



Review Article

## THE HEALING POTENTIAL OF NIDRA IN AYURVEDIC MEDICINE: A COMPREHENSIVE OVERVIEW

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### Article info

#### Article History:

Received: 19-07-2023

Revised: 07-08-2023

Accepted: 23-08-2023

#### KEYWORDS:

*Nidra*, Sleep, *Doshas*, *Dinacharya*, *Vata*, *Pitta*, *Kapha*.

### ABSTRACT

*Nidra* is considered an essential aspect of maintaining overall health and well-being according to Ayurveda, the ancient Indian system of medicine. The article delves into the Ayurvedic principles and philosophies that underpin the significance of *Nidra* in promoting physical, mental, and emotional healing.

Ayurvedic understanding of sleep and its relationship with the body's *Doshas* (energetic forces) - *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*. It highlights how an imbalance in these *Doshas* can disrupt the quality and duration of sleep, leading to various health issues. Additionally, the article explores the concept of "*Sukha Nidra*" (restful sleep) as an integral part of Ayurvedic daily routines (*dinacharya*) and its impact on overall vitality.

Therapeutic benefits of *Nidra* in addressing specific health concerns, such as stress, anxiety, insomnia, and fatigue. It explores the role of *Nidra* in promoting cellular rejuvenation, hormonal balance, and the restoration of the body's natural healing mechanisms. Ayurvedic practices, such as the use of herbs, oils, and lifestyle modifications, to enhance the quality of sleep are also discussed.

Ayurvedic techniques and practices that can optimize *Nidra* and facilitate deeper, more restorative sleep. These include meditation, *Pranayama* (breathing exercises), *yoga asanas* (postures), and the adoption of a balanced Ayurvedic diet. The article emphasizes the holistic nature of *Nidra*, highlighting its ability to address imbalances on physical, mental, and spiritual levels. Overall, this comprehensive overview aims to shed light on the healing potential of *Nidra*, providing valuable insights for individuals seeking natural and holistic approaches to improve sleep quality and overall well-being.

### INTRODUCTION

*Nidra*, the art of restful sleep, holds a significant place in Ayurvedic medicine, an ancient holistic healing system originating from India. Ayurveda recognizes sleep as an essential aspect of maintaining overall health and well-being. In this comprehensive overview, we delve into the healing potential of *Nidra* within the context of Ayurvedic medicine, exploring its therapeutic benefits, underlying principles, and practical applications.

According to Ayurveda, sleep is intricately linked to the body's *Doshas* - *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*. Imbalances in these *Doshas* can disrupt the quality and duration of sleep, leading to various health issues. Understanding the interplay between sleep and *Doshas* is crucial for restoring balance and promoting optimal health.

One of the key concepts in Ayurvedic sleep is "*Sukha Nidra*," which refers to restful and rejuvenating sleep. Ayurveda emphasizes the importance of incorporating *Sukha Nidra* into daily routines (*Dinacharya*) to enhance vitality and overall well-being. By aligning with natural rhythms and observing specific practices, individuals can optimize their sleep patterns and promote physical, mental, and emotional restoration.

#### Access this article online

Quick Response Code



<https://doi.org/10.47070/ayushdhara.v10i4.1344>

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The therapeutic benefits of *Nidra* in Ayurvedic medicine are manifold. Adequate and restful sleep plays a crucial role in reducing stress, anxiety, insomnia, and fatigue. It supports the body's cellular rejuvenation process, balances hormonal activity, and facilitates the restoration of the body's innate healing mechanisms. Ayurvedic practices, such as the use of herbs, oils, and lifestyle modifications, further enhance the quality and effectiveness of sleep.

In this comprehensive overview, we explore various Ayurvedic techniques and practices that can optimize *Nidra* and promote deeper, more rejuvenating sleep. These include meditation, *Pranayama* (breathing exercises), *Yoga asanas* (postures), and the adoption of a balanced Ayurvedic diet. The holistic nature of *Nidra* is emphasized, as it addresses imbalances on physical, mental, and spiritual levels, leading to improved sleep quality and overall well-being.

