

PSORIASIS

It is a chronic autoimmune disorder that causes rapid build-up of skin cells which creates scales on the skin surface. Typically skin cells grow deep in the skin and rise to skin surface and then shed off. But in psoriasis a rapid overproduction leads to build of skin cells.

Etiology

- **Environmental factors:** Mechanical, ultraviolet or chemical injury, prescription drugs use, stress, smoking, etc.
- **Genetics:** greater incidence was found among the first and second relatives of patient with psoriasis
- **Diet:** It has been observed that psoriasis has been improved if the person changes his diet to low carb vegetarian.

Signs and symptoms

- Red patches of skin covered with thick and silvery scales with extensive itching and painful
- Dry and cracked skin which may bleed
- Burning or soreness
- Swollen and stiff joints
- Severe dandruff

Types

- **Plaque Psoriasis** - It is most common which appears as raised areas of reddened skin covered with silvery white scales.
- **Guttate Psoriasis** - Tear drop shaped spots that doesn't normally leave scars and appear on large areas of body such as trunk, limbs and scalp. Mostly affect children and young adults.
- **Pustular Psoriasis** - Non-infectious pus filled bumps, the nearby skin is red and tender. Is commonly seen on hands and feet.
- **Nail Psoriasis** - Discoloration under nail plate, pitting of nail, thickening of skin under the nail, loosening and crumbling of nail.
- **Erythrodermic Psoriasis** - Fiery red skin from head to toe in which scales that peels in large pieces. It can be very painful and itchy pustules.
- **Inverse Psoriasis** - red rashes that appear under the skin folds such as armpits, groins, under the breast, etc.

Management in modern view

- Immune suppressant drugs
- Synthetic forms vitamin D and retinoids
- Hydrating solutions and moisturizers
- Photo light therapy

PSORIASIS IN AYURVEDA

Most of the skin disorders have been described under the roof of 'KUSHTA' in Ayurveda. In Ayurveda *Kushta* is divided into two groups: *Mahakushta* & *Kshudrakushta* which is again subdivided into 7 and 11 types respectively. Psoriasis is mostly comparable with two varieties of *Kshudrakushta*, i.e. *Ekakushta* and *Kitibha kushta* and also with *Mahakushta*, i.e. *Sidhma kushta*.

Nidana (Etiology)

- **Virudhahara** (incompatible food)
Intake of poultry along with diary, fish with honey, fruits with milk, intake of millets or grains along with yoghurt, etc.
- **Mithyahara** (Improper diet)
Untimely meals, intake of food without digesting the previous meal
excess intake of yoghurt, seafood, salty and sour food, fermented food, processed food, etc.
- **Virudha vihara** (inappropriate activities)
Using cold water for drinking or bathing immediately after exposure to sunlight or hot environment
Daytime sleeping
Excessive grief, worry, stress and thinking
Suppression of natural urges like thirst, hunger, sneezing, flatulence, urine
Excessive physical activities
Beeja dosha (genetic factors)

Samprapthi (Etiopathogenesis)

Due to the above mentioned causative factors for a prolonged period there is accumulation of *ama* (toxins) in the body which leads to *dosha* imbalance. This will aggravate all the three *doshas* which then lodges in *tvak* (skin), *rakta* (blood), *mamsa* (muscle), *lasika* (lymph) and further vitiates them that lead to *Kushta*.

Poorvarupa (premonitory signs)

- ✓ **Sparshaanjatwa** (lack of tactile sensation in the skin lesion)
- ✓ **Atisveda or Asveda** (excessive or absence of sweat)
- ✓ **Kandu** (itching)
- ✓ **Todha** (pricking sensation)
- ✓ **Klama** (debilitated)
- ✓ **Shrama** (fatigue)
- ✓ **Varanaadikyam** (discolouration)

Lakshana (symptoms)

