

**A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF THE BENEFITS OF
PANCHAKARMA IN LIFESTYLE DISORDERS****Dr. Vivek Ahlawat*¹ and Dr. Parvesh Kumari Ohlan²**

¹Assistant Professor, Dept. of Panchkarma, Bhagwant Ayurvedic College and Hospital,
Muzaffarnagar, U.P.

²Associate Professor, Dept. of Panchkarma, National College of Ayurveda and Hospital,
Barwala, Hisar, Hr.

Article Received on
12 June 2024,

Revised on 03 July 2024,
Accepted on 24 July 2024

DOI: 10.20959/wjpr202415-33374



***Corresponding Author**

Dr. Vivek Ahlawat

Assistant Professor, Dept. of
Panchkarma, Bhagwant
Ayurvedic College &
Hospital, Muzaffarnagar,
U.P.

ABSTRACT

Lifestyle disorders encompass a broad spectrum of health conditions directly influenced by individual habits, choices, and environmental factors. These disorders, such as obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, mental health issues, and certain cancers, arise primarily from sedentary lifestyles, poor dietary practices, stress, and substance abuse. Their prevalence has surged in recent decades alongside urbanization and global socioeconomic changes, posing significant public health challenges worldwide. This review examines the therapeutic benefits of Panchakarma, a cornerstone of Ayurvedic medicine, in the management and treatment of lifestyle disorders. In recent years, the incidence of lifestyle disorders—such as obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, arthritis, mental health conditions, and high cholesterol—has escalated alarmingly, driven by rapid economic growth, urbanization, and the adoption of sedentary lifestyles and

unhealthy dietary habits. These conditions are exacerbated by factors such as stress, lack of physical activity, consumption of junk foods, and poor nutrition. Panchakarma, which translates to "five actions," comprises a set of five cleansing and rejuvenating procedures: Vamana (therapeutic emesis), *Virechana* (purgation), Basti (medicated enema), Nasya (nasal administration), and *Raktamokshana* (bloodletting). These procedures aim to detoxify the body, eliminate accumulated toxins (ama), and restore the balance of the doshas (Vata, Pitta, and Kapha), which are fundamental to maintaining health according to Ayurveda. This comprehensive review synthesizes current research and clinical evidence on the efficacy of

Panchakarma in managing lifestyle disorders. It discusses how these detoxification and purification techniques help improve metabolic function, reduce body weight and adiposity, regulate blood sugar levels, enhance cardiovascular health by lowering cholesterol and blood pressure, and alleviate symptoms of anxiety and depression. By addressing the root causes of these disorders rather than merely treating symptoms, Panchakarma offers a holistic approach that not only promotes physical health but also mental and emotional well-being. In conclusion, this review underscores the potential of Panchakarma as a valuable tool in combating lifestyle disorders. It advocates for its wider adoption and integration into contemporary healthcare systems, highlighting its ability to promote long-term health, prevent disease progression, and enhance quality of life through holistic and natural means.

INTRODUCTION

As of the latest available data provided by the World Health Organization (WHO) life style disorders account for approximately 71% of all deaths globally, equivalent to 41 million people each year. The main types of life style disorders include cardiovascular diseases (such as heart attacks and stroke), cancers, chronic respiratory diseases (such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and asthma), and diabetes. life style disorders are prevalent across all regions and income groups, with low- and middle-income countries disproportionately affected. Nearly 85% of premature deaths from life style disorders occur in these countries. These statistics highlight the urgent need for coordinated efforts at the global, national, and community levels to address the growing burden of life style disorders and promote healthier lifestyles worldwide.^[1]

These diseases are described in Ayurveda as *Santarpanjanya Vyadhis*. According to Ayurvedic pathogenesis, the main factors contributing to these disorders are primarily vitiated Kapha dosha, impaired metabolism, digestive disturbances (*Agnidushti*), and the accumulation of toxins (Ama).^[2] These conditions predominantly arise due to excessive accumulation or nourishment (*Sanchayapradhana* or *Santarpanajanyaavastha*) characteristic of modern lifestyles. Panchakarma therapies offer preventive measures against such diseases.^[3] Panchakarma, along with adjunct procedures like *Abhyanga* (oil massage), *Mardana* (rubbing), *Gandusha* (gargling), *Anjana* (collyrium application), and *Udvartana* (powder massage), etc have proven highly effective in disease prevention.^[4] Ayurveda posits that the body's metabolic processes reflect the state of Agni (biological fire) at various levels. Any disruption in metabolism can obstruct channels due to a biological pathogenic factor

