

NASAL POLYPS (NASHA ARSHA) PATHOPHYSIOLOGY, DIAGNOSIS, AND EMERGING TREATMENT STRATEGIES – A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW

Ankit Sharma*¹, Siva Kumar C. S.²

¹PhD Scholar, Department of Shalaky Tantra, Glocal College of Ayurvedic Medical Sciences and Research Centre, Saharanpur, Uttar Pradesh, India.

²Professor, Department of Shalya Tantra, Glocal College of Ayurvedic Medical Sciences and Research Centre, Saharanpur, Uttar Pradesh, India.

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*Corresponding Author

Ankit Sharma

PhD Scholar, Department of
Shalaky Tantra, Glocal College of
Ayurvedic Medical Sciences and
Research Centre, Saharanpur, Uttar
Pradesh, India.



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ABSTRACT

Nasal polyps, also known as Nasha Arsha, are non-cancerous, inflammatory growths that develop from the sinonasal mucosa and are commonly linked to chronic rhinosinusitis. These polyps can considerably diminish quality of life by causing nasal blockage, impairment of the sense of smell, and frequent infections. The pathology of nasal polyps is characterized by persistent inflammation, dysfunction of the epithelial barrier, and immune system imbalances, primarily influenced by type 2 cytokine responses. Several factors can increase the risk of developing nasal polyps, including chronic rhinosinusitis with nasal polyps (CRSwNP), asthma, allergic rhinitis, aspirin-exacerbated respiratory disease (AERD), and genetic factors. The diagnosis of nasal polyps typically relies on clinical evaluation and is supported by procedures such as nasal endoscopy, imaging techniques like computed tomography (CT), and histopathological examination. Standard treatment

modalities often incorporate intranasal corticosteroids, oral corticosteroids, antibiotics, and biologic therapies that target interleukin pathways. For cases that are recurrent or resistant to other treatments, functional endoscopic sinus surgery (FESS) is frequently suggested. Newer treatment options, such as gene therapy and modifications of the microbiome, show potential

in managing disease persistence and recurrence. In Ayurvedic medicine, nasal polyps are referred to as *Nasha Arsha*, with their formation being attributed to imbalances in the *Kapha* and *Vatadoshas*. Ayurvedic treatment approaches may include *Nasya* therapy, which involves the use of medicated nasal oils, herbal remedies like *Triphala*, *Haridra* (turmeric), and *Pippali* (long pepper), as well as *Panchakarma* therapies such as *Vamana* (therapeutic vomiting) and *Virechana* (purification therapy). In addition, dietary changes and lifestyle adjustments are advocated for long-term management and disease prevention. This overview delves into the pathophysiology, risk factors, diagnostic methods, and innovative treatment options for nasal polyps, highlighting the importance of understanding these elements to develop effective therapies and enhance patient care. A multidisciplinary approach that combines conventional and holistic treatments may pave the way for more successful and enduring treatment solutions. Ongoing research into the interplay between these various treatment strategies is essential for improving patient outcomes.

KEYWORDS: Nasal polyps, *Nasha Arsha*, Chronic Rhinosinusitis, Ayurvedic Treatment, *Nasya* Therapy, Functional Endoscopic Sinus Surgery.

INTRODUCTION

Nasal polyps (NPs) are benign, soft tissue growths that develop from the mucosal surfaces of the nasal cavity and sinuses.^[1] They are often associated with chronic inflammation, allergic reactions, and asthma. Despite significant research efforts, the exact causes of NPs remain unclear. This condition is commonly seen in adults and can result in persistent symptoms that necessitate ongoing treatment.^[2] Nasal polyps may cause considerable functional limitations, disrupting sleep, breathing, and the sense of smell, which can detrimentally affect an individual's overall quality of life. This review offers a comprehensive overview of the underlying mechanisms, diagnostic approaches, and the latest advancements in treatment options, with the goal of enhancing strategies for patient management.^[3]

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

This review aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of nasal polyps (*Nasha Arsha*) by exploring their pathophysiology, risk factors, diagnostic approaches, and emerging treatment strategies.

The objectives include

- Understanding the underlying mechanisms contributing to nasal polyp formation.

- Evaluating modern diagnostic techniques for early detection and accurate assessment.
- Examining conventional and emerging therapeutic options, including pharmacological, surgical, and biologic treatments.
- Integrating Ayurvedic perspectives and treatment approaches for holistic management.
- Identifying future research directions and potential innovations in nasal polyp treatment.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This review is based on an extensive analysis of existing literature, including peer-reviewed journal articles, clinical trials, and traditional Ayurvedic texts. The methodology includes:

Literature Search: Data was sourced from PubMed, Google Scholar, Scopus, and Ayurvedic classical texts.

Selection Criteria: Studies focusing on the pathophysiology, diagnosis, and treatment of nasal polyps, including modern and Ayurvedic approaches, were included.

Data Analysis: Information was systematically reviewed, compared, and synthesized to provide a balanced perspective on conventional and holistic treatment methodologies.

