

THERAPEUTIC ROLE, PROCEDURAL METHODS AND CLINICAL SIGNIFICANCE
OF SWEDANA KARMA IN PANCHKARMADr. Mandeep Kaur*¹ and Dr. Asha K.²¹Asst. Professor, Panchakarma Dept., Govt. Ayurvedic College, Patiala, Punjab, India.²Professor, Prasuti Tantra & Stree Roga Dept., Karnataka Ayurveda Medical College, Mangalore, India.

*Corresponding Author: Dr. Mandeep Kaur

Asst. Professor, Panchakarma Dept., Govt. Ayurvedic College, Patiala, Punjab, India.

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ABSTRACT

Swedana Karma refers to a series of treatment procedures used to enhance sweating. *Swedana* helps to mobilize the stuck and tenacious *Doshas* of peripheral tissues by relaxing and loosening up toxins, allowing skin pores to open and clearing them from the body. In this process sweating may be induced either with the help of heat or without the help of heat. *Swedana* may be localized or may be used for the entire body, and may be classified as dry or wet fomentation, with increasing intensity of procedure. The medications employed in *Swedana* offers *Ushna* and *Tikshna* actions, to penetrate down into the *Srotas* of body, which further activates sweat glands. The therapy increases capillary permeability, makes way for the elimination of stored toxins into extracellular space, and clears body pathways. *Swedana* is applied in the treatment of several conditions including cough, asthma, constipation, muscle stiffness and neurological disorders like paralysis. It also serves the purpose of preparing the body for *Panchakarma* treatments by liquefying the *Doshas*. This article explains therapeutic role, procedural methods and clinical significance of *Swedana Karma*.

KEYWORDS: Ayurveda, Panchkarma, Swedana, Sweating, Purification Therapy.

INTRODUCTION

Swedana means sweating therapy, which relieves *Stambha*, *Gaurava* and *Sheeta* by inducing perspiration. It is typically administered after *Snehana* therapy. In Ayurveda, it mainly used as *Purvakarma* of *Panchkarma*, however it also used as main process sometimes. *Swedana* has a profoundly calming and cleansing effect on the body. By eliminating toxins from tissues, it aids in the detoxification of vital organs of body. Additionally, the treatment aids the elimination of obstructions in the body's subtle channels, improves digestion, relieves stiffness and increases circulation.^[1-4]

The medicinal substances employed in *Swedana* activate sweat glands and aid in the elimination of *Ama*, which are considered a primary cause of sickness, by penetrating the microcirculatory channels with their *Ushna* and *Tikshna* qualities. *Swedana* promotes sweating to balances *Doshas*, increases blood flow and stimulate natural healing process of body. It relaxes muscles and joints, which lessens stiffness and pain. Pregnancy, blood disorders, diarrhea, jaundice, anemia and fever, etc. are among the circumstances in which this therapy is contraindicated.^[4-6]

Types

Swedana is categorized into multiple types by different Ayurvedic experts. According to *Acharya Charaka*, it is predominantly categorized into two major types; *Sagniswedana* and *Niragniswedana*. First one is heat-induced sweating while later one is non-heat-induced sweating. *Niragniswedana* has many subtypes including *Vyayama*, *Ushnasadana*, *Guru pravaraana*, *Bahupana*, *Upanaha* and *Atapa*, etc. Conversely, *Sagniswedana* also consists of many methods, such as techniques like *Prastara*, *Nadi*, *Parisheka*, *Avagaha*, *Jentaka*, *Asmaghana*, *Karshu*, *Kuti*, *Kumbhi*, *Kupa* and *Holaka*, etc.

Acharya Sushruta divides *Swedana* into four broad categories as mentioned in **Figure 1**. As mentioned in figure *Tapa* includes direct heat, *Ushma* mean steam, *Upanaha* includes poultices and *Drava* involves utilization of warm liquids.^[5-7]

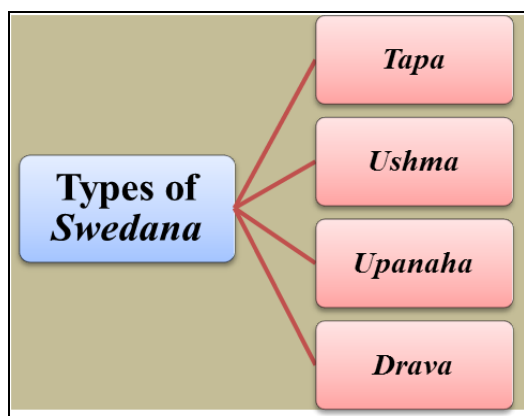


Figure 1: Types of Swedana according to Acharya Sushruta.

