

Various methods of pain management in *Ayurveda*

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ABSTRACT

Pain can be described as any physical or mental suffering or discomfort caused by illness or injury. No matter however mild the pain is anywhere in the body it lands person in state of discomfort and affects day to day activities. Pain can present in various ways as throbbing pain in toothache, colic pain which comes in spasm as in renal calculi, muscular pain as in sprain, sport injury and joint pain due to inflammatory condition and many more.

In today's era musculoskeletal and neuromuscular pain like pain of arthritis, sciatica, lumber spondylosis, migraine, etc are very common. Pain is also categorized as acute or chronic on the basis of duration. Our answer to pain is a pain-killer, which on frequent uses kills our resistance power. Ayurveda explains the origin of pain due to vitiated Vata dosha and once Vata dosha is treated efficiently, the pain subsides automatically. Many people have a false belief that Ayurveda is not good in curing acute pain and Ayurvedic medicines should only be consumed in

chronic pain and it always give very slow result but the thing is they are unaware of the wonderful management of Ayurveda.

KEYWORDS: Pain, Agnikarma, Raktamokshana, Marma-chikitsa, Snehan, Swedan, Basti, Sthanik Basti, Shirodhara, Ekal dravya and Ausadh yoga.

INTRODUCTION

Pain is a major symptom in many medical conditions and is the most common reason for physician consultation. It interferes with person's quality of life and general functioning. The pain not only interferes with physical functioning but also causes impairment in attention control, working memory, mental flexibility, problem solving and information processing speed. The chronic pain may also associate with increased depression or anxiety. To relieve this pain every person seeks such a treatment which has minimum side effect and maximum benefit. On this parameter

Ayurvedic procedures and medicines seem to be more effective.

AIM AND OBJECTIVE

To increase threshold of pain and bring balance of doshas to subside pain through various Ayurvedic procedures.

Ayurvedic Means To Manage Pain

There are various ways to manage pain in Ayurveda

1. Agnikarma- *Agnikarma* (Actual cauterization) is a para-surgical procedure where actual heat is transmitted into the tissues to relieving the pain.

Acharya Susruta has considered *Agnikarma* superior than *Aushadha*, *Kshara* and *Shashtra Chikitsa* as the diseases which are not cured by the above are cured by *Agnikarma* and the diseases treated by *Agnikarma* do not reoccur.[1]

Agnikarma pacifies the *Vata & Kapha* doshas, removes *srotovarodha*, increases *rasa-rakta samvahana* to the treated area,

increases *dhatwagni* causing digestion of *ama*. By all above mechanism, *Agnikarma* nullifies the disease process to relieve the pain in many musculoskeletal and arthritic problem.

In *Agnikarma* (Actual cauterization), epidermal burn is produced through red hot *Panchdhatu Shalaka*. It is usually done in conditions like joint pain, pain due to

cervical or lumber spondylosis, sciatica, frozen shoulder, etc. It is also useful in pain at heel in which burn is done by *Mruttika Shalaka*. [2] (earthen rod).

In indirect method, a small rod of gold with a blunt end, specially designed for this purpose is placed on the affected area and the heat is transferred through the other

end by a candle, till the patient can bear the heat.

Agnikarma works through “Gate Control Theory” according to modern research to

prevent the sensation of pain to reach the brain and hence provides immediate relief.[3] It was proposed in 1965 by Ronald Melzack & Patrick Wall. The gate control theory of pain asserts that non-painful input closes the “gates” to painful input, which prevents pain sensation from travelling to the central nervous system. Therefore stimulation by nonnoxious input is able to suppress the pain.[3]

It has also been postulated that the human body can easily absorb far-infrared heat because of its deep penetrating ability. Infrared waves can actually penetrate

up to 2-3 inches deep into muscular tissue and Ligaments. When far infrared heat penetrates through the skin into muscular tissue and ligaments, it changes into

heat energy. The thermal energy effect within the deep layers of tissues cause blood vessel dilatation which improves blood circulation and promotes healing and wellness.

