

Integrating Ayurvedic Herbal Remedies for Effective Acne Care

Meena P^{1*} , Sharma AK² 

DOI:10.21760/jaims.11.3.37

^{1*} Pooja Meena, Post Graduate Scholar, Department of Kriya Sharir, Madan Mohan Malviya Government Ayurved College, Udaipur, Rajasthan, India.

² Ashok Kumar Sharma, HOD, Department of Kriya Sharir, Madan Mohan Malviya Government Ayurved College, Udaipur, Rajasthan, India.

Acne is one of the most common skin concerns, affecting individuals across all ages, but especially troubling during adolescence and early adulthood. While modern medicine offers quick solutions, these often come with side effects such as dryness, irritation or recurrence. Ayurveda, the ancient Indian system of medicine, provides a more holistic perspective, viewing acne (Yuvan Pidika) as a manifestation of imbalanced Doshas particularly Pitta and Kapha combined with impaired Rakta Dhatu and accumulation of Ama (toxins). This understanding opens the door to herbal interventions that aim not just to suppress symptoms, but to address the root cause. Ayurvedic herbs such as Neem (*Azadirachta indica*), with its potent antibacterial and blood-purifying qualities, Manjistha (*Rubia cordifolia*) for detoxification and skin tone improvement and Haridra (*Curcuma longa*) for its anti-inflammatory and antioxidant actions, have been valued for centuries in managing acne. Other supportive herbs like Ghrithkumari (*Aloe barbadensis* Miller) for soothing and hydration and Shalmali Katak (*Salmalia malabarica*) for wound healing and scar prevention. These herbs work through multiple pathways reducing inflammation, controlling bacterial growth, regulating sebum production and purifying the blood while simultaneously promoting skin healing. Unlike synthetic treatments, they integrate dietary guidance, lifestyle correction and internal purification (Shodhana) for long-lasting results. In today's world, where stress, pollution and dietary habits aggravate skin conditions, Ayurvedic herbs present a safe, sustainable and culturally rooted approach to acne management. This article explores the pharmacological basis, traditional formulations and practical applications of these herbs, bridging classical wisdom with modern scientific evidence. The aim is to provide a clear understanding of how Ayurveda can restore not only clear skin, but also the underlying balance and confidence that come with it.

Keywords: Acne vulgaris, Yuvan Pidika, Herbal skin care

Corresponding Author	How to Cite this Article	To Browse
Pooja Meena, Post Graduate Scholar, Department of Kriya Sharir, Madan Mohan Malviya Government Ayurved College, Udaipur, Rajasthan, India. Email: poojanexus42@gmail.com	Meena P, Sharma AK, Integrating Ayurvedic Herbal Remedies for Effective Acne Care . J Ayu Int Med Sci. 2026;11(3):226-231. Available From https://jaims.in/jaims/article/view/5695/	

Manuscript Received
2025-12-10

Review Round 1
2025-12-31

Review Round 2
2026-01-15

Review Round 3
2026-02-02

Accepted
2026-02-21

Conflict of Interest
None

Funding
Nil

Ethical Approval
Not required

Plagiarism X-checker
10.65

Note



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Introduction

Acne is one of the most widespread dermatological disorders, affecting millions of individuals across the globe. Though it is most frequently observed during adolescence and early adulthood, it can persist or even appear for the first time in later stages of life. Clinically, acne presents with a variety of lesions including comedones, papules, pustules, and in more severe cases, nodules or cysts.[1] Beyond its physical manifestations, acne exerts a profound impact on psychological and social health, often leading to low self-esteem, social inhibition and even anxiety or depression, thereby highlighting its multidimensional burden.[2] Conventional medical treatments such as topical retinoids, antibiotics, hormonal therapy and oral isotretinoin remain the cornerstone of acne management. While these therapies often provide rapid and noticeable improvement, their benefits are tempered by significant drawbacks. Patients frequently experience adverse effects such as dryness, irritation and skin sensitivity, while prolonged use of antibiotics may contribute to microbial resistance. [3] Moreover, high recurrence rates following discontinuation of therapy present an ongoing challenge, underscoring the need for more sustainable and holistic solutions. These limitations have fostered increasing global interest in complementary and alternative approaches, particularly *Ayurveda*, the traditional system of medicine from India. *Ayurveda* offers a unique framework for understanding and treating acne, referred to as *Yuvan Pidika* in classical texts. According to *Ayurvedic* principles, acne arises from the vitiation of *Doshas* primarily *Pitta* and *Kapha* along with the involvement of *Rakta* (blood).[4] Improper dietary practices, irregular lifestyle habits and mental stress are considered to disturb *Agni* (digestive fire), leading to the formation of *Ama* (metabolic toxins). These internal imbalances manifest externally as inflammatory eruptions on the skin, signifying the inseparable link between internal health and external appearance in *Ayurvedic* philosophy.[5]

