



SHIRODHARA – THE FOREHEAD OIL POUR

The Sanskrit word “Shirodhara” simply means “head pouring” or “head stream”. The treatment is given with organic sesame oil warmed to body temperature. This oil nourishes and benefits especially Vata Dosha, which has the qualities of lightness and dryness. Vata is the Dosha responsible for nerve impulses in the body. Thereby, it controls the perpetual breathing, the blood circulation, and in fact all movement in and of the body.

Increased Vata Dosha can lead to restlessness and disruption of the delicate balance between the sympathetic and parasympathetic parts of the nervous system. On the physical level, this may manifest as nervous twitches or tinnitus; emotionally, there may be increased anxiety and circular thoughts. Ultimately, any kind of stress load leads to Vata dis-



turbances, and this happens all too often, especially as a result of our western modern way of life: Persistent restlessness and sleep disturbances can set in, as well as a constant sense of being driven and feeling under pressure.

Through the forehead oil pour, we can activate the parasympathetic nervous system – the part of our nervous system which is responsible for regeneration and relaxation – and thus help us regain our balance.

How does Shirodhara work?

The gently flowing oil during Shirodhara is especially beneficial for people with a high Vata component. The main indications include symptoms such as headaches, protracted worrying, anxiety, high blood pressure, impaired memory and concentration.

Balancing the vegetative system leads to lower intravascular pressure, with gradually decreasing blood pressure and heart rate. This vasodilatory effect can also be observed in the Shrotas, our bodily tubules. More room is created, resulting in a better flow in the tissues and vessels, which has a cleansing and opening effect.

At the Subdosha level, Prana Vata is pacified and



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also Sadhaka Pitta and Tarpaka Kapha. In a nutshell: Sadhaka Pitta provides the mind, intellect and ego with initiative and poise; it helps us to achieve our goals. And Tarpaka Kapha is localized in the head and functions to nourish the entire nervous system as well as the sensory organs.

Another effect is that, by gently waving the oil flow from one side of the forehead to the other, the left and right brain hemispheres are balanced and harmonized.

Takradhara – the special forehead pour in Maharishi Ayurveda

For people with a high Pitta component, the warming sesame oil is substituted by substances that have cooling, Pitta-soothing properties, such as coconut oil, lassi, or buttermilk. Especially if you have a skin disease, e.g. psoriasis, the forehead pour with buttermilk is very beneficial. For such applications, the buttermilk is prepared by boiling it with herbs that give an additional balancing effect. The pouring of buttermilk or lassi across the forehead with flowing movements is extremely pleasant and cooling also on hot summer days, and a true blessing for irritated and itchy skin.

How Shirodhara is given

Shirodhara is usually preceded by a head treatment or an Abhyanga – Ayurvedic full-body massage.

The duration of the forehead pour should be at least twenty minutes to provide the intended effect and is often gradually increased for successive treatments. A series of at least three applications is recommended to achieve a profound and long-lasting effect.

For more severe neurological conditions, such as



Parkinson's disease, Shirodhara is often given daily for one or two weeks, as part of a Panchakarma course of treatment.

For the Shirodhara proper, you lie on your back with the head slightly hyperextended. The therapist covers your eyes for protection. Before the treatment, the oil is warmed and poured into a special vessel called a Dhara jar. This vessel hangs above you and is moved over your forehead from one side to the other with a slow and gentle swinging motion. The oil is collected and poured back into the Dhara jar again several times during the treatment.

After the Shirodhara, a resting period is observed.



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In order for the Shirodhara treatment to truly unfold all of its beneficial effects, there are a few things that should be taken into consideration. For example, low blood pressure, poor circulation, pronounced Kapha disorders and the menstrual period are considered contraindications.

Experience has also shown that during the beginning of the Panchakarma course of treatment, people still feel some after-effects from the stress of their travel or are emotionally agitated. This can make it much more difficult for them to enjoy the treatment. It may happen that during Shirodhara, one perceives all the turmoil accumulated in one's system clearly for the first time, and then what otherwise is a soothing forehead pour can be an unpleasant experience.

In contrast, a few days into the course of treatment,

when one has become familiar with the surroundings and the therapists, and the stress from everyday life has slowly subsided, Shirodhara enhances a deep, emotionally balanced state of mind and fills one with peace and joy.

Have you become curious to enjoy an Ayurvedic synchronous oil massage followed by Shirodhara? Our doctors prescribe Shirodhara in almost every Panchakarma treatment plan, but you may also enjoy it during shorter stays without a major detox program, for deep relaxation. Experience authentic Panchakarma therapies under medical supervision in Europe's leading Ayurveda health center, without having to travel far and wide, and let yourself be pampered by our specially trained, empathetic therapists.

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