Pathophysiology

NPs result from chronic mucosal inflammation driven by various immune responses. The key mechanisms include:

- **Epithelial Barrier Dysfunction:** Injury to the epithelial barrier enables allergens, pollutants, and microorganisms to initiate chronic inflammation. This impairment results in heightened permeability of the mucosal lining, facilitating the entry of inflammatory cells.^[4]
- **Inflammatory Mediators:** Elevated levels of cytokines like interleukin (IL)-4, IL-5, and IL-13 contribute to a Type 2 inflammatory response, especially among Western populations. These cytokines are crucial in driving eosinophilic inflammation, a condition frequently seen in nasal polyps.^[5]
- **Tissue Remodeling:** Chronic inflammation leads to an increase in eosinophils, fibroblasts, and extracellular matrix proteins, which contributes to the development of polyps. This remodeling process is characterized by an overproduction of collagen and other structural proteins, resulting in the thickening of the mucosal lining and obstruction of the nasal passages.^[6]
- **Microbiome Alterations:** Dysbiosis within the sinonasal microbiome plays a significant role in disrupting immune function and promoting the persistence of polyps. Disruptions

in the balance of bacterial and fungal communities can intensify inflammation and result in frequent infections.^[7]

Risk Factors

Several factors predispose individuals to nasal polyps, including:

Chronic Rhinosinusitis with Nasal Polyps (CRSwNP): Persistent inflammation of the sinonasal mucosa is a primary factor in polyp development.^[8]

Allergic Rhinitis and Asthma: These conditions are strongly associated with nasal polyps, often presenting as part of a broader atopic syndrome.

Aspirin-Exacerbated Respiratory Disease (AERD): A condition characterized by hypersensitivity to aspirin and other NSAIDs, leading to recurrent nasal polyps and severe respiratory symptoms.^[9]

Genetic Susceptibility: Studies suggest that genetic factors influence the predisposition to nasal polyps, with certain gene mutations linked to inflammatory pathways.^[10]

Environmental Triggers: Exposure to pollution, smoking, allergens, and occupational irritants can contribute to chronic inflammation and polyp formation.^[10]

Diagnosis

Diagnosis of nasal polyps is primarily clinical, supplemented by imaging and histopathology.

Clinical Presentation: The symptoms associated with this condition encompass nasal congestion, hyposmia (which is a diminished ability to perceive odors), and anosmia (the total inability to smell). Additional symptoms may include rhinorrhea, postnasal drip, facial pressure, and headaches. Moreover, some individuals might experience snoring and sleep apnea, which can arise as a result of airway blockage.^[11]

Nasal Endoscopy: Nasal endoscopy allows for direct observation of polyp-like formations within the nasal cavity, aiding in the confirmation of the diagnosis and the evaluation of its severity.^[12]

Imaging (CT/MRI): Employed to assess the degree of polyp development and involvement of the sinus cavities, CT scans offer comprehensive structural insights that assist in the planning of surgical procedures.^[13]

Biopsy and Histopathology: Essential for differentiating polyps from neoplastic growths or other nasal pathologies, particularly in unilateral or atypical cases.

Ayurvedic Perspective on Nasha Arsha

In Ayurveda, nasal polyps are known as Nasha Arsha, a term that means 'nasal hemorrhoids.' The development of this condition is mainly attributed to an imbalance among the Tridoshas—Vata, Pitta, and Kapha—with a predominance of Kapha resulting in increased mucus production and subsequent blockage. Ayurvedic literature identifies several factors that play a role in the onset of Nasha Arsha:

- Vitiation of Kapha and VataDosh: Leads to tissue overgrowth and obstruction in the nasal passages.
- Accumulation of Ama (Toxins): Poor digestion and weak metabolism contribute to the buildup of toxins, leading to inflammation and polyp formation.
- Imbalance in Prana Vayu: Disruption in the flow of Prana Vayu (life force energy) affects normal nasal function and immune response.

Ayurvedic Treatment Approaches^[14]

Nasya Therapy (Nasal Administration of Herbal Oils)

Medicated oils such as AnuTaila and ShadbinduTaila help reduce inflammation and clear the nasal passages.

Regular Nasya therapy improves respiration, reduces congestion, and shrinks polyps over time.

Herbal Remedies^[15]

- Haridra (Turmeric): A potent anti-inflammatory and immune-modulating herb.
- Triphala: Detoxifies the body and reduces tissue overgrowth.
- Pippali (Long Pepper): Enhances respiratory function and reduces Kaphabuildup.
- Neem and Guduchi: Help in immune modulation and reduce recurrent infections.

Panchakarma Therapy^[16]

- Vamana (Therapeutic Emesis): Eliminates excess Kapha and clears nasal blockages.
- Virechana (Purgation Therapy): Detoxifies the system and balances Pitta.
- Dhoomapana (Medicated Smoke Inhalation): Helps reduce excessive mucus and shrink polyps.

