

Preventive and Rejuvenative Eye Care: An Ayurvedic Perspective

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ABSTRACT

There are five sense organs i.e. eye, ear, nose, tongue and skin. Among these sense organs, Ayurveda gives prime importance to eyes. It says "SarvendriyaanamNayanamPradhanam.Shalakya 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. The 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, Modern lifestyles and environmental changes significantly impacts eye health. The factors such as the use of electronic gadgets, smoking, alcohol consumption, workplace environment, and pollution contribute to various eye-related problems. In our fast-paced and technologically advanced world, we often neglect the health of our most precious organ-Eye. Ayurveda is a philosophy of life with holistic approach which plays an important role in prevention of diseases. Ayurvedic classics explain various eye protection measures, including dinacharya, ritucharya, sadvritta, yoga, kriyakalpa, rasayana and pathyapathy. Major Ayurvedic promotive measures and perceptions regarding maintenance of eye health and prevention of eye disorders are explored in this article. The aim of this review is to spread the awareness of simple visual health promotive and rejuvenative procedures in Ayurveda.

Keywords: Shalakya Tantra, Dinacharya, Rasayana, Preventive Ophthalmology,

I. INTRODUCTION

In Ayurveda, the eye has been considered to be the most significant sense organ. Eye care is covered under the "Shalakya Tantra," one of the eight branches of Astanga Ayurveda.¹ Eye disorders are much more important than any other physical disability, since the loss of vision leads to the obliteration of the world. According to

Ayurveda, three factors are responsible for the causation of all type of diseases including ophthalmic problem too.² [1] 1-Incompatible contact of eye with visual objects (**Asatmyendriyarthatasamyoga**) 2- Misuse of intellect (**Pragyaparadha**) 3-Abnormal cycles of seasons (**Rituviparyaya**). The onset of the digitalization has changed our lives, but it has also created new health challenges, especially with regard to eye health. Prolonged exposure to screens, increased environmental pollution, Smoking, Alcohol and changing dietary habits have contributed to the surge in lifestyle-induced ocular diseases like age-related macular degeneration (AMD), diabetic retinopathy, hypertensive retinopathy, cataract, pterygium, computer vision syndrome. For preventing eye diseases and for maintaining ocular health everyone should follow Ayurveda Dinacharya (daily regimen), Ritucharya (seasonal regimen) and specific therapies like Rasayana therapy, Sadvriddhapan, Kriya kalpa and Pathyaahara vihara described in Ayurveda.

Dinacharya (Daily Regimen)

Dinacharya regarding maintaining eye health is described in Charak Samhita sutasasthan chapter 5, Sushruta Samhita Chikitsasthan chapter 24, AstanghrudyaUttarasthan chapter 13 and pathya, apathy in eye diseases has been described in Yognitnakar, Bhaishjyaratnavali in Netrarogadhikaradhyaya. While Charak starts daily regimen with anjan (eye salve), Sushrut advised Netraprakshalana (Eye wash).

Netraprakshalana(EyeWash):³ Washing eyes with decoction of Lodhra (*Symplocos racemosa*), Amalak (*Emblica officinalis*) or with cold water after getting up from bed in the morning helps in maintaining the clear vision.

Ushajalapana (water intake in early morning) & Nasajalapana:⁴ Daily intake of water in early morning either through mouth or through nose purify the whole GIT and ensures good vision.

Gandusha-Keeping mouthful of cold water 2-4 times a day will help to maintain proper eyesight.

Anjana (Collyrium):⁵ Anjana is a method in which the medicine is applied along the inner surface of eye lid. Souveeranjan or darvi rasa kriya can be mixed with honey and can be applied in eyes for kapha shodhana as eye is Teja predominant and should be protected from kapha dosha. Anjana can dissolve the accumulated vitiated kapha dosha and drains it out, it dilates the blood vessels thereby increasing the blood flow to the eye and maintains the integrity of netra. Person who is on fasting, has taken head bath, who is awakened at night and person with fever should not apply the collyrium.

Shiroabhyanga:⁶ Daily application of medicated oil on head strengthens the eyes & is a preventive measure for sense organ disorders. It acts as drishtiprasadan.

Snanam (Bath):⁷ Generally, the sense organs get freshness with bath. The temperature mechanism is maintained and blood circulation is kept intact. Warm water is recommended for body bath and cold water for head bath. Hot water for head bath can adversely affect the hair and eyes.

