

Chapter 20. Shirovasti (Medicated Oil Retention on Head)



Shirovasti is a specialized Ayurvedic therapy where **medicated oil** is retained on the head for a specific duration. It is one of the **Moordha Taila** therapies (head treatments) and is considered the most potent among them. Shirovasti is often performed after purification procedures, but it can also be done without prior cleansing in cases where shodhana (purification) is not required.

Indications of Shiro Vasti

Shirovasti is indicated in the following conditions:



- Ardita (facial paralysis)
- Anidra (insomnia)
- Nasa Sosha (dryness of the nasal passage)
- Asya Sosha (dryness of the mouth)
- Vaksanga (speech disorders)
- Timira (vision problems)
- Siroroga (head diseases)

Commonly Practiced Oils

- Ksheerabala Taila
- Dhanwantharam Taila
- Karpasasthyadi Taila
- Rasna Dasamoola Taila
- Suddha Bala Taila

Infrastructure Facilities

- **Manpower:** A qualified doctor and an experienced technician

Space: A spacious room with an **armed chair** of knee-height for seating the patient comfortably

Materials Required

- Rexin or leather cap: 75 cm x 20 cm
- Black gram flour: 200 g
- Medicated oil: 1.5 liters
- Cotton ribbon: 120 cm x 10 cm (2 strips)
- Spoon
- Vessel: 2 liters (for heating oil)
- Large vessel
- Rasnadi Choorna: 5 g
- Oil for Abhyanga: 100 ml
- Soft towel
- Hot water bath

Pre-Operative Procedure (Poorvakarma)

1. **Shaving:** Hair on the head is shaved completely.
2. **Abhyanga:** Full-body oil massage is done before the Shirovasti procedure.
3. **Ear Protection:** Cotton cloth is plugged into both ears to prevent oil from entering the ears.
4. **Preparation of Dough:** A strip of cloth smeared with black gram flour paste is prepared to secure the oil-retention cap.
5. **Bowel and Bladder:** Ensure that the patient has emptied their bowels and bladder before starting the procedure.

Procedure

1. **Seating:** The patient is seated comfortably in the armed chair with the head and neck stabilized.
2. **Application of Dough Ring:**
 - A strip of cloth smeared with the black gram flour paste is wrapped around the head, **2 cm above the eyebrows**. This serves as the base for the rexin or leather cap and ensures no leakage of oil.
 - The rexin/leather cap is placed over the dough ring and sealed at the junctions using more black gram paste.

**3. Pouring the Oil:**

- The medicated oil is warmed to just above body temperature and carefully poured into the **vastiputaka** (oil-retaining cap) through a long strip of cloth or coconut leaflet to prevent spilling.
- The oil is filled to a height of **2-3 cm above the scalp**.

4. Duration:

- The oil is retained on the head for **30 minutes for Kapha, 40 minutes for Pitta, and 50 minutes for Vata** or until secretions from the nose, eyes, or throat are observed.
- Maintain the oil temperature by replacing small portions of cooled oil with warm oil regularly.

5. During the Procedure:

- The patient should sit comfortably with closed eyes.
- A gentle massage is performed on the neck and shoulders.
- Movements of the neck should be avoided during the procedure.

Post-Operative Procedure (Paschat Karma)

1. **Oil Removal:** A passage is made above the ear to drain out the oil from the head. The remaining oil is wiped off with a dry cloth.
2. **Abhyanga:** Apply medicated oil on the head, neck, palms, and soles.
3. **Rasnadi Choorna:** After oil is wiped, **Rasnadi Choorna** is applied on the head.
4. **Rest:** The patient should rest for at least one hour before taking a **lukewarm water bath**.
5. **Dietary and Lifestyle Guidelines:**
 - Avoid exposure to **cold air** or **cold foods**.
 - Avoid **sleeping, sneezing, or laughing** during the treatment.
 - Hot and cold conditions should be avoided.

Season/Time

- The best time to perform Shirovasti is **3-6 pm**, preferably for **7 days**.

Precautions

1. Ensure that the **cap and dough** are properly sealed to prevent oil leakage.
2. Maintain a **uniform temperature** of the oil throughout the procedure.
3. Do not heat the oil directly over a flame; use a hot water bath for heating.
4. The patient should avoid **head baths**, especially if contraindicated in conditions such as **Ardita** (facial paralysis).
5. **Cold foods and beverages** should be avoided during the treatment period.

Complications and Management

1. **Sneezing and Rhinitis:**
 - Apply **Talam** with **Rasnadi Choorna** and **Jambeera Swarasa**.
 - Perform **Dhoomapana** (herbal smoking) with **Haridra Dhooma Varti**.
2. **Neck Pain:**
 - Local **massage** can be done to relieve the discomfort.
3. **Heaviness of Head:**
 - If the patient experiences heaviness in the head, stop the procedure and treat accordingly.
4. **Fainting, Headache, or Shivering:**
 - Manage accordingly based on the patient's condition.

Clinical Vital Data Recording

- Record the patient's **temperature, pulse rate, blood pressure, and respiratory rate** before and after the treatment.
- **Routine pathological investigations** should be done on the first and last day of the procedure.
- **Biochemical tests** like **Blood Sugar, Blood Urea, and Serum Cholesterol** should also be performed.



Shirovasti is a highly effective therapy for neurological and psychological conditions related to the head. By retaining medicated oil on the head, this treatment helps in nourishing and balancing the doshas, especially in cases involving **Vata** and **Pitta** imbalances.

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