

## INTEGRATING ABHYANGA INTO DAILY ROUTINE: AN AYURVEDIC APPROACH TO PREVENTIVE HEALTH

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### ABSTRACT

In today's fast-paced lifestyle, people are increasingly disconnected from self-care practices that promote holistic well-being. *Ayurveda*, the ancient Indian system of medicine, emphasizes preventive health through daily rituals, one of which is *Abhyanga* the practice of self-oil massage. Integrating *Abhyanga* into the daily routine nurtures both body and mind, offering a simple yet powerful tool for maintaining balance and vitality. According to Ayurvedic philosophy, regular oil massage nourishes the skin, tones the muscles, enhances circulation, and supports the nervous system. It helps in removing accumulated toxins, alleviating fatigue, improving sleep, and promoting longevity. Modern scientific understanding aligns with these traditional insights, as gentle massage with warm oil has been shown to reduce stress hormones, improve joint mobility, and strengthen the immune system. *Abhyanga* not only maintains physical health but also supports emotional balance by calming the mind and promoting self-awareness. When practiced mindfully, it becomes an act of

self-compassion that reconnects individuals with their own bodies a much needed antidote to the mechanical pace of modern living. Incorporating *Abhyanga* into daily routine does not

require elaborate preparation; choosing the right oil according to one's Prakriti (body constitution) and performing the massage before bathing can yield profound benefits. For example, sesame oil suits *Vata* types, coconut oil benefits *Pitta*, and mustard or corn oil supports *Kapha* constitutions. Regular practice harmonizes the *doshas*, improves skin texture, and enhances overall health and vitality.

**KEYWORDS:** *Ayurveda*, *Abhyanga*, Daily Routine, Preventive Health, *Dosha Balance*, Self-Care, Wellness.

## INTRODUCTION

It has always been essential for a physician to possess a complete understanding of the human body without it, their knowledge is considered incomplete. In ancient times, *Abhyanga* (oil massage) was an integral part of *Dinacharya* (daily routine) due to its significant benefits, such as promoting physical growth, relieving stress, and maintaining overall health. Within *Ayurveda*, *Abhyanga* holds a special place not only as a part of daily self-care but also as a crucial procedure in *Panchakarma*, classified under *Bahya Snehana* and serving as a *Poorvakarma* (preparatory therapy) for major detoxification treatments.

Almost every classical *Ayurvedic* text mentions the practice and therapeutic value of *Abhyanga*, highlighting its role in both preventive and curative health care. Over time, this traditional practice has gained global recognition and is now widely known as Ayurvedic massage.

In today's fast-paced lifestyle, where individuals often push beyond their limits to keep up with daily demands, maintaining physical and mental balance has become more important than ever. Modern life's constant stress and tension have led many people to seek temporary relief in various massage therapies over 250 types are practiced worldwide. Yet, *Ayurveda* stands out with its time-tested, holistic approach to well-being through *Abhyanga*.

It is therefore vital to bring renewed attention to this deeply rejuvenating, natural, and powerful therapy. *Abhyanga* is traditionally performed in the Anuloma direction that is, along the direction of hair growth. To achieve its full therapeutic potential, practitioners must have a sound understanding of anatomy, including the origin, insertion, and pathway of muscles, as well as the structure of joints and body postures.

Hence, a comprehensive explanation of the massage techniques, supported by anatomical insights, is essential for truly effective practice.<sup>[1-3]</sup>

### Etymology of *Abhyanga*

According to *Amarkosha*, the term “*Abhyanga*” is formed by adding the prefix “*Abhi*” to the word “*Anga*.” Literally, it refers to specific movements or actions performed on the body using *Sneha* that is, unctuous substances like *ghee (Ghrita)*, *oil (Taila)*, and similar materials. In simple terms, *Abhyanga* means the act of massaging the body with oil or other nourishing substances, involving purposeful strokes and movements that promote health, relaxation, and rejuvenation.

### Definition

*Abhyanga* refers to the gentle and rhythmic massage of the body performed **in the direction of hair growth**, using **unctuous substances (*Snehadravya*)** such as medicated oils or ghee. In essence, it is a soothing and systematic application of oil over the body that follows the natural flow of the body’s hair, aimed at nourishing the skin, muscles, and overall well-being.

