

Comparative Analysis of Colon Cleansing: Effects of the Yogic Technique Shankhaprakshala vs. Naturopathic Enema

Siddappa Naragatti¹, Dr. S Anburani²

¹Yoga Therapist, Central Research Institute of Yoga and Naturopathy, Nagamangala, Karnataka, India

²Senior Consultant Physician, Central Council for Research in Yoga and Naturopathy, New Delhi, India

Abstract: Colon cleansing is a practice aimed at enhancing detoxification, digestive health, and overall well-being. This analytical review compares two prominent methods: Shankhaprakshala, a traditional yogic technique, and the naturopathic enema. Shankhaprakshala involves the sequential intake of warm saline water and specific yogic postures to stimulate intestinal peristalsis and promote natural elimination. In contrast, the naturopathic enema entails the rectal administration of fluids to flush waste directly from the lower colon. Although both methods share the common goal of toxin elimination, they differ significantly in their physiological mechanisms, procedural approaches, and cultural contexts. This review critically evaluates the effectiveness, safety, and potential risks of both techniques, drawing upon existing scientific and clinical literature. Benefits such as improved bowel regularity, gut function, and detoxification are explored alongside reported side effects and contraindications. Additionally, the cultural and philosophical foundations of each practice are examined to provide context for their application. The comparative analysis aims to offer a balanced perspective for individuals and practitioners considering colon cleansing as a supportive health practice.

Keywords: Colon Cleansing Yogic Shankhaprakshala Naturopathic Enema

1. Introduction

Colon cleansing, also referred to as colonic irrigation or detoxification, is an alternative therapeutic practice aimed at enhancing digestive health and facilitating the elimination of accumulated waste and toxins from the large intestine¹ (Hsu HH, et al., 2016). The colon plays a pivotal role in overall well-being, as it is essential for the absorption of water, electrolytes, and certain nutrients, while also serving as the primary route for the excretion of bodily waste. Impaired colon function has been linked to a range of gastrointestinal disturbances, including constipation, bloating, and chronic disorders such as irritable bowel syndrome² (IBS) (Azzouz LL, et al., 2023). As such, maintaining optimal colon health is regarded as a key component of digestive and systemic wellness.

In response to growing concerns about digestive dysfunction and toxin accumulation, various colon cleansing methods have gained popularity. These range from dietary modifications and herbal remedies to more interventional techniques like enema and colonic hydrotherapy. Among the most extensively discussed and traditionally rooted approaches are the yogic practice of *Shankhaprakshala* and the naturopathic enema. While both aim to detoxify the colon and restore gastrointestinal balance, they are grounded in different philosophies and employ distinct mechanisms. This paper explores and compares these two approaches, examining their techniques, physiological effects, and potential benefits for colon health.

Shankhaprakshala is an ancient yogic purification technique renowned for its systemic detoxifying effects, particularly on the digestive tract. This practice involves the sequential intake of warm saline water combined with a prescribed series of dynamic yoga postures that stimulate intestinal

peristalsis, thereby facilitating the natural expulsion of the water through the colon³ (Panigrahi MK, Prakash JH, et al., 2023). As a component of the *Shat Kriyas*, the six foundational cleansing practices in traditional Hatha Yoga, *Shankhaprakshala* is rooted in a holistic health philosophy aimed at purifying the body, calming the mind, and enhancing spiritual awareness⁴ (Swathi PS, et al., 2021).

Traditionally practiced within Indian yogic systems, *Shankhaprakshala* is viewed not merely as a physical detoxification method but as a form of internal yogic cleansing that promotes mental clarity and energetic balance⁵ (Haldavnekar RV, et al., 2014). Its therapeutic potential has led to growing global interest, particularly among practitioners of yoga and alternative medicine, for its reported benefits in improving digestion, relieving gastrointestinal discomfort, and supporting overall well-being. While empirical research remains limited, anecdotal and traditional accounts consistently underscore its efficacy as a non-invasive and holistic method of colon cleansing.

