

Oil Pulling: A Wonderful Ayurvedic Therapy

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Abstract

Oil pulling is an important therapy for treatment of dental problems since ayurveda, the procedure of this method is clearly described in "Charaka Samhita" a book of ayurveda in India. Different kinds of edible oils are used for oil pulling such as sesame oil, coconut oil, olive oil and mustard oil, it involves taking 20 ml of oil in mouth, swishing for about 20 min and then spit it out in sink. The oil has turned milky and viscous due to presence of toxins and different microbes of our mouth. Oil pulling is not only beneficial in dental problems but also helpful in other problems such as eczema, psoriasis, constipation, halitosis etc. This method is very helpful for those people who cannot afford the expenses of regular visits of dentist as it takes edible oils which are easily available in every house.

Keywords: Oil pulling; Ayurveda; Halitosis; Dentist; Sesame oil; Swishing

Introduction

Oil pulling is an ancient technique mentioned in ayurveda, it involves gargling with oil for about 20 min on an empty stomach in the morning for oral and systemic health benefits. Moreover, it is also beneficial in detoxification of our body by removing all the toxins from our digestive tract [1]. This concept of oil pulling is not new as it is described in ayurvedic text "Charaka Samhita", but with a different name known as gandoosha or kavala. This technique has been used for many year for improving dental health in all over the world. However, in India the use of oil pulling is not so common since people believe more in new technologies as compare to ayurveda [2]. In addition to treatment of dental problems, it is claimed to cure many other diseases like thrombosis, itching, chronic infections, asthma and diabetes [3]. As we all are aware that there are more than 60,000 varieties of microorganisms present in our mouth and the outer covering of microbes is water insoluble so it is not possible to remove them by gargling with water, i.e. why oil is more effective in dissolving them than water and causes removal of these bacteria from our mouth. The viscosity

of oil is greater than water which inhibits bacterial attack and plaque deposition on teeth, this is another reason of efficacy of oil pulling. A variety of common edible oils are used for oil pulling therapy such as sesame oil, coconut oil and olive oil, but sesame oil is most common among them due to its antibacterial nature and high viscosity [4].

Methods of Oil Pulling

Procedure

The oil pulling must be done in a proper sitting position with chin upright. For oil pulling, we need sesame oil or coconut oil near about 20 ml, with the help of spoon put this oil in mouth and swished between the teeth for 10 to 20 min, then it is needed to be spit out in sink, the color and viscosity of oil has completely changed as it contains thousands of bacteria and toxins. It is a very effective technique without any adverse effects and it can be practiced in any age except for the children below age of 5 year due to risk of swallowing [5].

Inclusion criteria:

- Subjects with plaque induced gingivitis
- Subjects having at least 20 permanent natural teeth

Exclusion criteria:

- Use of antibiotics or mouthwash in the past 3 months
- Pregnancy/lactating women
- Smokers (past/current)
- Children below age of 15 years

Mechanism of Oil Pulling Therapy

Oil pulling therapy is extensively used for many years using sesame oil for strengthening teeth, gums and for dryness of throat. Although exact mechanism of action of oil pulling is not known so far, but it is believed that the oil dissolves all the microorganisms of mouth and draws out toxins from digestive tract of human body. Because of fat soluble nature of microbes can easily mix with oil and move out of the body. Moreover, sesame oil is antibacterial in nature and its emulsification process may be responsible for the formation of a soapy layer which contains all microbes. The emulsification process alters the sticking of bacteria on the tooth surface and removes the superficial worn out squamous cells and improve oral hygiene [6].

Benefits of Oil pulling**Gingivitis**

It is one of the most commonly found oral disease, it is the beginning stage of periodontitis that occurs due to the deposition of microorganisms in the form of plaque on the tooth. Oil pulling with sesame oil or coconut oil is found effective in treatment of gingivitis as coconut oil contains about 50% of lauric acid which has antimicrobial effects. Plaque induced gingivitis is the result of an interaction between plaque and the tissues, oil pulling removes plaque by dissolving all microbes deposited in the form of plaque [7].

Dental Caries

Dental caries can be effectively prevented and controlled by good plaque control methods. By continuous practice of oil pulling for 45 days, it has been found that bacterial concentration reduced from 60% to 20% in our mouth. Thus, the process of oil pulling decreases the susceptibility of bacteria to dental caries [8].