### Synonyms

According to *Shabda Kalpadruma*, *Abhyanjana* refers to the act of anointing or applying a substance over the body essentially, smearing or coating (*Lepana*) the skin with oils or other preparations.

Similarly, the term *Snehana*, as explained in *Achaspatyam*, means to make smooth, adhesive, or connected. In a broader sense, it implies nourishing, softening, and promoting cohesion within the body tissues through the use of oily or unctuous substances.

### *Ashraya Ashrayi Siddhanta*

*Twak* (skin) serves as the seat of both *Vata* and *Bhrajaka Pitta*. Since *Abhyanga* is performed directly on the skin, it primarily helps to **pacify *Vata dosha*** because of its naturally soothing and unctuous properties. Furthermore, the **absorption of the oils and medicinal substances** applied during *Abhyanga* occurs through *Bhrajaka Pitta*, which is responsible for processing and assimilating substances that come in contact with the skin. Thus, *Abhyanga* not only nourishes and calms *Vata* but also supports the healthy functioning of *Bhrajaka Pitta*.<sup>[4]</sup>

## Types

### According to *Kamasutra*<sup>[5]</sup>

- *Samvahana*
- *Kesha-mardana*
- *Utsadana*

## Classification of Massage Techniques

Massage can be classified in several ways depending on the **technique, depth, area, medium, and method of application** used. Each type has its own therapeutic purpose and physiological benefits.

### 1. Based on the Technique Adopted

- **Stroking:** Gentle gliding movements over the skin to promote relaxation and improve circulation.
- **Pressure:** Firm and steady force applied to deeper tissues to relieve muscle tension.
- **Percussion:** Rhythmic tapping or striking movements to stimulate muscles and nerves.
- **Vibration:** Rapid, trembling movements used to relax or invigorate body tissues.

### 2. Based on the Tissue Approached

- **Light Massage:** Focused on the surface layers of the skin and muscles, offering soothing and relaxing effects.
- **Deep Massage:** Targets deeper muscles and connective tissues to relieve stiffness and improve mobility.

### 3. Based on the Area of the Body Covered

- **General Massage:** Applied to the entire body for overall rejuvenation and balance.
- **Local Massage:** Focused on a specific area or part of the body to address localized issues.

### 4. Based on the Method of Applying Pressure

- **Manual Massage:** Performed using the hands, palms, or fingers of the therapist.
- **Mechanical Massage:** Involves the use of mechanical or electronic devices to apply pressure or movement.

## 5. Based on the Substance Used

- **Dry Massage:** Performed without any medium, often to stimulate circulation and tone muscles.
- **Powder Massage:** Uses herbal powders (*Udwarthana*) for exfoliation, fat reduction, and improving skin texture.
- **Oil Massage:** Employs medicated or natural oils (*Sneha dravya*) to nourish, lubricate, and relax the body.<sup>[6]</sup>

## 6. Based on the Nature of Movements

- **Touch:** Light massage using the fingertips for gentle stimulation.
- **Stroke:** Smooth and slow movement of one or both palms over the body surface.
- **Friction:** Rubbing with mild pressure while grasping the body part to generate warmth and loosen tissues.
- **Kneading:** Alternating compression of soft tissues by grasping and pressing them against the underlying structures similar to muscle mixing.
- **Vibration:** Fine shaking or trembling movements using fingers or palms to relax tissues.
- **Percussion:** Repeated tapping or striking movements applied with varying force for stimulation.
- **Joint Movements:** Assisted or resisted movements aimed at improving flexibility and joint function.<sup>[7]</sup>

## 7. Based on the Method of Application

- **Samvahana:** Gentle smearing or application of oil over the body; often used in **newborn care** for nourishment and comfort.
- **Parisheka:** Sprinkling or pouring of oil over the body, especially after childbirth, to relieve **Vata aggravation** and reduce postnatal stress; part of *Jatamatra Paricharya* (care of the newborn and mother).
- **Abhyanga:** Application of oil on the whole body or specific parts using **moderate pressure and specific strokes** in a defined direction; aims at relaxation and balance of doshas.
- **Mardana:** Firm massage involving **pressing, squeezing, or kneading** of muscles performed with oil or dry powder to enhance circulation and relieve stiffness.<sup>[8-9]</sup>

### Indications of *Abhyanga*

*Abhyanga*, or oil massage, is recommended in various situations for both preventive and therapeutic purposes. Some of its main indications include.