- **Kitibha Kushtam**
 - **Shyava** (blackish brown colour)
 - **Kinakara sparsham** (rough to touch)
 - **Parusham** (hard to touch)Caused by *vata* and *kapha* vitiation
- **Ekakushtam**
 - **Asvedanam** (absence of sweating)
 - **Mahavasthu** (extensive localisation)
 - **Matsyashakalopamam** (resembles fish scales)Caused by *vata* and *kapha* vitiation
- **Sidhma kushtam**
 - **Sveta and tamra** (white and coppery in colour)
 - **Tanu** (thin)

- *Ghrishtam vimunchathi* (when rubbed it emits small patches of skin like dust)
 - *Alabhu pushpa varnam* (resembles flower of calabash)
 - *Prayenacha uras* (generally located in chest)
- Caused due to *vata kapha* vitiation

Upashaya (pacifying factors)

- Yoga and meditation
- Oleation

Anupashaya (non-pacifying factors)

- Improper diet
- Weight gain
- Alcohol and tobacco
- Dry and cold environment

Treatment

The common approach for the treatment for psoriasis is by eliminating *ama* and then balancing the *doshas* by detoxification which is followed with palliative medicine and strict diet.

There are two modes of treatment in psoriasis: *Shodana* and *Shamana*

- ***Shodana* (purification therapy)**

Ideal purification therapy to prepare the body is panchakarma that comprises of five therapies which are:

1. ***Vamana* (emesis)**
 - intake of herbal decoction that induces vomiting
 - to eliminate *kapha* predominant *Kushta*
2. ***Virechanam* (purgation)**
 - intake of medicine that eliminates the toxins accumulated in the digestive area through purgation
 - to eliminate the *pitta* predominant *Kushta*
3. ***Vasthi* (enema)**
 - herbal decoction or medicated oil is administered through rectum to excrete the toxins collected from the large intestine
4. ***Nasyam* (nasal drop)**
 - administration of herbal drops through nostrils
 - especially used in scalp psoriasis
5. ***Raktamokshana* (bloodletting)**
 - by vein puncture or by medicated leech therapy
 - eliminates the impure blood

There are three main procedures in panchakarma

- I. ***Poorva karma* (pre-operative stage)**

Snehapanam - Intake of medicated ghee or oil for a period of 3, 5 or 7 days in which the dosage and the type of oil/ghee is selected based on the person's body constitution and the predominance of *dosha* in the disease, for e.g. *Maha tiktaka ghritam*, *Tiktaka ghritam*, *Guggulu tiktaka ghritam*, *Nimbadi ghritam*. It is observed that dryness and scaling of skin is considerably reduced during this period.

II. **Pradhana karma** (operative stage)

Abhyangam - Oil massage all over the body with selected oil e.g. *Ayyapala Keratailam, Naalpamaradi Tailam, Shudha Durvadi Tailam, Gopadamajadi Keratailam.*

Swedanam - Sudation therapy is done parallel to abhyangam which helps to eliminate the toxins collected in the process of massage.

E.g. fomentation with *Triphala Kashayam, Dasamoola Kashayam, Naalpamaradi, Aaragwadadi,* etc.

And then any one of the *Panchakarma* is done.

III. **Pashchath karma** (post-operative procedures)

Following the **samsarjana krama** (dietary regimen) depending upon the *Agni bala* (digestive capacity) of the individual.

In a person with severe aggravation of three *doshas* multiple times of *Shodana* is done with utmost care.

Complementary treatments

- ✓ **Sarvanga takradhara**
- ✓ **Sarvanga kashaya parishekam**
- ✓ **Sirodhara** (with suitable oil to reduce stress)

● **Shamana (Palliative medicines)**

Herbal formulations

- Decoctions such as *Manjishtadi Kashayam, Patolakaturohinyadi Kashayam, Guduchyadi Kashayam, Mahatiktakam Kashayam,* etc.

- *Arishtams* like *Aragwadarishtam, khadirarishtam, Nimbamrita asavam,* etc.

