



"Therapeutic and Brumhana Potential of Yāpana Basti in Underweight Conditions"

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ABSTRACT

Underweight in adults is a public health concern linked to malnutrition, low immunity, and poor quality of life. Ayurveda attributes this condition to Dhatukshaya, Agnimandya, and Vata vriddhi, recommending Brumhana Chikitsa for nourishment. Yāpana Basti, a Panchakarma procedure, offers both therapeutic (Vyadhi-hara) and nutritive (Pushtikara) benefits, making it suitable for chronic underweight management.

Aim: To assess the therapeutic and Brumhana role of Yāpana Basti in underweight management.

Objectives: 1. Review classical references of Yāpana Basti. 2. Analyze its nutritive and therapeutic properties. 3. Evaluate modern evidence for its role in weight gain

Methods: A narrative review was conducted using Ayurvedic classical texts (Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, Ashtanga Hridaya) and modern literature from PubMed, AYUSH Research Portal, and peer-reviewed journals. Sources focusing on Yāpana Basti composition, procedure, pharmacology, and clinical application in nutrition and weight gain were included

Results: Yāpana Basti formulations containing milk, meat soup, ghee, honey, and medicated decoctions act as Brumhana and Vata-shamaka agents. Indications include emaciation, infertility, neurological disorders, and post-partum debility. Modern evidence supports its role in improving BMI, muscle strength, digestion, and immunity, with no significant adverse effects when used appropriately.

Conclusion: Yāpana Basti's unique combination of therapeutic and nutritive actions offers a safe, holistic approach for underweight management. By nourishing Dhatus, pacifying Vata dosha, and enhancing digestion, it promotes healthy weight gain and vitality, integrating classical Ayurvedic principles with modern nutritional needs.

Keywords: Yāpana Basti, Brumhana Chikitsa, Underweight, Nutritional therapy.

INTRODUCTION

Underweight is defined as a body mass index (BMI) below 18.5 kg/m² and is associated with multiple adverse health outcomes, including increased susceptibility to infections, poor wound healing, menstrual irregularities, and decreased muscle mass¹. The prevalence of underweight among adults remains a significant public health issue in developing countries due to inadequate nutrition, chronic illnesses, and socio-economic factors².

In Ayurveda, underweight conditions are often correlated with Karshya or Dhatukshaya, conditions characterised by depletion of body tissues (Dhatus), reduced strength (Bala), and compromised vitality (Ojas)³. The etiopathogenesis involves Agnimandya (impaired digestion and metabolism) and Vata vriddhi (excess Vata), leading to malnourishment and weakness⁴. Brumhana Chikitsa (nourishing therapy) is the primary line of management for such conditions, aimed at promoting anabolic processes and restoring tissue integrity⁵.

Within the scope of Panchakarma, Basti therapy is considered the prime treatment for Vata disorders⁶. Among its variants, Yāpana Basti is unique, as it provides both therapeutic (Vyadhi-hara) and nutritive (Pushtikara) effects, making it suitable for long-term administration without causing debility⁷. The term "Yāpana" signifies prolongation of life, maintenance of health, and enhancement of quality of life⁸.

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Classical formulations of Yāpana Basti, described in Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, and Ashtanga Hridaya, incorporate milk, meat soup, ghee, honey, salt, and medicated decoctions^{9,10}. These ingredients are Guru (heavy), Snigdha (unctuous), and Madhura rasa (sweet), which contribute to tissue building, improved immunity, and enhanced vitality¹¹.

Modern research indicates that such formulations supply essential amino acids, fatty acids, minerals, and antioxidants that can stimulate muscle protein synthesis, improve nutrient absorption, and support healthy weight gain^{12,13}.

Considering its dual action—correcting the underlying pathology while providing nutrition—Yāpana Basti may serve as an effective integrative intervention for the management of underweight in adults, aligning classical Ayurvedic wisdom with modern nutritional science¹⁴.

Literature Review – Classical Perspective

Yāpana Basti is a special variety of Niruha Basti mentioned in Ayurveda, indicated for long-term administration without causing the typical complications associated with decoction enema. Acharya Charaka describes it as a Brimhana (nourishing) and Rasayana (rejuvenative) measure, promoting strength, complexion, and longevity, while maintaining Vata in its normal state¹⁵. Unlike Kashaya Basti, which is predominantly eliminative, Yāpana Basti combines the effects of cleansing and nutrition¹⁶.

Acharya Sushruta states that Yāpana Basti can be administered in any season, regardless of the digestive capacity or strength of the patient, making it especially suitable for chronic debilitating disorders like Karshya (underweight) and Vata Vyadhi¹⁷. The formulation includes milk, meat soup, and Madhura Rasa Dravyas, which directly nourish the tissues (Dhatu Pushti)¹⁸.

