

MANAGEMENT OF SEASONAL PADASPUTANA (DRYNESS AND FOOT-CRACKS) AND POSSIBLE ROLE OF PADAABHYANGA: A CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda guides society with daily and seasonal regimens as an integral part of maintenance of life with the concept of prevention. A daily and seasonal regimen is explained with their four fold benefits like health promotive, preventive, curative and restorative. *Tridoshas* undergo seasonal changes as *Chaya – Prakopa – Prashama* which are the three natural stages responsible for health and ill health. These vitiated *dosha* will produce specific signs and symptoms. Dry skin is a very common skin problem and is often worse during the winter when environmental humidity is low (i.e., "winter itch"). It can occur at all ages and in people with or without other skin problems. Certain regimens were explained to overcome these by our scholars in the classics. In this article importance of *Padaabhyanga*, one such daily regimen explained in the context of *Dinacharya* and its beneficial in *Pada Supthi* (foot numbness), *Stambha*(stiffness), *Sankocha* (shrinkaning), *Pada Sphutana* (cracking of foot) which are few of *Vridhdha Vata Lakshanas* are explained. *Padabhyanga* is one of the simple, cost effective, less time consuming and can be practiced easily by individual in their busy schedule also.

Keywords: *Padasputana*, foot dryness and cracks, *abhyanga*, *ritucharya*

INTRODUCTION

Shishira Ritu constitute the winter season as per *Ayurveda*, English months Jan.14 to Mar.14 (Indian calendar months of *Magh* and *Phalgun*) constitute the *shishir Ritu*. *Shishira* marks the onset of *aa-daana kala* (*Aadaan* means taking away-the period of dehydration). Cold becomes severe and dryness intensify further. Occasional clouds, wind and rainfall are also features of late winter. According to *Ayurveda* during this period, the '*Sharir-bal*' or physical strength and '*jathragni-bal*' or digestive fire is at their maximum, by virtue of the Sun just coming out of its

Southern cycle and moving into the Northern cycle. It is also the time when '*Vata dosha*' tends to get aggravated. This is a prime time to build strength and stamina in our bodies. It is also the time to build the foundation for immunity (*Ojus*) for the spring months to come. This *Ritu* is dominant of excessive cold and dryness due to chill wind. Because of the excessive cold and dryness in the external environment, the moisture in the body is absorbed by the environment. Hence the skin becomes excessively dry and cracked. *Pada Sphutana* is thus seen commonly in this season. A

new survey from the Institute for Preventive Foot Health shows that nearly 80 percent of people ages 21 and older have dryness associated with foot cracks in winter season.

EFFECT OF WINTER ON SKIN;

Dry skin is a very common skin problem and is often worse during the winter when environmental humidity is low (i.e., "winter itch"). It can occur at all ages and in people with or without other skin problems. Everyone is familiar to some degree with the appearance of dry skin. The normally fine lines in the skin become more visible, the skin feels rough and appears dull and flaky. In more advanced cases, fish net-like cracks resembling the fine fracture lines of cracked porcelain can occur. Dry skin occurs most commonly on the arms and legs, but can also affect the trunk of the body. Dermatologists often call dry skin "xerosis" or "asteatosis". Chapped hands and feet in winter are a result of the reduction of needed water in the skin. The top layers of your skin normally retain a regular amount of water. With constant exposure to drying conditions, the water decreases and makes the skin less supple and easier to crack. People of all ages may display this condition but it most often occurs with people who have chronic dry skin. Effects of cold and dry air of the winter season on the skin will cause dry and chapped effect¹⁴. There are a number of reasons, both external and internal, why the skin gets dry and itchy during winter. Hence it is clear that during winter and cold seasons the skin requires special care. There are a number of reasons, both external and internal, why the skin gets dry and itchy during cold weather.

External Causes: Low humidity during winter, both outside and inside the house, enhances the drying effect on the skin. Exposure to dry wind, cold water or drying soaps further increase the skin dryness.

Internal Causes: When the skin becomes cold, the blood vessels supplying the skin become constricted. This reduces blood flow to the skin and sweat glands and oil producing glands in the body. When the water content of the skin diminishes, both inside and outside, the skin cells become shrunken and dry. This produces flaking of the superficial skin cells. This irritates the nerves beneath and produces itching. Most people, because they do not feel thirsty during winter, do not drink enough water or fruit juices during winter. This produces low volume of the circulating blood causing dehydration, another cause for skin dryness. Dry skin very commonly produces itching, which can be severe and interfere with sleep and other daily activities.

Abhyanga - 'Padabhyanga': One who is willing to attain good health should follow regimens of *Charya Traya* i.e., *Dinacharya*, *Ritucharya*, *Ratricharya*.¹ Various regimens which are explained in the context of *Dinacharya* includes *Abhyanga* and *Padabhyanga* is one among them.^{2,3i} *Twacha* is *Sthana* for *Vata* and *Abhyanga* is a procedure to overcome the *Vridha Vata* in *Twacha*.

Taila is best *Vatahara* and *tila Taila* is drug of choice for *Snehana Karma*. *Padabhyanga* is one of the simple, cost effective, less time consuming and can be practiced easily by individual in their busy schedule also. Benefits of practicing *Padabhyanga* as *Dinacharya* helps in pacifying *Vata Dosha Lakshanas* like *Rukshatha*, *Padasputana*, *Kharathva*, *Vedana* etc.^{4,5} *Shishira Ritu* which is characterized by extreme

cold and dry climate, due to which *Kapha* will be in *sanchayavastha*.^{6,7}

Daily practice of *Abhyanga* brings the beneficial effects like *Snigdhatata*, *Balya*, rejuvenates the body.⁸ While explaining *Dhatugata Vata Dosha lakshana*, it is said vitiated *Vata* in *Twacha* leads to *Rukshata* and *Sputana* of the same^{10, 11}. *Snehana Karma* is *vatahara*. Hence *Padabhyanga* will be beneficial in *Pada Sputana*.¹² *Tila Taila* is best among the *Tailas* for the purpose of *Snehana Karma*.¹³

Procedure of Padabhyanga: Foot massage with sufficient *Til* oil of required after cleaning the foot. 1 ½ to 2 hour before going to bed for a period of 20 - 30 min for both the feet daily at night time (Start massaging from hind– mid– fore foot with mild pressure). Avoid bare foot walking, Keep feet clean, and avoid exposing more to dry and cold weather.

CONCLUSION

Padabhyanga is one of the simple, cost effective, less time consuming and can be practiced easily by individual in their busy schedule also. This procedure is not restricted to *shishira ritu*, it can be practiced in all the seasons as a preventive procedure to prevent the foot related problems and to get the other beneficial effect from *Padaabhyanga*.

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