



## Review Article

### A CONCEPTUAL STUDY OF UPANAHA SWEDANA

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#### ABSTRACT

Swedana Karma is undertaken by inducing sweating from the application of heat. There are many methods used to achieve this, with Upanaha Swedana being one of them. Upanaha Swedana is a standard treatment modality used in Ayurveda for the management of pain and inflammation. It is a localized treatment wherein a combination of medicinal drugs are prepared, made into a poultice, heated and applied at the affected site. This is meant to reduce the local inflammation and act as a topical analgesic. The procedure is divided into three phases which are: Purva Karma (pre-therapy procedures), the preparation of the Upanaha Swedana material is done, Pradhana Karma (main therapeutic procedures) the prepared Upanaha Swedana material is applied to the patient and Paschat Karma (post-therapy procedures) after waiting the specified times, the Upanaha Swedana is removed following proper procedures. The present conceptual study was done based on the need of the day to elaborate the process of conducting Upanaha Swedana. Various Ayurvedic texts, digital libraries referencing Samhita were searched and the following headings were selected, types of data, types of reports and functionalities. This article seeks to explore this treatment modality and outline the general approach to be followed while conducting the procedure of Upanaha Swedana.

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#### INTRODUCTION

Swedana Karma is one of the Purva Karma that is usually performed before the administration of any Panchakarma procedures. Upanaha is one such type of Swedana Karma that can be utilized for the management of the patient.

Upanaha is derived from the two syllables "Upa"+ "Nah" where "Upa" is an Upasarga (Prefix) meaning "Near" and "Nah" Bandhane means to tie or bind. The function of Upanaha is to bandage or to bandage with medicaments. So the procedure whereby warm medicinal herbal paste is applied locally to the affected parts of the body, followed by bandaging, is referred to as Upanaha Swedana<sup>[1]</sup>. For the utmost benefit, the applied Upanaha should be kept at the local site, undisturbed for at least a period of twelve hours before being removed. Many clinical ailments which involve pain, stiffness and swelling can be adequately managed using Upanaha Swedana.

#### Methodology

The present conceptual study was done based on the need of the day to elaborate the process of conducting Upanaha Swedana. Various Ayurvedic texts, digital libraries referencing Samhita were searched and the following headings were selected, types of data, types of reports and functionalities. The selection criteria chosen were those that were presented in the english medium. The methodology undertaken was for a Review Study.

#### Types of Upanaha

Acharya Chakrapani<sup>[2]</sup> has stated that there are two types of Upanaha:

1. Sagni Upanaha (the medicinal herbal paste is heated and then applied)
2. Niragni Upanaha (medicinal herbal paste has hot potency and used without heating)

*Acharya Dalhana*<sup>[3]</sup> stated that there are three types of *Upanaha*:

1. *Pradeha Upanaha* (a thick paste of medicaments are applied to the affected part).
2. *Sankar Upanaha* (the paste is made into a bolus and wrapped in a cloth).
3. *Bandhan Upanaha*<sup>[4]</sup> (the medicaments are used on the affected part and then firmly tied with a thin piece of cloth or leaves with *Vatahara* properties).

#### Other types of *Upanaha* Include

1. *Salavana Upanaha*<sup>[5]</sup> (*Saindhava Lavana* is used for *Swedana* either alone or along with other medicinal drugs).
2. *Snigdha* and *Ruksha Upanaha* (Drugs having *Snigdha* and *Ruksha* qualities are used respectively, along with other medicinal drugs).

*Acharya Charaka* has considered *Upanaha* as a type of *Niragni Swedana* since it does not involve direct heat.

#### MATERIALS AND METHODS

The Procedure of *Upanaha Swedana* is divided into three main stages:

- Purva Karma*
- Pradhana Karma*
- Paschat Karma*

#### *Purva Karma*

**Preparation of *Upanaha*:** Approximately two-hundred grams of *Vatahara* drugs are procured and mixed with *Kanji*, *Kinva*, *Sneha*, *Aristha*, *Utarika* etc and then made into a paste. The paste should be made warm before applying to the affected area.

**Preparation of Patient:** The patient is examined concerning *Nadi*, *Mala*, *Mutra* and proper *Astha-Vidha Pariksha*. The affected area should be adequately inspected for wounds or bruises. Once the affected region is approved, the patient is asked to sit or lie down in a comfortable position where the affected part of the body can be accessed.

#### *Pradhana Karma*

The patient should lie in the prone position on the *Abhyanga* table. The skin sensitivity of the area should be examined for allergy and reaction to the temperature of the poultice. Local *Abhyanga* is done to the affected region for a few minutes. Then the lukewarm paste is applied. The thickness of the paste should ideally be equal to the thickness of *Ardra Mahisa Charma*<sup>[6]</sup> (buffalo skin), which is usually 3mm to 5mm thick and completely cover the affected area. The paste should ideally be applied against the direction of the hair follicles<sup>[7]</sup> to foster easy absorption through the *Roma Koopa*. After the paste is used, it should be covered by *Vatahara Patra*

(leaves) like *Eranda* or *Arka Patra*. Then it should be tightly bandaged with the bandage. The bandage should not be too tight, otherwise, it would restrict blood flow to the region nor too loose, otherwise, it would have to be kept for a longer time and the medicinal paste can fall out.

