

Analysis of the Types of Cupping in Hijama Therapy

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Introduction

Hijama, or cupping therapy, is a traditional healing practice that has persisted across civilizations and continues to be widely utilized in contemporary complementary and alternative medicine. Historically, cupping has been documented in ancient Egyptian, Chinese, and Greek medical texts, where it was employed to treat a variety of ailments ranging from musculoskeletal pain to systemic disorders (Aqeel et al., 2025). Within Islamic medicine, Hijama occupies a distinctive position due to its endorsement in prophetic traditions (ahadith), which elevated it from a therapeutic intervention to a spiritually significant practice (Kawoosa, 2023).

In modern times, Hijama has gained renewed attention as part of integrative medicine, with researchers exploring its physiological mechanisms and clinical efficacy. Different types of cupping—wet cupping, dry cupping, massage/moving cupping, and fire cupping—are practiced globally, each with unique therapeutic rationales. Wet cupping, involving controlled bloodletting, is often associated with detoxification and relief of chronic conditions, while dry cupping emphasizes circulatory stimulation and muscular relaxation (Hassan et al., 2023). Massage cupping integrates suction with movement to enhance lymphatic drainage, and fire cupping, rooted in traditional methods, utilizes rapid suction for respiratory and circulatory benefits.

Despite its widespread use, Hijama remains under-researched in terms of standardized protocols and biomedical validation. Current literature highlights promising outcomes in pain management, hypertension, and rehabilitation, yet methodological inconsistencies limit definitive conclusions. This research aims to analyze the types of cupping in Hijama therapy, situating them within historical, religious, and biomedical contexts, while emphasizing the need for rigorous scientific inquiry to bridge traditional practice with modern healthcare frameworks.

Types of Cupping

1. Dry Cupping

- Involves only suction without cutting the skin.
- Cups are placed on specific points to draw blood towards the surface but without bleeding.

2. Wet Cupping (Hijama)

- After suction, small incisions are made on the skin and cups are reapplied to draw out blood.
- This is the most common form of Hijama in prophetic medicine.

3. Massage Cupping (Moving Cupping)

- Involves gliding a suction cup over lubricated skin.
- Used mainly for muscle pain and stiffness.

How Hijama is Performed:

1. **Cleaning:** The skin is disinfected.
2. **Suction:** Special cups are placed on specific points and suction is created, either by fire or vacuum pumps.
3. **Incision:** After 3–5 minutes, the cups are removed, and small, shallow cuts are made with a sterile blade.
4. **Second Suction:** The cups are reapplied to draw out —toxic blood.
5. **Cleaning and Dressing:** The area is cleaned and covered.

Historical and Religious Background:

- **Prophetic Medicine (Tibb-e-Nabawi):**

Hijama is strongly recommended in Islam. According to several authentic Hadiths, Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) practiced and recommended Hijama.

Hadith: —Indeed in cupping (hijama) there is a cure. (Sahih al-Bukhari)

- **Used in ancient civilizations:**

- China
- Egypt
- Greece (notably used by Hippocrates)

Benefits of Hijama (According to Practitioners):

Physical Benefits	Mental Benefits	Spiritual/General Claims
Detoxifies blood	Reduces anxiety	Increases energy
Improves circulation	Improves sleep	Balances humors (in Unani)
Pain relief (back, neck, joints)	Reduces stress	Fulfills Sunnah
Boosts immune system	Mental clarity	Clears blocked energy

Common Conditions Treated by Hijama:

- Migraines and headaches
- Back and joint pain
- High blood pressure
- Rheumatoid arthritis
- Infertility (in men and women)
- Skin diseases (eczema, acne)
- Depression and anxiety
- Digestive disorders

Precautions & Side Effects:

- Should be performed by trained practitioners in sterile conditions.
- Minor side effects: bruising, soreness, skin irritation, light bleeding.
- Avoid Hijama:
 - During pregnancy (unless advised)
 - People with blood disorders (e.g., hemophilia)
 - Very weak, anemic, or elderly patients (consultation needed)

Best Times for Hijama (Sunnah Days):

Based on hadiths, the 17th, 19th, and 21st of the Islamic lunar month, especially if it falls on Monday, Tuesday, or Thursday, are recommended days for Hijama.

