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Healthy Eyes : Ayurvedic Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is the traditional and ancient Indian system of health science. Its name literally means science of life. Ayurvedic knowledge was originated in India more than 5000 years ago and it is often called the " Mother of all healing". It has eight branches which deals with the different parts of body. Among them, *Shalakyata Tantra* is an important branch of Ayurveda dealing with the diseases situated above clavicle, including the disorders of eye, ear, nose, throat, dental, head and neck. In this branch, the prime importance is given to *Netra* as it is considered *Pradhana* among all *Indriyas*. Importance of vision has been explained in *Samhitas* - A person who desires for a long life must take care of his eyes throughout life as for a blind man there is no difference between day and night henceforth even though he has wealth, he will not be able to enjoy the life so protection of eye sight is the top most priority in life. *Netra* being the most important *Indriya* among all the *Indriyas*, it is very necessary to maintain its health. Creating awareness among the people regarding the concepts of *Dinacharya*, *Kriyakalpas* use, *Chakshushya* drugs, healthy food habits, regular exercises and *Pranayam* can immensely decrease prevalence of eye disorders.

Key words: *Swastha Vritta*, *Netra*, *Dinacharya*, *Kriyakalpas*, *Exercise*, *Chakshushya* drugs.

INTRODUCTION

The *Regimens* to be followed routinely after awakening from sleep to maintain health are mentioned as *Swastha Vritta*. The word *Swastha* comprises of 'Sva' which means one's own and 'Stha' means staying i.e. being in one's own natural state.^[1]

Swasmin Sthane, Swasmin Karmani Swasu Rupe Sthiyate Tat Vruttam Swastha Vruttam.

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Dinacharya

Under the concept of *Swastha Vrutta*, very important factor to be considered is *Dinacharya*. If one follows undersaid *Dinacharya* properly, he will be free from many eye disorders and can maintain good eye health.

Netra Prakshyalana - The *Acharyas* have given particular reference to eye wash during the daily regimen of face wash. Also the practice of *Kavala* and *Gandusha* with cold water has been mentioned for maintenance of eye health.

Padabhyanga - The bodies massage with special importance to the head, eyes and feet have been given much importance. Two *Drishtigata Nadis*, *Gandhari* and *Hastijihwa* are mentioned by the *Acharyas*. The *Abhyanga* can be followed on a daily basis with special importance to foot massage before taking bath.

Snana - Special mention has been given to the usage of hot and cold water for bathing. The *Acharyas* have

specifically mentioned that the usage of hot water is for the trunk and not for the head. Hot water over the head can prove detrimental to the eye health. This is clinically seen as most of the people in cold territories have a practice of pouring hot water for head wash. People practicing this ultimately develop poor eye sight.

Pada Prakshyalana - Washing feet cleans the feet, cure diseases of feet and tiredness. It is good for eyes, enhances virility, *Rakshyoghna* and enhances pleasantness.

Chhatra Dharana - Using umbrella helps to protect eyes from damages occurring by exposure to Sunlight and UV rays. On exposure to these harmful radiations there is an increase in chance of getting cataract, pterygium and other degenerative disorders.

Padatra Dharana - Wearing of shoes protects feet, avoids diseases of feet, increases pleasantness and improves eyesight.^[2]

Kriyakalpas

The under described *Kriyakalpas* helps a person to maintain good eye health.

Netra Seka - Therapeutic ocular irrigation in closed eyes from a height of 7 to 8 cm. *Netra Seka* with *Triphala Kwatha* can act as *Tridosha Shamaka*.

Aschyotana - Instilling medication in drug from a height of 3 to 4 cm.

Vidalaka, Pindi - Medicated application over closed eyes in paste as well as poultice form.

Tarpana - Satiating eye with ghee by retaining it on eye ball and blinking continuously for stipulated period.

Putapaka - Pouring and with holding various forms of medicated extracts, prepared by specific Pharmaceutical process called *Putapaka* in open eyes followed by blinking continuously for stipulated period.^[3]

Anjana (application of collyrium)

Na Netra Roga Jayante Tasmad Anjana Macharet.

If one applies *Anjana* daily he will be definitely devoid of eye diseases.

Application of collyrium acts as *Netradoshahara*, *Kandughna*, *Drushthiklede*, *Rujapaha*, makes eyes attractive and gives resistance to sun light and blowing wind.^[4]

Nasya Karma (Nasal Medication)

Naso Hi Shiraso Dwaram.

Nose is the gateway to the *Shira*, helps to eliminate the *Doshas* which disturb the *Urdhwa Jatru*. The drug administered through the nostrils reaches the *Shringataka (Sira Marma)*, gets diffuse in entire *Murdha*, takes away the morbid *Doshas* from *Siramukha* of *Netra*, *Karna*, *Kantha* etc., from *Urdhwa Bhaga* of *Jatru*.

The nasal medication is advised in diseases of *Urdhwa Jatrugata Vikaras* (The diseases related to shoulders, eyes, nose, ears, hair disorders, head).^[5]

Chakshushya Drugs

Chakshushya means “*Chakshushehitah Shyaat*”

These are important drugs, that maintain eye health and cures eye disorders.