Unlike modern dermatology, which often emphasizes symptomatic control, *Ayurveda* focuses on correcting the root cause by restoring systemic harmony. Treatment encompasses a comprehensive strategy involving internal purification procedures (*Shodhana*), herbal remedies,

Dietary regulations and lifestyle modifications. Classical texts describe several medicinal plants with relevance to acne management, including *Neem* (*Azadirachta indica*), *Manjistha* (*Rubia cordifolia*), *Haridra* (*Curcuma longa*), *Ghrithkumari* (*Aloe barbadensis* Miller), *Shalmali Kantak* (*Salmaia malbarica*).[6] These herbs possess blood-purifying, detoxifying, antimicrobial and anti-inflammatory properties. Contemporary pharmacological research increasingly validates these traditional claims, demonstrating antibacterial effects against *Propionibacterium acnes*, reduction in oxidative stress and modulation of inflammatory pathways.[7] Furthermore, *Ayurveda* broadens the scope of acne care beyond herbal interventions. It advocates the integration of dietary discipline, seasonal regimens (*Ritucharya*) and mind body practices such as Yoga, *Pranayama* and meditation. Since psychological stress is a well-established precipitating factor for acne, these practices offer not only physical but also mental well-being, thereby reducing recurrence. This multidimensional therapeutic approach reflects the holistic vision of *Ayurveda*, which aims not just to clear skin lesions but also to strengthen systemic health, balance the *Doshas*, and enhance overall quality of life.

Aim and Objectives

Aim

To explore and critically analyze the role of *Ayurvedic* herbal remedies in the management of acne (*Yuvan Pidika*), while correlating traditional principles with modern scientific insights to promote a holistic and sustainable approach to skin health.

Objectives

1. To review *Ayurvedic* concepts of acne (*Yuvan Pidika*) by examining its pathogenesis, *Doshic* involvement and systemic factors influencing skin eruptions.
2. To highlight key *Ayurvedic* herbs and formulations with proven therapeutic potential in acne care, focusing on their pharmacological actions such as anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial and blood-purifying properties.
3. To integrate *Ayurvedic* wisdom with modern dermatological perspectives in order to present a comprehensive, safe and holistic framework for acne management that addresses both symptoms and underlying causes.

Methodology

This article adopts a dual approach, combining an *Ayurvedic* textual review with a modern evidence-based review, to explore the integration of herbal remedies for effective acne care.

Ayurvedic Textual Review

Classical *Ayurvedic* texts such as the *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita* and *Ashtanga Hridaya* were carefully examined to understand the conceptual framework of *Yuvan Pidika* (acne).

Commentaries and *Nighantus*, including *Bhavaprakasha Nighantu* and *Dhanvantari Nighantu*, were also reviewed to identify herbs traditionally indicated for skin disorders.

Modern Evidence Review

To complement the *Ayurvedic* review, contemporary biomedical literature was surveyed using electronic databases including PubMed, Scopus, Google Scholar and AYUSH Research Portal.

Peer-reviewed studies, clinical trials and pharmacological investigations published in English were screened for relevance.

Discussion

Acne, while often dismissed as a temporary skin issue of adolescence, is now recognized as a multifactorial condition that significantly impacts both physical appearance and mental well-being. The integration of *Ayurvedic* wisdom with modern biomedical insights provides a unique opportunity to approach acne care in a way that is both comprehensive and sustainable.

This discussion attempts to synthesize the evidence drawn from classical *Ayurvedic* texts and contemporary scientific studies, highlighting areas of convergence, divergence and scope for further exploration.

