



Oil Pulling: A Review

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Oil pulling is extensively used traditional Indian folk remedy to prevent decay, bleeding gums, oral malodor, dryness of throat, cracked lips and for strengthening teeth, gums, and jaws. In this procedure, the practitioners rinse their mouth with approximately one tablespoon of an ordinary cooking oil for 3-20 min, then spits it. This practice is usually performed on a daily basis. This technique is believed to cure more than thirty systemic diseases when practiced regularly and as directed. As a result of side effects to modern medicines and oral hygiene products, people are increasingly attracted towards such traditional practices. The present article attempts to review and discuss this ancient practice and its effects on one's oral and general health.

KEYWORDS: Oil Pulling, Traditional Medicine, Folk Medicine, Oral Health, Health.

INTRODUCTION

A health of mind, body and spirits starts with a healthy mouth, which in turn facilitates good digestion. Oil pulling is an ancient oral kriya or practice recommended in Ayurvedic scriptures as an essential part of daily health rituals or Dinacharya. The oil pulling of was first introduced in the 90's by Tummala Kotesware Rao, of Bangalore India.¹

Oil pulling is an ancient Ayurvedic practice that involves swishing oil in our mouth. Not only is oil-pulling advantageous for one's oral health but it also has other benefits on one's body. The mouth is considered as the mirror of the general health of human body. Oral cavity has billions of microorganisms, some of these leads to the development or progression of systemic diseases such as infective endocarditis, diabetes mellitus, etc. Oral health and general health are interrelated. So, maintaining oral health is very important. Antibiotic resistance, adverse effects and intolerance to modern medicines has prompted scientists to research on natural products. Oil pulling is said to improve oral health. It came into knowledge and popularity by Dr. F. Karach.

PROCEDURE OF OIL PULLING

Start by selecting a pure, cold pressed variant of oil for the process ideally coconut oil is the best choice

because of its viscosity and Lauric acid content which aids in the removal of toxins. The next best choice for oil-pulling can be either olive oil or sesame oil.²

On an empty stomach, take one tablespoon (10 ml) of the oil and rinse it through your mouth. Continue to do so for 15-20 minutes, moving the oil to different areas of mouth. In case of children above five years of age, a teaspoon of oil is used. You will find that the oil will start to get watery as your saliva mixes with it. Keep on swishing until you notice the oil/saliva mixture in your mouth has become thicker. Once the time is up spit it out and wash the mouth thoroughly with warm saline water. The oil should be spit into a trashcan or on a paper towel and make sure you do not swallow any of it as it is loaded with toxins. Then proceed to brush your teeth or gargle with mouth wash to remove the oily texture in your mouth.³

It should be ideally performed in the morning on empty stomach before brushing teeth so it absorbs toxins that have accumulated in the mouth during the night. Oil pulling is performed in sitting position with chin up. It is contraindicated for children below 5 years due to risk of swallow. In cases of oral ulcers, fever, vomiting tendency, asthma and in conditions where brushing is difficult and sometimes contraindicated, oil pulling can be useful to maintain



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oral health.

The anti-bacterial nature of oil strips away bacteria and gives whiter teeth, stronger gums and curbs bad breath.

MECHANISMS OF OIL PULLING AND ITS BENEFITS

The exact mechanism of action of oil pulling is not known. It has been proposed however, that the viscosity of oil can inhibit bacterial adhesion and plaque coaggregation.⁴

Studies state that the oil act as a cleanser. When we put it in our mouth and swish around our teeth and gums, it “pulls” out the bacteria and other soft debris. It has a very powerful detoxifying effect on the body .One of the very first symptoms experienced after oil pulling is an increased flow of mucous from the throat and sinuses. Mucous drainage is considered as body’s own way of removing toxins. It has also been claimed that swishing of oil in our mouth causes activation of enzymes and draws the toxins out of the blood.

Various oils used in oil pulling include sesame oil, coconut oil, sunflower oil, palm oil and soy bean oil. The more commonly available oils like coconut and sesame are used extensively.⁵

Sesame oil is found to be effective in reducing bacterial growth and their adhesion. Toxins and bacteria from the body might be expelled through tongue and trapped in oil and thrown out of the body. Sesame oil significantly reduces *S.mutans* counts in plaque and saliva of teenagers within 1 week.

Coconut oil has a unique role in diet as an important physical functional food. Besides health and nutritional benefits, it has been shown to have anti carcinogenic effect against colon tumours. It is different from other dietary oils due to it’s basic building blocks, or fatty acid (medium chained), making up the oil. It has anti microbial activity against a variety of gram positive and gram negative bacteria including *Helicobacter pylori*, *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Candida spp.* etc.⁷

It was hypothesised that medium chained fatty acids have the capacity to alter bacterial cell walls, penetrate and destroy cell membranes, inhibit enzymes involved in energy production and nutrient transfer, leading to the death of bacteria.

HEALTH BENEFITS

Oil pulling isn’t only good at prevention and reduction oral infections, but can actively fight them as well. The oil pulls the infection (bacteria, toxins, and pus) out of the tissues, allowing the tissue to heal better, Inflammation reduces, stop bleeding, loose teeth tighten, pain and sensitivity decreases . Teeth become white and gums gain normal colour and look healthy. The toxins in the mouth often meet the blood stream, which in turn affects the skin. As oil-pulling cuts toxins out from the source. It helps clear the skin of impurities which causes acne, dullness and rashes.

The body too is positively affected when one carries out oil-pulling. Regularly oil-pulling every morning can aid in rested sleep, help reduce headaches and curb allergies.

ORAL HEALTH BENEFITS

1. Prevents tooth decay, bleeding gums, oral malodor
2. Reduces dryness of throat, cracked lips
3. Strengthening of teeth, gums, and jaws

Oil pulling benefits also include helping to support and strengthen the body’s immune system, which in turn helps the entire body to be healthier and function better.⁶

GENERAL HEALTH BENEFITS

1. Prevents Thrombosis ,Intestinal infection
2. Decreases incidence of Diabetes ,Bronchitis, Asthma ,Migrain and Skin problems
3. Improves Digestion and gut health.

ADVANTAGES

Oil pulling is cheap and very easy to perform. You simply swish oil in your mouth. Compared to other forms of detoxification it is comparatively effortless. It doesn’t require dieting, fasting, or consuming medication. It is seen to have advantages over commercial mouthwashes since it causes no staining, has no lingering aftertaste, causes no allergic reactions and is easily available in the household.⁸

PRECAUTIONS

Do not swallow, however, if you swallow, there is nothing to worry. It will go out of body if not digested. No spitting where people walk or on vegetation. Spit in the toilet and flush it. If you are allergic to a particular oil brand then it can be changed to other

brand oil. Make sure the oil is good and refined. Keep chin up so that pulling covers the back of the oral cavity and the molar teeth. For children of 5 years and above, only one teaspoon full (5 mL) of oil will do.⁹

CONCLUSION

In spite of all the advances made the field of health science, traditional methods still have a greater role. These methods are born out of native wisdom of very high intellectualism. These techniques are untouched and unspoiled. If they are analysed on scientific backgrounds they stand out the best. Hence oil pulling is one such method which improves the oral health and benefits general health also. Sufficient scientific research has not been carried out to evaluate the effect of oil pulling therapy on oral health and thus needs to be explored.

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