- **As part of *Dinacharya* (daily routine):** Regular *Abhyanga* helps maintain overall health, vitality, and balance of the *doshas*.
- ***Shiro Abhyanga* (head massage):** Beneficial for conditions like **dry scalp**, **itching** (*Arunshika*), and to promote healthy hair growth.
- ***Taila Abhyanga* (oil massage):** Especially advised for **children (Bala)**, the **elderly (Vridhdha)**, and **emaciated or weak individuals (Krisha)** to enhance strength, nourishment, and immunity.
- **Hair and scalp disorders:** Useful in managing **dandruff (*Darunaka*)**, **hair fall (*Khalitya*)**, and **premature graying (*Palitya*)** by improving scalp health and nourishing hair roots.

### Contra Indications of *Abhyanga*

Although *Abhyanga* is highly beneficial for maintaining health and balance, there are certain conditions where it should be avoided or used with caution, as it may aggravate *doshic* imbalance or hinder recovery. These include.

- During indigestion (*Ajirna*), early or acute stages of fever (*Nava Jwara*, *Taruna Jwara*): Performing *Abhyanga* in these conditions can increase *Ama* (toxins) in the body, making the illness difficult to manage or even untreatable.
- Immediately after purification therapies (*Samshodhana Karmas*) such as *Vamana*, *Virechana*, or *Niruha Basti*: After these procedures, *Agni* (digestive fire) is naturally weakened; oil massage at this time may further reduce digestion and lead to *Agnimandya* (low digestive power).
- In certain disorders: Should be avoided in eye diseases (*Netra Roga*), ear disorders (*Karna Roga*), cold or sinusitis (*Peenasa*), weak digestion (*Agnimandya*), diarrhea (*Atisara*), and abdominal distension (*Adhmana*).
- In *Pitta*-dominant conditions: Such as *Pittaja Vyadhi*, excessive thirst (*Trishna*), bleeding disorders (*Rakta Pitta*), diabetes (*Prameha*), and when extremely hungry (*Ati-Kshudhita*), as *Abhyanga* may worsen the imbalance.
- In *Kapha*-dominant and over-nourished conditions: Like *Kaphaja Vyadhi* and *Santarpanaja Vyadhi* (disorders due to overnutrition), oil massage may increase heaviness and sluggishness.

- Immediately after meals or after consuming *Ruksha* (dry) and *Abhishyandi* (channel-blocking) foods, as digestion is not yet complete.
- Right after certain procedures or activities: Such as *Tarpana* (eye nourishment), *Snehapana* (internal oleation), bathing (*Snana*), exercise (*Vyayama*), daytime sleep (*Divaswapna*), suppression of natural urges (*Vegadharana*), sleeplessness (*Prajagarana*), or exposure to cold wind (*Sheeta Vayusevana*).<sup>[10-11]</sup>

### Selection of Oil for *Abhyanga*

According to *Vagbhata*, sesame oil has remarkable qualities that make it ideal for therapeutic use. It has the ability to penetrate deeply into the body tissues, spread quickly throughout the system, and even enter the smallest pores. It is hot in potency (*Ushna Veerya*) and, unlike many other oils, does not aggravate *Kapha dosha*.

*Dalhana* further emphasizes its effectiveness, noting that sesame oil can reach the deepest tissue layers within just 5 to 10 minutes of application, demonstrating its powerful absorptive and nourishing properties.

### Importance of *Abhyanga* as a *Poorvakarma*

*Abhyanga* plays a crucial preparatory role (*Poorvakarma*) before performing *Shodhana* therapies (purification procedures) in *Ayurveda*. The oil massage helps to **impart *Snigdhata* (unctuousness and softness)** to the body, making the tissues supple and ready for detoxification.