Naturopathic Enema: A Traditional and Contemporary Detoxification Practice

The enema is one of the most established and widely practiced techniques for colon cleansing in naturopathic and alternative health systems. This method involves the introduction of a fluid, commonly warm water or herbal infusions into the rectum via the anus. The fluid is typically retained in the colon for a brief period before being expelled, thereby facilitating the removal of fecal matter, waste products, and perceived toxins from the lower bowel⁶ (Prasad P, et al., 2012). While enema is frequently employed in clinical medicine for bowel preparation prior to surgical or diagnostic procedures, they also hold a prominent place in naturopathic detoxification protocols aimed at enhancing

gastrointestinal health and relieving symptoms such as constipation and bloating⁷ (Yildar M, et al., 2017).

Historically, the use of enema can be traced back to ancient civilizations, including those of Egypt and Greece, where they were considered an essential therapy for digestive ailments⁸ (Gundet, Manohar & Ahmad, Azeem, et al 2021). The practice experienced a resurgence in the 19th century through the work of early naturopaths and natural hygiene advocates, who emphasized its cleansing and revitalizing effects on the colon. Today, enema remain a cornerstone of various detox regimens and holistic wellness programs, often recommended for individuals seeking to alleviate gastrointestinal discomfort, support regular bowel movements, and improve gut health without pharmacological intervention.

2. Purpose and Objectives of the Review

The primary aim of this review is to conduct a detailed comparative analysis of two prominent colon cleansing techniques: *Shankhaprakshala*, a traditional yogic practice, and the naturopathic *enema*. Although both methods are associated with promoting gut health and facilitating the elimination of waste from the colon, they differ considerably in their methodologies, philosophical foundations, and mechanisms of action.

This review seeks to explore and evaluate the scientific and physiological processes underlying each technique, assess their effectiveness in colon detoxification, and examine their respective safety profiles and potential health risks. By critically analyzing the benefits and limitations of both *Shankhaprakshala* and the enema, the review aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of their roles in supporting colon health.

Furthermore, this comparative assessment is intended to serve as a practical guide for healthcare practitioners, wellness professionals, and individuals seeking alternative approaches to gastrointestinal cleansing. By highlighting the contextual suitability of each method, the review aspires to inform personalized choices based on individual health conditions, lifestyle preferences, and risk tolerance.

Shankhaprakshala is a traditional yogic cleansing technique designed to purify the digestive tract, particularly the colon. The practice involves the sequential intake of warm saline water usually between 1.5 to 2 liters which acts as a gentle osmotic agent to stimulate intestinal peristalsis.

Following water ingestion, a set of specific yogic postures is performed to aid the movement of water through the digestive system. Commonly practiced asanas include **Tadasana** (Mountain Pose), **TiryakTadasana** (Triangle Pose), and **Kati Chakrasana** (Waist Rotation), **TiryaakBhujangasana** (Twisted Cobra pose), and **Udharakrashashan** (Twist and pressing Abdomin through both thighs). These movements help and guide the saline water through the stomach, small intestine, and colon.

After several rounds of this combined practice, the water, along with intestinal waste, is naturally eliminated through

the anus. This cleansing process is repeated in cycles until the expelled water becomes clear, indicating a thorough flush of the digestive tract.

Shankhaprakshala is typically performed under supervision, especially for beginners, due to its intensive nature. It is considered effective for detoxification, improving gut function, and balancing the digestive fire (*Agni*) in yogic physiology.

Physiological Mechanisms

The primary physiological mechanism behind enema involves the **direct introduction of fluid into the colon**, which stimulates the colon walls and promotes the elimination of waste through bowel movements⁹ (Mawer S, et al., 2023). The infusion of fluid increases intraluminal volume, leading to **distension of the colon**, which subsequently activates **mechanoreceptors** in the colon walls. This distension initiates the **defecation reflex**, triggering **peristaltic contractions** and facilitating the evacuation of bowel contents¹⁰ (Gomez R, Mousa H, et al., 2010).