Nasya: The procedure in which medicines are given through the nasal cavity is called Nasya. Nasal cavity anatomically connects to structures of the head. Due to anatomical communications, the medicine applied through the nasal cavity reaches the areas around the Sringatak Marma and strengthens the "Sringatak Marma" which is the seat of the eye, ear, nose and tongue.^{8,9} Accumulation of vitiated kapha in the eye can be prevented by the daily application of Pratimarsha Nasya.¹⁰

Mukhalepa:¹¹ Application of medicines on face in the form of poultice is called mukhalepa. The facial artery, facial nerve and trigeminal nerve are situated along the cheek and have branches supplying to the eyes.

Padabhyanga, Padaprakshalan and Padatran
Dharan: Taking care of foot is also essential as the foot is connected to eye. - Foot is the end organ and the nerve endings are highly sensitive. The stimulation of nerve endings of the foot reflects in the eye via sympathetic and parasympathetic supply, so foot should be kept clean and footwear should be used to avoid physical injuries to the foot and padabhyanga (foot massage), padaprakshalan (cleaning foot) and padatrandharan (using footwear) has chakyushya effect (maintains vision).^{12,13}

Chatradharana (Use of umbrella): Use of umbrella protects the eyes from sunlight, UV rays,

heat, dust and smoke and is chakshyushya.^{14,15} On exposure to these harmful radiations, there is an increased chance of getting cataract, pterygium and other degenerative disorders of eyes.

Ritucharya (Seasonal Regime): Due to climatic changes, many changes occur in the physiology of the eye, which may lead to many ocular diseases. When one Ritu is completed and another one is commenced, the changes in atmosphere trigger many ailments. For getting rid of these diseases, Acharyas have mentioned Ritu-Charya under the heading of Ritu Sandhi. One should follow these for the prevention of Netra Rogas in various Ritus.

Kriya Kalpa and eye health- Kriyakalpa is a subset of Ayurvedic treatments focusing on eye care. It includes various procedures and medications to prevent and treat eye disorders.

Tarpana involves keeping medicated ghee in the eye for nourishment and treating Vataja and Pittaja eye disorders, as well as conditions like computer vision syndrome and retinal diseases

Putapaka is similar to Tarpana but uses herb-extracted medicine, typically performed after Tarpana for eye rejuvenation.

Seka involves pouring a thin stream of medicine on closed eyes to treat acute eye conditions.

Aschyotana involves applying medicated drops in open eyes, serving as a first-line treatment for ocular inflammation.

Anjana applies medicine to the eyelid's mucocutaneous junction, with **Sauviranjana** used daily and **Rasanjana** applied at intervals to control excess Kapha dosha, promoting eye health and clarity.¹⁶

Pindi involves applying a medicated herbal paste kept in a fresh thin cloth to the eyes to nourish the eyes and relieve conditions like dryness and fatigue.

Vidalaka is the application of a soothing paste around the eyelids except at eye lashes to alleviate burning sensations, redness, and irritation.

Rasayana and eye health

Rasayana therapy focuses on rejuvenation and overall health, while **ChakshusyaRasayana** is specifically aimed at improving eye health. Both approaches help nourish the eyes, prevent degeneration, and promote better vision. The use of Yastimadhu, Ghrita, Triphala and Shatavari act as Rasayana. Acharya Vaghbata has advised that triphala along with honey and ghrita (butter fat) should be consumed at nights daily for strengthening of eye sight¹⁷. Ghrita (ghee) and Navaneeta are extremely rich in vitamin A and choline with good amount of Vitamin E,

Riboflavin, Niacin and pantothenic acid; Vitamin K, foliate and Vitamin-B12 in small amount. Anti-stiffness factor present in butter prevents hardening of arteries and cataracts.¹⁸

Yoga and exercises for eye health

It can help reduce strain, improve focus, and promote relaxation. Techniques like **Palming** relax eye muscles by warming the palms and covering the eyes, while **Eye Rolling** strengthens eye muscles by rotating them in circles. **Trataka**, focusing on a fixed object or candle, improves concentration and clarity. Exercises like **Blinking** lubricate the eyes and reduce dryness, and **Distance Gazing** eases eye strain by alternating focus between near and far objects. Incorporating deep breathing with **Bhramari Pranayama** and full-body relaxation with **Savasana** further reduces tension around the eyes and promotes overall eye health. **Matsyasana**, **Sarvangasana**, **Surya Namaskar**, **Shavasana**, **Trataka**, and **Neti Kriya** support ocular health and improve focus.¹⁹