By applying oil systematically, *Abhyanga* **helps in cleansing and opening the body channels (*Srotovishodhana*)** and promotes the **loosening and movement of aggravated *Doshas***, especially *Vata*, from the **peripheral tissues (*Shakha*)** toward the **digestive tract (*Koshtha*)**. Once the *Doshas* are brought into this central region, they can be **more effectively expelled** through the subsequent *Shodhana* procedures such as *Vamana*, *Virechana*, or *Basti*.<sup>[12]</sup>

### Importance of *Abhyanga* as a *Pradhanakarma*

The *Bahya Rogamarga* includes the **skin (*Tvak*)** and **tissues like *Rakta* and others (*Raktadi Dhatus*)**, which are commonly affected in conditions such as *Mashaka*, *Vyanga*, *Gandalaji*, and *Arbuda*. Since the **primary site of action of *Abhyanga* is the skin (*Tvak*)**, it is regarded as an effective treatment for such disorders.



Moreover, because Abhyanga works directly on the skin and helps **pacify aggravated Vata dosha**, it can also be considered a **Pradhana Karma (main line of treatment)** in conditions where **Vata imbalance** plays a dominant role.<sup>[13]</sup>

**Table 1: Effect of Abhyanga on Sharir Dhatu.**<sup>[14]</sup>

| Tissue   | Time (Matra) |
|--|--------------|
| Hair follicles ( <i>Kesha</i> )                      | 300          |
| Skin ( <i>Tvacha</i> )                               | 400          |
| Blood ( <i>Rakta Dhatu</i> )                         | 500          |
| Muscular tissue ( <i>Mamsa Dhatu</i> )               | 600          |
| Fat ( <i>Meda Dhatu</i> )                            | 700          |
| Bones ( <i>Asthi Dhatu</i> )                         | 800          |
| Nervous tissue or bone marrow ( <i>Majja Dhatu</i> ) | 900          |

### Benefits of Abhyanga<sup>[15-16]</sup>

*Abhyanga*, the traditional *Ayurvedic* oil massage, offers a wide range of physical and mental health benefits. Its regular practice helps maintain balance, strength, and vitality throughout life.

- **Jarahara (Anti-aging):** Slows down the aging process by nourishing body tissues (*Dhatus*) and enhancing their strength and vitality.<sup>[17]</sup>
- **Shramahara (Relieves fatigue):** Alleviates tiredness and exhaustion caused by physical or mental exertion.
- **Vatahara (Balances Vata):** Pacifies aggravated **Vata dosha**, ensuring smooth functioning of the body's movements and nervous system.
- **Drishtiprasadakara (Improves eyesight):** Helps maintain eye health and prevents age-related eye disorders such as *Timira* and similar conditions.
- **Pushtikara (Nourishing):** Strengthens and nourishes all the body tissues, promoting overall health and vitality.
- **Ayushya (Promotes longevity):** Enhances the functions of vital organs and supports a long, healthy lifespan.
- **Swapnakara (Improves sleep):** Calms the mind, relieves stress, and promotes sound, restful sleep—beneficial in insomnia and mental fatigue.
- **Tvakdardhyakara (Improves skin and body strength):** Provides firmness and resilience to the skin and body, even in old age.
- **Kleshasaha (Enhances endurance):** Improves the body's ability to withstand physical and mental stress.<sup>[18]</sup>



- **Abhighata Abhihitam (Protective):** Those who practice Abhyanga regularly are less prone to injuries, strain, and bodily discomfort.<sup>[19]</sup>
- **Kapha-Vatanirodhana (Balances doshas):** As mentioned by *Sushruta*, Abhyanga helps maintain harmony between *Kapha* and *Vata* doshas.<sup>[20]</sup>
- **Varna-Balaprada (Enhances complexion and strength):** Promotes a healthy glow to the skin and improves overall strength and vitality.

### Health benefits of Massage<sup>[21]</sup>

Massage provides numerous benefits to the body by improving circulation, flexibility, and overall physiological balance. Its effects extend from the muscles and joints to the skin, nervous system, and internal organs.

- **Reduces muscle tension**

Massage helps to loosen tight, contracted, or hardened muscles, restoring their flexibility and tone. It can also stimulate weak or flaccid muscles, improving their function. By reducing muscle stiffness, it enhances blood flow and lymphatic circulation, promoting better nourishment and waste removal in the tissues.

- **Improves blood circulation**

Through direct and indirect stimulation of nerves connected to internal organs, massage causes dilation of blood vessels, which can increase blood flow by 10–15%. This improved circulation enhances oxygen and nutrient delivery throughout the body.

- **Promotes lymphatic movement**

The rhythmic pressure and muscular contractions created during massage act like a pump, facilitating the movement of lymph, which helps eliminate metabolic waste and supports the immune system.