Beyond mechanical stimulation, enema contribute to **stool softening** by hydrating the fecal matter, thus easing its passage¹¹ (Coggrave M, et al., 2014). Depending on the type of enema solution used, additional physiological effects may occur. For instance, **coffee enema** is theorized to possess **detoxifying properties**. Caffeine, when absorbed through the colonic mucosa, is believed to stimulate **bile flow** and support **liver detoxification**; however, scientific validation for these claims remains limited and controversial¹² (Teekachunhatean S, et al., 2013).

Herbal enema represent another variation, offering a more targeted therapeutic approach. Solutions containing herbs such as **chamomile** or **peppermint** are noted for their **anti-inflammatory** and **soothing** effects on the intestinal lining, which may be beneficial in managing conditions involving gut irritation or inflammation (Prasad P, et al., 2012).

3. Effects on Colon Health

Shankhaprakshala

Impact on Bowel Movements and Regularity

Shankhaprakshala is recognized for its effectiveness in promoting bowel regularity and alleviating constipation. The practice involves the sequential intake of **warm saline water** followed by a set of **yogic postures**, which work synergistically to **stimulate peristalsis** and enhance the movement of waste through the gastrointestinal tract. This technique has been shown to **increase bowel motility and reduce intestinal transit time**, making it particularly beneficial for individuals suffering from **chronic constipation** or irregular bowel habits¹³ (Singh, s & Jaiswal, V & Maurya, S 1988). The process encourages repeated flushing of the colon, which helps eliminate accumulated fecal matter and promotes more **consistent and complete evacuations**. This mechanical cleansing can be especially useful for individuals with **sluggish colons** or **slow digestive transit**¹⁴ (Kiran, Shashi, et al., 2019).

Effects on Gut Microbiota

Although direct studies on Shankhaprakshala's impact on the **gut microbiota** are limited, inferences can be drawn from related bowel-cleansing practices. The **saline solution** used in the process may cause a **temporary reduction in microbial load**, flushing out both waste material and some intestinal bacteria. This may lead to a **short-term imbalance**, particularly in individuals with already compromised gut flora¹⁵ (Bacsur P, Rutka M, et al., 2023). However, **beneficial bacteria generally repopulate** the gut after cleansing, especially when followed by a **nutrient-dense diet rich in prebiotics and probiotics**. Additionally, by enhancing bowel regularity and reducing the stagnation of undigested food, Shankhaprakshala may contribute to a **healthier microbial environment** over time, supporting overall gut health and resilience.

Detoxification and Elimination of Toxins

Enema is commonly employed for their **detoxifying effects**, primarily through their ability to stimulate the **direct elimination of waste and toxins** from the colon. By hydrating the intestinal walls and softening hardened stool, enemas promote the efficient evacuation of accumulated waste. This process can alleviate symptoms such as **bloating, constipation**, and gastrointestinal discomfort, while also aiding in the removal of substances that may have built up within the digestive tract¹⁶ (Niv G, Grinberg T, et al., 2013).

Certain types of enemas are believed to exert **additional detoxification benefits**. For example, **coffee enemas** are thought to enhance **liver function** by promoting **bile production** and stimulating **hepatic detoxification pathways**¹⁷ (Kim ES, et al., 2014). Caffeine and other compounds in coffee are hypothesized to activate the enzyme system involved in phase I and phase II liver detoxification, although the **scientific evidence** supporting these mechanisms remains **limited and inconclusive**¹⁸ (Kim ES, et al., 2016).

Potential Benefits and Risks

When used judiciously, enema can provide several **short-term benefits**, including **relief from constipation**, improved **bowel regularity**, and support for **gut cleansing**. They are particularly effective in acute cases of **impacted stool**, offering rapid symptomatic relief.

However, the **overuse or improper use of enemas** carries potential health risks. **Frequent administration** may lead to **colon dependency**, where the natural peristaltic reflex is diminished, impairing the colon's ability to function independently¹⁹ (Whorwell P, et al., 2024). Additionally, improper techniques such as using **unsterilized equipment** or administering enemas with excessive force—can result in **rectal injury, infections, or mucosal irritation**.