Detoxification

Sesame oil is very high in antioxidants, its main chemical constituents are sesamin, sesamol and sesaminol are highly effective against free radicals. Due to its antioxidant nature it reduces free radical injury to the tissues [9]. Sesame oil also holds a high concentration of vitamin E and polyunsaturated fatty acids along with antioxidant properties. Being an antioxidant, sesame oil is very effective in stopping the absorption of negative forms of cholesterol in the liver. Moreover, it absorbs the toxins present in human digestive tract and makes it clear [10].

Eczema and Psoriasis

Oil pulling is not only effective in dental problems but also used for the treatment of skin problems like eczema and psoriasis. Since it clarifies the skin by removing toxins and impurities [11]. Psoriasis is an autoimmune disorder, it means that when our immune system becomes hyperactive and it is causing exponential growth of skin cells and inflammation.

Halitosis

The term halitosis denotes 'unpleasant breath odor'. It is not the problem associated with smoking, food intake or bad morning breath on awakening. Indeed, it is a problem which arises due to poor oral hygiene and plaque deposition in our mouth. People use oil pulling for cure of halitosis but there is no scientific proof to accept oil pulling therapy as a treatment adjunct to cure halitosis [12].

Xerostomia

It is a disease associated with dry mouth as secretion of saliva decreases. Treatment of xerostomia by using oil pulling therapy has been found effective. According to a study, it has been proved that oil pulling is effective in reducing oral malodor and relieving oral dryness in head and neck cancer patients [13].

Intestinal Ulcers

Ulcer is an infection caused by *Helicobacter pylorus*, excessive production of acid in the stomach due to spicy food and smoking is the main reason behind ulcers in the stomach and small intestine. Main symptoms of ulcers are burning, gnawing and abdominal pain etc. Commonly two types of ulcers are there peptic ulcer and duodenal ulcer [14]. All kinds of ulcers irrespective of their cause are cured with oil pulling. During first few days the stomach pain may increase but after 2 to 3 weeks the pain is completely disappeared and patients were completely free from ulcer.

Other possible benefits of oil pulling for overall health include

- Migraine headache relief
- Supporting hormone imbalances
- Reducing redness and swelling in bones and joints
- May help reduce congestion
- Helps in normal kidney function
- Helps promote normal sleep pattern
- Some people report improved vision
- Aids in reducing discomfort
- Helps detoxify the body

Advantages of Oil pulling

Oil pulling is cheap; the only expense is for the oil you use. It is very easy; you simply swish oil in your mouth. Compared to other forms of detoxification it is relatively effortless. It does not require dieting, fasting, or consuming unpleasant, and often bowel loosening mixes of herbs and pills. And it is completely harmless [15]. It is claimed to have advantages over commercial mouthwashes since it causes no staining, has no lingering aftertaste, causes no allergic reactions and is readily available in the household [16].

Tissue Regeneration

In Ayurveda, the well-known rasayana herb, amla (the fruit of a tree) is considered a general builder of oral health. Amla works well as a mouth rinse as a decoction. One to two grams per day can be taken orally in capsules for long-term benefit to the teeth and gums. Herbs such as amla that support the healing and development of connective tissue when taken internally also benefit the gums. The healing effect of these tonics takes longer to become apparent since they must saturate the whole body in order to work on the gums. The results, however, are more lasting. Bilberry fruit and hawthorn berry stabilize collagen, strengthening the gum tissue [17]. Liquorice root promote anti-cavity action, reduces plaque, and has an antibacterial effect. In Ayurveda, teeth are considered part of Astidhatu-bone tissue, so that their sockets are like joints. Herbs taken internally to strengthen Astidhatu, i.e. the skeleton and the joints, are good for long-term health of the teeth. Outstanding examples include yellow dock root, alfalfa leaf, cinnamon bark, and turmeric root.

Conclusion

Ayurveda, a part of alternative medicine is recurring back its importance in various aspects of health,

primarily due to its natural product usage. Oil pulling is one such age old process highlighted today due to its innumerable systemic and dental health benefits. It became a mystic cure for many systemic diseases like diabetes, migraine etc. Few short term studies have demonstrated the beneficial effects of oil pulling on plaque, gingivitis and dental caries prevalence suggesting its usage as an oral hygiene maintenance aid. Further research with long term studies is in need to explore the other effects of oil pulling therapy on overall health. Scientific validations of the ayurvedic dental health practices could justify their incorporation into modern dental practice. Publicity of these techniques, using appropriate media would benefit the general population by giving more confidence in the ancient practices, thereby preventing tooth loss.

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