

ROLE OF ABHYANGA IN NEWBORNS

Dr Shubhangi Kapil Thakur

Assistant Professor, Kaumarabhritya Department, Sumatibhai Shah Ayurveda
Mahavidyalaya, Hadapsar, Pune -Maharashtra

ABSTRACT

Neonatal period is very crucial phase of life. One has to provide systematic, luxurious and sophisticated neonatal care. Ayurveda mentioned very scientific approach toward newborn care as *Jatamatra Paricharya*; means a protocol. *Abhyanga* is one of these care protocols. Neonatal massage with lubricant is in practice around the world and resembles with Ayurveda *Abhyanga* process. In vitally stable neonates *Abhyanga* can be done with particular precaution considering the indications and contraindications. *Abhyanga* increases the strength, nourishes body, improves skin texture and accelerates the healthy growth and development of newborn. Increased weight gain, reduced pain, enhanced attentiveness, reduced depression and enhanced immune function (increased natural killer cells and natural killer cell activity) are some advantages of newborn massage. During *Abhyanga* prevent harmful and painful practices and social taboos, like stretching of limbs, pulling of ear and nasal cartilages etc. should not be practiced. Oil which is suitable for baby according to local conditions should be used. *Bala Taila*, is one of the best oil among the all oil preparations in Ayurveda. Hence though *Abhyanga* is considered as complimentary and traditional ancient practice, it is very useful for the healthy newborn and contribution to modern health society.

KEYWORDS: *Abhyanga*, Neonatal Massage, *Jatamatra Paricharya*, *Bala Taila*.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda has given prime importance to preventive as well as curative aspect. Swasthavrittha is one of the important branch which deals with dinacharaya. *Abhangya* is one of the procedure to be performed daily '*abhangaymchareet nityam*'¹ as well as *poorvakarma* of *shodhana karma*. The reference of *abhangya* is found in *brihattraiyee* and *laghutraiye* except in *Madhava nidana*. *Abhangya* is said to be the measure of gentle massage of oil all over the body followed by bath. The procedure of *abhangya* will alleviate the

vitiation of *vata dosha*, occurred during the child birth. *Vata* is predominant in skin, so one should adhere to it habitually, by restoring to anointing daily the body will have good tactile stimulation and good strength. During delivery while passing through the birth canal the baby may experience exertion, to relieve such stress and strain, to promote good circulation, *abhangya* is done.²

Ayurveda which had explained the newborn care in sequential way. All these procedures are like protocol and have scientific

background, and termed as *Jatamatra Paricharya*.² Considering the smooth transition of new born baby Ayurveda explained very delicate and sophisticated protocol for newborn baby under *Jatamatra Paricharya*. *Abhyanga* is one such a procedure that should be performing for the good health of newborn. There are some methods for application of oil over body; like *Samvahana*, *Parisheka*, *Abhyanga*, and *Mardana*. *Parisheka*^{3,4} means sprinkling of oil and is useful immediately after birth to relieve the stress of labor while passing through birth canal and alleviate the increased *Vata Dosha*. *Samvahana*^{3,4} is application or just smearing of oil over body parts and also useful in newborn care. *Abhyanga* means application of oil or unctuous substances on entire body or body part with optimum pressure and in particular directions and applying the strokes.^{3,4} *Mardana* is application of oil or dry powder over body or body parts with enough pressure along with squeezing of body musculature in appropriate manner.^{3,4} *Parisheka* is included in *Jatamatra Paricharya* but *Abhyanga* is not directly quoted in protocol. For healthy individual *Abhyanga* is helpful to prevent premature aging, relieves the stress of daily activity and nutritious, hence doing the *Abhyanga* to newborn baby is very helpful for healthy growth and development. *Abhyanga* in newborns is reported to improve weight gain by better thermos regulation. It gives the feeling of security and soothing experience both to the mother and the baby.

Abhyanga

In Ayurveda *Abhyanga* is described as daily routine practice (*Dinacharya*)¹ to be

followed for healthy individual. In Indian culture *Abhyanga* for newborn baby is practiced too at many places as daily routine. Ayurveda emphasized on *Abhyanga* for prevention of aging process and healthy life. According to different geographical conditions and variation in climatic conditions one has to make difference in the procedure. For example in the cold climatic conditions oil used for *Abhyanga* should be taken as warm and vice versa. In different diseased conditions also different oils are in used; but for healthy adult sesame oil is the best for *Abhyanga* as it gives strength to body tissues and suitable in various conditions. Sesame oil processed with multiple herbs is considered as the best oil for newborn *Abhyanga*. *Bala Talia*, *Lakshadi Taila*, *Ashwagandhadi tail*, *Bala ashwagandhadi Taila* are different kinds of oil used for *Abhyanga*⁵.