Vagbhata in Ashtanga Hridaya notes that Yāpana Basti enhances digestive power (Jeerna Shakti Vardhana), improves strength (Bala Vriddhi), and sustains youthfulness (Vayahsthapana)¹⁹. The synergistic action of Brimhana Dravyas with Sneha and Madhura Dravya Yukta Kwatha aids nutrient absorption and supports the formation of Mamsa and Meda Dhatus²⁰.

In Ayurveda, Karshya is explained as a condition arising from Vata Prakopa and Dhatu Kshaya. Since Yāpana Basti pacifies Vata and facilitates nourishment of Rasa-Rakta-Mamsa-Meda Dhatus, it is considered an ideal therapeutic option for managing underweight conditions²¹.

Literature Review – Modern Perspective

Underweight is clinically defined as a Body Mass Index (BMI) less than 18.5 kg/m², often associated with nutrient deficiencies, muscle wasting, decreased immunity, and impaired quality of life²². Modern medical management focuses on high-calorie, high-protein diets, nutritional supplements, and treatment of underlying causes, but challenges remain in achieving sustainable weight gain²³.

Panchakarma therapy, especially Basti Chikitsa, has gained interest in integrative medicine for its potential in improving nutritional status. Yāpana Basti contains a combination of milk, medicated decoctions, ghee, and other nutrient-rich substances, which are absorbed through the colonic mucosa²⁴. Research shows that rectal administration of lipid-based medicaments can facilitate the absorption of medium-chain fatty acids, amino acids, and certain vitamins²⁵.

Several clinical studies have reported the benefits of Yāpana Basti in malnutrition and muscle wasting. A randomized controlled trial demonstrated significant improvement in body weight, mid-upper arm circumference, and serum albumin levels in patients receiving Yāpana Basti along with oral diet compared to diet alone²⁶. Another study in geriatric patients found enhancement in physical strength, reduction in fatigue, and better appetite regulation after a course of Yāpana Basti²⁷.

From a physiological perspective, the components of Yāpana Basti—rich in Madhura Rasa and Snigdha Guna—provide essential macronutrients and micronutrients that stimulate anabolic processes²⁸. Milk proteins and ghee provide high biological value amino acids and essential fatty acids, while herbal decoctions modulate gut microbiota and improve nutrient assimilation²⁹.

Thus, integration of Yāpana Basti with nutritional therapy may offer a holistic, sustainable approach for underweight management, aligning with both Ayurvedic Brimhana principles and modern nutritional science³⁰.

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DISCUSSION

Yāpana Basti, described in the classical Ayurvedic texts, is unique among basti formulations due to its ability to nourish (Brimhana) while maintaining doshic balance³¹. It is indicated in Dhatu Kshaya (tissue depletion), Agni Mandya (weak digestion), and conditions of chronic undernutrition³². The formulation typically includes milk, meat soup, ghee, honey, and medicated decoctions, which collectively provide both macronutrients and micronutrients in easily assimilable form³³.

Unlike other brimhana therapies, which can lead to Ama formation in patients with low digestive fire, Yāpana Basti contains ingredients that are Snigdha (unctuous), Madhura (sweet), and mildly Ushna (warm), thus supporting digestion while improving nourishment³⁴. This unique balance enhances nutrient assimilation, promotes weight gain, and improves strength and vitality³⁵.

From a modern nutritional perspective, the contents of Yāpana Basti provide high biological value proteins, essential fatty acids, vitamins, and minerals³⁶. Administration through the rectal route bypasses potential gastrointestinal absorption issues, ensuring better bioavailability of nutrients³⁷. Research on rectal nutrition has demonstrated its role in improving nitrogen balance, hemoglobin levels, and lean body mass in undernourished individuals³⁸.

In addition to its nutritional benefits, Yāpana Basti possesses Rasayana (rejuvenative) properties, enhancing immunity, recovery from illness, and overall longevity³⁹. Clinical observations have shown that regular administration of Yāpana Basti for 8–14 days in underweight patients results in improved body weight, skin luster, and energy levels⁴⁰.

Considering both Ayurvedic and modern evidence, Yāpana Basti can be considered a safe, natural, and holistic approach for managing underweight conditions, either as a stand-alone therapy or in conjunction with conventional nutritional rehabilitation⁴¹.

CONCLUSION

Yāpana Basti stands out among Ayurvedic therapeutic procedures due to its dual action of nourishment (Brimhana) and rejuvenation (Rasayana). Its formulation, combining nutrient-rich animal and plant-based ingredients, not only improves weight and strength but also supports digestion and immunity.

For underweight individuals, especially those with compromised digestion or chronic illness, Yāpana Basti offers a holistic, safe, and sustainable method of nutritional rehabilitation. The rectal route ensures effective absorption while minimizing gastrointestinal strain.

Integrating Yāpana Basti into clinical practice can be a valuable adjunct to conventional nutritional therapy, addressing both the physical and subtle aspects of health as described in Ayurveda. Further clinical research is warranted to explore its long-term benefits and potential applications in modern healthcare.

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