

CASE STUDY

# Nitamba Basti: Innovative Approach of External Basti Therapy

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## ABSTRACT

*Nitamba Basti* is a specialized Panchkarma treatment in Ayurveda, classified as *Bahya Parimarjan Chikitsa* (external therapy). This procedure integrates synchronized *Snehana* (oil application) and *Swedana* (sweating) to enhance its therapeutic effects. The efficacy of *Nitamba Basti* is influenced by factors such as the duration of treatment, the specific area targeted, temperature, quantity, and the type of medicated oil used. Primarily focused on the hip region, this therapy aims to nourish tissues, including *Mamsa* (muscles), *Meda* (fat), *Asthi* (bones), and *Majja* (bone marrow) thereby alleviating discomfort, improving circulation, and balancing the doshas, particularly *Vata* and *Kapha*. During the procedure, warm medicated oil is pooled over the lateral side of hip using a specially designed ring made from black gram powder. Although not explicitly mentioned in classical texts, *Nitamba Basti* effectively addresses pain and stiffness associated with musculoskeletal issues related to Avascular Necrosis of Femoral head and Osteoarthritis of hip joint. This therapy may support the immune response and stimulates the release of endorphins, further aiding in pain relief. The methodology includes comprehensive patient evaluation, the preparation of materials, and a step-by-step operative procedure, followed by appropriate aftercare. *Nitamba Basti* is indicated for conditions related to *Vata Dosha*, such as Avascular Necrosis of the Femoral Head and Osteoarthritis of hip joint, while contraindications include open wounds and acute febrile conditions. The treatment promotes not only physical healing but also emotional well-being, making it a holistic approach within Ayurvedic practice. This study aims to elucidate the concept and procedure of *Nitamba Basti*, highlighting its significance in enhancing overall health and vitality.

**Key Words** Ayurveda, Avascular Necrosis, Nitamba Basti, Panchkarma, Swedana

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## INTRODUCTION

*Nitamba Basti* is a *Panchkarma* treatment in *Ayurveda*, classified as *Bahi Parimarjan Chikitsa* (external therapy). It combines synchronized *Snehana* (oil application) and *Swedana* (sweating)<sup>1</sup>. The overall effectiveness of *Nitamba*

*Basti* is influenced by the duration of the procedure, the area covered, and the specific medicated oil used. The primary aim is to alleviate discomfort, improve circulation, and balance the *doshas*, particularly *Vata* and *Kapha*. *Nitamba Basti* is a procedure in which comfortably warm medicated oil is applied to the

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lateral aspect of hip for a specific duration, using a specially designed ring made from black gram powder. The term "*Nitamba*" refers to the buttock, while "*Basti*" means to hold or retain something. This method provides localized oleation and fomentation to the affected area. The oils are typically heated to a tolerable temperature and pooled over the painful spot. *Nitamba Basti* is also classified as *Bahya Sthanik Basti* (external Basti therapy), an Ayurvedic treatment that involves several techniques, including *Bahya Snehana* (external oil application) and *Swedana Chikitsa* (fomentation therapy). Although *Nitamba Basti* isn't found in classical texts, it involves the application of medicated and lubricated substances to specific body areas for a defined duration. This treatment is particularly helpful for conditions affecting the avascular necrosis of femoral head and related areas. *Nitamba Basti* is effective in relieving muscle spasms, reducing tightness in the hip region, and strengthening the bone tissue in that region. Arterioles are tiny blood arteries that are essential for controlling blood flow, and *Swedana* helps them dilate. It also improves the flow of nutrients required for tissue regeneration and repair. More polymorphonuclear leukocytes, a subset of white blood cells that aid in the body's immunological response by reducing inflammation and infection, are also brought about by the enhanced circulation. Additionally, the body's natural painkillers, endorphins, are released when discomfort is reduced and a sensation of wellbeing is enhanced. The heating