- **Enhances joint mobility and flexibility**

Massage gently stretches muscles and connective tissues, keeping them soft and elastic. This results in greater range of motion and improved flexibility of joints, helping to prevent stiffness and maintain ease of movement.

- **Stimulates or relaxes the nervous system**

Depending on the technique used, massage can either soothe and calm the nervous system or stimulate and energize it, creating a sense of harmony between the body and mind.

- **Improves skin health**

Massage activates sebaceous and sweat glands, ensuring the skin remains well-lubricated, supple, and healthy. It also improves local circulation, which enhances skin tone and texture.

- **Supports digestion and metabolism**

Massage promotes the body's natural secretions and excretions, increasing the production of saliva, gastric juices, and urine. It also enhances the elimination of nitrogen, inorganic phosphorus, and salts, which helps boost metabolic rate and improve digestion and intestinal function.

### **Mode of action of *Abhyanga***

The oils used in *Abhyanga* possess the quality of *Sneha* (unctuousness), and their therapeutic effects can be understood through the unique *Gunas* (properties) they exhibit. Each property contributes to the overall healing, nourishing, and balancing action of *Abhyanga* on the body.

- ***Snigdha Guna* (Unctuousness)**

This is the primary quality of *Sneha* dravyas. It helps in pacifying *Vata*, nourishing the body, and enhancing vitality. At the cellular level, it performs actions such as lubrication (*Snehana*), softening (*Kledana*), and liquefying (*Vishyandana*), ensuring proper nourishment and smooth functioning of tissues.

- ***Guru Guna* (Heaviness)**

This property contributes to strength, stability, and nourishment. As described by *Hemadri* and *Bhavaprakasha*, it is *Vatahara* (pacifies *Vata*), *Kaphakara* (increases *Kapha*), and *Pushtikara* (nourishing). It helps alleviate aggravated *Vata*, enhance body mass, and promote overall nourishment.

- ***Shita Guna* (Coolness)**

*Shita Guna* provides a calming and stabilizing effect on both the mind and body. It promotes mental peace, enthusiasm, and clarity, reduces excessive sweating, and helps maintain muscular stability.

- ***Mrdu Guna* (Softness)**

This quality counters hardness and rigidity (*Kathinya*) in the body. It helps relieve stiffness, enhances flexibility, and promotes smooth, supple muscles and joints.

- ***Drava Guna* (Fluidity)**

*Drava* means liquid or flowing. This property enables the oil to spread rapidly throughout the body, promoting moisture and hydration. It helps liquefy accumulated *Doshas* and mobilize them, facilitating their elimination.

- ***Picchila Guna* (Sliminess)**

This sticky, cohesive property promotes longevity, stability, and body strength. It maintains cellular and molecular integrity, supports *Kapha*, and contributes to a feeling of groundedness and heaviness.

- ***Sara Guna* (Mobility)**

*Sara* denotes smooth movement or flow. It assists in mobilizing *Doshas* and waste products (*Malas*), helping in their elimination and maintaining internal balance.

- ***Manda Guna* (Slowness)**

This property allows the gradual and sustained diffusion of the *Sneha* within the tissues. It ensures that the oil's nourishing effect lasts longer, maintaining its influence on *Doshas*, *Dhatus*, and *Malas*.

- ***Sukshma Guna* (Subtlety)**

*Sukshma* refers to fineness or subtle penetration. This enables the *Sneha* to enter even the minute channels (*Srotas*) of the body, ensuring deep nourishment and detoxification at a micro level.

Through these combined properties, *Abhyanga* acts effectively against *Vata*-related disorders, as all the qualities of *Sneha* oppose the dry, rough, and light nature of aggravated *Vata*.

Furthermore, modern understanding supports this view the skin is a metabolically active organ, and factors like UV exposure can alter its enzymatic activity, affecting lipid metabolism. Topical application and dietary intake of PUFAs (polyunsaturated fatty acids) can help protect dermal collagen, thereby slowing the skin aging process and maintaining its elasticity and health.

### **Mode of action of *Abhyanga* according to Modern view<sup>[22]</sup>**

*Abhyanga* acts on the skin, which is a site for *Vatadosha* and *Lasika*. Thus, *Abhyanga* directly acts on the lymphatic drainage. Lymph exhibits large amount of amino acid tryptophan.

