

Netra Swasthya in Ayurveda: A Review of Preventive Eye Care Measures

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Abstract

Netra is considered one of the most important sense organs in Ayurveda, and maintaining healthy vision is essential for a good quality of life. In today's modern lifestyle, increasing use of mobile phones, computers, television, and other digital devices, along with stress, irregular food habits, lack of sleep, smoking, alcohol consumption, and pollution, has led to a rise in eye disorders at a younger age. Ayurveda focuses not only on treatment but also on prevention through the concept of Swasthavritta. Practices such as Dinacharya (daily regimen), Ritucharya (seasonal regimen), proper Ahara (diet), and healthy Vihara (lifestyle) help maintain the balance of Tridosha, Agni, Dhatu, and Mala, thereby supporting ocular health. Classical procedures like Anjana, Nasya, Netra Prakshalana, and other Netra Swasthyakara Upakrama mentioned by Ayurvedic Acharyas are especially beneficial for maintaining eye health and preventing Netra Roga. When followed scientifically and regularly, these practices can help reduce the impact of modern lifestyle-related ocular problems. This article aims to review various Ayurvedic preventive measures for eye care and their relevance in present-day lifestyle disorders affecting the eyes.

Keywords: Netra, Swasthavritta, Dinacharya, Ritucharya, Netra Roga, Prevention, Ayurveda.

Ayurveda highlights the importance or supremacy of eyes through the Shloka "Sarvendriyanam Nayanam Pradhanam," [1] Ayurveda has not only outlined treatment protocols for various eye diseases but has also elaborated on numerous preventive measures to avoid their occurrence. It puts forward the concept of Chakshu and Chakshushya, Chakshu is that which illuminates the objects and enlightens the mind about its details and Chakshushya is any activity that enhances its functions [2]. Acharya Dalhana quotes that anything that is Hita (good) for eyes is Chakshushya.] The Ayurvedic practices conducive to ocular well-being, referred to as Chakshushya practices, encompass a multifaceted approach that includes adherence to dietary regimens i.e., following the Pathya Ahara and avoiding the Apathya Ahara, adoption of beneficial lifestyle habits mentioned under the Dinacharya (observance of daily routines), Ritucharya (seasonal regimens), Kriyakalpa (utilization of specific ayurvedic therapeutic procedures). Practicing of eye exercises and yoga and adoption of simple, daily techniques also help to mitigate ocular fatigue and prevent other eye-related complaints.

Aim of Ayurveda is mentioned as Swasthasya Swasthya rakshana" and cure of disease.

Therefore some lifestyle strategies are given in Ayurveda are Dinacharya (regimen in daily lifestyle), Ritucharya (seasonal regimen), Sadvritta (good moral conducts) etc.

Dinacharya:

The daily routine that one should follow from time of waking up to bedtime has been explained detailed by Acharyas under concept of Dinacharya.

Acharya Vagbhata has given sequence of Upakrama to be followed routinely as Dinacharya which is as follows.^[3]

1. Pratarutthana – Waking up at Brahma Muhurta
2. Shauchavidhi – Evacuation of Mala-Mutra
3. Dantadhavana – Brushing teeth
4. Anjana – Application of medicine over the margin of lower eyelids
5. Navan – Nasya – Administration of medicated oil / Ghee through nostrils.
6. Gandusha – Holding decoction in the oral cavity
7. Dhoomapana – Inhalation of medicated smoke through nose and its exhalation
8. Tambool-Sevana – Eating Tambool Patra (leaves) with other ingredients having medicinal properties.
9. Abhyanga – Oil application over the body / parts of body.
10. Vyayama – The physical exercise in adequate amount.
11. Udvardhana – Application of medicated Choorna all over the body.
12. Snana – Taking bath.
13. Sadvritta-Aacharana – following basic protocols while interacting in the society

For Netra: Among these following has been mentioned especially to promote health of our eyes.

- **Netra Prakshalana:** Washing eyes with decoction of Lodhra (*Symplocos racemosa* Roxb.) or with Amalaka (*Embllica officinalis*) Kashaya (juice) after getting up from bed in morning. Chakradatta also highlights Netra Prakshalana daily with Triphala Kashaya, which is said to prevent all kinds of ocular diseases.^[4]
- **Anjana:** It is procedure of applying collyrium to eyes.