called Ama, contributing to lifestyle disorders. Classical texts suggest that the vitiation of Kapha dosha, followed by other doshas, initiates these disorders. The involvement of Meda (fat tissue) and other bodily tissues is particularly significant, exacerbated by factors such as excessive intake of sweet and fatty foods, overeating, and sedentary lifestyles.^[5] Improperly digested food due to these factors can lead to the formation of reactive substances known as Ama, which distribute throughout the body with the nutrition essence (ahara rasa), predominantly increasing Sama Medadhatu (visceral adiposity) due to its excessively oily and sweet nature. According to Dalhana and Chakrapani's commentaries on Sushruta Samhita, Ama formation may not solely result from impaired Jatharagni (digestive fire) but also from impaired Dhatvagni Vyapara (tissue metabolism).^[6] Panchakarma therapy is integral to Ayurveda is well known for internal purification of the body. It aids in detoxifying and rejuvenating the body through simple techniques that are easily applicable in outdoor settings. The failure of modern medicines in preventing major health burdens has prompted a return to the original detoxifying naturopathy. Panchakarma is particularly effective in managing chronic and metabolic autoimmune, neurological, psychiatric, and musculoskeletal diseases.^[7]

In the present day, these distinct procedures are widely practiced by physicians in India and globally for both preventive and therapeutic purposes. Panchakarma therapy is regarded as superior to Samshamana therapy in Ayurveda. Disorders treated with Samshamana therapy can sometimes recur due to environmental and etiological factors gaining momentum. In contrast, disorders treated with Panchakarma have a lower or no chance of recurrence because these therapies prevent the conditions from gaining such momentum.^[8]

The five techniques of Panchakarma include Vamana (therapeutic emesis), Virechana (therapeutic purgation), Asthapana Basti (medicated decoction enema), Anuvasana Basti (medicated oil enema), and Nasya Karma (nasal administration). Ayurveda places greater emphasis on the preventive benefits of Panchakarma rather than its curative aspects.

Panchakarma also enhances the absorption of nutrients and medications, thereby promoting their desired therapeutic effects. It restores mental health, reduces stress^[9], and plays a crucial role in both preventing and managing various lifestyle disorders.

Panchakarma procedures offer benefits such as eliminating toxins from the body, reestablishing balance and harmony within, reducing negativity, promoting a positive

outlook, and enhancing overall health and well-being.^[10]

Panchakarma employs a series of therapeutic procedures administered in a specific sequence to facilitate the elimination of toxins from the body through the nearest possible routes. By doing so, Panchakarma effectively removes toxic accumulations and restores balance to the Doshas.^[11] These regimens are not merely aimed at alleviating specific symptoms but are tailored to achieve overall homeostasis, making Panchakarma more effective than conventional medicines for addressing complex disorders like lifestyle diseases.^[12]

Panchakarma also plays a crucial role in preserving and maintaining health, as well as promoting longevity. It is integral to preventive medicine practices (Swasthavritta), recommended as a prophylactic measure during epidemics and widespread health crises. According to Ayurveda, *Mandagni* (weak digestive fire) is the root cause of all diseases, and Panchakarma is considered the optimal treatment for correcting *Agni* (digestive fire).

Roganusara Panchakarma categorizes diseases based on the dominance of Doshas and employs specific treatments accordingly. Here are some commonly treated conditions:

Vamana: Used for diseases dominated by Kapha Dosha such as obesity, thyroid disorders, diabetes, asthma, PCOS (poly-cystic ovarian syndrome), and skin diseases.

Virechana: Employed for diseases where Pitta Dosha predominates, including hyperacidity and various skin disorders.

Basti: Administered for diseases dominated by Vata Dosha, such as arthritis and spondylitis.

Nasya: Recommended for conditions like migraine, headache, sinusitis, hair fall, premature graying of hair, frozen shoulder, cervical spondylitis, sleeplessness, and allergies.

Raktamokshana: Used for diseases primarily involving Rakta (blood), such as gouty arthritis.