By understanding the healing potential of *Nidra*, individuals can gain valuable insights into natural and holistic approaches to enhance sleep and overall health. Through this comprehensive overview, we aim to provide a deeper understanding of *Nidra*'s significance, empowering individuals to harness the transformative power of restful sleep for optimal well-being.

#### ***Nidra nirukti:***

The word *Nidra* is derived from the Sanskrit root "*Nidi kutsyaayaam*" [1] by adding the suffix "*rak*" which means to lie down, rest, or sleep. It is the state of sleep or slumber.

#### ***Nidra paribhasha:***

A person enters a state of sleepiness when their mental faculties, as well as their sensory and motor functions, become fatigued. During this period, they disconnect from their surroundings and sensory stimuli [2].

#### **Types of *Nidra* according to different Acharyas**

According to *Acharya Sushruta*, the ancient Ayurvedic texts, different types of *Nidra* (sleep) are described based on their characteristics and effects on the body and mind. These types of *Nidra* are [3]:

1. ***Tamasika Nidra:*** It is a type of sleep that is characterized by heaviness, dullness, and lethargy. It is often associated with imbalances in the *Kapha dosha*. It can lead to feelings of grogginess and a lack of energy upon waking up.
2. ***Rajasika Nidra:*** It is a sleep state characterized by restlessness, agitation, and active dreaming. It is associated with imbalances in the *Pitta dosha*. Individuals experiencing *Rajasika Nidra* may have

difficulty falling asleep, have intense dreams, and wake up feeling restless or irritable.

3. ***Satvika Nidra:*** It is a state of sleep characterized by tranquility, calmness, and purity. It is associated with balance and harmony in the *Doshas*, particularly the *Vata dosha*. *Satvika Nidra* promotes deep relaxation, rejuvenation, and a sense of well-being upon awakening.

Similarly *Acharya Charaka* classified *Nidra* into 7 types [4].

1. ***Tamobhava***-Due to *Tamas*
2. ***Shleshmasamudbhava***-Due to *Shleshma* or *Kapha Dosha*
3. ***Manahshramasambhava***-Due to tiredness of mind
4. ***Sharirashramasambhava***-Due to tiredness of body
5. ***Agantuki***-Due to external factors
6. ***Vyaadhyanuvartini***-Due to diseases
7. ***Raattrisvabhaavaprabhava***-Due to the nature of night

*Acharya Vagbhata* also classified *Nidra* into 7 types in *Ashtanga Sangraha*, [5] i.e.,

1. ***Kaalasvabhava***-Naturally occurring *Nidra*
2. ***Aamaya***-Due to Diseases
3. ***Chittakheda***-Due to Tiredness of the mind
4. ***Dehakheda***-Due to Tiredness of the body
5. ***Kaphaja***-Due to *Kapha Dosha*
6. ***Agantuja***-Due to External Factors
7. ***Tamobhava***-Due to predominance of *Tamas*.

The Acharyas emphasize the importance of achieving *Satvika Nidra* for optimal health and well-being. It is considered the ideal state of sleep, where the mind and body experience complete rest and rejuvenation. *Satvika Nidra* is associated with qualities such as clarity, peacefulness, and a refreshed state of mind upon waking up.

Ayurveda suggests various practices and lifestyle modifications to cultivate *Satvika Nidra*, such as following a regular sleep routine, creating a conducive sleep environment, practicing relaxation techniques, and adopting a balanced *Ayurvedic* lifestyle. Understanding the different types of *Nidra* according to *Acharya Charaka* and *Sushruta* can provide insights into the qualities and effects of sleep on our overall well-being. By cultivating *Satvika Nidra* and addressing imbalances in the *Doshas*, individuals can experience restful and rejuvenating sleep, promoting optimal health and vitality.

## Physiology of *Nidra*

When the mind and body are tired, *Kapha dosha* and *Tamas guna* (inertia) are increased in the body. In this state, the sensory organs are unable to function. This state leads to sleep (*Nidra*) [6]. Inertia (*Tamas*) is the prime factor responsible for *Nidra*[7].

The mental constitution of a person can influence natural sleep patterns variably.

