nose and tongue. In nutshell, Nasya always has action on the srotas (channels) and it cleans the Shirosrothas. So that accumulation of vitiated kapha in the srothas of the eye can be prevented by daily application of Pratimash Nasya.
Snaman (Bath)
Snana is one of important measures that has been described under heading of Dincharya. The temperature mechanism is maintained and blood circulation is kept intact by Snana. Hot water is preferred for body bath and cold water for head bath. If hot water is used for head bath it can adversely affect the hair and eyes leading to various diseases.[8-9]

Mukhalepa
Application of medicines on face in the form of poultice is called mukhalepa. Mukhalepa is of three types Doshahara, Vishahara and Varnakara. The facial artery, facial nerve and trigeminal nerve are lying along the cheek, having branches to the eye. So the medicinal value of the mukhalepa in turn affects the eye also.[10]

Kawal and Gandoosha
Both of these are types of gargling of medicated decoctions. The only difference is in the drug dose and techniques. In Gandusha Mouth is filled with medicated decoctions at its maximum capacity. There is no space for rinsing of mouth. The medicated decoction is only held in mouth for some time and then spitted out. Kawal In this type, the quantity of decoction is small. There is actual gargling of medicated decoction. Indications for both Kawal and Gandush are Diseases of ear, mouth, throat, eyes etc. The ophthalmic branch of facial artery lies along the cheek. Medicine may get absorbed through mucous membrane due to pressure effect of the liquid medicine. The structure of the eye may get nourished, stimulated, evacuated or maintained by the medicinal value of the drugs used for Kawal. In Gandoosha the same function can be explained due to increase in permeability of vessels, which in turn facilitates more absorption of medicines as well the nerve endings of oral cavity stimulated and brings reflex action in the eyes.

Padabhyanga, Padaprakshalan and Padatra Dharan
According to Vangbhatta there are two siras in the middle part of the foot that reaches to head hence taking care of foot is also very important as foot is connected to the eye.[11] Nerve endings in the foot are highly sensitive and stimulation of the nerve endings of the foot reflects in the eye via sympathetic and parasympathetic supply. So foot should be kept clean, abhyanga and footwear should be used to avoid physical injuries to the foot as padavyanga, padaprakshalana (cleaning foot) and padatra dharana (using footwear) has chaksyushya effect (improves vision).[12-14]
Trayopasthambha (Tripods of Life) and Eye Health

Three tripods of life i.e Ahara, Nidra and Brahmacharya are very significant as they sustain and maintain the life if they are followed properly. Ahara (Diet) plays major role in keeping eyes healthy. Virudha Ahara (incompatible foods) may leads to poor vision or cause blindness.[15]

Nidra (Sleep) and Eye Health

Normally 6-8 hours of sleep is necessary for a normal adult. Sleep rejuvenates the mind and body. Sound sleep is absolutely necessary for the eyes. During sleep, the eye is at complete rest and retains functional capacity. Sushruta has mentioned “Swapnaviparyayat” (faulty sleep) as etiological factor in context of netra roga.[16] So sleep deprivation leads to many eye disorders like floppy eye lid syndrome, dry eye, asthenopic symptoms, blurred vision, change in colour perception. When natural urge of sleep is hold it leads to Akshigauravam (heaviness and fatigues in eyes).

Use of Chattrak (umbrella)

Use of umbrella protects the eyes from sun shine, heat, dust and smoke and it is chakshyusah.[17]

Vegadharana (Suppression of Natural Urges)

In the context of etiological factors of eye diseases Acharya Sushruta has mentioned Vegbinigrahat (suppression of natural urge) and particularly Baspagrahat (suppression of tears) and Acharya Charka has mentioned that Nidra (sleep) and Baspa vega (Suppression of tear urge) are responsible for various eye diseases. It is quite evident that in modern era life style, people used to suppress natural urge due to various reasons like busy work schedule, frequent travelling and many other reasons.