- Tablets like *Kaishora Guggulu, Arogyavardhini vati, Brahmi vati, and Gandhaka rasayanam*

- *Choorana* like *Guggulupanchapalam churnam, Avipathikara churnam, Sidharthaka snana churnam* (for bath)

- *Lepam-Mahatikaaka lepam, Aragwadhadhi churna lepam*

- Oils like *Ayyapala kera tailam, Gopadmajadi kera tailam, Durvadi keram, Nalpamaaradi kera tailam, Durdhurapatradi kera tailam.*

Key drugs

Nimba (Azadirachta indica)

Manjishta (Rubia cordifolia)

Kumari (Aloe vera)

Khadira (Acacia catechu)

Aragwadha (Cassia fistula)

Ayyapaala (Wrightia tinctoria)

Guduchi (Tinospora cordifolia)

Home remedies

- Drink a glass of bitter gourd or bottle gourd juice with 1tsp lemon juice everyday on empty stomach. This purifies the blood and clears the psoriatic patches.
- Apply Aloe Vera pulp on patches to reduce burning sensation.
- Epsom salt bath
- By keeping a humidifier in home or office will significantly improve the dryness of the skin.

Dos and Don'ts

Pathya (dos)	Apathya (don'ts)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Easily digestible and wholesome food ● Vegetables such as asparagus, broccoli, spinach, beets, sweet potato, bitter-, bottle-, snake-gourd ● Fruits such as berries, cherries, watermelon, muskmelon, etc ● Old grains, buckwheat, corn, arrow-root ● Nuts like flaxseeds ● Lentils like green gram, soy-beans, split beans ● Spices and herbs such as cumin, turmeric, ginger, thyme, etc. ● Oil like olive ● Coconut water ● Apple cider vinegar ● Yoga, pranayama ● Regular exercises 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Red meat, seafood, eggs ● Dairy products ● Fried foods ● Processed food ● Pastries ● Grains like wheat, barley or rye ● Refined flour and sugar ● Caffeine ● Sauces such as soy sauce, vinegar, salad dressings ● Fermented food ● Sour and acidic food ● Spicy food ● Carbonated water ● Tobacco ● Daytime sleeping ● Stress ● Excessive physical activity ● Exposure to cold and dry air

Clinical experience

A patient aged 41 has been suffering from psoriasis for the past 20 years. His common symptoms were scaly skin lesions associated with itching all over the body. On further examination it was diagnosed as *vata kaphaja predominant kushta on vatapitta* constitution.

Treatment procedures along with Ayurvedic diet done for 21 days are given below:

- *Rookshana* with intake of *Shadanga Kashayam* for 2days
- *Snehapanam* with *Tiktakam gritham* for 7 days
- *Abhyangam* with *Ayyapala kera tailam* followed by *svedana* with *Triphala kashaya sarvanga svedam*
- *Virechanam* with *Trivrit lehyam* (15 vegas attained)
- *Sarvanga takradhara* done for 7 days
- *Sirodhara* with *Bhringamalakadi Keratailam*
- *Nasya* with *Shadbindhu Tailam* followed by *Haridradi Dhoomapanam*

During the whole period of stay he was also advised to expose to early morning sunlight.

It was observed that scaling and itching was considerably reduced up to 80 percent.

On discharge following advice was given:

- *Nithya virechanam* with *Avipathi choornam* for 3 months
- *Manjishtadi kashayam* for 6 months
- *Kaishora Guggulu* for 2 months
- *Gandhaka Rasayanam* for 2 months
- *Ayyapala keratailam* for local application
- Epsom salt bath
- Strict diet followed by yoga and meditation
- Panchakarma once in a year

The patient strictly followed all advice for three consecutive years and there was no recurrence of skin lesions till date.



Fig.1: Skin (back of the body and upper arm) of the patient before (upper two photos) and after the treatment (lower two photos).. The treatments are described in the text.

Conclusion

Incorrect food habits and polluted environment can affect our blood and immune system so much that we get into skin problems like acne, eczema, psoriasis, etc. There is limited scope for the treatment in modern science and available ointments and medicines have adverse effects. But in Ayurveda effective medicines with no side effects are available. It also emphasis on *Nidana parivarjana*, i.e. avoiding the causative and triggering factors as first line of treatment and hence it will prevent the manifestation of the disease which will improve the quality of life of the patient.

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