The internal fluid of the skin is subjected to movement in the massage because of osmotic pressure. Thus, massage results into mechanical hydrostatic pressure in the extra-cellular compartment. Massage helps fluid enter into viscera, tissues and dilute the accumulated toxins. After the completion of procedure, when it refills the peripheral vessels, the diluted toxins are brought into general circulation and during the course; they are expelled out via elimination procedures.

After massage, amino acids like tryptophan increase in the blood. It results into a parallel increase in the neuron transmitter serotonin, which is made from tryptophan at motor ends plates.

The piezoelectricity is derived from pressure. When massage is done along with a *Snehadravya*, a rhythmic movement creates magnetic field and electricity in the body. By this charging the conductivity of nerves will be increased. Electricity is discharged to nerve fiber at regular intervals and moves in circular pattern.

Interruption to the momentum results into the diseased condition, which may be treated by a massage with a certain pressure. Acetylcholine acts as a transmitter at motor end in the presence of calcium ion and facilitates synaptic action potential.

With the use of a concentrated drug, the absorption rate increases. Percutaneous absorption is observed in the inflammatory condition due to the presence of substances like serotonin.

- Due to rubbing of oil on skin, rubbing and friction tend to dilate the orifice of the superficial ducts and increase the temperature of skin.<sup>[23]</sup>
- Intercellular permeation.<sup>[24]</sup>
- The intercellular pathway involves drug diffusing through the continuous lipid matrix. The intercellular domain is a region of alternating structured bi-layers. Consequently, a drug must sequentially partition in to, and diffuse through repeated aqueous and lipid domains. Lipophilic substances such as essential oil components are absorbed more readily as the stratum corneum provides a formidable barrier for hydrophilic compounds, which penetrate more slowly.
- Massage soothes the nervous and the endocrine system which act like the connecting cells. The pleasure from touching is mediated through the limbic system which causes the secretion of hormones physically equivalent to health and happiness. Massage or touching

is found to increase secretion of Human Growth Hormone (HGH) which in turn speeds up the movement of digested proteins (amino acids) out of the blood and into the cells, and this accelerates the cells anabolism, hence this action promotes natural growth. It also promotes protein synthesis and reduces oxidation of proteins. HGH also affects the fat and carbohydrates, sexual functions, proper operation of stomach and bowels, liver, immune system and all glandular systems.

- The gate control theory states that massage provides stimulation that helps to block pain signals sent to the brain. It also eases certain chemicals such as serotonin in the body or cause beneficial changes in the body.<sup>[25]</sup>
- A number of immune boosting white blood cells were found significantly higher in patients who received massage versus patients who did not receive massage.<sup>[26]</sup>

### Difference between *Abhyanga* and Massage<sup>[27]</sup>

Unlike *Abhyanga*, which is recommended as a part of one's **daily health routine** (*Dinacharya*), a **massage** is not meant for regular practice in all individuals. Massage is generally **avoided in conditions involving inflammation, fractures, sprains, or muscle strains**, as it may worsen these issues.

*Abhyanga*, on the other hand, is a more **therapeutic and preventive practice** in *Ayurveda*. It is performed with careful consideration of an individual's **digestive strength** (*Agni*) and **Kapha dosha predominance**, aiming to maintain internal balance, promote nourishment, and enhance overall well-being.

**Table 2: Difference between *Abhyanga* and Massage.**

| Process     | <i>Abhyanga</i>   | Massage   |
|-------------|---|---|
| Method      | Done essentially with a <i>Snigdha dravya</i> e.g. <i>Taila</i> , <i>Ghrita</i> etc.  | Done with or without lubricant  |
| Uses        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prior therapy for <i>Panchakarma</i></li> <li>• Included in the daily routine</li> <li>• Can be taken as the main treatment for many medical conditions</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can't be used as a prior therapy for <i>Panchakarma</i></li> <li>• It may not be taken as part of the daily routine</li> <li>• It is not a main treatment; it is always supplementary</li> </ul> |
| Indications | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For ensuring proper growth and development of a healthy baby</li> <li>• For Neuromuscular</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Healthy baby</li> <li>• Neuromuscular disorders with some physiotherapy practices</li> </ul>   |

|                    |  |  |
|--------------------|--|--|
|                    | disorders  |  |
| Contra Indications | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Persons suffering from <i>Kaphaja</i> diseases</li> <li>• After the <i>Panchakarma</i></li> <li>• A person having <i>Ajeerna</i></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inflammatory conditions</li> <li>• Severe body aches</li> <li>• Sprains and strains</li> <li>• Fractures</li> <li>• Dislocations</li> </ul> |