Stress and Eye Health

A good, balanced mental status is essential for proper functioning of the eyes because sense organs can perceive the objects only in the active presence of mind.[18] In the case of chronic stress and anxiety, the level of adrenaline within the body remains elevated. This can cause pressure on the eyes, sometimes resulting in blurred vision. Many people with long-term anxiety find that they experience eyestrain during the day. A common feature of anxiety is hyper vigilance and the anticipation of events that will increase stress. Vigilance actually affects all the senses but as far as vision is concerned our pupils dilate in response to
adrenaline order to take in more of the surroundings. We become highly sensitized to any slight movement. Over time this and the strain from other senses can cause muscular tensions and headaches. Central Serous Chorioretinopathy (CSR) is believed to be exacerbated by stress. Again stress may induce hypertension which leads to retinal vein occlusion and other vascular disorders of retina. To maintain proper eye health and vision Vagbhtta advised “manaso nibrutti” i.e. withdrawing mind from all the sensual functions.[19]

**Rasayana Therapy and eye Diseases**

As per Sarangadhra due to normal ageing process vision becomes poor in 6th decade of life.[20] According to modern medicine age related macular degeneration (ARMD), Age related Cataract are diseases which occur due to ageing and oxidative stress in day to day life process. To avoid these problems or slow down the process of ocular degeneration Ayurved advocates Chaksyushya Rasayan therapy, the person who follows regular diet and regularly takes Triphala powder along with honey and Ghee in the night is always free from diseases of eye.[21-22-23-24]

**DO’S AND DON’T REGARDING EYE HEALTH**

1) **Eat plenty of vegetable and fruits**

Lutein has been proven scientifically to help reduce the chances of developing cataracts and macular degeneration disease. Hence plenty of vegetables like carrot and dark green leafy vegetables having Lutein and Beta carotene are highly beneficial for eye health. It helps to protect eye from ARMD, delay cataract formation.

2) **DO get plenty of Vitamins A and C**

Vitamin- A supports the repair of body cells. Our eyes have cells, just like the rest of body. They become damaged, and die naturally. Intake of vitamin A help to make sure that the cells repair well and grow back without damage. The vitamin A also help for proper functioning of rods and cones, protect the other tendons and ligaments within the eye. Its deficiency may cause Night blindness, Xerosis etc. On the other hand vitamin C, also help to boost cell repair. It also boosts immune system of body. There are infections and diseases that will affect the quality of eye health. If one can keep them away, we can have a better chance of protecting our eyesight. Amalaki and Gooseberry are rich source of vitamin C.
3) **DO regular exercise of eye muscles**

4) **DO get More Antioxidants**
Antioxidants are very important for eyes as they help in protection for immune system. It gets extra support to fight off various illnesses and diseases that body is faced with. This instantly helps to support the eye health.

6) **DO make sure for proper Sleep**
Proper sleep is very important for relaxation of eye muscles. The eye muscles work throughout the day, as one try to focus on everything going on in the world. The muscles have to relax and tense while changing the distance that one is looking. Hence proper sleep is important for relaxation of eye muscles.

7) **DO make sure for drinking of plenty of Fluids**
Eyes need proper hydration. If they get dehydrated, there is itching, foreign body sensation, pain in the eyes and may lead to dryness in the eyes, hence plenty of water and fluids containing seasonal fruits and vegetables should be taken.

8) **Do follow the 20/20/20 Rule**
According to 20/20/20 rule every 20 minutes, you should look at an object 20 feet away for 20 seconds. This is something that we tend to overlook when protecting our eye health. We’re focused so much on the computer screen at work, which isn’t good for the eyes at all. It helps to maintain tear film on the ocular surface, keep eye muscle relaxed.

9) **DON’T wear glasses all the time**
Wearing glasses helps to reduce some of the strain on eyes to focus on objects close or far away. However, eye muscles will need to do some work and relaxation. Cornea gets oxygen directly from environment, hence continuous wearing of contact lens restricts to provide oxygen supply to cornea.

10) **DON’T smoke**
Peoples who smoke are at a higher risk of developing various eye diseases, including cataracts and macular degeneration. Optic nerve damage may also occur due to smoking.

**CONCLUSION**
Disturbed lifestyle exposures are found closely associated with eye diseases. Their causes results of metabolic changes influenced by processes of growth and aging. The prevention
modalities suggested in literature such as regular and proper eye exercise, yoga practice, following Dincharya and Rtucharya, Anjana, Nasya, healthy diet etc. along with some positive life style changes helps a lot in prevention of various eye diseases. Do’s and don’ts in perspective to ocular health plays a leading role in preventing the eyes from any sort of illness.

REFERENCES