

REVIEW ARTICLE- ABHYANGA IN PEDIATRIC PRACTICES

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ABSTRACT

Neonatal period is the most delicate age group of life. The care taken in the neonatal period decides the nature of upcoming human being. *Jatmatra paricharya* plays a key role in neonatal care which is an ornament of *Ayurveda* in pediatrics. *Abhyanga* (massage) is one part of it. By massaging the neonate with oil, it relieves the pain, stress, and exertion of the baby which is experienced during labour while passing through the birth canal. It helps in temperature regulation, prevents the baby from hypothermia, also maintains blood circulation, increases weight, lubricates the body. In short, it plays an important role in growth and development of newborn. It is also used in other pediatric

diseases like cerebral palsy, hemiplegia, ASD, ADHD, etc. Some special care needs to be taken during *Abhyanga* like, not to stretch the limbs of the baby harshly, not to apply more pressure as the baby is delicate & it can not bear it. Thus, if practiced with proper precautions *Abhyanga* remains a very promising and acceptable practice in neonatal period.

**KEYWORDS:** *Abhyanga*, Neonatal period, *Jatmatra paricharya*, Growth and development of newborn.

INTRODUCTION

*Swasthasya swastha rakshanam l*

*Aturasya vikarprashamanam ch ll* <sup>[1]</sup>

This is the *Prayojana* of *ayurveda*. *Ayurveda* has mentioned a lot of things to take care of the healthy one. *Kaumarbhritya* is the branch precisely deals with care of newborn. *Bhritya*

means taking care of. *Jatmatra paricharya* is important in neonatal care. *Abhyanga* is one of them. It had mentioned as a part of *dinacharya* for the maintenance of health. *Vagbhat* has mentioned *abhyanga* as '*Jarahar*' (slows down the aging process), '*shramhar*' (overcome fatigue), '*vatahar*' (prevents the disease caused by vata). It promotes and regulates proper function of *vata*. '*Drishtiprasadan*' (prevent the eye diseases like timir), '*pushtikar*' (nourishes the body), '*ayushya*' (longevity of an individual), '*swapnkar*' (helps in getting sleep), '*twakdardhyakar* (promotes skin texture and muscle strength of individual.)<sup>[2]</sup>

In *Ayurveda*, *abhyanga* is the part of *snehan* which comes under *purvkarma* (pre procedure) of *panchkarma*. *Panchkarma* is contraindicated in children because many of the traditional practices are harmful but *Snehan* is helpful and beneficial for children. *Snehan* is of two types. External application (*bahya snehan/abhyanga*) and internal administration (*abhyantar paan*). *Abhyanga* is defined as an *Ayurvedic* procedure in which *sneha dravya* or medicated oil are massaged over body in *anulomagati*.<sup>[3]</sup>

There are four types of *sneha dravya* according to *Acharya Charak*. These are *Ghrita* (ghee), *taila* (oil), *vasa* (fat) and *majja* (bone marrow). *Taila* is best for all types of *prakruti* (body constitution) out of these four *sneha dravyas*. It is very beneficial for skin, promotes intellect and appetite.<sup>[4]</sup>

The procedure of *abhyanga* will alleviate the vitiation of *vata dosha* occurred during the birth process. *Vata* is predominant in skin, so body receives tactile stimulation and good strength. During delivery while passing through the birth canal, the baby experiences exertion, to relieve such stress and strain, and to promote good circulation, *abhyanga* is done.<sup>[5]</sup>

After cry, the child should be massaged with *bala tail*. After application of oil, the child should be bathed with lukewarm decoction. *Abhyanga snana* helps in cleansing the body of child completely.<sup>[6]</sup> After birth, massage with oil is a popular in Indian tradition and may prove beneficial as it provides insulation against heat and insensible water losses. Some oil gets absorbed into the thin skin of the baby and provide nutrition. Touch (*sparsh*) is believed to improve neuro-motor development of the baby by sending stimulation signals to the brain. In all, *Bala* oil massage therapy helps in promotion of strength, supports healthy neurological development, maintains the health and provides warmth to the newborn besides stimulating the nervous system into action soon after birth.<sup>[7]</sup>