2. Raktamokshan (Bloodletting)- It is performed in various ways to treat pain, the common methods used in practice are **a) Jalaukavcharan (Leech therapy)** – The

characteristic feature of leech to suck the impure blood from the body. In conditions like painful cracked heels or soles and palms due to excessive dryness, headache due to vitiated pitta, some skin diseases, swelling in various tissues or joints, pain due to contused wound where blood capillaries get ruptured and the blood gets accumulated under the skin resulting in pain. Leeches are usually used where the cause of pain lies in blood tissue. The moment the impure blood is sucked out the pain disappears.

It has also been suggested that the leeches have analgesic effect in osteoarthritic pain which may be due to

salivary secretion of analgesic agents, such as inhibitors of kallikrein and anti-inflammatory agents, including protease inhibitors.[4] It has also been postulated that Met-enkephalin and Leu-enkephalin are small endogenous peptides that bind to the same specific receptors as opiate analgesics to relief pain.[5]

b) Viddha karma- This is a miniature of bloodletting procedure, a very small puncture is done with the help of an insulin needle. The knowledge of vital points and symptom related points is essential. This procedure serves many purposes but usually helpful in headache, eye-ache, tonsillitis, nasal blockage, renal colic, pain related to nerve defects, joint pain, radiated pain, and much more. The bloodletting gives its miraculous results in fraction of a second.

3. Marma chikitsa- It is an effective, non invasive and handy method of wholesome healing. The concept of *marma* in *Ayurveda*, *chakras* in *Yoga* and meridian system in Acupressure or Acupuncture resemble each other closely. *Marma* can be viewed as the meridian point system of *Ayurveda*, corresponding to organs, nerves, and bodily systems. Through stimulation of *marma* by means of *Abhyanga* (massage), *Mardana* (Acupressure), Aroma therapy, *Pranic* healing, Herbal paste application (*lepa*), *Raktamokshan* (bloodletting) and *Agni karma*, the *Prana* (vital energy) existing in *marmas* can be directed to remove blockages (even in remotely connected areas) and stimulate energy flow, thus resulting in a state of healthy body, mind and spirit.[6] It may be used independently or as a hands-on adjunct to the standard therapies recommended for a particular health issue which directly or indirectly work by influencing *marmas*, but all of them basically require application of some kind of pressure or /

and appropriate medications over the different *marma* points.

Marma may help to treat following pathological condition

- ✓ Muscular pain
- ✓ Joint pain
- ✓ Respiratory obstructions
- ✓ Nervous system disorders
- ✓ Headaches & migraines
- ✓ Mental stress
- ✓ Fatigue
- ✓ *Vata vyadhi*
- ✓ Paralysis
- ✓ Cervical or Lumber Spondylosis

4. Snehan- using oils, both internally and externally is a very important Ayurvedic therapy. For this either medicated oil or ghrīt is given for oral intake or warm, medicinal oils are applied in large amounts all over the body or to a part of body. *Sneha* (oil/ghrīt) may be employed according to the *doshas*.

Snehana therapy is useful for arthritis, insomnia, paralysis, tremors, nervous exhaustion, constipation, and other *Váyu* derangements.[7]

5. Swedan- it is the *Steam therapy* applied locally or to whole body. According to *Astanga Hridayam*, after oleation, swedan or steam therapies are employed for effective dislodging and liquefying of

toxins and improving digestion. *Swedan* causes the body's channels to widen, enabling *ama* to easily flow from the tissues back to the GI tract and improve circulation. Heat allows the skin and blood (outer disease pathway) to be cleansed. This relieves and reduces fat tissue and muscle tension. Heat also restores balance to *Váyu* and *Kapha* (i.e., relieving pain and stiffness) and reduces the *ama* by increasing *dhatwagni*.

Swedan is suggested for different pains like earache, headache, monoplegic, hemiplegic, paraplegic pain, pain due to constipation, absence or retention of

urine. It is also indicated for stiffness and tetany arthritis (muscle spasms and tremors caused by poor metabolism of calcium, and associated with poor parathyroid gland functioning).[7]

Vasodilation caused by *Svedan* increases blood flow to the area resulting in increasing supply of nutrition and drug to that area.

6. Basti- According to Ayurveda Vata is the main factor in causation of pain related diseases and Basti treatment is the best treatment for degenerated Vata. To show the importance of *Basti Chikitsa* Acharya Charaka has called it as “*Ardha Chikitsa*” of Ayurveda.[12] Basti is useful for many disorders including chronic constipation, sciatica, lower back pain, arthritis, gout, and rheumatism. It also heals numerous neurological disorders like Parkinson’s, Muscular dystrophy, paraplegia, hemiplegia, poliomyelitis, osteoporosis, and muscle and nerve atrophy.