- a) In *Tamas guna* predominant people, sleep occurs excessively during both the day and night.
- b) In *Rajas guna* predominant people, sleep is irregular and can occur at any time, day or night.
- c) In *Sattva guna* predominant people, sleep occurs at midnight only[8].

According to Ayurveda, sleep is governed by the *doshas* (bioenergetic forces) and their influence on the mind and body. The physiological aspects of sleep in Ayurveda are described in relation to the *doshas* and their functions. Here's an overview of the physiology of sleep according to Ayurveda:

**Vata Dosha:** *Vata* is responsible for movement and governs the nervous system. During sleep, *Vata* naturally calms down, allowing the body and mind to rest. *Vata* imbalances can lead to difficulties in falling asleep, light and restless sleep, or frequent awakenings during the night.

**Pitta Dosha:** *Pitta* is associated with metabolism, digestion, and transformation. During sleep, *Pitta* energy withdraws from the external world and facilitates the body's repair and rejuvenation processes. Excessive *Pitta* can lead to overheating, vivid dreams, and a tendency to wake up feeling hot during the night.

**Kapha Dosha:** *Kapha* provides stability, structure, and nourishment to the body. During sleep, *Kapha* energy promotes deep rest and rejuvenation. Adequate *Kapha* is necessary for restful sleep, and imbalances can manifest as excessive sleepiness, difficulty waking up in the morning, and a feeling of heaviness upon waking.

Ayurveda also considers the role of the mind (*Manas*) and the concept of *Sattva* (clarity), *Rajas* (activity), and *Tamas* (inertia) in sleep. A calm and balanced mind with a predominant *Sattva* quality is conducive to restful sleep, while an agitated or imbalanced mind can disrupt sleep patterns.

In Ayurveda, maintaining a regular sleep routine, practicing relaxation techniques, and following lifestyle recommendations specific to an individual's *dosha* constitution are considered important for promoting healthy sleep. These may include practices such as oil massage (*Abhyanga*),

meditation, herbal preparations, and creating a sleep-supportive environment.

## Benefits of *Nidra*[9]

The practice of "*nidra*" in Ayurveda, offers several potential benefits for physical, mental, and emotional well-being. Some of these benefits include:

- ✓ **Stress Reduction:** *Nidra* is known to induce relaxation and reduce stress by activating the parasympathetic nervous system, which promotes a state of rest and rejuvenation.
- ✓ **Improved Sleep Quality:** Regular practice of *Nidra* can help alleviate insomnia and improve the quality of sleep by calming the mind and body, leading to more restful nights.
- ✓ **Enhanced Concentration and Focus:** *Nidra* helps in sharpening mental clarity and concentration by calming the mind's incessant chatter and promoting mindfulness.
- ✓ **Reduced Anxiety and Depression:** Through guided relaxation techniques, *Nidra* can assist in managing anxiety and depression by promoting a sense of tranquility and emotional balance.
- ✓ **Heightened Creativity:** *Nidra* can tap into the subconscious mind, potentially unlocking creativity and innovative thinking.
- ✓ **Boosted Immune System:** Regular practice of *Nidra* is thought to have a positive impact on the immune system, contributing to overall health and vitality.
- ✓ **Physical Relaxation:** The practice induces deep physical relaxation, which can help alleviate muscular tension, aches, and pains.
- ✓ **Balanced Hormones:** *Nidra* can assist in balancing hormone levels by reducing stress-related hormonal fluctuations.
- ✓ **Self-awareness and Self-discovery:** Through introspection and mindful awareness, *Nidra* can lead to a deeper understanding of oneself and one's thought patterns.
- ✓ **Emotional Healing:** *Nidra* can provide a safe space for processing and healing emotional wounds by promoting a sense of acceptance and compassion toward oneself.
- ✓ **Enhanced Energy Levels:** Even a short session of *Nidra* can help rejuvenate the body and mind, providing a natural energy boost.
- ✓ **Mind-Body Connection:** The practice fosters a stronger connection between the mind and body, leading to holistic well-being.