Ayurvedic Understanding of Acne and its Relevance Today:

Ayurveda identifies acne as *Yuvan Pidika*, primarily caused by the vitiation of *Pitta* and *Kapha Doshas* along with the involvement of *Rakta* (blood). The pathogenesis described in *Ayurveda*, which links improper digestion (*Mandagni*), toxin accumulation (*Ama*) and lifestyle factors with skin eruptions,

Bears close resemblance to the modern view that acne arises from a combination of hormonal imbalance, inflammation, microbial growth and excess sebum production. This conceptual overlap underscores the enduring relevance of *Ayurvedic* theories in the modern clinical context. *Ayurveda* does not merely focus on the skin manifestation but emphasizes systemic balance. The role of *Ahara*, *Vihara* and *Manas* in maintaining healthy skin resonates strongly with emerging research on the influence of diet, stress and gut health on acne.[8]

For instance, the *Ayurvedic* caution against heavy, oily and spicy foods parallels modern dietary recommendations to avoid high-glycemic foods and excessive dairy, which are known to aggravate acne.[9]

Efficacy of Ayurvedic Herbs in Light of Modern Evidence

A central theme emerging from this review is the therapeutic efficacy of *Ayurvedic* herbs traditionally prescribed for skin disorders.

- **Neem (*Azadirachta indica*):** Widely described as a blood purifier in *Ayurveda*, *Neem* has shown strong antimicrobial activity against *Cutibacterium acnes* and anti-inflammatory effects in scientific studies.[10] Its ability to modulate sebum secretion further validates its traditional use in acne.
- **Manjistha (*Rubia cordifolia*):** Considered one of the best *Raktashodhaka* (blood-purifying) herbs, *Manjistha* has been demonstrated to possess antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties, helping reduce post-inflammatory pigmentation and preventing scarring.[11]
- **Haridra (*Curcuma longa*):** Turmeric's active compound, curcumin, has proven antimicrobial, antioxidant and wound-healing properties. Modern trials support its topical and oral application in reducing inflammatory acne lesions,[12] validating the *Ayurvedic* view of its *Pitta*-pacifying and detoxifying role.
- **Ghrithkumari (*Aloe barbadensis miller*):** Known in *Ayurveda* as *Kumari*, *Aloe vera* is prized for its cooling, wound-healing and anti-inflammatory actions. Clinical studies have confirmed its ability to soothe irritation, accelerate lesion healing and enhance skin hydration without major side effects.[13]

- **Shalmali Kantak (*Salmalia malbarica*):** Traditionally indicated in skin diseases, *Shalmali Kantak* exhibits astringent and anti-inflammatory qualities, which may help reduce acne lesions. Although modern evidence is limited, preliminary studies suggest antimicrobial and antioxidant properties that align with its classical description.[14]

These findings highlight that the pharmacological activities demonstrated by these herbs correspond closely with their traditional *Ayurvedic* indications, reinforcing their relevance in integrative acne care.

Integrative and Holistic Approach

The discussion on acne management would remain incomplete without highlighting the *Ayurvedic* philosophy of holistic healing, which views health as a balance of body, mind and spirit rather than the mere absence of disease. Unlike conventional dermatological practices that often target symptoms in isolation, *Ayurveda* adopts a multidimensional strategy, integrating herbal remedies with mindful dietary practices, lifestyle regulation and mental well-being. Central to this approach are classical practices like *Dinacharya* (daily regimen) and *Ritucharya* (seasonal regimen). These routines are designed to harmonize the body with natural cycles, stabilize *Doshas* and sustain the digestive fire (*Agni*) a cornerstone of health and disease prevention in *Ayurveda*. [15] By keeping *Agni* balanced, *Ayurveda* seeks not only to clear existing skin issues but also to prevent their recurrence by addressing root causes. Stress management also forms an essential part of this framework. Techniques such as *Yoga*, *Pranayama* and meditation are recommended to cultivate emotional balance and inner calm. This is highly relevant in acne care, as modern biomedical research has confirmed that stress hormones like cortisol can aggravate sebaceous gland activity, inflammation, and acne flare-ups.[16] Thus, *Ayurveda's* emphasis on cultivating mental clarity and resilience finds resonance in contemporary science.

This integrative approach works on multiple dimensions simultaneously:

- Local treatment through herbal formulations and topical applications that reduce inflammation, bacterial overgrowth and skin irritation.
- Systemic regulation through internal purification, dietary guidance and measures that enhance digestion and metabolism.

- Psychological support by reducing stress, balancing emotions and strengthening mental resilience, which indirectly improves skin health.

Such holistic, preventive and restorative care often contrasts with conventional dermatology which primarily emphasizes pharmacological interventions aimed at quick relief but may overlook long-term prevention and overall well-being. By addressing the physical, systemic and psychological layers together, *Ayurveda* provides more comprehensive, sustainable & person-centered model of acne management.

