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Mohd Arshad Jamal
Department of Amraze Jild wa
Tazeeniyat, Mohammadia
Tibbia College, Malegaon,
Nashik, Maharashtra, India

Ansari Shaiqua
Department of Qabalat wa
Amraze Niswan, Mohammadia
Tibbia College, Malegaon,
Nashik, Maharashtra, India

Fahmeeda Zeenat
Department of Amraze Niswan
wa Atfal, Faculty of Unani
Medicine, AMU, Aligarh,
Uttar Pradesh, India

Wasim Ahmad
Department of Ilmul Advia,
Mohammadia Tibbia College,
Malegaon, Nashik,
Maharashtra, India

Corresponding Author:
Fahmeeda Zeenat
Department of Amraze Niswan
wa Atfal, Faculty of Unani
Medicine, AMU, Aligarh,
Uttar Pradesh, India

Hijamah: An important regimen of Ilaj bit Tadbeer

Mohd Arshad Jamal, Ansari Shaiqua, Fahmeeda Zeenat and Wasim Ahmad

Abstract

Hijamah is a method used for local evacuation or diversion of morbid humors in which a horn is attached to the surface of the skin of the diseased part through negative pressure created by vacuum. The Messenger Mohammad (Sallallahu alaihe wa Sallam) said: Indeed the best of remedies you have is Hijamah (cupping). It is one of the oldest methods of treatment, which has been discussed in the Misri Tib (Ebers Papyrus), one of the oldest medical textbook in the world. In Egypt, cupping was the remedy not only for every type of disease but also for preserving health. It was transferred to Greece from Egypt. However, it is believed that it has been practiced back from 3000 BC. Hijamah is one of the oldest and most effective methods of releasing toxins from the body's tissues and organs. It is safe, non-invasive and non-expensive technique. It is used to alleviate pain and discomfort. It acts to draw pressure and inflammation from the deep organs towards the skin. It diverts the toxins and other harmful impurities from affected organs towards the skin before expulsion. Due to the high cost, resistance and toxicity of antibiotics and modern medicines led to their decline in popularity. Once again people started taking treatment from the alternative system of medicines. Hence, Hijamah once again started getting popularity globally. In the present paper an attempt has been made to review the available literature on Hijamah, its types, sites, mechanism, indication, contraindication, benefits and complication.

Keywords: Hijamah, Ilaj bit Tadbeer

Introduction

Human body is kept under physiological homeostasis by the harmony of body systems and organs. The disease etiopathogenesis occurs against physiological homeostasis. Disease pathophysiology varies according to the etiology of each disease and its effect on disturbing body homeostasis [1]. According to Unani system of medicine, all pathogenesis in the body takes place just because of disturbance in the body homeostasis in the form of morbid matter and it is necessary to evacuate these morbid matters for maintenance of health. Hijamah is one of the popular therapeutic regimens used for *tanqiya* and *imala-e-mawad* (diversion and evacuation of morbid matter) from the affected part. It relieves pain; resolve inflammation and produces localized heat by increasing local blood circulation [2].

Hijamah is a method used for local evacuation or diversion of morbid humors in which a horn is attached to the surface of the skin of the diseased part through negative pressure created by vacuum [3].

Hijamah comes from the original Arabic word 'Al-Hajm' which means to restore to original size and to suck. Hjamah also means to do cupping. In Hijamah blood is sucked after applying cup to specific area of body [4, 5].

In olden days, hollow horns were used as Hijamah instrument and in Urdu language horns are known as Seengh, thus Hijamah was also known as seenghi lagwana [4]. Now a day, cups are used for this purpose, so it is known as Cupping Therapy [5, 6]. The beauty of cupping therapy comes from the fact that cupping therapy is an excretory form of therapy not an introductory one in which cupping removes blood and tissue fluids mixed with potentially harmful substances [1].

Hijamah is one of the oldest and most effective methods of releasing toxins from the body's tissues and organs. It is safe, non-invasive and non-expensive technique. It is used to alleviate pain and discomfort. It acts to draw pressure and inflammation from the deep organs towards the skin. It diverts the toxins and other harmful impurities from affected organs towards the skin before expulsion [7].

Textual evidence on cupping can be found in the writing of Hippocrates. He recommended cupping in the treatment of angina, menstrual irregularities and other disorders.