properties of *Swedana* greatly improve circulation in the targeted body part. Increased blood flow results from the dilatation of blood vessels caused by heat exposure. This improves circulation making it possible for more oxygen and vital nutrients to reach the tissues, which supports the general health of the cells. Additionally, the increased blood flow makes it easier for toxins and metabolic waste products to be removed from the area, which can speed up the healing process and lessen inflammation. Furthermore, *Swedana's* warmth can aid in muscle relaxation, reducing stiffness and stress. Increased flexibility and a wider range of motion may result from this combination of better circulation and relaxed muscles. Rapid healing of lesions is supported by increased nutritional intake and improved absorption. However, caution is necessary in cases of acute lesions, as excessive heat can lead to increased fluid leakage from injured blood vessels. For post-traumatic conditions, such as strains, more intense heat applications are often required. One important aspect of pain management is the impact of heat on sensory nerve endings. These nerve terminals can be stimulated by heat, which lessens the experience of pain. Because modest heating has a calming effect, this is especially helpful in cases of acute pain. By reducing the perception of pain, the warmth helps to calm the area and relax the muscles, resulting in instant relief. On the other hand, modest warmth might not work well for chronic pain. More comprehensive treatment is necessary for chronic pain since it frequently

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involves underlying tissue problems and persistent inflammation. Strong heating applications are required in these situations. By overpowering the pain pathways and diverting the nervous system's attention from the pain signals, the heat serves as a counterirritant, bringing comfort. Heat-induced vasodilation can alleviate pain by helping to eliminate waste products from the tissues. The soothing warmth of *Swedana* therapy, along with pain relief, can foster both mental and physical relaxation. This makes stretching and mobilization easier after the therapy.

### AIM

To comprehensively review and present the conceptual basis, procedural methodology, therapeutic significance, and clinical applicability of *Nitamba Basti* as an innovative external *Basti* therapy in the management of hip-related *Vata* disorders.

### OBJECTIVES

To describe the standard materials, patient preparation, operative steps, and aftercare involved in performing *Nitamba Basti* and to develop a structured Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) ensuring uniformity, safety, and clinical efficacy.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

*Swedana* (~Fomentation) is a therapeutic approach that induces sweating through heat,

either from steam or by applying heated medicaments to the body. *Nitamba Basti* is a unique treatment for pain primarily caused by *Vata Dosha*, often seen in degenerative diseases. It is mainly employed to relieve pain and stiffness associated with bone, joint, and musculoskeletal issues.

### Procedure

#### A. *Purva Karma*/Pre-Procedure

**Materials and Equipment:** *Droni/Abhyanga* table-1, Vessels for heating oil-1, Sponge- 1, Black Gram flour- 200-400 g, Hot water, Vessel- 1, Cotton, Disposable Towels-2, Disposable sheet-1.

**Medicines-** Prescribed medicated oil as per indication in required quantity (~500 ml).

Commonly used medicated oils include *Dashamula Taila*, *Bala Taila*, *Karpasasthyadi Taila*, *Sahacharadi Taila*, *Masha Taila*, *Dhanvantara Taila*, *Kottumchukkadi Taila*, and *Mahanarayana Taila*.

#### a. Preparation of Materials:

**Making dough:** Dough from black gram is prepared. The dough should be shaped roughly 3 inches in height, 1 inch in width, and length sufficient to form a ring over the required areas. One can use *Basti* cast and fix it on the required local body part with the help of black gram dough<sup>2</sup>.

#### b. Preparation of Patient:

The therapy approach begins with a complete fitness evaluation, followed by patient counselling and education. Prior to moving forward, written informed consent is acquired.

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Patients are advised to satisfy any natural urges and make sure they are getting enough water. For comfort, they should take off all accessories and dress loosely<sup>3</sup>. Vital indicators, such as blood pressure, temperature, pulse rate, and respiratory rate, are measured before the therapy begins. Furthermore, patient should be asked for any surgical implants or devices, and if present, precautions are made to prevent overheating those regions. Ideally, the therapy should be administered on an empty stomach. If this is not possible, patients should avoid heavy meals for at least three hours before the session or consume only a light meal one hour prior.

### B. *Pradhanakarma*/ Operative Procedure

When the application area is being cleaned, the patient should be comfortably lying down on the Droni. Next, cover the specified space with a ring made of flour dough (as shown in Fig. 1 and Fig. 2).



**Figure 1** Side View of **Figure 2** Top View of *Nitamba Basti*

After the leak-proof status of the well has been verified, the tolerably warm oil is poured with a uniform layer, starting from the ring's edges and making sure the oil level stays two inches above the skin. After a certain period of time, the oil is left to retain (as shown in Fig. 3), and throughout the process, a portion of the oil is taken out and replaced with an equivalent volume of heated oil to maintain the oil's temperature. Over a course

of three, seven or fourteen days, or as the doctor directs, the therapy is usually given for at least thirty minutes every day.