Shirodhara: Effective for conditions like sleeplessness, headache, dandruff, and psychological disorders.

Abhyanga: Promotes relaxation and alleviates frequent body pain.

These therapies are tailored to address the specific imbalance of Doshas underlying each disease, offering targeted and effective treatment in Ayurvedic practice.

Research spanning a century has demonstrated promising outcomes in the Ayurvedic treatment of various ailments, particularly chronic disorders. "Lifestyle diseases," globally recognized as non-communicable diseases (NCDs) or chronic diseases of lifestyle (CDL),

stem from individuals' maladaptation to their environment. These diseases share common risk factors accumulated over years, including poor dietary habits, tobacco use, sedentary lifestyles, and stress. Panchakarma in Ayurveda offers a potent strategy to effectively manage such diseases by eliminating toxins through purification procedures. Panchakarma not only detoxifies the body but also rejuvenates tissues, offering a holistic approach to disease prevention and management without the risk of recurrence.

DISCUSSION

According to Ayurveda, the pathogenesis of lifestyle disorders begins with factors like reduced physical activity, consumption of high-calorie foods, and a lack of exercise. These behaviors lead to an accumulation of Kapha in the bodily tissues (Kaphachaya), affecting vital components such as Rasa (plasma), Mansa (muscle tissue), and Meda (adipose tissue).

This imbalance manifests as symptoms of Kaphachaya, which vary based on individual constitution (Prakruti) and predisposition (Anshanshakalpana), eventually impacting specific bodily locations (Sthanasamshraya). This cascade of events contributes to the development of conditions such as diabetes, high cholesterol, hypertension, cardiovascular diseases, and depression.

Panchakarma therapies play a crucial role in Ayurvedic treatment by cleansing the body's channels, eliminating toxins, and restoring the balance of Tridosha (Vata, Pitta, Kapha) and Manasa Dosha (mental aspects of Raja and Tama). This process aims to achieve long-term benefits by restoring chemical equilibrium within the body, particularly in the brain, thereby promoting overall homeostasis.

Vamana therapy in Ayurveda is a therapeutic emesis procedure specifically designed to eliminate excessive Kapha from the body, making it particularly effective for managing Kapha-related disorders, including lifestyle diseases. This therapy primarily targets the stomach (Amashaya), which is the seat of Pitta and Kapha. By addressing the root cause of Kapha imbalance, Vamana expels vitiated Kapha from throughout the body, thereby suppressing disease processes to a significant extent. Following Vamana, fat accumulations (Abbadha Meda) return to normal levels as excess oil and toxins (Sneha) are mobilized from cellular tissues (Rasadi Dhatus) and expelled from the body.^[13]

Contrary to modern views that perceive Vamana as merely gastric lavage, Ayurveda

emphasizes its direct impact on Agnisthana (the liver), where impaired Agni (digestive fire) plays a crucial role in disease initiation. The therapeutic action of Vamana not only purges Kapha but also clears the channels (Srotomukhavishodhana), thereby restoring the flow of Vata and promoting normal Vata movement (Vatanigraha).

In summary, Vamana therapy in Ayurveda represents a comprehensive approach to managing Kapha-related disorders by addressing their root causes and restoring physiological balance through targeted cleansing and rejuvenation procedures.

Virechana therapy in Ayurveda involves therapeutic purgation aimed at eliminating excess Pitta from the body through the anal route, specifically for managing Pitta-related disorders. It effectively addresses Pitta-related conditions associated with both Pitta and Kapha imbalances, including localized Pitta manifestations within Kapha-dominant areas. Unlike modern purgatives that primarily focus on bowel movement, Virechana is a comprehensive therapeutic approach with systemic and local impacts.^[14]

During Virechana Karma, it removes excessive Pitta and sticky toxins (Bahudrava Shleshma) from the gastrointestinal tract, promoting the activation of Dhatwagni (metabolic fire) and thereby maintaining balance between Doshas and bodily tissues (Dhatu-Dosha equilibrium). This process supports the formation and nourishment of subsequent bodily tissues (Uttarottardhatu), enhancing cellular nourishment through Rasa (plasma) and Rakta (blood) Dhatus. It also plays a critical role in boosting Oja, the essence responsible for immunity, which is often diminished in lifestyle disorders. Virechana therapy thus addresses the underlying immune deficiencies associated with these conditions.

