

Prevention of Hearing loss according to Ayurveda...

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Hearing loss is extremely common disease found in regular practices. The management of hearing loss is challenging and the effectiveness still remains a question for most of the practitioners. Therefore, it is better to prevent hearing loss by making people aware about it. Hearing loss is found either due to conductive or sensorineural pathologies. According to the ancient science Ayurveda, ears are considered to be the main place for Vata Dosh and there are high chances of them being vulnerable to Vata vitiation either due to busy lifestyle, frequent occurrence of cold or due to constant noise exposure to ear. Studies showed that long term use of headphones in adolescents is likely to impair hearing function [1]. While the prevalence of occupational noise has decreased since the early 1980s, the prevalence of social noise has tripled. There is great concern regarding the development of Noise Induced hearing loss in youth due to high sound exposure levels during leisure-time activities. Activities which leads to hearing damage and the percentage of hearing damage are- visiting night-clubs or pubs (96%), watching movies or plays (88%), and listening to PMPs through headphones (86%) and attending concerts or festivals (69%) [2]. Now a days due to online education, either the use of headphones or earphones has increased. This leads to damage to cochlea and there by affects hearing.

Ayurveda has given prime importance on the chapter of Karnaroga (diseases of ear). Separate etiological factors, pathogenesis

and description of 28 disorders of ear are given in Ayurvedic texts. Prevention and Treatment of diseases occurring in ear includes Nidana Parivarjana (avoidance of causative factors), following Pathya- Apathya (does and don't) along with treatment available like Karnapoorana (filling of ear canal with medicated oil and other decoctions), Karna Prakshalana (washing of ear canal/aural toileting with medicated liquids), Karnadhoopana (application of medicated smoke to ear canal), Karnapradeha (application of packs around ear), Swedana (local fomentation), Shirobasti (filling of scalp with medicated oil), Shashtra Karma (surgical procedures), Karna Avachoorana (dusting of medicated powders in ear canal), Nasya (instillation of medicated oil into nasal cavity), application of Kshara (alkali), Agni Karma (cauterization), etc.

Avoidance of certain causative factors also plays an important role in prevention of hearing loss. They are to prevent frequent cold (Pratishyaya) by following proper Dinacharya (daily regimen) and Ritucharya (seasonal regimen). For that use of Pratimarsha Nasya is very effective in which, instillation of sesame seed oil is suggested in the quantity of 2 drops per each nostril. By making a protective layer within anterior nasal cavity and being greasy in nature apart from many other medicinal values, it may help to prevent viruses and bacterias from entering into respiratory tract. Other causative factors for ear disorders are said as swimming (Jalakrida), scratching the ear canal (Karnakandu), exposure to loud sounds (Shabda

Mithyayoga) should also can be taken care to prevent hearing loss either being conductive or sensory neural in nature.

Avoidance of certain don'ts (Apathya) like taking bath with excess cold water which leads to Vata and Kapha Dosha vitiation; avoid excessive exercise/walking as it leads to early ageing (hearing loss in early age); avoid direct excess wind exposure as it leads to Vata vitiation by causing dryness; avoid awakening at night time or taking improper sleep again leads to Vata vitiation; fingering to ear canal is to be avoided; avoid excessive indulgence in coitus; do not tilt the neck/head for long time (just like while driving/work-ing most of the people have habit of tilting head); heavy weight should not be lifted on head. These are the factors about which people are usually unaware and it's the duty of health care worker to sensitize them.

Karnapoorana is the procedure which is mentioned in Ayurvedic texts which helps in prevention and treatment of diseases affecting hearing. Karnapoorana improves hearing quality, helps in hearing loss and reduces frequent ear infections. In Karnapoorana local fomentation is given prior to the procedure which does vasodilation, thus increases permeability of capillaries. As the efferent vasodilator nerves are situated on the superficial surface of the face, it gives stimulation by fomentation and it may increase blood flow to the brain affecting hearing center situated in the cortex of the brain. Then after instilling medicated oil (oil is used mainly for the prevention and treatment of hearing loss) and filling the ear canal for a stipulated time, may lead to absorption of active principles of the drug through cochlear nerve. Oil being lipid in nature may prevent fungal and bacterial invasion into the ear canal. Role of oil used for Karnapoorana in myelination is not known yet. However, myelin assembly requires a significant amount of lipids, and lipids play an important role in glial cell myelination. Karnapoorana might have some role to improve inner ear capacity by withstanding shearing force applied between hair cells and tectorial membrane. Even it may have some role to provide nourishment to hair cells which would not easily then get destroyed by loud sound exposure or any other cause. This way Karnapoorana may help in preventing conductive hearing loss by protecting external ear and sensory neural loss by making inner ear healthy. It also helps to treat diseases like deafness, tinnitus, vertigo, chronic earaches which are challenging to treat by any of the ENT practitioners.

Regular practices of Pratimarsha Nasya, Karnapoorana and Shiro Abhyanga (head massage) as a part of Dinacharya if done, one would not get easily affected by hearing loss. Regular practice of Shiro Abhyanga (head massage) does Santarpana (nourishment) of Gyanendra (senses including hearing, vision, smell, taste). By head massage, body gets nourishment the way like a giving water to the roots of tree makes tree to expand.

In short, prevention of hearing loss is possible if people are made aware about taking care of ear by various means which are mentioned in ancient science of Ayurveda.

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