

A Review on Childhood Obesity Management by Siddha Podi Thimirthal Therapy

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ABSTRACT

Childhood obesity is a growing concern worldwide, linked to unhealthy diet and sedentary habits. In Siddha medicine, obesity is known as "Athithoola Noi" and in children as "Balar Athithoola Noi". The condition arises due to deranged "Iyam (Kapham)" and weak "Agni (digestive fire)". Management includes internal medicines, external therapies, and lifestyle regulation. One such external therapy, "Podi Thimirthal" (powder massage). It uses dry herbal powders with scraping and fat-reducing properties, applied through vigorous upward massage. This therapy improves circulation, metabolism, and lymphatic drainage, thereby reducing excess fat and toxins.

This review compiles available Siddha and modern literature on childhood obesity and highlights the therapeutic mechanism and clinical potential of "Podi Thimirthal" in its management.

Keywords: Balar Athithoola Noi, Childhood Obesity, External Therapy, Podi Thimirthal, Siddha

INTRODUCTION

Childhood obesity is now a major public health issue globally, predisposing to diabetes, hypertension, and other metabolic diseases in early adulthood. According to WHO, millions of children are overweight or obese, especially in urban areas.

In the Siddha system, Podithimirthal is defined as a method in which dry herbal powder is applied over the affected skin or all over the body then peeled out gently after some time by rolling method. In this system disease occurs due to imbalance in the "Mukkutram"- "Vatham", "Pitham" and "Kabam. Excess intake of sweet and fatty foods, sedentary lifestyle, and hereditary factors aggravate "Iyam", causing improper fat metabolism and accumulation of "Kolluppu (fat)" in tissues. This leads to "Balar Athithoola Noi" (childhood obesity).

Siddha Management Focuses On Restoring Humoral Balance Through

- * Internal medicines-to correct metabolism,
- * External therapies ("Thokkanam", "Podi Thimirthal").
- * Diet modification (Pathiyam), and Daily regimen

Among these, "Podi Thimirthal" is a safe, non-invasive external therapy that supports metabolic activation and fat reduction.

Aim And Objectives

- * To review Siddha and modern concepts related to "Bālar Athithoola Noi".
- * To explore the role and mechanism of "Podi Thimirthal" therapy in managing childhood obesity.
- * To identify herbs and techniques used in the therapy and their physiological basis
- * To summarise current evidence and research gaps.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Information was collected from Siddha classical texts such as "Theraiyar Tharu", "Agasthiyar Gunavakadam", "Kuzhandhai Maruthuvam Thirattu", Siddha Standard Treatment Guidelines (CCRS, 2022), and modern scientific literature.

Databases used include PubMed, Google Scholar, and ResearchGate.

Articles, reviews, and clinical trials were reviewed.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Concept of Childhood Obesity in Siddha

In Siddha Medicine, Athithoola Noi is caused by aggravated "lyam" and decreased "Agni Overeating, excessive sleep, and lack of exercise result in accumulation of fat tissues .This impairs circulation and metabolism

Symptoms include fatigue, excessive sweating, heaviness, shortness of breath, and swelling of the body.

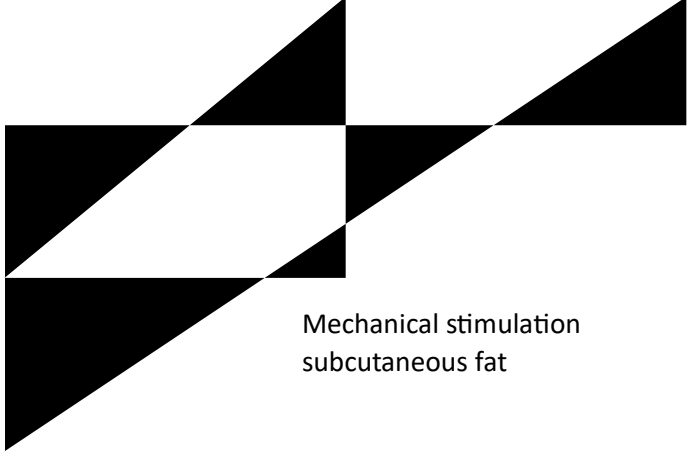
In children, improper feeding and lack of outdoor play worsen the condition.

Podi Thimirthal Therapy (Siddha Powder Massage)

"Podi Thimirthal" or "Podi Thimirudal" is an external therapy. The procedure involves rubbing the body with "dry herbal powders " in an upward direction (against hair follicles).

This massage is performed for 15-30 minutes, followed by a warm bath or herbal steam (Vedhu pidithal). It promotes circulation, induces sweating, and helps burn fat

Mechanism Of Action (How Podi Thimirthal Acts on Obesity)

Mechanism	Explanation
 <p data-bbox="387 1960 671 2022">Mechanical stimulation subcutaneous fat</p>	<p data-bbox="815 1653 1501 1720">Friction and rubbing increase local blood flow and help dislodge</p>

<p>Thermogenic effect</p>	<p>The heat produced promotes sweating and calorie expenditure.</p>
<p>Drainage of excess fluid</p>	<p>Enhances lymphatic circulation and reduces puffiness.</p>
<p>Metabolic stimulation</p>	<p>Activates peripheral nerves and boosts tissue metabolism</p>
<p>Herbal Absorption</p>	<p>Active compounds from powders with scrapings and Ushnam (heat) properties penetrate skin.</p>