It is useful for prevention of Khaphaj roga. It enhances the capacity of eyes, improves vision. Application of medicine over the margin of lower lid of both the eyes is known as Anjana. There are two types of Anjana mentioned to maintain physiology of eyeball and hence to improve vision.^[5]

Souveeranjana which is pleasing to eyes can be used daily. According to Hridayabodhika commentary of Ashtanga Hridaya, Pakshma or eye lashes become Snigdha (unctuous), eyes become clean with well-defined colors and will be endowed with sharp vision or Sookshma Darshana.

Rasanjana is indicated to be applied once in a week, as it helps in secretion of kapha. Acharya Susruta explains application of Sroto Anjana. It helps in reducing burning, itching, watering and pain. Application of Anjana also helps in enhancing vision and helps to withstand sun, heat, wind and eye diseases. Anjana has also been mentioned as a Pathya Vihara to Netra in Yogaratnakara.

Nasya (Navan) ^[6]: Routinely medicine is when administered through the nostrils, it is defined as Nasya or Navan. The drug acts on Srotasa through minute pores and drains out the Kapha dosha improving general ocular health. It prevents diseases of eyes, nose, ears and strengthen the body parts above neck region. After Anjana Upakrama, Nasya is to be done routinely. For daily use, Anu Taila is mentioned in the commentary given by Arundatta Acharya for Navan Upakrama.

Some eye diseases like Timira, Krucchavbodh, Krucchonmilan etc. where vitiated vata creating symptoms can be treated with shaman Nasya as a treatment which is beneficial to pacifying vitiated dosha and improve visual acuity and strengthen muscles of eyeball.

Gandush ^[7]: Lukewarm decoction with medicated properties is asked to hold in the oral cavity known as

Gandush. It is indirectly beneficial to restore eye health. It removes excess of Kapha Dosha and prevents from diseases of oral cavity & strengthens Indriyas (special senses). It is asked to be followed after Nasya procedure in daily routine.

Dhoomapana ^[7]:

Dhoomapana is a procedure in which medicated smoke is inhaled & then exhalation is done. It is also responsible to remove excess of Kapha Dosha and it also balances Vata because of which diseases of eyes can also be prevented. Practice of Prayogika Dhoomapana regularly helps to cure pain in eyes and discharge from the eyes caused due to morbid conditions. ^[8] Dhoomapana is mentioned as a part of treatment for many ocular diseases like Kaphotklishta, Kukunaka, Pakshmakopa, Kruchchronmilan, Abhishyanda, etc.

Abhyanga:

Application of medicated oil to all over body is called as Abhyanga. Acharya Vagbhata advised Abhyanga to be done daily as it improves clarity of vision and gives nourishment to eyes. It has been especially indicated to Shir- as (head), Shrivana(ear) and Pada(feet). Abhy- anga to Shiras prov. nourishment to all Indriya's (sense organ) & that when done to Paada (feet) is said to be Drishti Prasadana (vision enhance)^[7]

Padabhyanga:

Acharya Vagbhat identified 4 major Nadis(Channels or nerves) in feet which connect to eyes, help to maintain good eyesight and relieve eyestrain when subjected to soothing therapies like Padabhyanga. Padabhyanga pacifies the Doshas (The three basic elements of body Vata, Pitta and Kapha) through the Nadis reaching the Netra thereby nourishing and soothing them^[9,10]

Padaprakshalana and Padatra Dharana:

Washing feet to keep feet clean and hygienic is very important to prevent diseases to eyes. Wearing of feet protections like footwear, shoes etc prevents feet from heat and trauma is also helpful in keeping eye healthy. according to Acharyas, Padatrandharan has the Chakshushya effect.^[11]

Snana: Taking bath daily is said to be Indriya Prabodhana. Acharya specifies that head bath with cold water is more suitable for promoting eye health and that with hot water is Achakshushya.

Mukhalepa:

According to Susrutha, Mukhalepa gives strength to eyes and Acharya Vagbhata opines that one who is habituated to application of Lepa on face will have keen vision.

Chhatradharana:

Use of umbrella protects eyes from sun, heat, dust and smoke and is considered to be Chakshushya.