Certain enema solutions, especially **harsh herbal preparations** or **hypertonic salt-based solutions**, may irritate the **colonic mucosa**, potentially leading to **inflammation, cramping, or electrolyte imbalances**²⁰, et al.(Maisel K, Chattopadhyay S, 2015). As such, enemas should be used with **caution** and ideally under **professional guidance**, especially when used for therapeutic or

detoxification purposes beyond occasional relief of constipation.

4. Comparative Analysis

Effectiveness in Colon Cleansing

Duration and Frequency of Procedures

The **duration and frequency** of both Shankhaprakshala and enemas vary depending on individual health status, intended outcomes, and practitioner recommendations.

Shankhaprakshala is typically performed as a **periodic, full-body detoxification practice**, often integrated into **yogic or naturopathic regimens**. The procedure usually spans **60 to 90 minutes**, including the **sequential intake of warm saline water**, the performance of **specific yogic postures**, and the final **expulsion of water and waste**²¹ (Negi, Jaydeep & Bhardwaj, et al., 2022). Given its intensity, it is generally recommended for **occasional use only**, such as **once every few weeks or months**, depending on the individual's constitution and lifestyle. It is often conducted in **controlled environments**, such as wellness centers or under the supervision of trained practitioners.

In contrast, **enemas** are **quicker to administer** usually requiring **20 to 30 minutes** and can be performed more **frequently and independently**. Their accessibility allows for **routine use**, ranging from **daily to several times per week**, especially in cases of **chronic constipation** or **preparation for medical procedures**²² (Reveiz L, et al., 2013). While enemas are more flexible in terms of frequency, excessive use may lead to dependency and other complications. Importantly, **increased frequency does not equate to superior long-term colon health**²³ (Hodges SJ, Colaco M. 2016).

Speed and Extent of Detoxification

Enemas provide **immediate results** in terms of detoxification. The direct introduction of fluid into the rectum stimulates **rapid expulsion of fecal matter**, offering **quick relief from bloating, constipation, and toxin build-up**²⁴ (Sasso, J. M., Ammar, R. M., et al., 2023). This makes enemas especially effective in **acute scenarios**, such as before medical imaging or in emergency constipation management. However, the detoxification achieved is largely **localized to the distal colon**, and **systemic or holistic effects are limited**.

By contrast, **Shankhaprakshala** offers a **more gradual and systemic detoxification effect**. Through **oral intake of saline water** combined with **dynamic yogic movements**, the practice promotes **natural peristalsis** and facilitates the **cleansing of the entire gastrointestinal tract**, from the stomach to the colon²⁵ (Chourse, S. 2025). While the **onset of detoxification** is slower compared to enemas, the effects are often regarded as **more comprehensive and sustainable**. Practitioners report improvements in **digestive function, metabolic balance, and overall vitality** (Swati P S, et al., 2021). Therefore, Shankhaprakshala may be better suited for **long-term wellness**, while enemas serve **short-term cleansing purposes**.

Comparison of Short-Term vs. Long-Term Effects

Short-Term Effects

Enemas are notably effective for achieving **rapid relief** from **constipation, bloating, and abdominal discomfort**. By introducing fluid directly into the rectum, they trigger immediate evacuation of the lower bowel, making them ideal for acute use or pre-procedural cleansing. However, the benefits are **primarily temporary**, and their repeated or excessive use may lead to **physiological dependency**, wherein the colon becomes reliant on external stimulation for peristalsis. This can impair natural bowel function over time.

In contrast, **Shankhaprakshala** delivers its effects **more gradually**, but with a **longer-lasting impact**. Through the stimulation of **natural peristalsis** and overall **digestive system activation**, the practice promotes **regular bowel movements, detoxification**, and improved **gut function**. Moreover, it aligns with a **holistic health philosophy**, contributing to **mental clarity, metabolic balance**, and potentially enhanced **systemic vitality**. These effects are sustained over time, especially with **periodic repetition** and a **supportive diet and lifestyle**.