## DISCUSSION

The practice of *Abhyanga* holds a central position in *Ayurvedic* preventive and curative medicine. It is one of the most practical and effective methods for maintaining the equilibrium of doshas and promoting overall wellness. Classical *Ayurvedic* texts emphasize that *Abhyanga* pacifies Vata dosha, which is considered the root cause of many degenerative and neuromuscular disorders. The *Snigdha* (unctuous), *Guru* (heavy), and *Mrdu* (soft) properties of *Sneha dravya* used in *Abhyanga* act by countering the dryness, roughness, and instability caused by aggravated *Vata*, thereby restoring balance and vitality to the body.

From a physiological standpoint, *Abhyanga* exerts a multidimensional action on the body. The rhythmic application of oil with appropriate pressure enhances lymphatic drainage, blood circulation, and neuromuscular coordination, while also stimulating the parasympathetic nervous system. This leads to a reduction in stress hormones, stabilization of heart rate, and improved relaxation response. Modern studies further support that oil massage stimulates the release of serotonin and endorphins, neurotransmitters responsible for emotional well-being, relaxation, and pain modulation.

*Abhyanga* also acts directly on the skin (*Tvak*), which is a seat of *Vata dosha* and *Bhrajaka Pitta*. The mechanical and thermal stimulation during the procedure activates *Bhrajaka Pitta*, which aids in the absorption and metabolism of *Sneha dravya*. The absorbed oil nourishes the *Dhatus* (body tissues) and assists in the mobilization of *Doshas* from peripheral tissues (*Shakha*) to the gastrointestinal tract (*Koshtha*), where they can be expelled through *Shodhana* procedures.

The effects of *Abhyanga* at the molecular and cellular levels are also noteworthy. The process enhances percutaneous absorption of bioactive compounds, particularly lipophilic substances, through the stratum corneum's lipid matrix. This results in improved skin hydration, elasticity, and collagen preservation, delaying the aging process. Additionally, the friction and mild heat generated during *Abhyanga* increase skin temperature, dilate pores, and facilitate toxin removal through perspiration.

Furthermore, stimulation of sensory receptors in the skin activates the limbic system and endocrine responses, promoting the secretion of beneficial hormones such as Human Growth Hormone (HGH), which aids in protein synthesis, tissue regeneration, and immune modulation. The cumulative outcome is improved vitality, mental clarity, and physical resilience.

Unlike ordinary massage therapy, which may be contraindicated in certain inflammatory or traumatic conditions, *Abhyanga* is an integral part of *Dinacharya* (daily routine) and serves both preventive and therapeutic roles. When performed regularly with suitable oils chosen according to individual *Prakriti* (constitution) and environmental conditions, it contributes to long-term health maintenance, making it a unique blend of traditional wisdom and modern physiological science.

## CONCLUSION

*Abhyanga*, as outlined in *Ayurvedic* literature, is not merely a cosmetic or relaxation therapy but a comprehensive preventive and rejuvenative procedure. Its regular practice as part of *Dinacharya* enhances circulation, metabolism, tissue nourishment, and dosha balance, while also promoting mental calmness and emotional stability. The classical understanding of *Abhyanga* aligns closely with modern physiological mechanisms, confirming its ability to improve lymphatic drainage, hormonal regulation, and immune function.

Scientific findings corroborate that *Abhyanga* influences neuroendocrine activity, enhances serotonin secretion, and increases immune cell count, thereby strengthening both body and mind. Through its effects on *Vata* regulation, skin nourishment, and psychological well-being, *Abhyanga* stands as a timeless and scientifically relevant practice in the pursuit of holistic health.

In conclusion, integrating *Abhyanga* into daily routine offers a practical and sustainable approach to preventive health care. It bridges ancient *Ayurvedic* knowledge with modern scientific understanding, fostering self-awareness, physical strength, emotional stability, and overall wellness essential foundations for healthy living in today's fast-paced world.



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