

Shirodhara

Continuous pouring of decoction, oil or other liquids on the forehead and then allowing it to flow over the scalp, using a special instrument dhara yantra is known as shirodhara. Here pouring of oil is not followed by any massage.

SPECIAL INDICATION

Shirodhara is specially indicated in the following conditions:

- Mental stress
- Hypertension
- Dermatological conditions like eruptions
- Pediculosis
- Headache
- Anxiety
- Psychological illness
- Insomnia
- Mental exhaustion

REQUISITOS

Drape: A 6 feet long and feet wide cotton doth for draping the body

Medicated or plain oil or infusion Cotton pads to cover eyes

Ribbon of gauze

Dhara Table

This is needed for making the client to lie down in supine position during the dhara procedure. This special table has a shallow rounded depression at its head end where the client keeps his head. The

depressed head portion is large enough to accommodate the head, and is approximately 45 cm in diameter. Also, this head portion of the table possesses a small hole of 1 cm diameter at the centre of the shallow depression. This hole is fitted with a tube in its under surface. Any liquid that falls on this depression will drain out completely through this whole. A vessel may be placed under the table to collect this liquid.

Dhara Yantra

This is a special instrument used for dhara procedure. It consists of a dhara pot, a valve, a stand.

Dhara Pot

This refers to a unique vessel of two-liter capacity having wide mouth and rounded base. There is a hole of half cm diameter at the bottom of the vessel. The dhara pot is made up of clay or any other suitable metal. Pot is provided with three metal chain or rope anchored to the margin of the vessel mouth. The opposite free end of the chain or rope is fixed to a hook, so that the dhara pot may be hanged on a stand.

PREPARATION OF THE DHARA POT

Dhara pot is made to hang on a stand so that it lies just above the head side of the dhara table. Make the medicine liquid slightly luke warm and fill it in dhara pot.

Stand

Thus, prepared dhara pot is mounted on a stand, the height of which can be adjusted according to the requirement.

The stand with the dhara pot hanging is placed beside the head end of the dhara table.

MECHANISM OF THE DHARA INSTRUMENT

Dhara pot is meant for steady flow of decoction or oil. When any liquid is poured into the pot it steadily flows from the bottom hole. The valve can help the dhara flow to maintain fast or slow.

TAKRADHARA

Liquids like milk, buttermilk, decoctions or oil is used for the shirodhara depending upon the illness the client is suffering from. Following is the list of different liquids used in the shirodhara.

- Plain boiled and cooled milk.
- Buttermilk processed with drugs.

Shirodhara carried out by using medicated buttermilk is popularly known by the name takra dhara. This unique dhara is proved efficacious in following conditions:

- Palitya- Cures premature graying of hair
- Klama- Mitigates fatigue
- Shiroruk- Effectively cures headache.
- Ojahkshaya- Replenishes the depleted ojo dhatu
- Karacharana- prick sensation, Relieves the pain and of the extremitie
- Mutra dosha -Beneficial in abnormalities of the urine.
- Hridaya ruk- Cures precordial pain.
- Aruchi- Improves the taste in the mouth.
- Agnimandya- Improves the digestion power.
- Shiro roga- Cures the diseases of the head
- Karna roga- An effective remedy in the diseases of the ear.
- Akshi roga- Beneficial in the disorders of the eye.

Two distinct methods are followed in the preparation of medicated Both have almost similar therapeutic effect. Both the methods are elaborated here.

Method I:

Processing of the medicated butter milk includes preparation of the buttermilks well as decoction of the amalaki (*Emblca officinalis*). Buttermilk has to be prepared on the previous day of the dhara procedure, and the decoction on the day of the dhara procedure itself. For the preparation of the buttermilk 1152 ml of cow's milk is boiled and cooled. When the milk is cool about 20 ml of curd or sour buttermilk is

added to it and kept overnight for fermentation Next day morning thus prepared curd is churned to extract butter and separate the buttermilk.

Now the buttermilk is ready. Decoction of the amalaki is then prepared. For this 1920 grams (40 pala of dry endocarp of amalaki is taken in a vessel, added with 6912 ml (9 prastha) of water and then boiled in a slow fire till it is reduced to 1152 ml (1% prastha).

When cool, the endocarp of the amalaki properly crushed and the decoction is strained to get the clear liquid. To this decoction equal amount of already prepared butter milk is added. This mixture is now ready for dhara procedure:

Method 2

The procedure includes preparation of the medicated buttermilk and decoction of the amalaki. Medicated buttermilk is prepared on the previous day of the dhara procedure and the decoction of amalaki on the same day of dhara procedure. In the preparation of the medicated buttermilk, crushed tubers of musta (*Cyperus rotundus*) is taken in a square cotton cloth piece of the size approximately 15 inches and is tied into a pack. This pack is placed in a vessel of 5 liters capacity. 1536 ml (2 prastha) of cow's milk and 6144 ml (8 prastha) of water is poured into the vessel. This is heated in a slow fire to prepare the decoction. Heating is continued till the decoction is reduced to 1536 ml (2 prastha). Then the decoction is allowed to cool down, the pack of musta is squeezed well and the decoction is strained into another vessel. To this decoction about 20 ml of sour butter milk or curd is added and kept overnight for fermentation.

Next day morning, the decoction of the amalaki is prepared. For these 192 grams (4 pala) of dried pericarp of amalaki is added with 3072 ml (4 prastha) of water in a vessel and then boiled. Boiling is continued till the decoction is reduced to 768 ml (1 prastha).

This amalaki decoction is now mixed with already prepared medicated buttermilk, and then churned vigorously to extract the butter. The butter is separated. Now this buttermilk is ready for the takra dhara.