The British cupper Samuel Bayfield wrote that Hippocrates was a minute observer, and has left us some striking remarks on the shape and application of the cups. He

recommended that they should be small in diameter, conical in shape, and light in their weight, even if the disease (for which they are applied) is deeply seated ^[4].



Fig 1: Hollow Horns

Historical aspect

Hijamah is one of the oldest method of treatment, which has been discussed in the Misri Tib (Ebers Papyrus), one of the oldest medical textbook in the world (1550 BC) ^[5]. However, it is believed that it has been practiced back from 3000 B.C. Evidence exists that in China the practice of cupping exist from 1000 B.C. In ancient Greece, Galen and Hippocrates also greatly supported cupping. In Egypt, cupping was the remedy not only for every type of disease but also for preserving health. It was transferred to Greece from Egypt. In Greece, the Cup was known as the symbol of medicine. Natives of America, India, New Holland, Japan and China have long practiced cupping. This method spread throughout the Asian and European civilizations. Hijamah has been distinguished into two main types, dry and wet. Italian physicians favored dry cupping, while European and American doctors practice wet cupping, which was widely used in western hospitals till 1832. Horns of animals were used as earliest cupping instrument. These are replaced by modern sophisticated electronic, electrical and mechanized suction cups. Throughout the European history, most of the people were treated by local lay practitioners who charged less and could be consulted more informally than

physicians. Cross cultural studied show that women in particular, female heads of household represents the major source of therapeutic assistance in many societies. In Greece, New Holland, Russia and Turkey, cupping was performed by women, which has been verified form many reliable sources. In the west, cupping therapy was the part of basic clinical skill, which doctor expects to understand and practice until the later part of the 19th century. It was sharply criticized by the medical fraternity in mid to late 1800s. It was completely vanished in 20th century. The reason behind that was the emergence of various antibiotics and antipyretics ^[4].

Due to the high cost, resistance and toxicity of antibiotics and modern medicines led to their decline in popularity. Once again people started taking treatment from the alternative system of medicines. Hence, Hijamah once again started getting popularity globally. Currently it is practiced in countries like China, Germany, United States of America, Australia, Finland and Vietnam. In India also this therapy gained popularity and is practiced in cities like Delhi, Aligarh, Mumbai, Pune, Hyderabad, Patna, Chennai and Calicut etc. ^[4].



Fig 2: Hijamah Cups

Islamic concept of Hijamah (Cupping Therapy)

The Messenger Mohammad (Sallallahu alaihe wa Sallam) said, Indeed the best of remedies you have is Hijamah (cupping). Jabir bin 'Abdullah, radiya-llāhu 'anhu, reported, "I heard the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wa Sallam) saying, "If there is any healing in your medicines, then it is in Hijamah, a gulp of honey or branding with fire (cauterization) that suits the ailment, but I don't like to be (cauterized) branded with fire." Ibn Umar (radiya-llāhu

'anhu) reported that the Messenger (Sallallahu alaihe wa Sallam) said, "Cupping (Hijamah) on an empty stomach is best. There is a cure and blessing in it. It improves the intellect and the memory. So cup yourselves with the blessing of Allah on Thursday. There are many more Hadees which says that Hijamah is a best treatment and is recommended by Prophet Mohammad (Sallallahu alaihe wa Sallam). Prophet (SAW) once said that when he went for Miraj, he moved through the different groups of Angel, who

said that “Ya Mohammad (Sallallahu alaihe wa Sallam) tell your Ummah to practice Hijamah” [5, 8].

Plan of Hijamah

As per Islamic teaching, Hijamah can be performed on 17th, 19th and 21st dates of lunar months. The best time to perform Hijamah is from early morning till 4:00 pm. For the therapeutic purpose Hijamah can be performed at any time, on any date and day of months [4, 8].

Types of Hijamah

Basically Hijamah is classified into following types:

1. Hijamah bil Shart (Wet Cupping)
2. Hijamah bila Shart (Dry Cupping)
3. Hijamah bil Nar (Fire Cupping)
4. Hijamah Ma'ai (Water Cupping)
5. Massage Cupping

1. Hijamah bil Shart (Wet Cupping)

In this type of Hijamah skin of that part is cut superficially and deeply by scalpel before applying the instrument. This method is done for the local evacuation. It is also known as cupping with scarification [9]. This procedure actually starts with the procedure of dry cupping. After appearance of congestion at the site, small scratches or incision are made with the lancet. Then blood is sucked after applying cups to the incised area [6].