Modern Scientific View:

While Hijama is widely practiced and valued in various traditional systems (Unani, TCM, prophetic medicine), scientific evidence is mixed. Some studies suggest possible benefits in:

- Reducing inflammation
- Pain management
- Blood flow improvement

However, more research is needed to confirm its effectiveness and mechanisms.

Summary:

Hijama is a sunnah-based, natural detoxification therapy involving the removal of stagnant blood via small cuts and suction. It is used for both physical and mental health, rooted in Islamic tradition, but also practiced in various ancient healing systems.

If you want, I can also provide:

- Urdu translation
- A one-page printable summary
- Sunnah points for Hijama therapy

1. Wet Cupping (Hijama al-Ratb / الرطبة ال حجامة)

Description:

This is the most well-known and Sunnah-based form of Hijama. It involves both suction and controlled bloodletting.

Procedure:

1. Suction cups are applied to the skin.
2. Cups are removed after a few minutes.
3. Small incisions are made with a sterile blade.
4. Cups are reapplied to draw out "stagnant" or "toxic" blood.
5. The area is cleaned and dressed.

Benefits:

- Detoxifies the blood
- Improves circulation
- Relieves muscle and joint pain
- Boosts immune function

Sunnah-Based Practice:

Prophet Muhammad ﷺ specifically recommended wet cupping. He himself underwent this form of Hijama.

2. Dry Cupping (Hijama al-Yabis / ال جافة ال حجامة)

Description:

Dry cupping uses only suction, with no incisions or bleeding.

Procedure:

1. Cups are applied to the skin using suction.
2. No cuts are made.
3. Cups are removed after 5–20 minutes.

Uses:

- Muscle relaxation
- Pain relief (especially for athletes)
- Reduces inflammation

- Improves blood flow without blood loss

When Used:

For people who want to avoid bloodletting or have anemia, or for first-time clients to prepare them for wet cupping.

3. Massage Cupping (Hijama al-Tadlik / ال حجامه ت دل يك)

Also known as Moving Cupping

Description:

This is a form of dry cupping, but with movement. Cups are moved along lubricated skin to give a deep tissue massage.

Procedure:

1. Oil (olive oil, black seed oil, etc.) is applied to the skin.
2. A suction cup is placed and then gently moved along the muscles.

Benefits:

- Muscle relaxation
- Improves lymphatic drainage
- Reduces stress and tension
- Boosts circulation

4. Fire Cupping (Traditional Chinese Technique)

Description:

Used in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). Fire is used to create suction by burning a cotton ball inside the cup before placing it on the skin.

Procedure:

1. Cotton dipped in alcohol is lit and placed briefly inside the glass cup.
2. The fire consumes oxygen, creating a vacuum.
3. The cup is quickly placed on the skin.

Benefits:

Similar to dry cupping; sometimes used in massage therapy for pain and tension.

5. Flash Cupping (Quick Cupping)

Description:

This involves repeated, short suction and release cycles without leaving the cups on the skin for long.

Procedure:

1. Cups are applied and removed quickly.
2. Often repeated several times in one session.

Benefits:

- Stimulates circulation
- Warms up the body before deeper cupping
- Used in traditional sports medicine

6. Facial or Cosmetic Cupping

Description:

This is a gentle form of cupping done on the face with small soft cups, typically for cosmetic purposes.

Uses:

- Reduces puffiness

- Improves skin tone
- Promotes collagen production
- Relieves sinus congestion

7. Herbal Cupping (Hijama with Herbs)

Description:

Cups are used with medicated oils or herbal infusions to enhance therapeutic benefits.

