

Bronchial Asthma - *Tamaka Swasa*

Background:

Difficulty in breathing or shortness of breath may be simply termed as *Swasa* (Asthma). It may be primary - originating from respiratory system, secondary - originating from other systems of the body but the impact is on respiratory system. Bronchial Asthma is a chronic inflammatory disease of airway. It leads to recurrent episodes of wheezing, breathlessness, tightness of chest and cough particularly at night or early morning. As per *Ayurveda*, *Swasa* is mainly caused by the *Vata* and *Kapha doshas*. *Swasa* is broadly classified into five types in *Mahaswasa* (Dyspnoea major), *Urdhawaswasa* (Expiratory Dyspnoea), *Chinna swasa* (Chyne-stroke respiration), *Kshudra swasa* (Dyspnoea minor), *Tamaka swasa* (Bronchial Asthma).

Etiology:

The causes of Asthma are divided in to two types.

Inducing factors: Induce Asthma in susceptible persons. These are Genetic factors, Obesity, Viral infections in early life and exposure to tobacco smoke.

Triggering factors: Can aggravate symptoms in a patient who is having Asthma.

- Inhalation of Allergens: House dust, pollen, mold, animal dander
- Environment: Cold and dry climate, cooking gas fumes, passive cigarette smoking, paints, sprays
- Infections: Upper Respiratory Tract infections, Viral infections
- Drugs: Aspirin, Pain killers (NSAIDs)
- Food: Colouring agents of food, food preservatives, ice creams
- Exercise: Vigorous exercise particularly on cold and dry day
- Psychological factor: Stress
- Occupation: Wood and cotton dust, chemicals.

As per *Ayurveda* the causes of *Tamaka Swasa* are as follows:

- Intake of dry, cold , heavy, incompatible food and irregular intake of food
- Excessive Intake of black gram, beans, sesame, meat of aquatic animals.
- Intake of cold water and exposure to cold climate
- Exposure to dust, smoke and wind
- Excessive exercise, over indulge in the sexual activity
- Trauma to throat, chest and vital organs.
- Suppression of natural urges.

Pathology:

Due to excessive intake of *kapha* aggravating food and regimen the *kapha* along with *vata* gets into *pittasthana* and causes *swasa*.

Signs and symptoms:

- Breathlessness along with forcible expiration
- Cough
- Wheezing
- Tightness of chest
- Thick mucus sputum
- Aggravation of above symptoms during night and early morning
- Fainting during the bout of cough.
- Sleeplessness, discomfort increases when lied down on bed
- Gets comfort in sitting posture.
- Sweating on the forehead.

Tamaka swasa is of two types namely *Pratamaka swasa* associated with fever, fainting, distention of abdomen and indigestion. *Santamaka swasa* is pacified by taking of cold regimen.

Diagnostic tests in Bronchial Asthma:

1. Pulmonary function tests include Spirometry and peak flow which estimate the narrowing of the bronchial tubes and how fast an individual can breathe.
2. Chest X-ray is useful in differentiating the asthma from other lung diseases.
3. Allergy tests helpful in finding the allergen causing the asthma.
4. Methacoline challenge test and Nitric oxide tests are confirmatory tests in Bronchial asthma.

Treatment modalities in Ayurveda:

As per the Ayurveda Bronchial Asthma is *Vatakaphaja* disease, it begins in the stomach, progresses to the lungs and bronchi. Hence the aim of treatment is to move the excess *Kapha* back to stomach and then eliminate it. For this purpose following methods are adopted.

1. *Swedana* (Sudation)
2. *Vamana* (Therapeutic emesis)
3. *Virechana* (Therapeutic purgation)

These procedures will be followed as per the need of individual patient.

Practice of *Pranayama*, laxatives, light diet in the night and use of warm water will help in the treatment of Asthma.