Niruha Basti in Ayurveda functions through two primary mechanisms.

Administered rectally, Basti affects the entire body with its potency, analogous to how the sun's influence extends to water on earth despite being distant. This illustrates Basti's efficacy, which begins upon contact with the rectum, demonstrating its immediate action through absorption. Once introduced into the rectum, Basti's potency (likely active principles) is assimilated by Samana Vayu with assistance from Apana Vayu. It then spreads to other Vayus (wind energies) and regulates Pitta and Kapha to their appropriate locations. Basti's effect on elemental constituents (Bhutas) aligns with its inherent qualities (Guna of Virya). The dissemination of Basti's potency follows the principle of Kedarikulya Nyaya, ensuring its

widespread influence through different Vayus.^[15]

Anuvasana Basti in Ayurveda involves the administration of medicated oils or substances that directly interact with the mucosal layer of the intestines. This approach facilitates daily purification of the intestines, nourishing the intestinal layers and villi. Enhanced nutrient absorption occurs, particularly of micronutrients, which are then transported into circulation and reach their target organs. The mucous membrane of the intestine efficiently absorbs lipid-soluble substances introduced through Anuvasana Basti, allowing for systemic action and therapeutic benefits.^[16]

Nasya therapy in Ayurveda is regarded as the optimal method for alleviating and eliminating vitiated Doshas in the upper body regions (Urdhvanga). Specifically, oils are recommended for Nasya in conditions dominated by Kapha and Vata Doshas. The administered drug during Nasya induces irritation in the head region, leading to increased blood circulation to the brain. This effect is mediated by histamine release due to the drug's irritant properties.^[17] The facial vein connects directly to the ophthalmic vein, which in turn communicates with the cavernous sinus within the cranial cavity. The absence of valves in the facial vein allows for potential reverse circulation of the Nasya substance, which can reach the brain circulation after absorption through the highly vascular mucous membrane of the nasal cavity.^[18] This process helps expel accumulated morbid Doshas through nasal discharge and salivation. Additionally, pre- and post-procedure massage and heat application at the supraclavicular and posterior neck regions enhance local circulation. This not only improves drug absorption but also alleviates local stiffness.^[19]

Other allied Panchakarma procedures offer additional therapeutic benefits.

Udvardhana: According to Acharya Sushruta, Udvardhana, or dry powder massage, provides various benefits including pleasure, sleep induction, aphrodisiac effects, alleviation of Kapha and Vata imbalances, fatigue reduction, and enhancement of muscle, blood, and skin health. This procedure helps in reducing Kapha through vigorous massage, facilitating the removal of metabolic wastes such as lactic acid, water, and carbon dioxide via the lymphatic system and urine. This results in a detoxified body that feels lighter and less burdened.^[20]

Shirodhara: This procedure induces a tranquil state of mind, reducing stress and improving mental function. It offers benefits similar to those achieved through meditation and relaxation

practices. In today's hectic world, where stress and tension are prevalent, Shirodhara provides a rare opportunity for deep relaxation, aiding in the management of insomnia and stress-related disorders.^[21] Additionally, Shirodhara affects the Yogic Chakras, particularly the Aagya Chakra and Sahasrara Chakra located in the head region, which regulate vital energy. Stimulating these Chakras enhances mental well-being and contributes to the management of lifestyle disorders.^[22]

Overall, Panchakarma procedures are highly effective in managing various lifestyle disorders by enhancing Agni (digestive fire), thereby improving digestion and nutrient absorption. This increase in bioavailability of nutrients and medications contributes to their therapeutic efficacy.

CONCLUSION

Ayurvedic holistic view towards physiological and mental development has brought it to the forefront of non-medicinal remedies for various ailments and general malaise. It also brings about visible psychological and spiritual changes in the subject, thus securing an all round development in one's lifestyle. Panchakarma treatment is among the most popular of Ayurveda therapies and it is a rigorous process of detoxification and purification. These procedures help to keep our body weight in check, hypertension at bay and enable us to be lighter, freer and happier in general. Also, it assists in dealing with stress, anxiety, tension, agitation, irritability and misery in a healthier manner. Once we overcome these symptoms of decadent lifestyle that is all around us today, we will automatically rise above crippling lifestyle diseases better than others.