Kshira dhara

Shirodhara using the medicated milk is popularly known by the name kshira dhara. This is specially indicated in psychological illness, insomnia, burning sensation in the head and in different types of the head ache. Milk is processed as detailed below. 768 ml (1 prastha) of cow's milk is taken in a vessel and diluted with 6144 ml (8 prastha) of water.

Coarse powder of properly cleaned roots of bala (*Sida cordifolia*) and crushed pieces of tubers of shatavari (*Asparagus racemosus*) is taken in a square cotton cloth piece of size 15 inches. Ends of the cloth piece are tied to form a pack of these herbs. This pack is then put into the vessel containing the diluted milk. In a slow fire the diluted milk containing the pack of herbs is boiled and reduced to 768 ml

(1 prastha), so that the water added gets evaporated. The milk is then allowed to cool; the pack containing the herb is well squeezed to extract all the liquid and then is removed.

Oils

Different medicated oils are used in both health and diseased. Oil processed with roots of bala (*Sida cordifolia*) is ideal in persons having vata constitution. In pitta prakriti people oil prepared out of chandana (*Santalum album*) is preferred. Madhuyashti (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*) oil is prescribed in persons belonging to kapha prakriti. Depending upon the combination of de different mixture of the above oil may be used for the dhara procedure. A bilwadi taila is beneficial in symptoms of insomnia.

Infusions

Different decoctions prepared out of herbs that alleviates vata, pitta or kapha doshas may be used for the dhara purpose depending upon requirement.

Decoction prepared from roots of bala is useful in imbalances vata dosha.

Vitiation of pitta dosha is best treated by decoction of herbs lie candana, ushira (*Vetiveria zizanioidis*) etc.

Decoction of Madhuyashti (*Cyperus rotundus*) is beneficial in disorders of kapha dosha.

Cold water

Dhara with cold water at room temperature is proved efficacious in bringing down the blood pressure in clients suffering from hypertension.

PREPARATION OF THE CLIENT

Even though shirodhara may be performed at any time of the day before the bath according to the habit of the client, early morning at the time of sunrise is the most ideal time for the shirodhara procedure. Client is asked to refresh himself by brushing his teeth and washing the face after evacuating the bowel and voiding urine. This may be followed by moderate warming up exercise. Client may be subjected to Shiro-abhyanga if oil will be used for the dhara. Now the client is ready for shirodhara

He is made to lie down on the dhara table. His body below the neck is draped with a cloth. A 12 inches long and 2 inches wide cotton ribbon is folded twice along its length to make it thick ribbon. This ribbon is placed along the lower border of the client's forehead upon the eyebrows. This will prevent escape of the fluids into the eyes during the procedure of shirodhara

The eyes are then closed with cotton pads. The dhara yantra is placed at the head end of the table, with dhara pot hanging above the head of the client, with wick pointing towards the center of his forehead. A distance of about 3 inches is maintained between the free end of the wick and the forehead of the client. The therapist should first chant the mantra or prayer and then perform shirodhara procedure. Therapist standing on the right side of the client is ideal position to carry out shirodhara procedure.

PROCEDURE

Shirodhara is performed in the following steps:

WARMING LIQUID MEDICINE

Oil or infusion depending upon the prescription is heated to make it lukewarm in a water bath. Cold infusions or other liquid medicines are preferred if the client shows predominance of pitta dosha in his body.

FILLING THE DHARA POT

The valve in the bottom of the dhara pot is closed and then the lukewarm or cold infusion is poured into the dhara pot. About one to two liters of liquid medicine may be poured into the dhara pot. One should make it sure that, the position of the dhara pot is adjusted in such a way that the stream of liquid medicine falls on the center of the forehead.

MOVING STREAM

The valve is open and the liquid in the dhara pot starts flowing steadily onto the forehead of the client. The dhara pot is then oscillated constant and steadily in to and fro fashion across the head so that the fluid falls on the entire forehead from one lateral to other. Or else dhara pot may be moved in the shape of number eight, so that the stream of liquid medicine is made to fall across the forehead in the same shape. During the whole procedure of dhara, jerky movement of the pot should be avoided as far as possible.

REFILLING

The fluid that falls on the forehead flows first into the head support of the dhara table and then collects in a container placed under it. This fluid is then taken and once again poured into the dhara pot as and when the liquid level in the dhara pot decreases. As a result, one can achieve a continuous flow of the fluid for a desirable period. As and when the fluid has cooled down, it is heated once again and used for continuing the procedure. In this way the procedure is continued for about 30 minutes.

AFTER PROCEDURE

After the shirodhara the client is asked to take rest for about 15 minutes and then to take head bath with warm water. Use of soap should be discouraged alternatively one can ask the client to use gram powder.

DURATION AND COURSE OF DHARA

The process of pouring the liquid is carried out for about 30 to 90 minutes. Depending upon nature of the illness and the physical condition of the client shirodhara is performed daily and continued for 7 or 14 days.

PRECAUTIONS

During the procedure the eyes are well protected and covered so that medicinal liquid does not leak into the eyes and produce irritation of the eye.

Research on shirodhara

A comparative clinical study was carried out in 25 patients suffering from hypertension. The study revealed that the takra dhara alone is very effective in reducing the blood pressure as well as the associated symptoms.

In another single blind clinical trial of pre-test post-test design, 36 patients suffering from anxiety disorder were treated with jaladhara for 30 minutes every day for six weeks. This study showed that a relief of 67.49% in patients treated with jaladhara as assessed by the Hemilton scale.

A comparative clinical study was carried out in 8 patients suffering from insomnia and were treated with dhara of ashwagandhadhi taila. The study said that, 50% of the patients had complete relief from the symptom insomnia. The result was also statistically highly