Pathya Aahara for eye according to Ayurveda

Many of the classics explained Chakshushya food items and drugs which can be regularly used. Lohitasali (Red rice), Yava (Barley), Mudga (Green gram), Vanyakulattha (Dolichos biflorus), Jeevanti (Leptadenia reticulata), Punarnava (Boerhavia procumbens), Patola (Trichosanthes dioeca), Kumari (Aloe vera), Chandan, Karpura, Draksha, Kurma mamsa (Turtle flesh), Nari paya (human milk), cow milk, Hasteeni paya (Elephant milk), Ajaghrit (Ghee prepared from goat milk), Kheerothataakra (Butter milk), Peya, Vilepi, Yusha, Swarna (Gold), Kamsya (Bronze), Mukta (Pearl), Vidruma (Coral), Vajra (Diamond).

Some best foods to keep eyes healthy

Maintaining a wellbalanced diet is key to eyes health and may help in 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, 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, nuts and vegetables.

ApathyaAahara: Amla rasa (Sour), Lavana(Salt), Kshara(Aalkali), katusasatmakahara, Masha (Horse gram), Go Dadhi (curd), Atimadhyapaan (excessive alcohol intake), KalingakaPatrasaka, Phanita, Tambula (Piper betel). Overconsumption of spicy food, junk food, fast food, food that is stored for a long time, and stale food should be avoided.

Pathya Vihara

- Proper sleep: Staying awake in the fiery Pitta hours of late night leads to overexertion. During sleep, the eyes retain functional capacity due to complete rest.
- Eye exercises: movements of both eyes in up-down, sideways (right-left), and rotational (clockwise-anticlockwise) directions, followed by palming, are very effective in preventing refractive errors.
- Shatkarmas (Trataka and Netikriya) and Yoga Aasanas (Shirshasana and Suryanamaskara) boost circulation to the blood vessels and capillaries, relax the eyes, and over a period of time, are reported to even improve vision.

Apithya Vihara

- Vegadharana²⁰ (suppression of natural urges): Suppression of natural urges has bad effect on whole body but suppression of tear and sleep especially leads to diseases of eye. Suppression of urges causes vataprakopa, leading to weakness of ocular tissues and strain to eyes. Prolonged office duties, class room, meetings and watching TV programs and continuous computer work nowadays are part of faulty lifestyle and quite evident for suppression of natural urges.
- Diwaswpana (Habit of day sleep), Ratrijagrana(Awaking in night), Indulgence in Fear,Krodha (anger),Shoka (sorrow).

II. DISCUSSION

Human eyes are extremely delicate organs. Ayurveda emphasizes a comprehensive approach to eye health through **preventive** and **rejuvenating** strategies, focusing on maintaining the balance of the three doshas—**Vata**, **Pitta**, and **Kapha**. Preventive care involves minimizing eye strain from environmental factors, such as excessive screen use, exposure to pollutants, and seasonal imbalances, which can disturb the doshas and lead to conditions like dry eyes, redness, and fatigue. Key preventive measures include protective practices like wearing sunglasses and

using herbal washes, such as **Triphala-infused water**, to cleanse and safeguard the eyes. Rejuvenative care on the other hand centers around daily nourishment and revitalization of ocular tissues through kriyakalpatherapies like **Netra Tarpana** (ghee therapy), **Aschyotana** and **Anjana** (herbal collyrium), which detoxify and strengthen the eyes. Additionally, Ayurveda incorporates dietary interventions—such as the consumption of ghee, **Triphala**, and **vitamin A-rich foods** like **amla** and **leafy greens**—to promote retinal health and protect against oxidative stress. Yoga techniques, including **Trataka** and inverted postures further support eye rejuvenation by enhancing circulation and reducing strain, offering a holistic, science-backed approach to prevent and treat common eye conditions.

III. CONCLUSION

In Ayurveda, eye care is not limited to treat diseases but involves preventive and rejuvenative strategies that focus on maintaining optimal eye health through a balanced lifestyle, proper diet, and natural remedies. The integration of preventive measures like protecting the eyes from environmental damage and rejuvenating therapies like **Kriyakalpa** procedures helps ensure long-term vision health. By following Ayurvedic principles, one can promote both the preservation and enhancement of eye function, preventing early degeneration and maintaining visual acuity throughout life.

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