Role of Different Swedana in Specific Diseases

- ✓ *Tapa Swedana*, which applies direct heat using heated cloth or metal rods, is particularly recommended for conditions involving *Ama*, heaviness, stiffness and chronic musculoskeletal discomfort. It is useful in *Kapha-Vata*-dominated illnesses, especially when dry heat is recommended and there is no active inflammation.
- ✓ *Ushma Swedana* uses steam to induce perspiration. When both *Kapha* and *Vata doshas* are involved, such as in *Sandhigata Vata*, joint stiffness, backache, frozen shoulder and *Vata-Rakta*, this technique is highly beneficial.
- ✓ *Upanaha Swedana* is quite helpful when *Vata* and *Kapha* vitiation causes localized discomfort, stiffness and edema, etc. It works best for *Mamsa-Gata Vata*, *Ama Vata* and *Sandhigata Vata*. *Upanaha* can be used to soften tissue, reduce inflammation and improve mobility in chronic illnesses.
- ✓ *Drava Swedana* involves applying warm liquids to the body or immersing in them, it is used to treat neurological disorders, stiffness and post-trauma edema, etc. It helps to reduce dryness, reduce inflammation and increase circulation. *Drava*

Swedana helps with gynecological issues, muscular fatigue and urinary tract disorders, etc. by promoting relaxation and facilitating the skin's absorption of medications.

Mode of Action of Therapy

Swedana medication's *Ushna* and *Tikshna* properties enable them to enter *Srotas*, widen them, and stimulate the sweat glands. The qualities of *Laghu* and *Sara* direct liquid *Doshas* either out via the skin or toward the *Kostha* once the *Srotas* are open, thus assisting in purifying *Srotoshodhana*.

The medicinal impact of *Swedana* remedies is mostly due to their *Guna*, which is based on its elemental constitution. The *Agni Mahabhuta* is the source of *Ushnata*, or heat, which fights cold, boosts vitality, eases stiffness, causes sweating, thirst, a burning feeling and aids in digestion. *Tikshnata* is also *Agni* dominant, causes morbid *Doshas* and their secretions to burn and ripen, which makes it easier for vitiated *Dosha* and *Mala* to dissolve and be expelled. It raises *Pitta* and lowers *Kapha* and *Vata doshas*. *Rukshta*, is more common in *Vayu* and *Agni* components, is in opposition to bodily softness and is responsible for tissue rigidity. *Sarata* supports mobility because of its *Jala* and *Sthirata* which gives steadiness instead of mobility.

Jala is associated with *Dravata*, which aids in the dissolution and movement of body fluids. *Agni* is the primary source of *Sukshmata*, which allows substances to flow through *Srotas*. Strength and nourishment are enhanced by *Guruta* which is dominated by *Prithvi* and *Jala*. The selection of chemicals for *Swedana* is based on their qualities; *Sara* is used for whole-body therapy and *Sthira* is used for localized treatment; *Ruksha* medications are used for *Ruksha Swedana* and *Snigdha* drugs are used for *Snigdha Swedana*.^[7-9] *Swedana* *Dravya* play vital role for facilitating sweating inside the body, their properties responsible for action is depicted in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Property of Some Swedana Dravya.