According to Yagaratnakara

Ghrita, Ksheera, Saindava, Madhu, Jeevanti, Bastu, Matsyakshi, Meghanada, Punarnava, Triphala, Lodhra, Patola, Godhuma, Mudga, Sitaa, Shaali.^[6]

According To Sushruta

Triphala (Amalaki, Haritaki, Bibhitaka) strengthens the eye muscles which in turn improves the eyesight. In Ayurvedic terms, *Amla* is called *Chakshusya*, which means "a *Rasayan* for strengthening the eyes" this is because *Amalaki* enhances both *Ranjaka Pitta* (one type of *Pitta* that governs liver functions and the blood formation) and *Alochaka Pitta* (another type of *Pitta* that governs the eyes or vision phenomenon).^[7] If a person consumes *Puranghrita, Triphala, Shatavari, Patola, Mudga, Amalaki* and *Yava* everyday then the person will not have the fear of dreadful *Timira*.^[8]

According To Ashtanga Hrudaya

Yava, Godhuma, Shali, Sastika, Kodrava, Mudga, Vegetables, meats of animals of Jangala Desha, having similar properties: *Dadima, Sita, Saindhava, Triphala, Drakshya* and rain water drinking.^[9]

According to Bhavaprakash

Shali, Mudga, Yava Jangala Mriga Pakshi Mansa, Vastukam, Naveen Vartaka, all cooked in ghee and also sweet and bitter drugs.^[10]

According to Dravyaguna Vigyan (Acharya Priyabrata Sharma)

Mamira, Piyaranga, Chakshusya, Kataka^[11]

Some best foods to keep eyes healthy

Maintaining a well balanced diet is key to eyes health and may helping reducing risk for developing eye ailments. Serious eye conditions may be avoided if we include foods that contain a range of Vitamins, nutrients and minerals. Eye conditions can be prevented with a healthy diet include; cataracts, which cause cloudy vision, age related macular degeneration, glaucoma, dry eyes and poor night vision. Eyes need many types of antioxidants to stay healthy. These include: lutein, zeaxanthin, vitamin A, C, E, beta -carotene, omega -3 fatty acids, zinc. A balanced diet is best created with a variety of proteins, dairy products, fruits and vegetables.

Carrots - Carrots contain lots of beta-carotene and Vitamin A which can contribute to our eyes health and may provide a fantastic source of Vitamins for preventing macular degeneration and cataracts. Carrots are good sources of Vitamin A and rhodopsin are also abundant in carrots.

Almonds - Almonds like other nuts and seeds, are generally good for eye health. Almonds contain Vitamin E. This vitamin guards against unstable molecules that target healthy tissue. Consuming regular amounts of vitamin E can help prevent age related macular degeneration as well as cataracts.

Fish - Salmon and other fish have Omega 3 fatty acids. These are healthy fats. Omega 3 fatty acids can contribute to visual development and the health of the retina in the back of the eye. They can also prevent dry eyes.

Eggs - Eggs are a great food to eat for eye health. The yolks contain Vitamin A, Lutein, zeaxanthin and Zinc, which are all vital to eye health. Vitamin A safeguards

the cornea. Lutein and zeaxanthin lower the chance of getting serious eye conditions like age-related macular degeneration and cataracts. Zinc contributes to the health of the retina. The retina is the back of the eye. Zinc also helps eyes see at night.

Dairy products - Dairy products such as milk and yogurt can be good for the eyes. They contain Vitamin A as well as the mineral zinc. Vitamin A protects the cornea while zinc helps in bringing that vitamin to the eyes from the liver. Zinc is found throughout the eye, especially the retina and choroid, which is the vascular tissue that lies under the retina. This important mineral helps with night vision as well as the prevention of cataracts. Dairy from grass fed cows provides the most benefits.

Kale-Kale is extremely good for eye health. It has the antioxidants lutein and zeaxanthin also found in eggs and other foods. These nutrients may help to prevent serious eye conditions. Lutein and zeaxanthin are not made in the body so we have to incorporate them into your diet.^[12]

Some important exercises for healthy eyes.

One should practice these eye exercises and *Pranayamas* daily.

- Eye Rotation - Up and Down
- Eye Rotation - Sideways
- Eye Rotation - Clockwise and Anti Clockwise
- Palming
- *Trataka*
- *Bhastrika Pranayam*
- *Kapalbhati Pranayam*
- *Bahya Pranayam*
- *Anuloma-Viloma Pranayam*
- *Udgeeth Pranayam*
- *Agnisara Kriya*
- *Shavasana*^[13]

DISCUSSION

The above mentioned practices, foods and drugs will be helpful in our modern life to avoid lifestyle diseases as well as in improving eye health. The practice of *Padabhyanga* has clinically proven to be effective in promoting eye health. The practice of *Anjana Karma* on daily basis has shown good results in improving vision. The practice of *Kriyakaalpas* have shown statistically and clinically significant results in promotion of eye health and in treatment of various eye diseases.

CONCLUSION

Eyesight is most important out of five senses. 80% of what we perceive comes through our sense of sight. By protecting your eyes, we reduce the odds of blindness and vision. The eyes are the windows to the body. They are the only place where blood vessels can be viewed in their natural state without a surgical procedure. With this visual inspection of the blood supply, optometrists can spot many health conditions and vision problems just by taking a glance into your eyes. Ayurveda offers many natural, safe and effective regimen and eye care techniques.

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