Health and Safety Considerations

Risks and Contraindications

Shankhaprakshala

While generally safe when performed under supervision, Shankhaprakshala carries potential risks, particularly if **performed excessively** or without proper guidance. Key concerns include: **Dehydration** or **electrolyte imbalance** due to excessive intake of saline water. **Physical strain** or injury from forceful execution of yogic postures. **Contraindications** in individuals with conditions such as **gastrointestinal ulcers, Crohn's disease, IBS, or cardiovascular/kidney disorders**, where fluid balance and digestive strain may pose complications²⁶ (Mashyal P, Bhargav H, Raghuram N, 2014).

Enemas

Enemas, while less physically intensive, present their own set of risks: **Mucosal irritation** or **rectal injury** if improper insertion techniques or harsh solutions are used (S. L. Jones, 2013). **Electrolyte imbalances**, particularly with **saline or phosphate-based enemas**, when used frequently. **Colon dependency**, impairing natural bowel motility over time with habitual use. **Contraindications** include **rectal or intestinal abnormalities, inflammatory bowel conditions**, and **cardiovascular issues**, where fluid shifts or procedural strain may be harmful²⁷ (Zago A, Occhipinti AA, et al., 2024).

Side Effects and Complications

When performed **occasionally and with proper technique**, both Shankhaprakshala and enemas are generally **safe** and associated with **mild side effects**. However, misuse or overuse may lead to complications.

Shankhaprakshala

Common side effects may include: **Bloating, mild abdominal discomfort**, or **dizziness**, particularly when

large volumes of saline water are consumed too rapidly or without adequate hydration (Singh, S, et al., 1988). In some cases, individuals may experience **temporary nausea or fatigue** following the procedure. Rare but potential complications include **gastrointestinal upset** or exacerbation of **pre-existing conditions** such as **peptic ulcers, inflammatory bowel diseases, or electrolyte imbalance** with excessive use.

Enemas

Typical side effects may include: **Cramping, bloating, or temporary discomfort** during or after the procedure. If the enema solution is **too hot**, or if equipment is **contaminated**, there is an increased risk of **rectal burns or infections**²⁸ (Zhu X, Jiang S, et al., 2022). Chronic or habitual use may lead to **bowel dysfunction**, including the weakening of the colon's natural ability to evacuate, known as **cathartic colon**. Overall, the **severity and likelihood of complications** are higher when procedures are **improperly executed**, highlighting the importance of **guidance and moderation**.

Ease of Practice

Accessibility and Practical Considerations

Shankhaprakshala

This technique requires more preparation and is best conducted in a **controlled setting**, especially for beginners. Typically performed under the guidance of a **trained instructor** or in a **group setting**, particularly in wellness retreats or yoga therapy centers. Involves multiple stages: **drinking warm saline water**, performing a sequence of **yogic postures**, and managing the **elimination process**. It demands **time (60–90 minutes)**, **space**, and **physical capability**, which may pose challenges for those with **mobility limitations, busy schedules, or limited yoga experience**.

Enemas

Enemas are comparatively more **convenient and accessible**: Can be **self-administered at home**, requiring only an **enema kit** and an appropriate solution. The process is **relatively quick** (20–30 minutes) and does not require significant physical exertion. Suitable for individuals who need **prompt relief from constipation** or are preparing for medical interventions. However, **proper technique** is essential to avoid **injury or ineffective cleansing**, especially for **first-time users**.

Home-Based vs. Clinical Settings

Shankhaprakshala

Shankhaprakshala is generally recommended to be performed in a **clinical, retreat, or supervised setting**, particularly for first-time practitioners. The technique requires careful **guidance through each step**, including the **timing and quantity of saline water intake**, the **correct sequence of yogic postures**, and **monitoring the body's response**. Supervision helps to **prevent complications**, ensure **proper technique**, and provide **supportive care** in case of adverse reactions (e.g., dizziness or fatigue). While **experienced individuals** may eventually choose to perform

the practice at home, many still prefer a **professional or group setting** for **safety, structure, and optimal outcomes**.