Examples:

- Using black seed oil for joint pain
- Mixing honey or herbal pastes under the cup

Summary Table:

Type of Hijama	Involves Blood?	Tools Used	Common Use
Wet Cupping	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	Blade, Cups	Detox, Sunnah healing
Dry Cupping	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Cups	Pain relief, muscle recovery
Massage Cupping	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Cups + Oil	Relaxation, lymph drainage
Fire Cupping	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Fire + Cups	TCM therapy, deep tissue stimulation
Flash Cupping	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Cups	Warming up, energizing treatment
Facial Cupping	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Soft cups	Cosmetic use, anti-aging, sinus relief
Herbal Cupping	<input type="checkbox"/> / <input type="checkbox"/> Mixed	Cups + Herbs	Natural healing with added herbs

Benefits of Hijama (Cupping Therapy) – In Detail

Hijama (wet cupping) is believed to offer numerous health, mental, and spiritual benefits, supported by centuries of traditional practice and some modern research. Below is a detailed explanation of its proven, reported, and traditional benefits:

A. Physical Health Benefits

1. Detoxification of Blood

- Removes —waste or stagnant blood from the body.
- Helps clean the bloodstream and promote fresh blood circulation.

2. Pain Relief

- Effective for back pain, neck pain, migraines, arthritis, and muscle pain.
- Reduces stiffness and swelling in joints.

3. Improves Blood Circulation

- Suction brings blood to surface tissue and boosts oxygen/nutrient delivery.
- Enhances circulation in affected areas.

4. Boosts Immune System

- Encourages the production of white blood cells and immune responses.
- May help in managing chronic infections and inflammatory conditions.

5. Reduces Inflammation

- Cupping is known to reduce markers of inflammation.
- Helps with rheumatoid arthritis, asthma, and allergies.

6. Treats Skin Conditions

- Beneficial in cases of eczema, acne, boils, and psoriasis.
- Cupping purifies blood which improves skin health.

7. Regulates Hormonal Imbalance

- May assist in issues related to menstrual irregularities, PCOS, infertility.

8. Aids Digestion

- Hijama on specific points (like stomach, back) may relieve indigestion, bloating, and constipation.

9. Lowers Blood Pressure and Cholesterol

- Helps with hypertension and improves lipid profile (in some studies).

10. Improves Liver and Kidney Function

- Removes toxins and supports metabolic processes.

B. Mental & Emotional Benefits

1.Reduces Stress and Anxiety

- Helps balance the nervous system.
- Deeply relaxing effect – like acupuncture or massage.

2. Improves Sleep (Insomnia)

- Relaxes the body, calms the mind.
- Treats insomnia and restlessness.

3.Relieves Headaches and Migraines

- Especially helpful for people suffering from chronic migraines.

4.Mental Clarity and Energy Boost

- Reported to improve concentration, memory, and reduce brain fog.

C. Spiritual & Sunnah Benefits

1. Following the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ

- Practiced and highly recommended by the Prophet (peace be upon him).

—Indeed, in cupping (Hijama) there is a cure.

— *[Sahih Bukhari]*

2. Protection from Magic and Evil Eye

- Mentioned in Islamic traditions that Hijama helps with spiritual afflictions.

3. Increase in Barakah (Blessing) and Strength

- Believed to provide physical and spiritual energy when done on Sunnah days.

Modern Scientific Perspective:

While more clinical studies are needed, research has shown potential benefits in:

- Managing chronic pain
- Improving blood biomarkers
- Reducing oxidative stress
- Managing high blood pressure and cholesterol

Several clinical trials suggest that cupping therapy may stimulate the immune system, reduce inflammation, and relieve musculoskeletal pain.

Summary Table of Hijama Benefits:

Category	Benefits
Physical	Detox, pain relief, improved circulation, joint health, digestion
Mental	Stress reduction, sleep improvement, mental clarity
Spiritual	Sunnah reward, protection from spiritual harm
Preventive	Boosts immunity, balances body systems, improves general well-being

While Hijama (wet cupping) is generally considered safe when performed by a trained professional, there are certain medical, physical, and situational conditions in which Hijama is either discouraged, risky, or strictly prohibited.

