



Exercise: Ayurvedic Oil Pulling (Gandusha)

Oil pulling is an Ayurvedic practice that has been used for thousands of years to detoxify the body and promote good health. It is a simple practice that you perform soon after waking, and can be done either before eating or brushing your teeth (to soften ama/plaque on teeth and tongue to remove more easily) or after eating or brushing your teeth; it is personal preference.

There are many approaches to oil pulling. Here is one that we recommend:

- Take a tablespoon of high-quality oil (traditionally sesame or coconut oil is used) and swish it gently in your mouth for twenty minutes, making sure to pull it back and forth through your teeth.
- If your jaws become sore or tired, you are probably swishing too vigorously. You may want to begin with five minutes and build up to the full twenty minutes.
- When you're done swishing, spit out the oil into a trash can rather than into a sink or toilet as the oil could damage your pipes. Then rinse your mouth well with warm water.
- Keep in mind that oil pulling is one part of a healthy oral-care regime that includes daily flossing and brushing.

According to Ayurveda, oil pulling removes the unhealthy bacteria and other toxins, or ama, that accumulate in your mouth, thereby reducing plaque and inflammation. Oil pulling promotes healthy gums and teeth, helps eliminate bad breath, and purifies the taste buds, which enhances your enjoyment of food. The oil also nourishes the mucus membranes of the mouth. In addition, these natural oils contain natural anti-inflammatory chemicals that can decrease inflammation of the gums and oral tissues. In a triple-blind study (Asokan et al, 2009) that evaluated the effect of oil pulling on plaque-induced gingivitis, researchers found that the study participants experienced a statistically significant reduction in plaque and gingivitis, as well as a significant reduction of the bacteria *Streptococcus mutans* in the participants' saliva and plaque samples.

Oil pulling is a healthy alternative to using commercial mouthwashes that contain artificial sweeteners, synthetic colorings, and toxic chemicals such as formaldehyde (also known as quaternium-15), saccharine, sodium lauryl sulfate, and methyl salicylate. The benefits of oil pulling may extend beyond good oral hygiene. In the Ayurvedic tradition, each section the tongue is connected to a different organ location, including the lungs, heart, kidneys, liver, small intestines, colon, stomach, and spine. Thoroughly swishing the mouth with oil stimulates all regions of the tongue and therefore purifies and nourishes the entire mind-body system.

Many modern studies have linked gum health with heart health because bacteria in the gums can enter the bloodstream and trigger inflammation in the body. Inflammation is one of the major sources of damage to the blood vessels, including those in the heart. By reducing unhealthy bacteria in your mouth, you can help decrease inflammation throughout your body.

Reference

Asokan S., Emmadi P., Chamundeswari R. Effect of Oil Pulling on Plaque Induced Gingivitis: A Randomized, Controlled, Triple-blind Study. *Indian J Dent Res* (2009) 20:47–51.