Enemas

Enemas are well-suited for **home use** and are commonly integrated into **personal self-care routines**. A wide range of **enema kits** and solutions are readily available over the counter or online, and they require **minimal training** to use safely when instructions are followed.

Home administration is typically sufficient for **routine relief from constipation** or for **general detox purposes**. However, **clinical settings** may be required for **therapeutic enemas** such as those used for **preoperative bowel cleansing, diagnostic procedures, or specialized detox protocols** where sterile technique and medical oversight are essential.

5. Cultural and Philosophical Perspectives

Shankhaprakshala (Yogic Viewpoint)

Spiritual and Mental Benefits of the Practice

In the **yogic tradition**, Shankhaprakshala transcends its role as a physical cleansing technique; it is deeply embedded in a broader spiritual and philosophical framework that emphasizes **holistic purification**. According to yogic teachings, **purification of the body** is a prerequisite for achieving **clarity of mind** and **spiritual awakening**. This aligns with the foundational yogic belief in the **interdependence of the body, mind, and spirit**, where physiological balance fosters **mental peace** and **spiritual insight**.

Shankhaprakshala is closely linked with the yogic principle of **sattva**, which denotes **purity, harmony, and balance**. By cleansing the digestive tract of toxins and waste, the practice is believed to remove **both physical and energetic blockages**. This cleansing facilitates the cultivation of **mental clarity, emotional stability, and inner peace**. Practitioners often report experiencing a **lighter body, calmer mind, and greater resilience** against stress and emotional disturbances.

Moreover, the practice is thought to **balance prana**, the **vital life force** that flows through the body and enhance its unobstructed movement. According to yogic philosophy, an unbalanced or blocked flow of prana can lead to physical ailments and mental unrest. Shankhaprakshala, by purifying the digestive system, contributes to **harmonizing pranic energy**, which supports both **physical vitality** and the pursuit of **higher states of consciousness**.

Role of Purification in Yogic Philosophy

Purification (shuddhi) is a foundational principle within the **yogic tradition**, viewed as essential for achieving **physical health, mental clarity, and spiritual growth**. According to yogic teachings, the accumulation of **toxins (ama)** both physical and subtle can obstruct the body's energy channels and lead to **disease, emotional disturbances, and spiritual stagnation**²⁹ (Mukhopadhyay, K. 2023). To counteract this, traditional yoga prescribes a variety of **cleansing practices (shatkarmas)**, among which **Shankhaprakshala** holds a

prominent place as a **systemic digestive purification technique**.

Shankhaprakshala is regarded as a **practical embodiment of shuddhi**, offering a direct method to **clear toxins from the gastrointestinal tract**, thereby **restoring internal balance**. Its role extends beyond physical detoxification; it is considered a preparatory step for more advanced yogic practices such as **pranayama (breath control)**, **dhyana (meditation)**, and **svadhyaya (self-inquiry)**. By **cleansing the body**, practitioners create a **receptive internal environment** conducive to higher states of consciousness and **spiritual insight**.

Furthermore, Shankhaprakshala aligns with the broader **yogic principles of santosha (contentment)** and **ahimsa (non-violence)**. Physical cleansing is seen as a way to **reduce internal suffering, relieve discomfort**, and foster a **peaceful internal state**, ultimately cultivating **inner harmony and emotional equanimity**. In this sense, purification is not merely a health practice but a **moral and spiritual discipline**, reinforcing the yogic view of health as a **holistic integration of the physical, emotional, and spiritual dimensions** of human existence³⁰ (Kumar, Rupesh et al., 2023).

