

Chapter 11. Abhyangam (Oil Massage)



Abhyangam is a traditional Ayurvedic procedure involving the application of **snehadravayas** (medicated oils) over the body using mild pressure in specific directions. It can be done either on the whole body (Sarvanga) or on specific body parts (Ekanga). Many modern massage techniques have evolved from traditional Ayurvedic practices like **Keraleeya Kalari Chikitsa** and **Kathakali massage**. Abhyanga can be performed daily as part of general body care or as a therapeutic massage targeting specific disease conditions.

Materials Required:

1. **Oil/medicated oil:** 100-150 ml (depending on the size and condition of the patient)
2. **Vessel:** 200 ml capacity for heating the oil
3. **Tissue paper/soft towel:** As required (Q.S.)
4. **Green gram powder/medicated snana choorna/medicated soap:** Q.S. (for post-massage cleansing)
5. **Masseurs:**
 - For **whole body massage:** 2 masseurs
 - For **Ekanga massage (local massage):** 1 masseur
 - For children under 10 years: 1 masseur

Pre-Operative Procedure:

1. **Oil Selection:** The oil (in **Kharapaka** or **Madhyamapaka** form) should be selected based on the **climate**, the patient's **Prakriti** (constitution), and their specific **disease condition**.
2. **Oil Heating:** The oil should be heated to **38°C-44°C** before application. For **Siroabhyanga** (head massage), use **lukewarm oil**.
3. **Patient Positioning:** The patient is seated on a **Droni** (massage table) with legs extended.

Procedure:

1. **Head and Scalp:** Start by applying warm oil to the **anterior fontanelle** of the scalp, then cover the entire scalp.
2. **Karnabhyanga (Ear massage):** Follow this with oil application and gentle massage around the ears.
3. **Palm and Padabhyanga (Palm and Foot massage):** Prior to the main massage, oil is applied to the palms and feet.

**4. Body Massage:**

- Two therapists, positioned on either side of the droni, apply oil uniformly.
- Massage starts from the **scalp and head**, moving down to the **neck, upper back, shoulders, upper arms, forearms, and hands**.
- Continue to the **chest, abdomen, lower back, and lower limbs**.

5. Positions for Massage:

- **Sitting:** Ideal for head, neck, shoulders, and back.
- **Supine (lying on the back):** Massage the upper limbs, neck, shoulders, lower limbs, and regions from the sternum to the flanks.
- **Left and Right Lateral (lying on the sides):** Focus on the back, limbs, and hips on the respective sides.
- **Prone (lying on the stomach):** This position is recommended for **low back pain** but should be avoided for patients with chronic conditions of the **lungs, heart, or gastrointestinal tract**.

6. Note:

- **Upper back:** Massage in an upward-downward direction.
- **Limb joints:** Circular movements are used for joints, while muscles are massaged in linear strokes.
- **Umbilical region:** Circular movements are applied around the navel.

7. End of Procedure: After the massage, wipe the oil off the body with tissue paper or a towel.**Duration:**

- The massage typically lasts for **45-60 minutes**.

Post-Operative Procedure:

1. **Rest:** The patient should rest in a comfortable position for **15 minutes**.
2. **Bathing:** The patient can take a **lukewarm water bath** using a **medicated soap** or **snana choorna**.
3. **Rasnadi Choornam:** Apply **Rasnadi choornam** to the scalp after the bath.
4. **Diet:** Once the patient feels hungry, they should eat light food suitable for their illness, digestive power, and **Satmya** (suitability to food).
5. **Swedana:** If the patient is indicated for **Swedana** (sudation therapy), it should be done immediately after Abhyanga, before the bath.

Abhyanga provides numerous benefits, including relaxation, nourishment to the tissues, improved circulation, and relief from pain. When performed regularly, it promotes overall health, vitality, and balance in the body.