The usual time for keeping *Upanaha Swedana* in the affected area is twelve hours. It is usually recommended that the *Upanaha* be applied in the night time and removed the following morning to avoid burns.

#### *Paschat Karma*

After the twelve hour time has elapsed, the medicated paste is removed when the paste has been dried up or cooled down. The local area is cleaned well with lukewarm water and the patient is then asked to move slowly.

#### Precautions to be Taken

The removed medicinal paste should not be reused as the medicinal properties of the paste would have decreased after application. Any medicinal paste that was not used and kept for a long time should be discarded. The paste should be made to a tolerable heat capacity that is bearable to the patient to avoid burns to the area.

#### Mode of Action

The effect of *Upanaha Swedana* has a broader scope of action, based on the *Dravya* used, thickness etc. This can be explained as among the *Panchamahabhuta*, *Vayu Mahabhuta* is mainly predominant in the skin. Hence, the *Sparshindriya* is capable of perceiving many different types of sensations. *Bhrajaka Pitta* (one of the five types of *Pitta*) is present in *Twak* and its function is *Twak Bhrajana*. *Abhyanga* and *Swedana* applied externally are digested and processed by this *Bhrajaka Pitta*<sup>[8]</sup>.

*Acharya Susruta* explains that the *Tiryak Dhamani* that divides into numerous branches covers the entire body like a complex network and their openings are attached to the *Roma Koopa*. Through the *Roma Koopa*, the *Virya* of the *Lepa* enters into the body after undergoing *Paka* by *Bhrajaka Pitta* in the skin. This is how the systemic absorption of drugs applied on the skin produces an effect in essence; the *Virya* of the drug used in *Upanaha Swedana* has the desired effect after being absorbed in the skin.

#### DISCUSSION

In a study conducted, *Vatavyadhihar Upanaha Swedana* was employed in the management of knee joint pains, localized pain was significantly reduced and the patient was able to go about performing daily activities with lesser difficulty than before treatment<sup>[9]</sup>.

*Upanaha Swedana* is one of the types of *Swedana*, which relieves pain, stiffness, heaviness, coldness and produces sweating. *Swedana* primary function is achieved by a rise in temperature, which is responsible for increased metabolic activity, increased blood flow and stimulation of neural receptors in the skin or tissues. It opens up the pores in the skin and transfers the medicated paste and nutrients to the affected site. Heat directly affects the blood vessels, causing vasodilation, particularly in the superficial area where the temperature is highest. Metabolic wastes at the local site are removed through the increased blood circulation and sweating caused. This can be understood as *Sroto-Mukha Vishodhana*, due to the *Guna* of the *Upanaha Swedana Dravya* used, the *Leena Dosha* are liquefied and expelled pores of the sweat glands<sup>[10]</sup>. It can also cause a reflex dilation of arterioles by the stimulation of superficial nerve endings<sup>[11]</sup>. It also causes an anti-inflammatory effect on the local site by clearing the inflammatory mediators<sup>[12]</sup>.

The initial barrier to drug absorption of exogenous substances through the skin is the stratum corneum. The absorption rate is directly proportional to the drug concentration, partition coefficient, diffusion coefficient and thickness of the stratum corneum. Certain physiological factors also contribute to the percutaneous absorption, including hydration, occlusion, age, and intact versus ruptured skin, temperature, and the local site. Absorption generally depends on the lipid solubility of the drug, since the epidermis acts as a lipid barrier. The dermis, however, is permeable to many solutes. Hence, suspending the drug in an oily vehicle or base can enhance absorption through the skin. This is because hydrated skin is more permeable than dry skin. Therefore, the application of medicaments, heat and massage aids in eliminating the number of unhealthy elements through the skin.

## CONCLUSION

*Upanaha Swedana* can be utilized as a simple yet effective topical measure for relieving pain and stiffness. It can also significantly reduce other associated symptoms and therefore improve the physical status of the patient. The *Upanaha Dravya*, due to their *Virya*, enter into the body through the *Roma Koopa*, then undergo *Paka* by *Bhrajaka Pitta* and produces the desired effect based on the *Dravya*

selected for use. Application of the *Upanaha* to the affected part causes local vasodilation, stimulation of superficial nerve endings and increased blood flow which increases nutrition supply and metabolism. Therefore *Upanaha Swedana* is a procedure that can be used at both OPD & IPD levels depending on the nature of the disease and patient compliance.

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