It's important to note that individual experiences may vary, and the benefits of *Nidra* might take time to become noticeable. Regular practice and

guidance from qualified instructors are recommended to fully realize its potential benefits.

### Indications of daytime sleep (*Divasapna*)<sup>[10]</sup>

Daytime rest or napping is encouraged in Ayurveda for various specific reasons, as mentioned in your description. Here's a more simplified version:

Taking daytime naps is recommended in Ayurveda for individuals who have become tired due to activities such as singing, reading, drinking alcohol, engaging in sexual intercourse, undergoing elimination therapies, carrying heavy loads, walking long distances, suffering from conditions like tuberculosis or wasting, experiencing thirst, diarrhoea, colic pain, shortness of breath, hiccup, or even mental disorders. Napping during the day is also beneficial for those who are either very young, elderly, weak, or emaciated.

Additionally, daytime rest is suggested for people who are fatigued due to physical stress from accidents or injuries, stress from travel, sleeplessness, anger, sorrow, or fear. This practice helps maintain a balance in bodily elements (*dhatu*) and energy, while the *Kapha dosha* supports the nourishment of body tissues and contributes to longevity.

During the summer season, when nights are shorter and bodily strength is lower (known as "*adana kala*"), *Vata dosha* tends to increase in the body due to fluid loss. As a result, daytime napping is advised for everyone during this time to counterbalance these effects and promote equilibrium.

It's worth noting that Ayurveda takes into account different factors that influence an individual's well-being and recommends practices based on their unique constitution and circumstances.

### Consequences of improper daytime sleep<sup>[11]</sup>

Sleeping during daytime is not advisable in seasons other than summer, as it can lead to imbalances in the *Kapha* and *Pitta doshas*. Individuals with excessive body fat, those who consume fatty foods excessively, those with a predominance of *Kapha dosha*, individuals suffering from disorders related to vitiated *Kapha*, and those with latent toxins in their body should avoid daytime sleep.

If someone disregards this advice and naps during the day, they might experience negative consequences such as advanced jaundice (*halimaka*), headaches, cold symptoms, a sense of heaviness in body parts, general discomfort, reduced digestive power, a feeling of phlegm sticking to the heart (*hridyopalepa*), swelling, loss of appetite, nausea, inflammation of the nasal passages (rhinitis), severe headaches (hemicranias), skin reactions like hives and pustules, boils, itching, drowsiness, coughing, throat disorders, memory and intelligence impairment, blockage of bodily channels, fever, reduced sensory

and motor functions, and intensified toxic effects of poisons.

Hence, it is essential to consider the advantages and disadvantages of daytime sleep in different seasons and situations, in order to maintain happiness and longevity.

### Sleep-promoting measures<sup>[12]</sup>

If someone is experiencing sleeplessness, there are various measures that can be taken to alleviate the issue. These include:

- ✓ **Body Massages:** Receiving massages can help relax the body and promote a sense of calm, which may aid in overcoming sleeplessness.
- ✓ **Uction:** Applying soothing oils or ointments to the body can have a calming effect and contribute to better sleep.
- ✓ **Bath:** Taking a bath, especially with warm water, can help relax the muscles and prepare the body for sleep.
- ✓ **Consuming Nourishing Foods:** Consuming soups made from meats of domestic, marshy, or aquatic animals can provide nourishment that supports relaxation. Additionally, including foods like *shali* rice, curd, milk, and healthy fats can have a positive impact on sleep.
- ✓ **Moderate Wine Consumption:** In some cases, consuming wine in moderation might help induce sleepiness. However, this should be done cautiously and in alignment with individual health conditions.
- ✓ **Positive Mental States:** Engaging in activities that bring joy and mental pleasure can create a conducive environment for falling asleep.
- ✓ **Aromatherapy:** Pleasant smells and soothing scents, such as from essential oils, can help create a calming atmosphere that promotes sleep.
- ✓ **Soothing Sounds:** Listening to calming sounds or music can help relax the mind and make it easier to fall asleep.
- ✓ **Eye, Head, and Face Ointments:** Applying gentle ointments to these areas can alleviate any discomfort and promote relaxation.
- ✓ **Comfortable Sleeping Environment:** Having a comfortable bed and creating a peaceful sleeping environment can significantly impact the quality of sleep.
- ✓ **Consistent Sleep Schedule:** Establishing a regular sleep routine, including going to bed and waking up at the same time each day, can help regulate the body's internal clock and improve sleep patterns.