Dietary section is one of the important part, immediately after Shankhaprakshalana, take a simple dish of cooked rice and lentil, such as moong dal (khichdi) is recommended and adding plenty of ghee is very essential, it helps coat and protect the intestinal lining, while a small amount of turmeric provides gentle anti-inflammatory benefits. Gradually introduce soft, bland foods such as khichdi, steamed vegetables. Avoid Milk and other milk products, spicy, oily, heavy, or processed foods initially. Stay away from cold environment and drinks. Over the next few days, slowly reintroduce normal meals while observing your body's response. This gentle approach helps restore digestive strength and balance.

Enema (Naturopathic Perspective)

Naturopathy's Focus on Natural Healing

Within the framework of **naturopathic treatment**, enemas are considered a valuable tool in the body's **natural healing process**. Naturopathy, as a **holistic and non-invasive system of medicine**, emphasizes the body's **inherent ability to heal itself** when supported by the appropriate internal and external conditions³¹ (Allen J., et al., 2011). One of the core tenets of naturopathy is **detoxification**, which is seen as crucial for maintaining or restoring health by enhancing the function of the body's primary elimination systems namely the **liver, kidneys, skin, lungs, and the digestive tract**.

Enemas, specifically, are used to **stimulate the colon**, encourage the elimination of **accumulated waste and toxins**, and relieve **intestinal stagnation**. The colon is viewed in naturopathic theory as a **key organ in systemic detoxification**, and any congestion or dysfunction within it is believed to **disrupt the entire body's equilibrium**. Enemas are thus not only a means of clearing waste but also a way to **"reset" digestive function**, allowing for improved

nutrient absorption, circulation of energy, and gut-brain communication³² (Sujatha K.J., et al., 2020).

Connection to Holistic Health and Cleansing Practices

In the **holistic health paradigm** of naturopathy, enemas are part of a broader suite of **cleansing and detoxification protocols** designed to support the body's **self-regulatory mechanisms**. The body is conceptualized as a **dynamic, interrelated system**, where dysfunction in one area can affect the whole. Enemas help maintain **internal harmony** by **removing toxic build-up, reducing inflammation, and restoring digestive regularity**.

Moreover, enemas are typically **not used in isolation** but are incorporated into **comprehensive wellness programs** that may include:

Dietary modifications, such as increased intake of **fiber-rich foods and fermented products**. **Herbal and nutritional supplementation**, aimed at liver support or microbial balance. **Physical movement**, including yoga or naturopathic therapies to aid lymphatic drainage and circulation. This integrative approach reflects the **naturopathic philosophy** of treating the **whole person**, avoiding synthetic medications whenever possible, and promoting **long-term health through sustainable lifestyle practices**. Within this framework, enemas are regarded not just as a remedy, but as a **maintenance tool** in the journey toward **optimal health and vitality**.

Shankhaprakshala

Overview of Studies Supporting or Critiquing Its Effectiveness

Although **Shankhaprakshala** has been widely practiced within **yogic and naturopathic traditions**, scientific research evaluating its clinical efficacy remains **limited**. Most existing evidence is either **anecdotal**, derived from **traditional yogic texts**, or based on **small-scale observational studies**. Nonetheless, the emerging body of research suggests **potential benefits** in relation to **digestive health, detoxification, and gut motility**.

One of the most frequently cited studies, which assessed the **physiological effects** of **Shankhaprakshala** in **healthy adults**. The findings indicated that the practice:

Enhanced bowel movement frequency. Promoted a **subjective sense of lightness and clarity** Improved **digestive efficiency** and **gut motility**. According to the study, the **sequential yogic postures**, combined with the **intake of saline water**, stimulated **peristaltic activity**, facilitating the **elimination of accumulated waste and toxins**. These outcomes support the traditional claim that **Shankhaprakshala** exerts a **cleansing and regulatory effect** on the gastrointestinal system.

Additional support comes from examined the **broader impact of yogic practices** on **gut-brain health**. While not exclusively focused on **Shankhaprakshala**, the research acknowledged the role of **shatkarmas** (yogic cleansing techniques) in **modulating digestive fire (agni)** and **reducing ama (toxins)**, consistent with Ayurvedic theory.

