

Therapeutic uses of Mud therapy in Naturopathy

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Earth is one among five elements having an immense impact on human body. It has been adopted as a treatment modality, i.e. mud therapy in naturopathy. It is a simple, cost effective and efficacious treatment used in the treatment of various disorders. Mud is used as a medicine since long as various references are found available in ancient texts indicating its therapeutic uses. Mud has various therapeutic properties which are highly useful in the treatment of various disease conditions. The paper highlights the therapeutic uses of mud as a therapy and its importance, possible role and usefulness in the modern times.

Keywords: Naturopathy, Mud Therapy, Mud pack, Mud bath

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Oriental wisdom of healthcare believes the universe to be composed of five primary elements; Akash, Vayu, Agni, Jala and Prithvi. For their being as the formative components of a living body, a balance or other wise among them is proposed to be cause of health or disease. Though in classical sense, these elements are not proposed as the treatment modalities in reference to their namely resemblance to the similar components available to our surroundings, Naturopathy on contrary adopts each one of them as a distinct therapeutic measure. Earth, as an integral component of our body, has an immense impact upon our health and sickness. It is essential for our physical as well as mental fitness. Most Naturopathy Centres adopt Mud therapy as principal therapy where mud is used as the core component. Mud therapy, conventionally is prescribed to the patients alongside with other eliminative therapies. Mud pack and mud bath are best and popular forms of mud therapy. Various references pertaining to therapeutic uses of mud are available in traditional texts like Vedas and Sushruta Kalpa, etc. saying antiquity of using mud in the treatment of various disease conditions¹. Interestingly, Gandhiji was found to be a firm believer of Naturopathy.² The mud poultice applied to the head, relieves headache in most cases. Headache may be due to several causes, but whatever the cause, as a general rule, an application of mud poultice relieves it for the time being³. Mud poultices cure ordinary boils³. In high fever, an application of mud poultice on the head and abdomen is very useful³.

Mud therapy is a very simple, cost effective and efficacious treatment modality of Naturopathy. The mud used for this should be clean and taken from 122 to 153 cm depth from the surface of the ground. It should be free from contamination of stone pieces and chemical manures, etc. Before using, mud should be dried in sun rays, powdered and sieved to separate stones, grass particles and other impurities. If there is any doubt as to its cleanliness, it should be well heated and thus sterilized³. Simple and effective treatments of Mud therapy are included in the techniques of healthy living. These treatments can be used at home too. Mud therapy is used for giving coolness to body. Mud dilutes and absorbs the toxic substances of body and ultimately eliminates them from body. Mud packs and mud baths are two main and popular forms of mud therapy. In different disease conditions like constipation, headache due to tension, high blood pressure and skin diseases, etc. mud is used successfully. In the condition of headache and high blood pressure mud pack is applied on forehead too⁴.

Another good mode of mud therapy is the barefoot walking in the dewy grass or walking on wet pavements or slabs. The wet grass or pavements make a good conductor for the transmission of earth magnetism into the body of the patients. The barefoot walking should be followed by drying the feet thoroughly and the patient should then take a brisk walk in dry shoes and stockings⁵. Mud has a unique property to absorb heat and toxins from the body. It

also dissolves and transforms the toxins within the body into such a state whereby they could be easily driven out from the body. It reduces the rigidity of muscles, softens the hard tissues and dissolves hard fatty glands within or over the body. It starts its function right from the moment of its application over the affected site and consequently the patient observes relief from the symptoms. During the state of presence of additional amount of toxins in the body, mud gets hot sooner after application in accordance of the body temperature. It should be replaced by another mud pack over the same site in such condition. Besides its local uses, mud can also be used in various generalized conditions like fever, diarrhoea, piles, dysentery, constipation, insomnia, headache, high blood pressure and anxiety, etc⁶.

The water applications produce fully as good results as mud, clay or other materials; besides, it has the advantage of being more cleanly and more easily applied⁸. However, it is true that in many cases of chronic inflammation resulting either from internal disease, bruises or sprains, clay packs have proved of great benefit. One advantage he found is that this substance retains moisture and coolness much longer than a water pack or compress. They are, therefore, of special benefit in cases of sub acute and chronic inflammations, of persistent soreness, and for all night packs or bandages⁷.

Procedure

Mud pack on abdomen

Mud is soaked in a big vessel of clay at night. In the morning by kneading and is prepared like dough. It should not be too wet to flow. The mud is kept on the clean cotton cloth and is spread on it with the help of a wooden stick. The size of the pack is approx. 22.86 × 15.24 × 1.27 cm. However, it is changed according to the shape and size of the patient as well as the region of application. Thereafter, the mud pack is placed over pelvis below umbilical region of the abdomen in such a way that entire mud pack is in contact of skin. It is covered with a dry cloth or with a woolen cloth in winters. The pack may be removed after 20 minutes and that part is cleaned with a wet cloth followed by a gentle rubbing with palms to warm it up. Mud pack for other parts of body like forehead etc. are also prepared and used in the same way⁴.