It's important to note that individual responses to these measures may vary. If sleeplessness persists or is chronic, it's advisable to consult a healthcare

professional to identify and address any underlying issues.

### Discussion

"The Healing Potential of *Nidra* in Ayurvedic Medicine: A Comprehensive Overview" explores the therapeutic benefits of *Nidra* (Yogic sleep) within the context of Ayurvedic medicine. The paper presents a comprehensive analysis of the ancient practice, drawing upon traditional Ayurvedic texts, scientific research, and contemporary studies. The following points emerge from the discussion:

**Historical Significance:** The paper delves into the historical roots of *Nidra* in Ayurvedic medicine, highlighting its ancient origins and traditional use as a powerful healing technique. By tracing its lineage through Ayurveda, the discussion emphasizes the credibility and time-tested nature of *Nidra*.

**Mechanisms of Action:** The discussion elucidates the physiological and psychological mechanisms through which *Nidra* exerts its healing potential. It emphasizes the impact of deep relaxation and its role in reducing stress, anxiety, and promoting overall well-being. The activation of the parasympathetic nervous system during *Nidra* helps balance the autonomic nervous system and enhances the body's innate healing capacity.

**Mental Health Benefits:** Another significant aspect discussed is the positive impact of *Nidra* on mental health. The practice's ability to calm the mind, improve focus, and alleviate symptoms of depression and insomnia is explored through scientific evidence. This indicates that *Nidra* could be an effective adjunctive therapy for various mental health disorders.

**Physical Health Benefits:** The paper also highlights the physical health benefits of *Nidra* in Ayurvedic medicine. It discusses its potential in reducing blood pressure, boosting the immune system, and aiding in pain management. The deep relaxation induced by *Nidra* may support the body's natural healing processes and contribute to overall health improvement.

**Personalized Approach:** Ayurveda's individualized approach is discussed, emphasizing how *Nidra* can be tailored to suit an individual's unique constitution (*Prakriti*) and imbalances (*Vikriti*). This aligns with Ayurvedic principles of holistic healing, where treatments are customized to address specific needs.

**Integration with Modern Medicine:** The discussion also explores the integration of *Nidra* with modern medical practices. While Ayurveda has its system of healing, there is potential for collaboration with conventional medicine to achieve more comprehensive patient care.

### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, "The Healing Potential of *Nidra* in Ayurvedic Medicine: A Comprehensive Overview" demonstrates that *Nidra* holds significant promise as a therapeutic practice within the framework of Ayurvedic medicine. By providing a thorough exploration of the historical context, mechanisms of action, and benefits, the paper establishes a strong foundation for understanding its potential.

The integration of traditional Ayurvedic knowledge with scientific research enhances the credibility of *Nidra*'s healing potential. The profound relaxation and stress-reduction effects of *Nidra* can positively impact both mental and physical health, making it a valuable addition to the therapeutic repertoire.

However, further research is warranted to solidify the evidence base and ascertain *Nidra*'s effectiveness in addressing specific health conditions. Collaborative efforts between Ayurvedic practitioners and modern medical professionals can lead to a more comprehensive and holistic approach to patient care.

Overall, the exploration of *Nidra*'s healing potential in Ayurvedic medicine is an essential step in promoting its wider recognition and adoption as a complementary healing practice. As interest in alternative and holistic therapies continues to grow, *Nidra* has the potential to contribute significantly to the well-being of individuals seeking a more integrated approach to health and healing.

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**Cite this article as:**

Suman Meena, Pradeep Kumar Meena. The Healing Potential of Nidra in Ayurvedic Medicine: A Comprehensive Overview. AYUSHDHARA, 2023;10(4):76-81.

<https://doi.org/10.47070/ayushdhara.v10i4.1344>

**Source of support: Nil, Conflict of interest: None Declared**

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