2. Hijamah bila Shart (Dry cupping)

It is a classical procedure of regimenal therapy that works on the principle of imala-e-mawad (shunting/ diversion of morbid humors) [10]. It is called as Dry cupping. It is a method of relieving local congestion by applying a partial vacuum that is created in cup by manual suction pump [6]. In this method, skin is not incised and is also known as cupping without scarification [9].

3. Hijamah bil Nar (Fire Cupping)

In this type of Hijamah, vacuum is created by lightening fire. Its possible English equivalent is cupping with fire [9]. Hijamah bil Nar is actually a type of dry cupping [11].

4. Hijamah Ma'ai (Water Cupping)

It is a type of Hijamah in which a decoction of certain drugs is used [9].

5. Massage Cupping

It is a special type of Hijamah done for the purpose of massage. In this therapeutic oil is applied on the affected part of the body and cups are used for massage [12].

Sites for Hijamah

There are 14 common sites recommended for Hijamah bil shart (wet cupping) [11] that are as follows:

- Muhajim Naqra: it is at the lower part of head posteriorly
 Kahil: which is on the vertex (Guddi)
 Muhajim Akhdaein: it is on the lateral parts of neck
 Muhajim Zaqein: it is on the inferior part of mouth
 Muhajim Katfein: which is on the Azmul kataf
 Muhajim Asas: which is on the tail bone
 Muhajim Zandaein: which is on the wrist
 Muhajim Saqein: which is on the calf muscles
 Muhajim Arqubein: which is on the foot

The above-mentioned sites for Hijamah have described by the renowned Unani physician Zohrawi in his famous book “Jarahiyat Zohrawi”. Although in many books different sites are described for different diseases. Sites and type of Hijamah can also be selected by the physician depending upon the type of disease and what actually he wants to achieve. It can be selected on the following basis like at the site of pathology, or depending upon its nerve distribution or where the morbid matter is to be diverted.

Theories about Hijamah

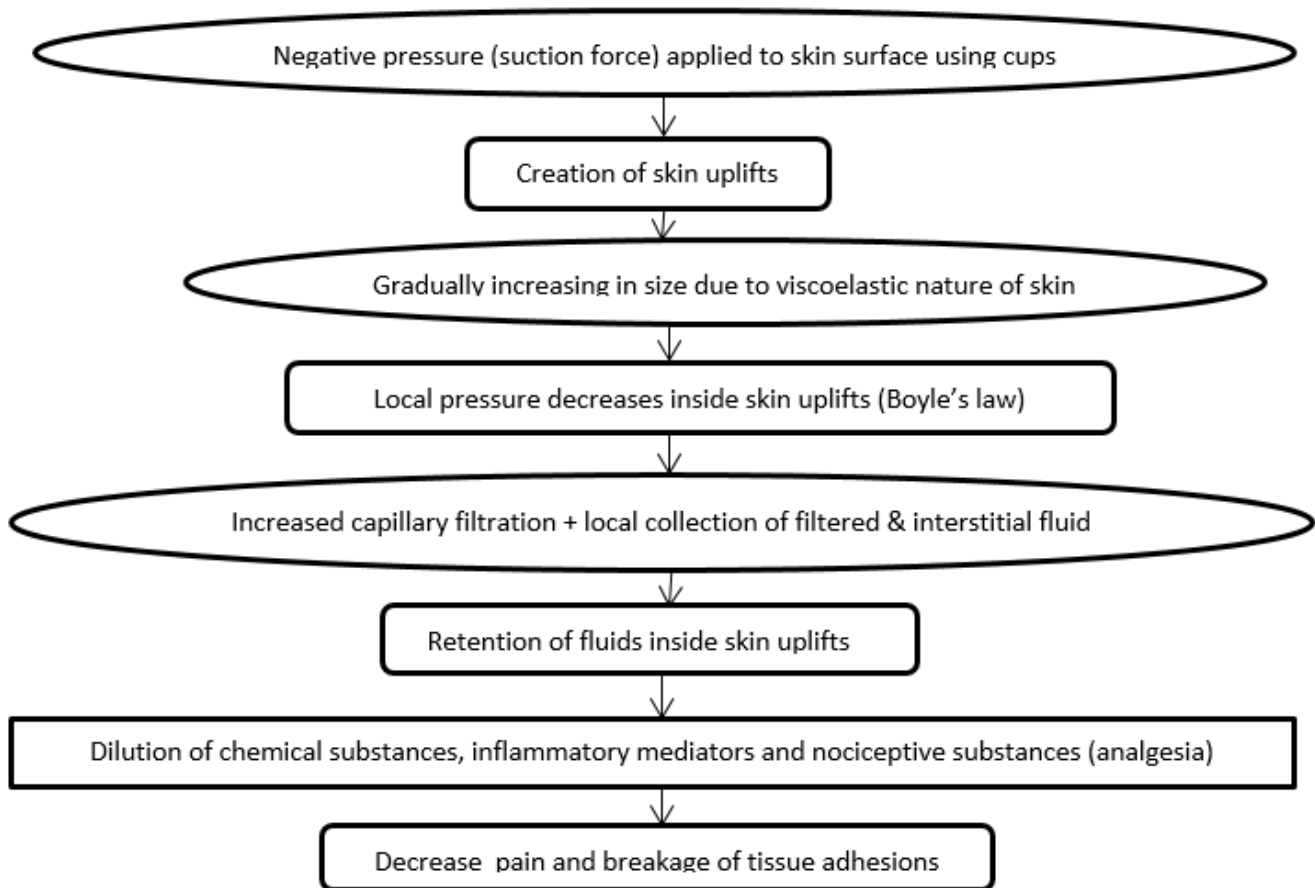
The mechanism of action needs to be elucidated. Many theories exists to explain benefits of cupping therapy like Chinese theories according to Hong *et al.*, Gao *et al.*, and Taibah theory etc [1].