Some of Useful Ayurvedic drugs for Asthma

- ✓ *Talisadi Churna* or *Sitopaladi churna* : 1 to 3 gms to be taken twice a day with honey
- ✓ *Somalata churna* : 1 to 3 gms to be taken twice a day with honey

- ✓ *Kanakasava* : 5 to 10 ml with equal quantity of Luke warm water after food
- ✓ *Shringyadi churna* : 1 to 3 gms to be taken twice a day with honey
- ✓ *Trikatu churna* : 1 to 2 gms with honey
- ✓ *Vasavalehyam* : 12 to 24 gms twice daily
- ✓ *Kantakaryavalehyam* : 12 to 24 gms twice daily
- ✓ *Vyaghriharitaki Avaleha*: 12 to 24 gms twice daily
- ✓ *Agastya Haritaki Avaleha*: 12 to 24 gms twice daily
- ✓ *Lavangadi vati*: 1 tablet for chewing 3 times a day
- ✓ *Swasakutara ras* : 125 to 250 mg twice daily
- ✓ *Mahalakshmvilas ras*: 125 to 250 mg twice daily

Useful medicinal plants for Asthma

- ✓ *Kantakari* (*Solanum xanthocarpum*)
- ✓ *Vasa* (*Adhatoda vasica*)
- ✓ *Sunthi* (*Zingiber officinalis*)
- ✓ *Bharangi* (*Clerodendrum serratum*)
- ✓ *Pushkaramoola* (*Innula racemosa*)
- ✓ *Karkataka Shringi* (*Pistacia inergerrima*)
- ✓ *Haridra* (*Curcuma longa*)



Kantakari



Vasa



Sunthi



Pushkarmool



Karkataka Shringi



Haridra

Note: All these drugs to be taken under the supervision of qualified physician only.

Specific Do's and Don'ts

Do's (Pathya):

- ✓ *Godhuma* (wheat), Old rice, *Mudga* (green gram), *Kulattha* (Horse gram), *Yava* (barley), *Patola* (snake gourd)
- ✓ Use of Garlic, Turmeric, Ginger, Black pepper
- ✓ Luke warm water, Goat milk, Honey
- ✓ Respiratory exercise, *Pranayama*, *Yoga*

Don'ts (Apathya):

- ✗ Heavy, cold diet, *Masha* (black gram), Deep fried items, Mustard leaves, Fish
- ✗ Exposure to Cold & Humid atmosphere
- ✗ Sweets, Chilled water, Stored food items, Curd
- ✗ Suppression of natural urges
- ✗ Excessive physical exertion
- ✗ Exposure to Smoke, Dust and fumes, Pollutants and Pollens

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is Bronchial asthma?

Bronchial Asthma is a chronic inflammatory disease of airway. It leads to recurrent episodes of wheezing, breathlessness, tightness of chest and cough particularly at night or early morning. Asthma is a chronic and recurring condition. It has a tendency to keep appearing for years or even life time.

Is Bronchial Asthma mentioned in Ayurveda?

Yes. In Ayurveda this disease is described in the name of *Tamaka Swasa*, one of the five varieties of *Swasa*.

Who gets asthma?

If someone in the family already has asthma that persons are more likely to develop asthma. Children with eczema or food allergy are more likely to develop asthma than other children. Allergy to pollen, house dust, mites or pets also increases your chance of developing asthma. Exposure to tobacco smoke, air pollution or other inhaled irritants can also cause asthma symptoms in those with an underlying tendency to asthma.

Is there any relation with age for starting asthma?

Asthma can start at any age, although about half of all people with asthma have had their first symptoms by the age of 10, and many children with asthma have had their first asthma attack before the age of 6.

What causes asthma?

The causes of asthma are not fully understood. Asthma is probably usually caused by a mixture of hereditary factors (those you are born with) and environmental factors, but how these factors work together is still largely unknown.

Allergens from house dust, mites and pets are the most common causes, but many other allergens such as pollen and moulds can cause asthma. Some patients with asthma have no obvious allergies.

What are the main aggravating factors of asthma ?

Inhalation of Allergens like House dust, Pollen, Mold, Animal dander, Cold and dry climate, cooking gas fumes, passive cigarette smoking, paints, sprays. Upper Respiratory Tract infections, viral infections. Drugs like Aspirin, Pain killers (NSAIDs), Colouring agents of food, food preservatives, ice creams , Vigorous exercise particularly on cold and dry day, Stress, Wood and cotton dust, chemicals etc.