How to do the Abhyangain newborn babies with cautions:

use comfortable warm massage oil [store massage oil in a plastic flip-top and warm it by holding the container under running hot water for a few minutes] dip fingertips into the warm oil and apply lightly to the entire body. Wait for 4-5 minutes to let some of the oil absorbed by skin, massage the entire body, applying even pressure with the whole hand-palm fingers. Apply light pressure on sensitive area such as abdomen or heart. Use more oil and spend more time where nerve ending are concentrated such as soles of the feet. Palms of the hands along the base of the fingernails. Circular motions over rounded areas such as head or joints and straight strokes on straight areas such as

arms and legs after massage relax for 10-15 min.

When to start?

From neonatal point of view *Abhyanga* can be immediately done after birth once the baby gets vitally stable. Then daily once either in morning or evening *Abhyanga* can be done in vitally stable healthy newborn. In case if one fails to start *Abhyanga* after birth, then there is no specific time or indication to start the procedure for the healthy neonate; except the pre-request is that newborn should be vitally stable and no signs of illness or sickness (Lethargy, Refuse to feed, Convulsions, Respiratory distress).

Time of the procedure:

One can do *Abhyanga* to baby at any time in the day, but the ideal time to do *Abhyanga* is morning time, while one should take care that, room temperature should not be less than 25°C in order to prevent the hypothermia to baby⁶For this purpose warmer, room heaters etc. can be used to make the room warm; but one should not use smoke or burning of carbon substances (coal, kerosene, organic substances etc.) to warm the room as smoke is hazardous to neonatal lungs. Also windows should be closed and no air draughts should be there while doing procedures.

How many days in one setting:

One can continue the *Abhyanga* till the completion of infantile age i.e. one year of life, if there is no any other illness.⁷

BENIFITS of Abhyanga:

Abhangya mitigates *vata*, strengthens the bone; improve the strength of muscle and tendons. *Abhyanga* induces good sleep and causes *brimhana*, reduces the both

mental and physical fatigue [*klesh-sahatva*] and delays the aging process. *Vata* is responsible for sensory perception, and that is mainly through the skin oil bath is best for skin hence it improves the quality of *vata*. *abhyanga* also helps to maintain the original softness and luster of the skin that is *tvak-dardhyakara*. *abhangya* promotes the excellence of body tissue *dhatu pusti-janan* and improves the eyesight *dristhiprasadkara*.⁸

All these benefits are of special concern in case of newborn.

a. Newborn passes through tedious birth process through narrow birth canal and therefore experiencing the fatigue, pain and lassitude.⁹

b. Newborn skin is very delicate require additional care as compare to adults.

c. Newborn is in growing phase, and growth velocity is highest in this period of life, which demands continuous nutrition.

d. Also it is the time of development of central nervous system along with senses.

Indication:

It is a safe procedure can be done on every newborn baby who is vitally stable, except in certain contraindications

Contraindication

Time at which *Abhyanga* should be do, for how long it should be performed, which oil should be use according to cold or hot season etc depend on the *Pachakagni* of patient. Whenever there is increase in *Kapha* and *Pitta Dosha* in body, if person is suffering from indigestion, and if person is gone through the *Shodhana (Panchakarma)* processes; in such condition *Abhyanga* is contraindicated.

There is few more contraindication for the *Abhyanga* of newborn babies.

- Immediate after feeding.
- Baby with hypoglycemia.
- Sick newborn – neonate with lethargy, refuse to feed, and newborn having signs of sepsis.
- Newborn with congenital heart diseases like cyanotic heart diseases.
- Vitally instable neonate.⁷

DISCUSSION

Newborn care is one of the important basic care and *Abhyanga* has been practiced in the past and

Present. It is effective and economically cheaper method is essential considering the economic status of the individuals. Prevention of neonatal morbidity is also a factor that has to be born in mind. Discussing the classical texts of *Ayurveda*, the care of newborn includes *abhyanga*, *snana*, *jatakarma* etc., as part of routine care of newborn. *Snehana* (oleation) brings softness in the skin of body. *Snehana* in the form of *Abhyanga* is one of the most important procedures practiced till today from the days of Ancient *Acharyas*. *Ayurveda* has given more stress on the preservation of the health and curing the disease. To get a perfect physical and mental health, it is essential to follow a prescribed regimen everyday which includes personal hygiene, care of various organs and exercise. Due to *abhyanga* skin becomes soft, beautiful and increases strength and reduces stress.