According to Chinese theory, it believes that diseases are caused by stagnation or locking the source of vital energy of life (Qi). They believe that cupping therapy works by unblocking Qi and restoring correct balance to regain its flow [13]. It was explained that cupping therapy can remove the wind, cold, dampness and stagnant blood, especially when cupping therapy was combined with acupuncture [14]. Salah's theory for Hijamah bil shart (wet cupping therapy) is named Taibah theory (named after Taibah city, Al-Madinah Al-Munawwarah, city of Prophet Mohammad Sallallahu alaihe wa Sallam). In light of Taibah theory, prophetic method of (Al-Hijamah) can be defined as a minor surgical excretory procedure that creates superficial skin scarifications to open skin barrier and create a pressure gradient and a traction force across the skin and underlying capillaries to drain interstitial fluids and enhance blood clearance and waste excretion through skin. Taibah theory states that Al-Hijamah is Hijamah bil shart (wet cupping therapy) of Prophetic medicine. Al-Hijamah includes all steps (and consequently similar or better therapeutic benefits) of both Chinese dry cupping therapy and wet cupping therapy altogether [1].

Mechanism of cupping

The mechanism of cupping therapy is not clear, but some researchers suggest that placement of cups on selected acupoints on the skin produces hyperemia or hemostasis, which results in a therapeutic effect [15].

Hijamah is a minor surgical excretory procedure, where negative pressure (suction force) applied to skin surface using cups creates skin up liftings (gradually increasing in size due to viscoelastic nature of the skin) inside which local pressure correspondingly decreases (Boyle's law) around capillaries. This causes increased capillary filtration, local collection of filtered fluids, lymph and interstitial fluids and their retention inside skin upliftings. This dilutes chemical substances, inflammatory mediators, nociceptive substances, bathes nerve endings in collected fluids and breaks tissue adhesions causing decreased pain (Taibah theory for dry cupping therapy). On removing the cups, dramatic increase in skin blood flow occurs (reactive hyperemia). Scarification of surface of skin upliftings opens skin barrier for evacuation of fluids with causative pathological substances and prevents their absorption at venous capillary end [1]. This is the first part of Hijamah. Sometimes we stop the procedure till this step. The decision depends upon the need of the patient, indication, contraindication and complications.