Kavala and Gandoosha: When properly done is considered as Indriya Prasadana.

Other Practices of Dinacharya:

Wearing turban over the head good for eyes.

Holding umbrella is also having Chakshushya effect.

RATRICHARYA (NIGHT REGIMEN):

In maintenance of health, Ratricharya is of utmost importance. Intake of Madhu and Ghrita along with Triphala churna enhances vision.^[12]

SADVRITTA:

The principles of good conducts (Sadvritha) aim to preserve all dimensions of health. Observance of Sadvritha simultaneously fulfils two objectives – maintenance of positive health and control over sense organs.^[13]

Nidan parivarjana:

S.No	Nidana (Cause)	Explanation	Present Era Example
According to Sushruta ^[14]			
1	Ushnabhitapasya Jalapravesha	Entering cold water after heat/sun exposure	Cold bath, cold water, AC after sun exposure
2	Doorekshana	Looking at distant objects continuously	Drivers, shooters
3	Swapna Viparyaya	Improper sleep habits	Night shifts, late sleeping
4	Prasaktha Samrodana	Excessive continuous weeping	Emotional stress
5	Kopa and Shoka	Anger and grief causing dosha imbalance	Anxiety, emotional disturbance
6	Klesha	Stress, pain, suffering	Mental stress, workload
7	Abhighata	Injury to eyes	Chemical injuries, accidents
8	Atimaitihuna	Excessive sexual activity causing dhatu kshaya	Weakness due to overindulgence
9	Shukta Aranala Nishevana	Excess fermented substances/alcohol	Alcohol addiction
10	Kulattha Masha Nishevana	Excess horse gram and black gram intake	Improper dietary habits
11	Vega Vinigraha	Suppression of natural urges	Ignoring body urges
12	Atisweda	Excess sweating/heat exposure	Cooking, coal mines
13	Dhuma Nishevana	Exposure to smoke/pollution	Smoking, pollution
14	Chhardi Vighata	Suppression of vomiting urge	Suppressing nausea
15	Vamana Atiyoga	Excessive vamana therapy	Improper Panchakarma

S.No	Nidana (Cause)	Explanation	Present Era Example
16	Bashpa Graha	Suppression of tears	Emotional suppression
17	Sukshma Nirikshana	Seeing minute objects continuously	Computers, mobile, reading
According to Bhavprakash			
18	Rajo Dhuma Nishevana	Exposure to dust and smoke	Pollution, smoking
19	Ati Sheeghrayaana	Fast travelling	High-speed driving
20	Rutu Viparyaya	Not following seasonal regimen	Improper food habits
21	Shiro Abhitapa	Excess heat exposure to head	Working in heat/sun
According to Yogaratnakara			
22	Ati Drava Annapana & Atimadhya Pana	Excess liquid intake and alcohol	Alcohol addiction, poor nutrition

Avoidance of these Nidanas helps prevent Netrarogas (eye diseases).

Kriyakalpa ^[15]

These are local ocular therapeutic measures employed for prevention and treatment of various ocular diseases

Tarpana:

Tarpana is best method to Tripti or satisfaction to eyes. It is local procedure where a border is created around eyes and eyes are filled in with unctuous materials like Ghrita Manda. Tarpana provides nourishment to ocular tissues. For Swastha, time for retention of Dravya is 500 Maatra Kaala.

Yoga ^[16]

Trataka:

It is process of looking intently with an unwavering gaze at small point until tears are shed from eyes. Out of 2 types of Trataka, Bahiranga Trataka or external concentration gaze is practiced in dark room with candle placed 2-3 feet in front of subject & flame at eye level. Subject sits in comfortable meditative pose, body relaxed & gazing at flame without blinking eyes unless eyes are filled with tears.

Antaranga Trataka or internal concentration is done with eyes closed and concentrating on a symbol in mind. Trataka is said to help in relieving all Netra Rogas. Jala Basti or yogic enema with water is said to purify the senses and mind by destroying the excessive Doshas. Jala Neti can be practiced everyday by a patient who is suffering from eye strain, it is said to cleanse all the diseases that occur in the Kapala (cranial region) and is said to be Divya Drishti Prasadana (bestows with good vision). Bhramari and Bhastrika Pranayama can be practiced as it helps to refresh the body and mind, regenerate and rejuvenate the whole body.