- **The mechanism of absorption of oil through skin**

The skin is relatively permeable to fat soluble substances and relatively impermeable to water soluble substances. Essential oil molecules are so tiny that when they are smeared to the skin, they are capable to pass through the stratum corneum and the outer layer of epidermis. Then, passes through dermis, capillaries and blood stream. There are many factors that affect absorption of an oil molecule. Circulation and warmth can be increased by massage.<sup>[8]</sup>

- **Hazards of hypothermia**

Hypothermia is a core temperature  $<36-36.5^{\circ}\text{C}$ . In premature infants, hypothermia increases morbidity and mortality. Hypothermia may be purely environmental or represent intercurrent illness e.g. sepsis. Maintaining an appropriate environmental temperature in delivery room or operating room is essential in preventing hypothermia. Prolonged, unrecognized cold stress may divert calories to produce heat, impairing growth. Persistent hypothermia can result in hypoglycemia and metabolic acidosis increases the risk of late onset sepsis and mortality.

- **Mechanism of heat loss**

Thermal equilibrium is affected by relative humidity, air flow, direct contact with cool surface, proximity to cool objects and ambient air temperature. Neonates are prone to rapid heat loss and consequent hypothermia because of high surface area to volume ratio which is even higher in LBW neonates. There are several mechanisms for heat loss. Conductive heat loss (neonates are placed in contact with cool surface or objects), convective heat loss (a flow of cooler ambient air carries heat away from the neonate, radiant heat loss (bare skin is exposed to an environment containing objects of cooler temperature), evaporative heat loss (neonates are wet with amniotic fluid).<sup>[9]</sup>

The perception of abhyanga is intensely beneficial to the brain, nervous system, mind, soul, skin and joint. The massage provokes a feeling of being enclosed in loving arms. It stimulates the warmth and make powerful difference in how you feel about yourself as well as everything and everyone around you. It replaces the anxiety with the sense of calmness and contentment. *Abhyanga* oil therapy creates a buffer between baby's skin and harsh environment effect, maintaining skin soft and supple. This *Ayurvedic* full body massage also strengthen the fragile skin and increase skin's natural vibrant beauty helping skin to adapt the aging process more graceful and reduce wrinkles.<sup>[10]</sup>

*Abhyanga* inspires blood circulation boosting quick elimination of metabolic wastes and provides immediate relief to diseases and energy and energy to last all over the day. An unrecognized benefit of *abhyanga* is its ability to stimulate and nourish internal organs. The massage helps in alteration of the functioning of the organ and improves the body's ability to flush out the toxins. It also revitalized and energizes the cell of the body.<sup>[11]</sup>

The warmed medicated oil used in *abhyanga* intensely penetrates cells. It releases physical, mental and spiritual pollutants from our body, hence scrubbing our body from head to toe inside out and makes it toxin less. The oil, herbs and massage will be carefully chosen and customize to suit body type and doshas, enabling to precipitate the stored up toxins and promoting self-healing of cells.<sup>[12]</sup>

*Abhyanga* allows the absorption of all nutrients in the body from the oil and herbs through the skin and assist the skin to eliminate toxins efficiently. If *abhyanga* is performed daily, it absorbs nutrients to heal the body and eliminate toxins to cleanse the body. Therefore, this particular practice has the ability to relax body and give energy. In *Ayurvedic* practices, herbal massage oil chosen for *abhyanga* are usually known for their ability to strengthen the body and mind. *Abhyanga* can also enhance endurance and energy while having ability to relax body.<sup>[13]</sup>