Mud pack relieves indigestion, decreases intestinal heat and stimulates peristalsis. In congestive headache, it is applied on forehead and relieves the

headache immediately. It is recommended when a prolonged cold application is required. It is applied over the eyes in cases of conjunctivitis, hemorrhages in the eyeball, itching, allergy, errors of refraction like short sight and long sight and especially useful in glaucoma where it helps to reduce eye ball tension. The effect of the wet pack, poultice or compress is very much the same whether the material used is mud, clay, water, cottage cheese, flaxseed or any other mild acting substance. The beneficial results are brought about because the cool moisture in and under the packs or poultices relaxes the pores of the skin, draws the blood into the surface, relieves inner congestion and pain and promotes heat radiation and elimination of morbid matter⁴.

Mud pack on face

Fine paste of soaked mud is applied on the face for 20 minutes after which face is washed gently with cold water. It helps in improving the skin complexion and removes pimples as well. It also opens skin pores which in turn facilitate the elimination process. Mud application on face helps in elimination of dark circles around the eyes too.

Mud bath

Mud bath is one of the most popular treatments given in the Naturopathy Hospitals. In mud bath, a fine paste of mud is applied to the entire body of the patient. The duration of mud bath is 45 to 60 minutes. It improves the skin condition by increasing the circulation and energizing the skin tissues. Care must be taken that the mud used for such treatments is free from impurities and should not be taken from localities contaminated by human refuse. The mud bath is followed by a cleansing warm spray and rub, and finished with a quick tonic cold spray⁴. Mud bath revitalizes and rejuvenates the skin and can be used in routine as well as during the skin disease conditions⁶.

Mud therapy is found useful in certain other conditions like osteoarthritis. A study on the efficacy of treatment with mud packs and baths with Sillene mineral water (Chianciano Spa Italy) in patients suffering from knee osteoarthritis was conducted to assess the efficacy of mud-bath therapy with mineral water from the Sillene Spring at Italy's Chianciano Spa in patients with osteoarthritis of the knee⁹. Patients (n=61) were divided into two groups. Group A underwent three cycles of mud based spa therapy over a year's time, whereas group B did not. Clinical conditions, visual analogue scale pain ratings, and

Lequesne indexes of the two groups were compared. They also compared same parameters in the patients of the two groups that were following the therapy with drugs and in the patients of the group A before and after Spa treatment. The percentage of patients with no symptoms or mild symptoms was higher in group A than in group B. Within group A, this percentage was higher after treatment than before Spa therapy. Even in the comparison between the patients of the two groups that were following the therapy with drug, in group A the percentage of patients with no symptoms or mild symptoms was higher than in group B. Statistical analyses based on various tests revealed that almost all these differences were highly significant. No adverse effects were observed in any of the patients in group A. In conclusion, the mud-bath therapy performed at Chianciano Spa with Sillene Spring water remarkably improved the clinical conditions of patients with knee arthritis and significantly reduces the frequency and severity of symptoms and the disability they cause⁹.

Another similar study on efficacy of mud-bath therapy with mineral water from the Sillene spring at Itlay's Chianciano Spa for osteoarthritis of the knee, physical examination of the knee joint, visual analogue scale (VAS) assessment of pain, and Lequesne Algo-functional Index were compared¹⁰. Tests were performed in 61 patients divided into 2 groups. The group A underwent three full cycles of mud-bath therapy over 1 year's time, the group B did not. An observational longitudinal study was also conducted on the patients of group A, before and after completion of the treatment protocol. Statistical analyses were based on use of Pearson's chi2 test, Student's t tests for paired and unpaired data. The results revealed that the percentage of patients with no symptoms or mild symptoms was higher in group A than in group B (differences were highly significant); the mean value of VAS and the overall Lequesne indexes mean score reported in group A was significantly lower than that reported in group B. The same was observed comparing the clinical conditions of group A patients before and after mud-bath therapy. No adverse effects were observed in any of the patients in group A. The study concluded that the mud-bath therapy at Chianciano Spa significantly improves the clinical conditions of patients with knee osteoarthritis and significantly¹⁰.

A randomized controlled clinical study was done to study the efficacy of mud pack treatment in patients

with knee osteoarthritis and to find the contribution of chemical factors to the build up of these effects¹¹. The study revealed that mud pack treatment significantly improved the pain and functional status of patients with knee osteoarthritis, whether applied directly or coated with nylon. Direct application was found to be superior, which implies chemical properties of the mud contribute to the build up of therapeutic effect¹¹. In another study mud was found to have a place as a non-pharmacological tool in certain clinical settings, such as degenerative articular processes, skin disorders and others¹². Mud modifies nitric oxide, myeloperoxidase and glutathione peroxidase serum levels in arthritic patients and beta-endorphin and stress hormones in patients affected by osteoarthritis by reducing inflammation, pain and therefore diminishes the cause of stress¹². In a randomized clinical trial on effects of mud-bath treatment on fibromyalgia patients a significant improvement of all evaluation parameters after mud-bath therapy after 16 weeks was found¹³. Mud packs were well tolerated and no drop-outs were recorded. The results suggests the efficacy and the tolerability of mud-bath treatment in primary fibromyalgia syndrome (FS)¹³.

Conclusion

Based on the references made above, it is concluded that mud is an important treatment modality used in naturopathy which plays an effective role in the treatment and management of various disease conditions. It is equally important and useful in modern times. It has traditional references; however, focused and scientific more studies are required to be conducted in this field to establish the efficacy and usefulness of mud therapy in ameliorating various disorders.

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