The *guru*, *snigdha* properties of *taila* may take care of *dhatupushti*. *Jeevaneeya* (life promoting action) *ganadravya*.¹⁰ indicative of their capability to bring out cell

division i.e. they generate the healthier tissues. *Abhyanga* increases in vagal Activity, which in turn may lead to increased gastric motility and thereby weightgain^{11,12}; massage increases the blood flow and stroke volume of heart. *Abhyanga* also beneficial and significant in physiological transitions^{10,7}.

In *Ayurveda*, the absorption as well as distribution of the oil with the herbal ingredients impetrated in it takes specific duration oil applied on skin enters in *rasadi dhatu* in about five minutes and nourishes all the *rasadi dhatu*s. It cleans the skin from any dirt *mrijaprada*, improves the body complexion *varna prada*, restores the natural immunity of the skin *vayadhi kshamatva*, relaxes the muscle and useful in eliminating fatigue *shramhar*, improves physical strength *balvan*, promotes excellence of body tissue *dhatu pusthi janan*, induces sound sleep *swapnkar*, by nourishing the body tissues *abhyanga* prolongs life span *ayushaykara*.

Abhyanga is helpful to prevent premature aging, relieves the stress of daily activity and nutritious, hence doing the *Abhyanga* to newborn baby is very helpful for healthy growth and development.

CONCLUSION

Abhyanga (Massage) is one of newborn care protocols are very scientific; of present era prove the scientific background protocols and very effective to gain weight, reduces pain, enhances immunity and accelerates the healthy growth and development of baby. With proper selection of oil and with certain precaution under medical supervision and advice one can practice *Abhyanga* from birth

to infantile age without any harm is the key message to modern health world.

REFERENCE

1. Ashtanga Hridaya Sootra Sthana Adhyaya 2/8, Chaukhambha Sanskrit Pratishthana Varanasi, Published 2012, pp. 26.
2. Kaviraj Ambikadutta Shastri. Susruta Samhita edited with 'Ayurveda Tattva Sandipika' Hindi commentary, Part-I (reprint year: 2005) and Part-II (reprint year: 2004), Varanasi: Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sansthan, Varanasi (India)
3. Shabda kalpa druma 3rd volume, Chaukhambha Pratishthana Varanasi Published 1984, pp. 641.
4. Sanskrit English Dictionary Editors PanditIshwara Chandra Parimala Publication 2nd Reprint 2011, pp. 114.
5. Ashtanga Samgraha Sharirasthana Adhyaya no 4/51 Editor Kaviraja Atrideva Gupta Chaukhambha Krishnadasa Academy Varanasi Reprint 2005, pp. 296.
5. Module I Care of baby at the birth 1/4 Neonatal Division AIIMS New Delhi 2010
6. Swapnil Raskar, Rajagopala S. Abhyanga in New Born Baby and Neonatal Massage - A Review
7. Ashtanga Hridaya Sutrasthana Adhyaya 2/8 Chaukhambha Sanskrita Pratishthana Varanasi, 2012, pp.26.
8. Charak Samhita of Agnivesha by Kashinath Shastri, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Sansthan Varanasi reprint 2007, Vol-I, vol-II
9. Savita Butali Aziz Arbar. A RCT of balatailaabhyanga versus coconut oil massage in physiological transition of newborn.

10. Moderate versus light pressure massage therapy leads to greater weight gain in preterm infants. T Field et al Infant Behavior & Development 29 (2006) 574-578

11. Agarwal KN, Gupta A, Pushkarna R, Bhargava SK, Faridi MM, Prabhu MK PMID:11247199 [Pub Med Effects of massage & use of oil on growth, blood flow & sleep pattern in infants. Indian J Med Res. 2000 Dec; 112:212-7.

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR

Dr Shubhangi Kapil Thakur,
Assistant Professor, Kaumarabhritya
Department, Sumatibhai Shah Ayurveda
Mahavidyalaya, Hadapsar, Pune -India.
E-mail: shubhangikthakur@gmail.com

Source of support: Nil,

Conflict of interest: None Declared

Cite this article as

Shubhangi Kapil Thakur: Role of Abhyanga in
Newborns. ayurpub 2017;II(1):307-311