Sukshma Vyayama - Eye exercises

- Netra Shuddhi (eye wash)

- Palming
- Eyeball movement exercises - Upward- Downward, Up & Down, Complete circle - Up down left and round.
- Blinking and breathing Fusion or binocular vision

Pathya and Apathya in Netraroga^[17,18,19,20]

Acharya Charaka defines Pathya as anything diet or regimens that calms the mind, beneficial to the body and provides nutrition to the body whereas Apathya is the opposite to this.

Ahara Varga	Pathya (Wholesome)	Apathya (Unwholesome)
Shukadhanya	Lohitashali (red rice), Shashtika shali (old rice), Yava (barley)	Newly harvested grains, sprouted/germinated cereals
Shimbi Dhanya	Mudga (green gram)	Masha (black gram), heavy legumes
Shaka Varga	Jeevanti, Vastuka, Punarnava, Patola, Karavella, Kakamachi, Kumari	Excess pungent, sharp, dry vegetables
Phala Varga	Draksha (grapes), Dadima (pomegranate), Kushmanda (ash gourd)	Sour, unripe, acidic fruits
Mamsa Varga	Jangala mamsa (light meat)	Heavy meat, marshy animal meat, excess fish
Ksheera Varga	Milk, cow ghee	Curd at night, fermented milk products
Jala / Drava	Cool clean water, ghrita preparations	Alcohol, very hot liquids, contaminated water

Category	Pathya	Apathya
Vihara	Adequate sleep, Netra prakshalana, Nasya, staying in shade	Night awakening, excessive sun exposure, dust/smoke exposure
Indriya Upayoga	Proper eye rest, controlled eye use	Excess screen work, continuous reading, bright light exposure
Manasika	Calm mind, stress control	Anger, grief, excessive crying
Vegadharana	Avoid suppression of urges	Suppression of tears, sleep, vomiting etc.

Discussion

Ayurveda emphasizes prevention of eye diseases through Pathya–Apathya and Dinacharya. Chakshushya dravyas are rich in essential nutrients such as vitamins (A, B-complex, C, E), zinc, and antioxidants like glutathione, which help maintain the structural and functional integrity of the eye.

Pathya ahara like Mudga, Lohitashali, Draksha, and Dadima possess antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties that reduce oxidative stress, a key factor in conditions like cataract and retinal degeneration. In contrast, Apathya dravyas such as Masha may increase metabolic imbalance and oxidative stress, negatively affecting ocular health.

Lifestyle practices also play a significant role. Netra prakshalana cleanses the ocular surface and improves tear film stability. Triphala has antioxidant and antimicrobial effects, supporting corneal health. Procedures like Anjana, Nasya, Shiroabhyanga, and Padabhyanga help maintain proper functioning of Prana Vata, essential for vision.

Kavala and Gandusha stimulate cranial nerves and may enhance ocular perfusion, while Akshi Tarpana provides nourishment to deeper ocular tissues due to the lipophilic nature of Ghrita. Eye exercises such as Trataka, blinking, and palming improve ocular muscle coordination and reduce strain.

Thus, a combination of proper diet, lifestyle practices, and daily regimens offers a holistic and preventive approach to maintaining eye health, aligning with modern concepts of antioxidant support and lifestyle modification.

Conclusion

Ayurveda provides a holistic and preventive approach for maintaining eye health through proper diet, lifestyle, and daily regimens (Dinacharya). In the present era, where conditions like digital eye strain and refractive errors are increasingly common, maintaining Netra Bala (strength of the eyes) is essential.

The use of Chakshushya dravyas rich in nutrients and antioxidants, along with practices such as Anjana, Nasya, Netra Kriyas (Aschyotana, Tarpana), Rasayana, and simple eye exercises, helps in preserving both the structural and functional integrity of the eyes. These measures act by balancing Doshas, nourishing Dhatus, and improving ocular circulation and neuromuscular coordination.

Thus, adopting Ayurvedic principles with positive lifestyle modifications offers an effective, safe, and sustainable strategy for the prevention and management of ocular disorders, highlighting the continued relevance of Ayurveda in modern eye care.

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