<i>Swedana Dravya</i>	<i>Rasa</i>	<i>Guna</i>	<i>Virya</i>	<i>Vipaka</i>
<i>Tila</i>	<i>Madhura, Tikta, Kashaya</i>	<i>Snigdha, Guru, Sara</i>	<i>Ushna</i>	<i>Madhura</i>
<i>Masha</i>	<i>Madhura, Kashaya</i>	<i>Guru, Snigdha</i>	<i>Ushna</i>	<i>Madhura</i>
<i>Kulattha</i>	<i>Katu, Tikta</i>	<i>Ruksha, Laghu</i>	<i>Ushna</i>	<i>Katu</i>
<i>Ghrita</i>	<i>Madhura</i>	<i>Snigdha, Guru</i>	<i>Sheeta</i>	<i>Madhura</i>
<i>Taila</i>	<i>Varies</i>	<i>Snigdha</i>	<i>Ushna</i>	<i>Varies</i>
<i>Odana/Krishara/Payasa</i>	<i>Madhura</i>	<i>Snigdha, Guru</i>	<i>Ushna</i>	<i>Madhura</i>

Indications

- ✓ According to Ayurveda, *Swedana* has various important functions, including *Swedakarakatva*, reducing stiffness, heaviness and coldness.
- ✓ Disrupted *Samana Vayu* & *Shleshaka Kapha* and tissues such as *Mamsa, Rasa, Vasa* and *Meda* are the primary causes of stiffness. Stiffness results from the *Ruksha* character of *Samana Vayu*. *Swedana*

counteracts this by purifying the *Srotas* and aiding in the digestion of *Ama* through its *Ushna* and *Snigdha* properties.

- ✓ Sweating, which lightens and activates muscles and nerves, helps the body release water-based chemicals that cause heaviness.
- ✓ *Swedana's* opposing *Ushna* nature helps to reduces complications of excessive coldness.

✓ *Swedana* promotes perspiration.

Swedana Therapy Techniques

Sankara technique entails applying a heated herbal bolus or *Potli* to a body that is either dressed or not. The body can be heated or gently massaged with the bolus. The herbal paste within the bolus is unwrapped and applied to the body repeatedly. A warm bath and relaxation in a cozy setting mark the end of the treatment.

Prasthara Sweda involves utilization of medicinal leaves, elements like corn, legumes, dry ginger, *Pippali*, *Maricha*, ghee and preparations like *Paayasa* and *Krushara*, which are piled on a bed for sweating purpose. After that, blankets made of silk or wool are put around the sufferer to stimulate sweating and heat.

Nadi Sweda, uses a tube referred as *Nadi* to administer herbal steam to specific body parts or the entire body. Depending on the ailment, the steam treatment can be either targeted or full body.

Heated herbal decoctions are poured or streamed over the body using pots, pitchers, or perforated tubes to ensure uniform distribution of the heated liquids. This process is known as *Parisheka Sweda*

In *Jentaka Sweda* the patient is positioned in a circular chamber or close to a body of water, such as a pond, where herbal materials are burned in an oven. This process generate therapeutic steam atmosphere for inducing controlling sweating.^[8-10]

Precautions & Contradictions

Despite the fact that *Swedana* therapy offers many therapeutic benefits, it must be used with prudence. *Pitta*-dominant conditions such as inflammation or fever should be avoided. *Swedana* should also be avoided by very frail people, heart patients and pregnant women. It is contraindicated in bleeding disorders; diabetes mellitus; vascular diseases; eye disorders; poisoning cases; indigestion; menstruation; certain skin diseases; excessive hunger or thirst and in case of fearful mental distress, etc.^[9-11]

CONCLUSION

Swedana sometimes referred to as sudation therapy, which is a healing technique that uses perspiration to clean the body from the accumulated toxins. During the major purification phase of *Pradhanakarma*, these toxins are moved toward places from which they can be eliminated more effectively. Although *Swedana* is usually done as the last stage of *Purvakarma*, after *Snehana* and *Pachana*, it can also be used as a stand-alone treatment. *Swedana* is an important Ayurvedic treatment procedure, which is mainly used for alleviating stiffness, heaviness, and coldness resulting from *Vata-Kapha dosha* imbalances. With its *Ushna* and *Snigdha* properties, it induces perspiration, cleanses the channels of the body, and facilitates digestion of *Ama*. *Sankara*,

Nadi, *Prasthara*, *Parisheka* and *Jentaka Sweda* are different techniques used for different clinical conditions. But the application of it has to be with great cautions particularly in *Pitta*-dominant and contraindicated cases, so that it will be safe as well as effective.

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