Dietary and Lifestyle Modifications

- Avoid cold, heavy, and dairy-based foods that aggravate Kapha.
- Incorporate warm, light, and easily digestible foods.
- Practice Pranayama (breathing exercises) to enhance nasal function and improve oxygenation.

Ayurvedic interventions, when combined with modern treatments, offer a holistic approach to managing nasal polyps effectively.

Modern Treatment Strategies

Management of nasal polyps aims at reducing inflammation, alleviating symptoms, and preventing recurrence.

Treatment modalities include:

1. Pharmacological Treatments

Intranasal Corticosteroids (INCS): First-line therapy to reduce inflammation and polyp size. Regular use can help maintain symptom control and prevent recurrence.

Oral Corticosteroids: Used for severe cases but have systemic side effects, such as osteoporosis and adrenal suppression, limiting long-term use.^[17]

Biologic Therapies: Monoclonal antibodies targeting IL-4, IL-5, and IL-13 pathways (e.g., Dupilumab, Mepolizumab, Omalizumab) offer promising outcomes in refractory cases. These therapies are particularly beneficial for patients with eosinophilic CRSwNP.^[18]

Antibiotics: Used in secondary infections or bacterial exacerbations. Long-term macrolide therapy has been explored for its immunomodulatory effects.

Aspirin Desensitization Therapy: Beneficial for patients with AERD, helping to reduce polyp recurrence and improve respiratory symptoms.^[19]

2. Surgical Interventions

Functional Endoscopic Sinus Surgery (FESS) is advised for individuals with large or recurrent polyps that do not respond to medical treatment. This surgical intervention helps in eliminating polyps and enhances sinus drainage, resulting in alleviation of symptoms and improved absorption of medication.^[20] On the other hand, polypectomy serves as a minimally invasive alternative for treating small, isolated polyps, although it may not be effective in preventing recurrence in chronic situations. Following the surgery, it is essential to implement maintenance therapy involving corticosteroids and saline irrigation to minimize

the risk of polyp regrowth.^[21]

3. Emerging Therapies^[22]

Targeted Immunotherapy: Current research is examining new biologic agents that focus on specific inflammatory pathways, which may provide more tailored treatment alternatives.

Gene Therapy: This approach holds potential for altering genetic susceptibility factors, yet it remains in the experimental phase.

Probiotics and Microbiome Modulation: These strategies are being studied as supplementary treatments to help restore a balanced sinonasal microbiome and mitigate chronic inflammation.^[22]

DISCUSSION

The treatment of nasal polyps necessitates a comprehensive strategy that combines traditional medical methods with complementary therapies like Ayurveda. Although contemporary medicine provides effective drug-based and surgical options, the recurrence of nasal polyps continues to be an issue. Biologic therapies appear to be beneficial, especially for patients with eosinophilic chronic rhinosinusitis with nasal polyps (CRSwNP), yet their significant expense and restricted accessibility hinder broader implementation.^[23] Conversely, Ayurvedic treatments focus on a holistic methodology, targeting not only the symptoms but also the root causes, including digestive issues and the buildup of toxins. Techniques such as Panchakarma therapies, the use of herbal remedies, and changes in diet contribute to lasting improvements by reducing the likelihood of polyp recurrence and enhancing overall immune health. Nonetheless, the effectiveness of these treatments necessitates additional clinical validation through comprehensive scientific research.^[24]

The combination of both modern and traditional approaches may provide a more sustainable and patient-centered strategy. Future research should explore the synergistic effects of integrating Ayurvedic therapies with conventional treatments to develop more personalized and effective treatment protocols. Additionally, public health initiatives should focus on early detection, patient education, and lifestyle modifications to reduce the prevalence and impact of nasal polyps.^[25]

CONCLUSION

Nasal polyps represent a persistent inflammatory disorder associated with considerable

discomfort and often necessitate ongoing management techniques to minimize recurrence and enhance the quality of life for affected individuals. Recent developments in biologic treatments and targeted therapies provide promising prospects for patients suffering from difficult-to-treat cases, especially those with eosinophilic chronic rhinosinusitis with nasal polyps (CRSwNP). Although pharmacological and surgical methods remain the cornerstone of treatment, issues such as recurrence, expense, and accessibility highlight the need for additional complementary strategies. Ayurvedic medicine offers a comprehensive viewpoint on treating nasal polyps by targeting the underlying causes of inflammation and immune imbalance through tailored dietary changes, herbal remedies, and Panchakarma therapies. The incorporation of these traditional practices alongside contemporary, evidence-based medical treatments has the potential to improve patient outcomes by lowering recurrence rates and enhancing symptom management. A collaborative approach that merges pharmacological, surgical, and alternative treatment options is essential for effective long-term care. Future studies should concentrate on precision medicine techniques, investigating the interplay between conventional and Ayurvedic therapies to create more thorough and individualized treatment plans. Furthermore, large-scale clinical trials and standardized protocols will be vital in affirming the effectiveness of Ayurvedic methods and broadening the range of treatment possibilities for patients with nasal polyps globally.

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