Each human being is composed of a combination of 5 different elements, ether, wind, fire, water and earth. *Dosha*, according to *Ayurveda*, need to remain balanced in a person. An inequality will manifest a negative or unwanted condition. Using *Ayurvedic* oils in massage is a potent contributor at preserving coordination and equilibrium. Due to the extremely small size of the oil molecules, *Ayurveda* oil penetrates the skin easily and transport the healing properties of nature, directly to the cell of the body.<sup>[14]</sup>

The effect of massage is on physiological and behavioral parameters among low birth weight babies. The massage among LBW babies may have a potential provider greater weight gain and better alteration to external stimuli. The effect of combined therapy of *mahamash tail abhyanga*, *shashtik shali pinda sweda* (bolus massage using rice and milk) and *mustadi rajyapan basti* is the management of hemiplegia, cerebral palsy, paralysis of one vertical part of the body. This combined approach should statistically significant improvement after treatment in all parameters.<sup>[15]</sup>

Autistic children, who usually don't like being touched, show and attentive after receiving massage therapy from their parents. If the massage received in children with atopic dermatitis, eczema, scaly skin, itching skin problem, it seems to experience less redness scaling and other symptoms. Massage may improve mood in children with ADHD and help them feel less fidgety and hyperactive. Adolescent with eating disorder feel less depressed and anxious after receiving massage therapy. Children with juvenile rheumatoid arthritis have been shown to experience less discomfort, morning rigidity and nervousness as a result of massage therapy. It reduces anxiety during labour. A bolus massage increases oxytocin a hormone known to facilitate bonding.<sup>[16]</sup>

*Dalhana* has described the effect of *abhyanga* according to its duration

When the *abhyanga* is done for 300 *matras* (95 sec), the oil reaches to hair root. The oil reaches to skin in 400 *matras* (133 sec), in *rakt dhatu* in 500 *matras* (160 sec), in *mamsa dhatu* in 600 *matras* (190 sec), in *meda dhatu* in 700 *matras* (228 sec), in *asthi dhatu* in 800 *matras* (240 sec) and it reaches to *majja* when it is performed up to 900 *matras* (280 sec). Means at least 3 min are needed to penetrate the oil in the deepest layer.<sup>[17]</sup>

## DISCUSSION

*Abhyanga* is the traditional practice which come from our forefathers. *Panchkarma* is contra-indicated in children. But *Snehan* is safer and beneficial. Neonatal morbidity is the factor which is to be prevented through *Abhyanga*. It is the most important procedure practiced till today. According to *Ayurveda*, *swasthya rakshan* is the main aim. It includes personal hygiene, care of various organs and exercise. *Abhyanga* makes the skin soft, beautiful and increases strength and reduces stress experienced by the baby as well as the mother.

*Dhatupushti* is done by *guru*, *snigdha* properties of *taila*. Capability of bringing out cell division is performed by *Jivaniya dryavyas*. They generate the healthier tissue. Vagal activity is increased by *abhyanga* which in turns increase gastric motility and weight gain. Blood flow and stroke volume of heart is also increased by *abhyanga*. Oil applied on skin enters the *rasadi dhatu* at about five minutes. It is *mrijapada* (cleans the body from dirt), *varnaprada* (improve the body complexion), *balvan* (improves physical strength), *swapnkar* (induces sound sleep), *ayushyakara* (prolongs life span). It prevents premature aging, relieves the stress of daily activities, makes the skin soft and nourishing. Thus, *Abhyanga* is acceptable in the pediatric practices.

## CONCLUSION

*Abhyanga* is the important neonatal care protocol which contribute to the growth and development of the newborn baby. It is very effective in gaining weight in preterm, reduces pain during labour, thermal regulation, prevents from hypothermia, maintenance of blood circulation, enhancement of immunity, etc. It can be practiced by anyone from birth of baby without any harm if done under medical supervision and precaution is taken. Also, it can be used in many pediatric diseases like hemiplegia, cerebral palsy, ADHD, ASD, atopic dermatitis, etc. If it is done in proper way, it will be the boon for children. Hence it should be promoted.

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