REFERENCES

1. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/noncommunicable-diseases>
2. Shivaranjani J Kantharia, SN Gupta, K. B. Patel. Ayurvedic Approach to Santarpanjanya Vyadhi w.s.r. to Sthaulya. Jour. Of Ayurveda & Holistic Medicine, Nov.-Dec. 2022; X: VI.
3. Conboy L, Edshteyn I, Garivaltis H. Ayurveda and Panchakarma: measuring the effects of a holistic health intervention. ScientificWorldJournal, Apr. 27, 2009; 9: 272-80. doi: 10.1100/tsw.2009.35. PMID: 19412555; PMCID: PMC2699273.
4. Maya Vivek Gokhale et al, Role of Panchakarma Procedures In Dincharya For Preventing Lifestyle Disorders, International Ayurvedic Medical Journal, (ISSN: 2320 5091), September, 2017; 5(9).

5. Nidhi Choudhary, Thesis, Clinical Evaluation Of Virechana Karma In The Management Of Metabolic Syndrome, Rishikul Campus, U.A.U. Haridwar, 2017.
6. Sushruta Samhita, Ambikadatta Shastri, Ayurveda tatva sandeepika Hindi commentary, Sutra sthana, Chapter 15 Verse 3, Varanasi; Chaukhambha Orientalia, 73.
7. Kajaria Divya, Tripathi J.S, Tiwari.S.K, Utilization of panchakarma in health care: preventive, nutritive and curative treatment of disease. J Pharm Sci Innov, 2013; 2(5): 1-5.
8. Rajeshwar Dutta Shashtri et.al. (Ed.), Charaka Samhita, Chaukhambha bharati academy, Varanasi. Charak sutra 16 verse 22.
9. Singh, S., An Appraisal of Bio-Purificatory and Therapeutic Potential of Panchakarma, International Journal for Pharmaceutical Research Scholars, 4(3): 89-95.
10. Suman M, Panchakarma procedures for a healthy life that can be performed at home, Journal of Ayurveda and Integrated Medical Sciences, December 2023; 8(12).
11. -ibid-
12. Maya Vivek Gokhale & Vivek Gokhale: Role Of Panchakarma Procedures In Dinacharya For Preventing Lifestyle Disorders. International Ayurvedic Medical Journal, June, 2018; 09.
13. Shipra Singh Thesis, Clinical Evaluation Of Vamana Karma In The Management Of Dyslipidemia, Rishikul Campus, U.A.U. Haridwar, 2018.
14. Agnivesha, Charaka Samhita, edited by R K Sharma, Bhagawan Dash, Chaukhambha Sanskrit series office, Varanasi, Siddhi Sthana, 2001; 1: 17: 151.
15. Bende Yogita at el., A Critical review on Pharmacodynamics of Basti Chikitsa and its action on Enteric Nervous System International Journal of Ayurvedic Medicine, 2015; 6(4): 301-304.
16. An Appraisal of Bio-Purificatory and Therapeutic Potential of Panchakarma Satyapal Singh V-4, I-3, 2015; 17.
17. Tanwar SR at el., Clinical evaluation of Nasya Karma in cervical spondylosis: Case series. Indian J Health Sci Biomed Res., 2018; Jun. 20.
18. Kantikar P, Mechanism of Nasya. Mechanism of Panchakarma and its module of investigation. 1st ed., Ch. 6, Part 1. Delhi: Chaukhamba Sanskrit Pratishthan, 2013; 115.
19. Tanwar SR at el., Clinical evaluation of Nasya Karma in cervical spondylosis: Case series. Indian J Health Sci Biomed Res., Jun. 20, 2018.
20. Patil Vishal Nanaso, at el., Concept of Udvartanam, International Journal of Multidisciplinary Health Sciences, Apr.-June 2015; I(2).

21. Kuldeep at el., An Evidence-Based Review on Shirodhara: A Unique Panchakarma Therapy, IJAPR, July 2022; 10(7).
22. Pokharel S, Sharma AK. Evaluation of Insomrid Tablet and Shirodhara in the management of Anidra (Insomnia). Ayu., Jan. 2010; 31(1): 40-7. doi: 10.4103/0974-8520.68209. PMID: 22131683; PMCID: PMC3215320.