Taibah theory for 1st part of Hijamah**(Hijamah bila Shart)****Fig 3:** Taibah Theory for 1st Part of Hijamah

After performing first step of Hijamah, immediate second cupping pressure is transmitted through skin incisions to create a pressure gradient and a traction force across the skin and capillaries leading to excretion of collected interstitial fluids (including lymph) with causative pathological substances, filtration of capillary fluids containing causative pathological substances, bleeding at puncture sites and increased release of endogenous opioids (analgesic effect) ^[1].

Cupping therapy increases innate and acquired immunity (skin wounding effect), hemolyzes old RBCs against high-pressure gradient and enhances natural excretory functions of the skin ^[1].

Positive effects of Hijamah ^[16].

1. It improves oxygen supply
2. It enhances tissue perfusion and cellular metabolism
3. Preserves underlying tissue structure
4. Modulate angiogenesis
5. Relieves muscle spasm
6. Restores balance of the neuro-endocrine system
7. Improves neurotransmission
8. Exerts pharmacological potentations
9. Restores physiological homeostasis

Indication for Hijamah

1. It helps in diversion of morbid matter (madda): when

the matter is diverted from primary affected organ towards its related organ ^[7].

2. It helps to pull up the organ to its position which has descended down from its original position due to any laxity or weakness ^[17]. Because of Hijamah, Uterus will be pulled up and will not descend down again ^[18]. According to Abu Bakar bin Mohammad Zakaria Razi, cupping should be done over hypogastric region ^[19] and at lumbosacral region ^[20].
3. In cases of displacement of organ, e.g. in case of inguinal hernia and prolapse etc. it helps to bring the organ to its original position ^[12].
4. Draws disease outside from inside the body such as in case of internal piles ^[4].
5. To bring back the warmth and movement in the paralyzed muscles ^[4].
6. Non healing wounds: by keeping the cup on wounded site and withdraw the pus or morbid matter ^[4].
7. To bring the secretion outside or towards periphery e.g. in leucorrhoea the Hijamah is done on pubic region ^[4].
8. It is used in various diseases like heaviness of head, Asthama, dyspnea, migraine, quinsy, palpitation, headache, hemorrhoids, amenorrhoea, renal and ureteric colic, plethora, pustules and boils, sciatica, gout, pain of knee, diseases of liver, spleen and psoriasis etc ^[6].
9. To increase the blood circulation and warm the organ ^[12].

Taibah Theory for 2nd Part of Hijamah

(Hijamah bil Shart)