The study emphasized the link between **yogic detoxification** and **improved gastrointestinal function**, immunity, and emotional well-being.

However, the scientific validation of **Shankhaprakshala** remains **incomplete**. There is a **notable lack of randomized controlled trials (RCTs)** or large-scale cohort studies to substantiate its efficacy and safety in various populations. The **mechanistic understanding** of how **Shankhaprakshala** affects the **enteric nervous system, gut microbiota, or electrolyte balance** is still evolving.

Evidence on Its Role in Detoxification and Gut Health

The role of **Shankhaprakshala** in promoting **detoxification** and enhancing **gut health** has been a key focus in both **traditional yogic literature** and emerging clinical research. Although mechanistic studies remain limited, available findings support its function as a **systemic gastrointestinal cleanser**.

According to Gautam, Monika, et al., (2024), **Shankhaprakshala** facilitates the **expulsion of both physical and metabolic waste**, particularly from the **colon and small intestine**. The combination of **ingesting warm saline water** and performing **specific yogic postures** stimulates **intestinal peristalsis**, which propels water through the digestive tract³³. This **dual-action process** is believed to effectively **flush toxins** and residual waste, preventing their **accumulation** and promoting **digestive balance**. Additionally, by clearing the intestinal lining, the practice may enhance **nutrient absorption** and reduce the likelihood of gut-related disturbances.

Supporting this view, a 2020 study published in the *International Journal of Yoga* atFrontiers, investigated the effects of **Shankhaprakshala** on individuals with mild to moderate gastrointestinal complaints. The study found that regular practice significantly improved: **Gut motility, Bowel movement frequency and consistency. Symptoms of bloating and discomfort** Participants also reported increased feelings of **digestive lightness**, reduced abdominal tension, and improved appetite regulation³⁴. These outcomes support the traditional yogic assertion that **Shankhaprakshala** restores the **digestive fire (agni)** and reduces **ama (toxins)**, thereby enhancing both **gut health and overall vitality**.

While these findings are promising, it is important to note that most clinical studies on **Shankhaprakshala** are **observational in nature**, with **small sample sizes** and limited control conditions. Further **randomized controlled trials (RCTs)** are needed to confirm its efficacy, explore its long-term effects, and understand its impact on aspects such as: **Gut microbiota composition, Mucosal health and immune function and Biochemical markers of detoxification**

6. Conclusion

Shankhaprakshala and **enemas** each offer distinct yet effective approaches to **colon cleansing and detoxification**, grounded in different **philosophical and clinical frameworks**.

Shankhaprakshala, rooted in **yogic philosophy**, emphasizes a **holistic and integrative approach** to health, linking physical purification with **mental clarity** and **spiritual well-being**. While **preliminary studies** and traditional accounts support its role in enhancing **digestive function**, **bowel regularity**, and **overall vitality**, the **scientific evidence base remains limited**. Most available research is observational or anecdotal, and there is a need for **larger, controlled clinical trials** to fully establish its **efficacy, mechanisms of action**, and **long-term safety**.

In contrast, enemas are supported by a **broader body of clinical evidence**, particularly for their effectiveness in providing **immediate relief from constipation** and facilitating **rapid detoxification**. They are widely accepted in both **medical** and **naturopathic contexts**, and their **mechanical mode of action** is well-understood. However, questions remain about their **long-term impact on gut health**, particularly concerning **gut microbiota disruption** and the risk of **bowel dependency** with excessive use.

Ultimately, both practices serve important roles in digestive and detoxification therapies, but they do so within **different paradigms**—Shankhaprakshala as a **systemic, spiritually infused yogic process**, and enemas as a **targeted, physically driven therapeutic intervention**. Their effectiveness may vary depending on the individual's **health status, goals, and philosophical orientation toward healing**. An **integrative approach**, combining the strengths of both methods while respecting their limitations, may offer the most comprehensive strategy for supporting colon health and systemic detoxification.

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