

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) Through the Lens of Ayurveda: A Conceptual and Clinical Review

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Abstract: *Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by persistent inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity. While modern psychiatry classifies it based on behavioral symptoms, Ayurveda provides a deeper understanding based on dosh imbalances, particularly Vata and Pitta. This article explores ADHD through Ayurvedic Principles, reviews clinical interventions including Medhya Rasayana, Shirodhara, and Panchakarma and suggests integrative approaches for long-term management.*

Keywords: ADHD, Ayurveda, Vata, Medhya Rasayana, Shirodhara, Panchakarma, Neurodevelopmental Disorders.

I. INTRODUCTION

ADHD affects approximately 5–7% of children worldwide and often persists into adulthood. It leads to significant impairment in academic, occupational, and social domains. While contemporary treatments involve stimulant medications and behavioral therapy, Ayurveda offers holistic insights and interventions that address the root imbalances of the condition. The disease is characterized by inattention, increased distractibility, hyperactivity and impulsivity. This leads to a number of problems like poor academic performance, poor social interaction, relationship problems with parents, friends and peers, etc.

Aims and Objectives

- To interpret ADHD based on Ayurvedic principles
- To identify suitable Ayurvedic formulations and therapies
- To review existing research and clinical applications of Ayurvedic interventions in ADHD management

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This review is based on classical Ayurvedic texts (*Charaka Samhita*, *Ashtanga Hridaya*), modern research databases (PubMed, AYUSH portal), and recent clinical trials and case studies evaluating Ayurvedic management in ADHD.

Ayurvedic Understanding of ADHD

1. Nidana (Etiopathogenesis)

ADHD can be correlated with *Vata-Pitta prakopa*, particularly:

- *Prana Vata* – affecting mental focus and coordination
- *Sadhaka Pitta* – governing intellect and emotions
- *Tarpaka Kapha* – linked to mental stability and memory



2. Samprapti (Pathogenesis)

Impaired function of *Dhi* (intellect), *Dhriti* (retention), and *Smriti* (memory) due to *doshic* vitiation. Aggravation of *Vata* leads to hyperactivity and impulsiveness. *Pitta* contributes to irritability, emotional volatility.

Therapeutic Approaches in Ayurveda

1. Medhya Rasayana (Cognitive Enhancers)

Herb	Sanskrit Name	Action
Bacopa monnieri	<i>Brahmi</i>	Enhances memory and concentration
Convolvulus pluricaulis	<i>Shankhpushpi</i>	Calms mind, reduces hyperactivity
Withania somnifera	<i>Ashwagandha</i>	Adaptogen, reduces stress
Glycyrrhiza glabra	<i>Yashtimadhu</i>	Nourishes brain, improves focus

2. Panchakarma Therapies

- *Shirodhara* – continuous stream of medicated oil on forehead; calms *Vata*

In this process, the milk was poured over the forehead of patients in the form of a regular stream from a specific height of about 8 cms in a fixed fashion in the form of oscillatory movements i.e. to & fro movement of milk stream over the forehead of the patients for 30-45 minutes daily for 2 weeks.

- *Abhyanga* – oil massage for grounding and calming

- *Nasya* – nasal administration of medicated oils improves mental clarity

- *Matra Basti* – enema therapy to pacify *Vata*

3. Lifestyle (Vihara) and Diet (Ahara)

- Routine-based lifestyle (*Dinacharya*)

- Warm, nourishing foods; avoid refined sugar, cold foods

- Yoga and *pranayama* practices like *Nadi Shodhana*, *Bhramari*

Clinical Evidence and Case Studies

1. Randomized Clinical Trial (NIIMH, Jaipur)

Subjects: 43 children aged 6–14 years

Intervention: Ayurvedic syrup + *Shirodhara*

Outcome: Significant improvement in attention, impulse control

Conclusion: Ayurvedic interventions were effective and well-tolerated

2. Case Study – Ayurvedic College, Belgaum

Patient: 7-year-old male with hyperactivity

Treatment: *Brahmi* syrup, *Shirodhara*, *Matra Basti*

Result: Improved concentration and reduction in aggressive behavior

3. Comparative Study

Groups: Eleve tablets vs *Shirodhara*

Sample: 100 children with ADHD

Findings: Eleve (herbal formula) produced faster improvements; both showed benefit



III. DISCUSSION

The Ayurvedic approach to ADHD is primarily focused on balancing *Vata* and *Pitta doshas*, improving cognitive strength (*Medha*), and promoting *sattvic* mental states. The combination of *Rasayana* herbs and therapies like *Shirodhara* and *Basti* shows promising results without the adverse effects associated with stimulants.

IV. CONCLUSION

Ayurveda offers a comprehensive framework for understanding and managing ADHD. *Medhya Rasayanas*, *Panchakarma*, and supportive lifestyle modifications can be effective complementary therapies. However, more robust, multi-center trials with standardized protocols are necessary to validate and integrate these treatments globally.

Future Scope

- Development of standardized herbal formulations for ADHD
- Integration of Ayurveda with modern neuropsychological assessments
- Longitudinal studies assessing the efficacy of Ayurvedic therapies over time

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