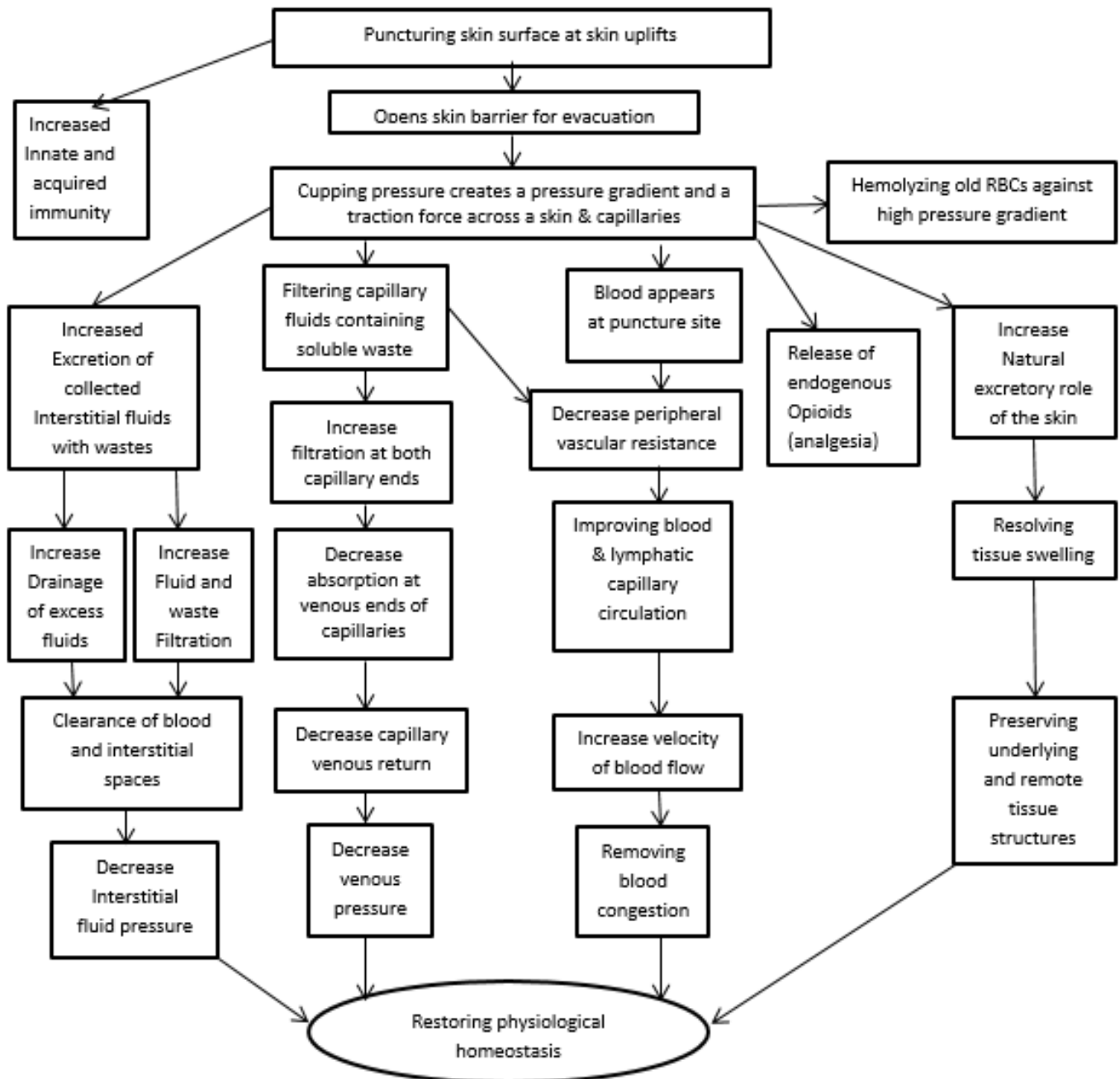


Fig 5: Taibah Theory for 2nd Part of Hijamah

General Contraindications and Precautions

Hijamah is not without its risk. It is not for everybody to undertake. The therapist must see whether the patient is fit for Hijamah. Always take sensible precaution while doing Hijamah. The precautions and contraindications that must be followed in Hijamah are as indicated ^[16]:

1. Sterilization.
2. Patients must be advised to fast for a minimum period of 4 hours.
3. Don't eat meat, poultry, salt, dark fizzy drink, dairy products, tea, coffee for the next 48 hours.
4. No sexual intercourse 48 hours before and after the Hijamah is scheduled.
5. Although the patient feel tiredness after the procedure

but resting is discouraged in order to avoid blood clotting. In fact half hour to one hour walking is recommended.

6. Stop taking any anticoagulant drug 24 hours before Hijamah.
7. Hijamah should not be done in fever.
8. Pregnant women should refrain from using Hijamah on the lower abdomen.
9. Hijamah is not appropriate for pregnant women, during menstruation (especially first three days), patients with active tuberculosis, mania or mental disorders, restlessness, muscle cramps or convulsions.
10. In diabetic patients, proper monitoring of glucose level, which should be around 150 mg during fasting.

11. Hijamah should not be done over kidney area, eyes, sunburns or burns, open wounds or a recent trauma, it is not recommended to the patients suffering from, high blood pressure, heart diseases and respiratory failure.
12. Hijamah therapy is not suitable for the children under the age of 3 years, very old or frail person.
13. Hijamah should not be done to the tired and hungry.
14. Hijamah is absolutely prohibited with the hematological disease like hemophilia, leukemia, pernicious anemia and thrombocytopenia.
15. Hijamah is not done over the sensory organs and pudendal areas.
16. Do not cup immediately after bathing or vomiting.

Complications

Hijamah causes blood to be drawn to the surface of the skin, which causes red marks swelling and bruising. No serious side effects have reported from cupping except one case of panniculitis^[6]. After Hijamah, the phenomena of developing localized small blisters, water droplets, bleeding points, extravasations of blood are all normal therapeutic reactions. If the blister is larger in size, it may be ruptured with a sterilized needle to discharge the fluid and then Gentian violet paint is applied along with the packing with sterilized gauze to prevent infection. Patient may also feel giddiness, restlessness, cold sweat, uneasiness in chest^[16].

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