

## Prevalence of oil pulling among Indian population

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### ABSTRACT

**Aim:** The aim is to study the prevalence of oil pulling among Indian population and to create awareness about the benefits of oil pulling. **Introduction:** Oil pulling is a traditional remedy practiced in ancient India for maintenance of good oral hygiene. It is believed to cure more than thirty diseases when practiced regularly. Many people are easily attracted to this remedy as it is an ancient Ayurvedic therapy and has less or no side effects. In addition to offering several oral health benefits, oil pulling also helps in maintaining overall health. The aim of the study is to study the prevalence of oil pulling among Indian population and to create awareness among the people. **Materials and Methods:** This survey on oil pulling was administered through a questionnaire given to 100 participants. The questionnaire consisted of questions about their patterns of oil pulling, its benefits, and also its impact on oral hygiene. The results were tabulated and statistically analyzed. **Result:** From the survey, it is known that 59% of the participants started oil pulling as they wanted to give it a try. Around 49% of people first heard about oil pulling from the Internet. It was found that most of the people are not aware about the health benefits of oil pulling. About 53% of people use coconut oil, and it is the most commonly used oil. Around 65% of people found improvement in their oral hygiene. **Conclusion:** From this survey, it was shown that awareness of oil pulling is less among people. Those who practice oil pulling are happy with the improvement in oral hygiene and overall health.

**KEY WORDS:** Dental caries, Detoxication, Emulsification, Oil pulling, Oral hygiene

### INTRODUCTION

Oral health and general health of a person are interrelated.<sup>[1]</sup> Antibiotic resistance, its adverse effects and toxicity to modern medicines have prompted scientists to research on natural products. Oil pulling is claimed to improve oral health. It came into existence and popularity by Dr F Karach.<sup>[2]</sup> In oil pulling, a tablespoon full of oil is taken and swished around the mouth in the early morning before breakfast and in empty stomach for about 20 min. In case of children greater than 5 years of age, a teaspoon of oil is used. The oil is swished between the teeth and gums. Mouth is thoroughly washed with saline water and tooth brushing is done.<sup>[3]</sup> Oil pulling should be ideally performed daily morning on empty stomach before brushing our teeth, and care should be taken that oil is not swallowed by mistake.<sup>[4]</sup> Swallowing of oil during oil pulling should be avoided as the oil contains bacteria and toxins which may be harmful for

the body.<sup>[5]</sup> It can be practiced thrice daily in empty stomach before meals to fasten the healing effects.<sup>[6]</sup> It is contraindicated for children below 5 years due to risk of aspiration.<sup>[7]</sup>

It is believed to remove microorganisms through saponification and emulsification process.<sup>[8-10]</sup> Oil pulling generates antioxidants which damage the cell wall of microorganisms and kill them.<sup>[11]</sup> These oils will attract the lipid layer of bacterial cell membranes and pulled to the oil. Furthermore, teeth become whiter; breath becomes fresher; and oral cavity muscles and jaws become stronger with excellent achievement of oral hygiene.<sup>[12]</sup> Oil pulling prevents dental caries, gingivitis, oral candidiasis, and periodontitis from occurring, helps to reduce tooth pain, fixes mobile teeth, and achieves vigorous oral hygiene.<sup>[13]</sup> Oil pulling when practiced regularly is believed to freshen and stimulate the mind and strengthen the senses. It is also beneficial in sore throat, dry face, impaired vision, taste loss, and anorexia.<sup>[14]</sup> It also helps in improvement of conditions such as headaches, migraines, diabetes mellitus, asthma, and acne. Oil pulling is said to

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remove plaque in the oral cavity without the side effects of staining that chlorhexidine rinses alone may cause.<sup>[15]</sup> The aim of the study is to study the prevalence of oil pulling among Indian population and to create awareness among the people.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This survey on oil pulling was administered through a questionnaire given to 100 participants. The questionnaire consisted of questions asking about their patterns of oil pulling, its benefits, and also its impact on oral hygiene. The results were tabulated and statistically analyzed. The survey was conducted online through survey planet link, and the participants expressed their view toward oil pulling.

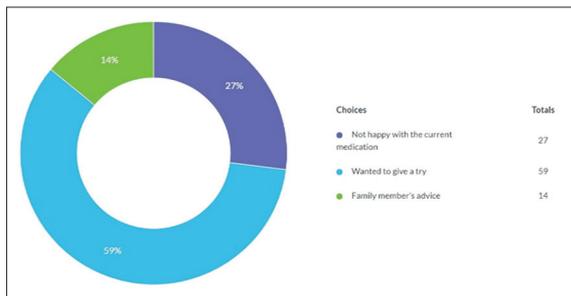


Chart 1: Reason for starting oil pulling

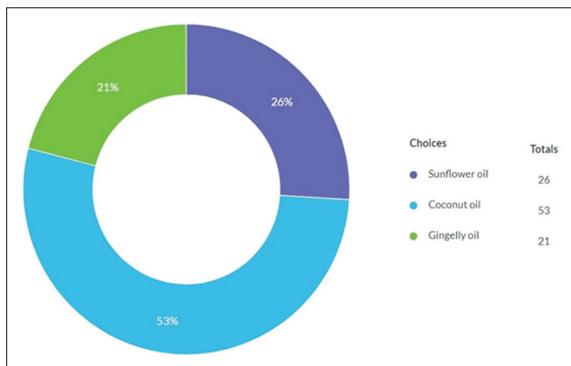


Chart 2: Type of oil preferred

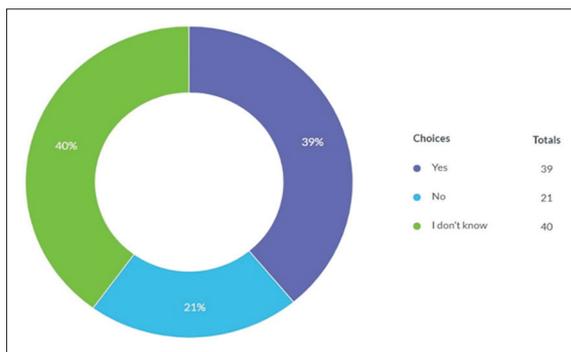


Chart 3: Can oil pulling reduce the risk of dental caries?