<p>Detoxification</p>	<p>Stimulates sweating and eliminates surface toxins</p>
<p>Improves Agni</p>	<p>Helps restore digestive fire and corrects sluggish metabolism.</p>
<p>Reduces Iyam (Kapham)</p>	<p>Balances excess Iyam, reducing fat accumulation and heaviness</p>

Common Powders Used in Podi Thimirthal

Ingredient	Action/Property
<p>Dry ginger powder</p>	<p>Improves metabolism, reduces "Iyam"</p>
<p>Pepper/long pepper ("Milagu", "Thippili")</p>	<p>Thermogenic, enhances fat burning</p>

<p>Turmeric ("Manjal")</p>	<p>Anti-inflammatory, improves blood flow</p>
<p>Horse gram powder (*Kollu*)</p>	<p>Fat-reducing,</p>
<p>Fenugreek seeds powder ("Omam", "Vendhayam")</p>	<p>These herbal powders possess "Ushnam" which scraping fat and improving metabolic fire.</p>

Procedure (Traditional Practice)

- * The child is made to sit or lie down comfortably.
- * A small quantity of medicated oil (like "Sesame oil") may be applied.
- * Herbal powder is rubbed on the body using upward strokes.
- * Massage continues for 15-30 minutes until mild sweating occurs.
- * The session ends with a warm bath or mild steam therapy.

Precautions

- * Avoid open wounds, eczema, or sensitive skin.

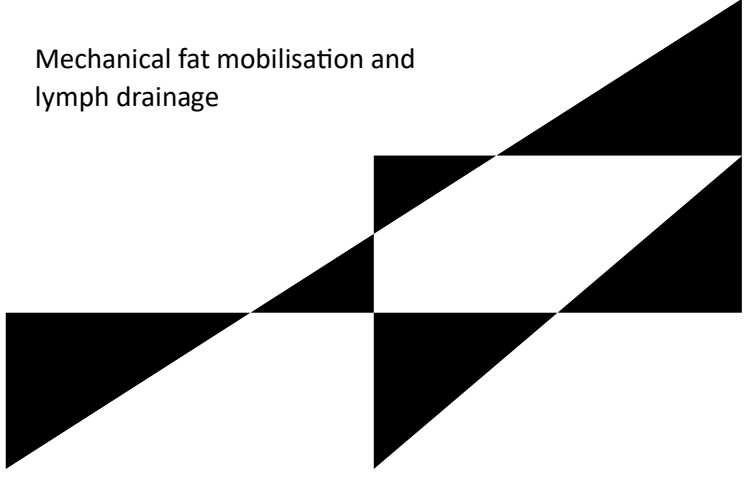
- * Not recommended during fever or pregnancy
- * Should be done only by trained Siddha therapists.

Complications Of Childhood Obesity

- *Type 2 diabetes
- *Hypertension
- *Dyslipidaemia
- *Fatty liver
- *Sleep apnoea
- *Joint and bone diseases
- *Precocious puberty
- *PCOS
- *Low self-esteem and depression
- *Adult obesity and heart disease

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Siddha Concept	Modern Explanation
<p style="text-align: center;">Excess Iyam (Kapham)</p>	<p>Increased fat deposition and low metabolic rate.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Improvement of Agni</p>	<p>Enhanced enzyme and metabolic activity</p>

Powder Application therapy	Mechanical fat mobilisation and lymph drainage 
Sweating and Detoxification	Thermogenesis, toxin removal, and improved metabolism.

Thermogenesis, Toxin Removal, And Improved Metabolism

The therapy stimulates the circulatory and lymphatic systems, increases metabolism, and generates heat to break down subcutaneous fat deposits. It also promotes detoxification through perspiration and enhances skin texture.

The Siddha view of "Balar Athithoola Noi" corresponds to metabolic imbalance caused by deranged "Iyam" and weakened "Agni". "Podi Thimirthal" helps balance these humours through mechanical scraping, heat generation, and herbal absorption.

From a modern perspective, the therapy enhances circulation, promotes lymph drainage, and increases local metabolism. The frictional heat produced during the procedure supports calorie burning and detoxification. Herbs like ginger, pepper, and horse gram contribute thermogenic and fat-reducing effects.

When integrated with balanced diet, exercise, and internal Siddha medicines, "Podi Thimirthal can be an

* effective supportive therapy in managing childhood obesity.

The Evidences from Research Studies Are

A registered clinical trial (CTRI/2022/02/040297) evaluates "Paruma Noi Nivarana Mathirai and "Neermulli Kudineer" with "Podi Thimirthal" for managing childhood obesity.

* Shalini et al. (2021) reported the use of "Podi Thimirthal in children with cerebral palsy, confirming its safety in paediatric practice.

* Standard Treatment Guidelines (CCRS, 2022) recommend "Podi Thimirthal" as a supportive external therapy in metabolic disorders.

CONCLUSION

Podi Thimirthal therapy, a traditional Siddha external treatment offers a holistic, safe, and non-invasive approach for childhood obesity. It acts through mechanical, thermogenic, and metabolic stimulation to reduce "Iyam" and improve "Agni".

Although classical texts and preliminary evidence support its use, further scientific studies with objective parameters

(BMI, lipid profile, body-fat percentage) are necessary to validate its efficacy

When practised under trained Siddha physicians, "Podi Thimirthal" can serve as an effective adjunct in the comprehensive management of "Balar Athithoola Noi".

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