7. Sthanik Basti- it is soaking a body part with lukewarm medicated oil placed in a dam made from dough of *Urad* (black gram), such as -

- ✓ *Shiro Basti* (Head),
- ✓ *Greeva Basti* (Cervical area),
- ✓ *Uro Basti* Chest/Heart),
- ✓ *Katti Basti* (Lumbosacral area),
- ✓ *Janu Basti* (Knee).[7]

It produces cumulative effect of *Snehan* and *Swedan* at the area of application.

8. Shirodhara- In this, lukewarm oil or decoction or any other liquid like *Takra* is made to flow on the head. The liquid poured on the forehead is one of the most divine, relaxing therapies one can experience.

Shirodhara therapy has been found as a safe and effective treatment modality having tranquilizer and anxiolytic effects resulting into a kind of relaxation

response causing relief in *Shirashoola* (Headache).

9. Ekal dravya (Single Drug)

- Godanti bhasma
- Guggulu
- Aswagandha
- Rasna
- Nirgundi
- Langali
- Kuchala
- Guduchi
- Eranda
- Bala
- Atibala
- Shunthi
- Nagarmotha
- Ajmoda

10. Ausadh yoga (Drug Formulations)

i. Ras/bhasma

- Vatagajaankush Rasa
- Mahavatagajaankush Rasa
- Vatavidvansaka Rasa
- Mahavatvidvansaka Rasa
- Brihatvatchintamani Rasa
- Ekangaveerya Rasa
- Sameerpanag Rasa
- Navajeevan Rasa
- Rasasindoor
- Mallahsindoor
- Shirashoolharavajra Rasa

ii. Churna

- Trikatu Churna
- Panchakol Churna
- Ajmoodadi Churna
- Hingvastaka Churna
- Satdharana Churna

iii. Guggulu

- Yogaraja Guggulu
- Mahayagaraja Guggulu
- Trayadashanga Guggulu
- Kaishoor Guggulu
- Shinghnada Guggulu
- Amrita Guggulu
- Rasnadi Guggulu
- Panchamritlauh Guggulu
- Abha Guggulu

- Lakshadi Guggulu

iv. Kwath

- Rasnasaptak Kwath
- Rasnastak Kwath
- Dashmool Kwath
- Harsingar patra Kwath
- Gokshuradi Kwath

v. Asav-arista

- Dashamoolarista
- Aswagandharista
- Balarista

vi. Tail

- Panchguna Taila
- Mahanarayana Tail
- Prasarani Tail
- Vishgarbha Tail
- Mahavishgarbha Tail
- Mash Tail
- Mahamash Tail
- Bala Tail
- Balalakshadi Tail
- Ksheerbala Tail
- Saindhavadi Tail

vii. Ghrit

- Aswagandha Ghrit
- Dashmool Ghrit
- Chitrakadh Ghrit
- Panchkol Ghrit
- Guduchyadha Ghrit

CONCLUSION

Agnikarma is a procedure frequently indicated in many Vata and Kapha predominant conditions. It is very effective procedure for pain management by inhibiting the pain pathways. Bloodletting also relieves the pain by removing the pain causing agents and by removing the vitiated doshas. On the other hand many chemicals present in leech saliva relieves the pain by blocking the receptors responsible for producing the pain. Snehana and Svedhana pacifies Vata, the main culprit in causing pain. *Basti* works

at the *mool sthana* (prime site) of Vata to remove the vitiated Vata from the body and hence relieving the pain of respective disease. *Sthanic Basti* produces cumulative effect of *Snehan* and *Swedana* to pacify Vata and subside local pain of Head, Cervical area, Lumbosacral area, Knee, etc. *Sirodhara* therapy has been found as a safe and effective treatment of headache. Many single drugs and formulations have been told in Ayurveda to manage different kind of acute and chronic pain. All above measures give miraculous results in no time.

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Cite this article:

"Various methods of pain management in Ayurveda."

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Ayurline: International Journal of Research In Indian Medicine 2020; 4 (2) :01-06