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data obtained were statistically analyzed using pie charts. Around 49% of the participants first heard about oil pulling from the Internet. 30% and 29% of them heard about oil pulling from newspaper and family members, respectively, and started practicing it.

About 59% of the participants started oil pulling as they wanted to give it a try [Chart 1]. Nearly 27% of people started oil pulling as they were not comfortable with their current medication. Almost 53% of people are using coconut oil and it is the most commonly used oil since it is easily available and harmless [Chart 2]. Coconut oil has high saponification index. It contains lauric acid which can react with alkalis present in saliva such as sodium hydroxide and bicarbonates to form sodium laureate-soap like substance, which reduces plaque adhesion and accumulation and possesses cleansing action [Chart 3]. The second most commonly used oil was sunflower oil.

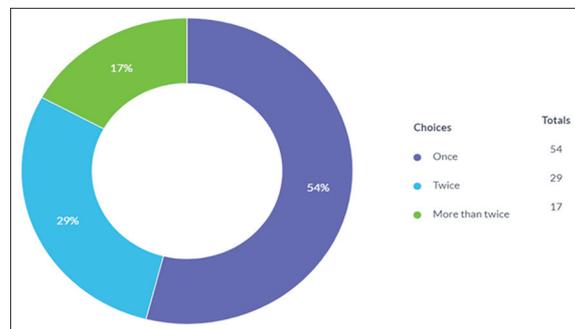


Chart 4: Frequency of oil pulling per day

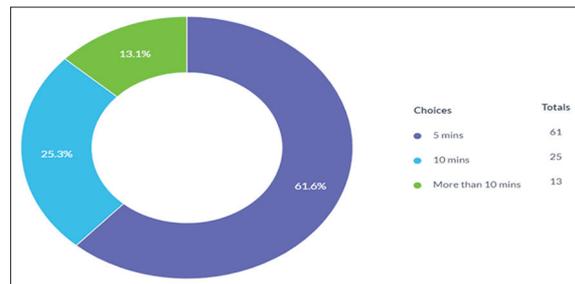


Chart 5: Time spent in oil pulling

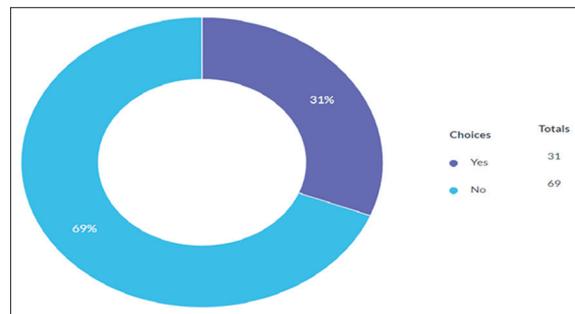


Chart 6: Any side effects of oil pulling?

It was found that most of the people are not aware about the health benefits of oil pulling. About 40% of the participants were not aware of oil pulling benefits in dental caries. Almost 21% of participants felt that oil pulling cannot reduce dental caries. Bacteria present under the gums and in tubules within the teeth are removed out of their hiding places<sup>[16,17]</sup> and held firmly in the milky solution. Thereby, it reduces the risk of plaque and caries.

Around 54% of people practice oil pulling only once a day [Chart 4]. About 29% of people practice twice a day, and 17% of people practice more than twice a day [Chart 5]. Most of them preferred oil pulling early morning in an empty stomach. Around 65% of people found improvement in their oral hygiene after oil pulling. Some reported that oil pulling reduces body weakness.

Most of them spend only 5 min in oil pulling due to their hectic schedule. About 61% of them spend 5 minutes, 25% of them spend 10 min, and only 13% of them spend more than 10 min. Almost 42% of people practice oil pulling early morning in an empty stomach.

Almost 69% of people admitted that they did not notice any side effects of oil pulling [Chart 6]. From the study, it was found that the side effects of oil pulling are almost negligible. Only 31% of the people observed side effects such as nausea and headache.

Anyone with anybody constitution can do oil pulling. Ideally, it should be done in morning and evening after you brush. It is not only limited to oral health. The ancient Ayurvedic texts talk about the benefits of oil pulling for migraines, shoulder pain, neck pain, headache, graying of hair, and cataract. Basically, it benefits all regions above the neck region. It is the combination of saliva and oil together that creates the magic potion.

## CONCLUSION

Oil pulling therapy is a form of Ayurvedic procedure that promotes good oral and systemic health through

incorporating the use of oil-based oral rinses in the daily oral hygiene routine. From this survey, it is concluded that awareness of oil pulling is less among people. Those who practice oil pulling are happy with the improvement in oral hygiene and overall health. However, few of them also had side effects such as allergies and nausea, but those are negligible.

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