Is there any specific causative factors mentioned in Ayurveda?

Yes. As per Ayurveda the causes of *Tamaka Swasa* are Intake of dry, cold, heavy, incompatible food and irregular intake of food, Excessive Intake of black gram, beans, sesame, meat of aquatic animals, Intake of cold water and exposure to cold climate, exposure to dust, smoke and wind, excessive exercise, over indulge in the sexual activity, trauma to throat, chest and vital organs and suppression of natural urges.

Can weather changes trigger asthma?

Yes, sudden weather changes (e.g. cold winds, humidity and storms) can trigger asthma in some people. Some of these sudden changes can cause the release of allergens such as pollen that can make asthma worse in people whose asthma is allergy-related. Cold air can also have a direct irritant effect on inflamed airways.

Is asthma a psychological (psychosomatic) disease?

No, asthma is not a psychological condition; it is a long-term (chronic) inflammatory disease that leads to extra-sensitive and easily irritated airways, especially when it is not properly treated. Although asthma is not a psychological condition, emotional stress can trigger the symptoms. For example, financial problems, not enjoying your work or worrying about your family can all help to trigger symptoms if you already have asthma.

What are the symptoms of asthma?

The most common symptoms are cough, breathlessness, expectoration, chest discomfort, exhaustion. Thick mucus sputum. Aggravation of these symptoms during night and early morning, sleeplessness, discomfort increases when lied down on bed, gets comfort when in sitting posture.

What is acute asthma and what is chronic asthma?

Acute asthma is a severe form of asthma which is of recent origin (a few minutes to a few hours) while a chronic asthma is a condition where one experiences either a prolonged breathless or more commonly recurring attacks of acute asthma.

What are the Diagnosis methods for Asthma?

Pulmonary function tests include spirometry and peak flow

Chest X-ray , Allergy tests, Methacoline challenge test and Nitric oxide tests are confirmatory tests in Bronchial asthma

What one should know about the Asthma treatment?

One has to know that the treatment of asthma is towards better control. In early cases, one can expect a cure or near complete elimination with proper treatment, precaution and lifestyle changes. One has to understand commonly used anti-asthma medicines which would help acute attacks of asthma.

Is there any treatment in Ayurveda for Bronchial Asthma?

In Ayurveda there are two types of treatment for Bronchial Asthma

Shodana Therapy : (Elimination of vitiated doshas from the body)

1. *Swedana* (Sudation)

2. *Vamana* (Therapeutic emesis)
3. *Virechana* (Therapeutic purgation)

These procedures will be followed as per the need of individual patient.

Shamana Therapy: Treatment with drugs

The commonly used drugs are *Talisadi Churna*, *Sitopaladi churna*, *Somalata churna*, *Kanakasava*, *Shringyadi churna*, *Trikatu churna*, *Vasavalehyam*, *Kantakaryavalehyam*, *Vyaghriharitaki Avaleha*, *Agastya Haritaki Avaleha*, *Lavangadi vati*, *Swasakutara ras*, *Mahalakshmvilas ras* etc

Any of these drugs may be used for treatment of Bronchial Asthma. However these drugs to be used under the supervision of qualified physician only.

What are the commonly available medicinal plants for Bronchial Asthma Treatment?

Kantakari (Solanum xanthocarpum), *Vasa (Adhatoda vasica)*, *Sunthi (Zingiber officinalis)*, *Tulasi (Ocimum sanctum)*, *Haridra (Curcuma longa)*.

What are the Do's and Don'ts in Bronchial Asthma?

Do's (Pathya):

Use of *Godhuma* (wheat), Old rice, *Mudga* (green gram), *Kulattha* (Horse gram), *Yava* (barley), *Patola* (snake gourd), Garlic, Turmeric, Ginger, Black pepper, Luke warm water, Goat milk, Honey, *Pranayama*, *Yoga*.

Don'ts (Apathya):

Intake of Heavy, Cold diet, *Masha* (black gram), Deep Fried items, Mustard leaves, Fish, Sweets, Chilled water, Stored food items, Curd, suppression of natural urges, excessive physical exertion, exposure to cold & humid atmosphere, smoke, dust, Fumes, pollutants and pollens.