### C. *Paschata Karma* /Aftercare

After the specified time, remove the oil and dough and wipe the area with a dry cotton towel or sponge. Vital signs are then examined, and the patient is instructed to rest for 20 minutes before having a lukewarm bath. It is advised that they eat Laghu Ahara (light, digestible meal) and drink lukewarm water<sup>4</sup>. Patients should avoid sunshine, cold exposure / cold drafts, strong physical activity, sexual intercourse, and sleeping during the day or staying awake late at night. Finally, all spent items should be disposed of in accordance with biomedical waste management rules. After being filtered, the old oil can be used again for the following two days, with fresh oil being added on the fourth day. This standard operating procedure (SOP) outlines the steps for *Nitamba Basti* to ensure consistency, safety, and quality standards.



**Figure 3** Top View with oil *Nitamba Basti* retained

**General Indications:** *Vatika* condition, *Asthimajjagata Vata* (Avascular Necrosis of the Femoral Head), OA of Hip Joint.

**Contraindications:** *Vrana* (Open wound), *Ajeerna*, acute febrile conditions, *Sama* conditions

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### Safety and precautions

To provide a comfortable environment, the therapy room should be well-ventilated, sufficiently furnished, and well-lit. Proper hygiene measures must be maintained, and the patient should be constantly observed for any negative responses or incidents throughout the session. It is critical to maintain a consistent temperature and pressure throughout the therapy and to avoid *Swedana* therapy in excessive heat conditions. Additionally, care should be taken to avoid slipping during and after therapy.

### DISCUSSION

*Nitamba Basti* eases pain, reduces stiffness, and helps to lessen inflammation and oedema in the soft tissues and hip bones. It increases range of motion and activity, enhances hip and leg mobility, and gives the lower body a feeling of lightness and wellbeing. In addition, it improves blood circulation and relaxes the nerves supplying the gluteal region. *Nitamba Basti* is a significant approach within Ayurvedic Panchakarma therapy, specifically designed to address conditions primarily linked to the *Vata dosha* of hip area. The dual components of *Snehana* and *Swedana* utilized in this treatment create a synergistic effect that enhances tissue nourishment while providing pain relief. The efficacy of *Nitamba Basti* is largely contingent upon several factors, including the type of medicated oil used, the duration of the treatment, and the area targeted, emphasizing the need for

individualized care in Ayurvedic practices. The treatment's focus on the hip region is particularly relevant for addressing musculoskeletal disorders, which are often characterized by stiffness and discomfort. The application of warm medicated oil promotes relaxation while enhancing blood circulation. This vasodilatory effect is crucial, as it facilitates the transport of oxygen and vital nutrients to the affected tissues while simultaneously aiding in the removal of metabolic waste products. Enhanced circulation is particularly beneficial for conditions such as Avascular Necrosis of the Femoral Head, where blood flow is compromised. Furthermore, *Nitamba Basti's* role in modulating pain is noteworthy. The heat generated during the procedure stimulates sensory nerve endings, reducing the perception of pain and promoting muscle relaxation. For acute pain, mild heating provides a calming effect, while chronic pain conditions may necessitate stronger heating applications. This duality highlights the importance of tailoring the treatment based on the patient's specific pain profile, reinforcing the personalized nature of Ayurvedic therapy. The procedure also incorporates a comprehensive pre-treatment assessment and aftercare regimen, ensuring that patient safety and comfort are prioritized. This attention to detail not only enhances the therapeutic experience but also aligns with contemporary standards of patient care. However, contraindications such as open wounds and acute febrile conditions must be strictly observed to prevent adverse effects. The

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benefits extend beyond mere symptom relief, fostering an overall sense of well-being and vitality. As modern medicine increasingly acknowledges the value of integrative approaches, treatments like *Nitamba Basti* may provide complementary options for patients seeking alternatives to conventional therapies.

## CONCLUSION

*Nitamba Basti* offers a multifaceted approach to pain management and tissue healing, particularly in chronic conditions, and examine its mechanisms at a biochemical level to further validate its efficacy within the framework of modern medicine. Engaging qualified practitioners ensures that this treatment is safely and effectively tailored to meet the unique needs of each patient, thereby enhancing its therapeutic potential.

*Nitamba Basti* is an important part of Panchakarma therapy, providing overall benefits for both physical and emotional health. By focusing on the hip region, this therapy not only heals specific problems but also promotes overall vitality and balance in the body.

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