Comparative Insights: *Ayurveda* and Modern Dermatology

While modern dermatology emphasizes antibiotics, retinoids and hormonal therapy, these approaches are not without limitations such as resistance, side effects and relapse after discontinuation. *Ayurveda*, on the other hand, seeks to correct the root cause by addressing *Dosha* imbalance and blood impurities. Rather than being contradictory, these systems can be seen as complementary. For instance, topical antibiotics may provide rapid relief in severe acne, while *Ayurvedic* herbs can serve as long-term maintenance therapy to minimize recurrence and support overall skin health.[17] The challenge lies in standardizing *Ayurvedic* formulations, conducting well-designed clinical trials and integrating these remedies into mainstream practice without diluting their holistic principles. Nonetheless, the evidence strongly suggests that a hybrid model combining strengths of both systems could yield better outcomes than either system alone.

Challenges and Limitations

Despite promising findings, several challenges exist in fully validating *Ayurvedic* remedies. Many studies lack large sample sizes, standardized dosage forms or long-term follow-ups. Additionally, variability in plant quality, regional practices and preparation methods complicates consistent results. Another limitation is the relative underreporting of *Ayurvedic* lifestyle interventions in scientific literature, which often narrows the focus to single herbs rather than the comprehensive therapeutic system.

Future Directions

There is a pressing need for interdisciplinary research that not only evaluates the efficacy of individual herbs but also investigates the synergistic effects of *Ayurvedic* formulations, dietary practices and lifestyle measures.

Developing standardized protocols, ensuring quality control of herbal products and conducting randomized controlled trials will strengthen the evidence base. Furthermore, exploring the gut-skin axis, microbiome modulation and stress management already central in *Ayurveda* offers exciting avenues for future acne research.

Conclusion

Acne continues to be one of the most challenging skin conditions, not only because of its physical manifestations but also due to its emotional and social impact. Acne remains a complex dermatological disorder that extends beyond the surface of the skin, affecting physical appearance, self-confidence and psychosocial well-being. While conventional dermatological therapies provide rapid symptomatic relief, their limitations such as side effects, recurrence and a narrow focus on lesion suppression highlight the need for more comprehensive and sustainable solutions. *Ayurveda*, with its holistic philosophy, offers a unique and time-tested framework that addresses not only the visible eruptions but also the underlying systemic imbalances responsible for acne. The *Ayurvedic* concept of *Yuvan Pidika* places emphasis on the disturbance of *Pitta* and *Kapha Doshas*, *Rakta Dushti* and impaired *Agni*. This perspective links digestion, blood purification, diet, stress and lifestyle with skin health, an understanding that resonates strongly with modern biomedical insights into inflammation, oxidative stress, hormonal imbalance and microbial proliferation in acne pathogenesis. Such parallels establish *Ayurveda* as a scientifically relevant and integrative system for acne care. Herbal remedies like *Neem* (*Azadirachta indica*), *Manjistha* (*Rubia cordifolia*), *Haridra* (*Curcuma longa*), *Ghrithkumari* (*Aloe barbadensis miller*) and *Shalmali Kantak* (*Salmaalial malbarica*) exemplify this integrative potential. Their multidimensional properties antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory, blood-purifying, detoxifying and wound-healing address both immediate symptoms and long-term complications such as pigmentation and scarring. Supported by emerging pharmacological and clinical research, these plants form a cornerstone of safe, natural and effective acne management. When combined with *Ahara*, *Vihara* and stress management techniques like yoga and meditation, *Ayurvedic* care evolves into a holistic therapeutic model that promotes systemic health alongside dermatological improvement.

What becomes evident is that an exclusive reliance on either conventional medicine or *Ayurveda* alone may not fully address the diverse challenges posed by acne. Instead, a synergistic approach blending the quick and targeted action of modern dermatology with the preventive, restorative and holistic strengths of *Ayurveda* holds greater promise. Such an integrative pathway has the potential to reduce recurrence, enhance patient satisfaction and provide long-term safety, thereby improving overall quality of life.

Looking ahead, the future of acne care lies in building bridges between traditional knowledge and modern scientific validation. Standardization of *Ayurvedic* formulations, well-designed clinical trials and interdisciplinary research into the combined effects of herbal therapies, dietary regimens and lifestyle modifications are essential. These efforts will not only validate the timeless wisdom of *Ayurveda* but also expand the scope of evidence-based dermatology. In summary, the integration of *Ayurvedic* remedies with modern biomedical insights offers a transformative model of acne care one that addresses root causes, minimizes side effects, prevents recurrence and nurtures both skin and systemic health. This holistic approach embodies the true essence of sustainable healing, where the goal extends beyond clear skin to encompass balance, vitality and enhanced quality of life.

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