1. Anemia (Low Hemoglobin / Iron Deficiency)

Why?

- Hijama involves blood loss, which can worsen anemia.
- May lead to weakness, dizziness, or even fainting.

Recommendation:

- First correct anemia with supplements and diet before undergoing Hijama.
- Get a blood test done (CBC, Hemoglobin) before your session.

2. Severe Weakness, Fatigue, or After Illness

Why?

- Hijama may cause temporary tiredness.
- In weak individuals, it can deplete energy further.

Avoid:

- Immediately after surgeries, childbirth, fever, long illness.

3. During Pregnancy (Especially First 3 Months)

Why?

- Risk of stimulating uterine contractions, miscarriage, or reduced blood flow.
- Hormonal changes may also cause skin sensitivity.

Exceptions:

- In later stages (after 4th month), Hijama may be done only by trained experts and on safe points (not abdomen or lower back).

4. People on Blood Thinners / Anticoagulants

Examples:

- Warfarin, Aspirin, Heparin

Why?

- Increased risk of excessive bleeding, bruising, and delayed clotting after Hijama.

5. Hemophilia or Bleeding Disorders

Why?

- Patients with clotting disorders may bleed excessively and uncontrollably.

- Hijama is strictly contraindicated.

6. Skin Diseases or Open Wounds at the Hijama Site

Conditions to Avoid:

- Eczema
- Psoriasis (active lesions)
- Fungal infections
- Burns, cuts, infected wounds

Why?

- Can spread infection or worsen skin damage.
- Suction may irritate inflamed skin.

7. Uncontrolled Diabetes (Especially with Poor Wound Healing)

Why?

- High blood sugar impairs healing.
- Increased risk of post-cupping infection or delayed recovery.

Advice:

- Control sugar levels first; use antiseptic care strictly.

8. Cancer Patients (Under Treatment)

Why?

- Weak immune system, poor healing capacity.
- Risk of stimulating blood flow to tumors (theoretical concern).

Exceptions:

- Palliative use in some chronic pain cases, but only under medical advice.

9. Children (Below Age 7–10 Years)

Why?

- Their blood volume is low.
- Hijama may cause dizziness, weakness, or trauma.

Exceptions:

- Dry cupping may be done by pediatric experts for asthma or digestion, with caution.

10. Elderly or Frail Individuals

Why?

- Skin is fragile.
- Blood pressure may fluctuate easily.
- Weak immune response increases infection risk.

11. During Menstruation (in Women)

Why?

- Women are already losing blood.
- Hijama may cause weakness, dizziness, or hormonal imbalance.

Best Time:

- 3 to 5 days after menstruation ends.

12. Immediately After Eating or Fasting

Why?

- Stomach is either too full or too empty.
- Can cause nausea, vomiting, or fainting.

Ideal Time:

- At least 2–3 hours after eating.

Special Conditions Requiring Doctor's Approval

Condition	Hijama Status
Heart disease	Caution – Only with cardiologist's advice
High blood pressure	Can be beneficial – but monitor BP closely
Epilepsy	Only under expert supervision
Asthma	Safe on back points – avoid during attacks
Mental illness	May help, but avoid during severe psychosis

Summary Table: When to Avoid Hijama

Condition	Status
Anemia / low hemoglobin	<input type="checkbox"/> Avoid
Pregnancy (1st trimester)	<input type="checkbox"/> Avoid
Bleeding disorders (e.g., hemophilia)	<input type="checkbox"/> Prohibited
Weakness after illness	<input type="checkbox"/> Not advised
Diabetes (uncontrolled)	<input type="checkbox"/> With care
Blood thinners (e.g. aspirin)	<input type="checkbox"/> Avoid
Children below 7	<input type="checkbox"/> Caution
During menstruation	<input type="checkbox"/> Avoid
Open wounds / skin infections	<input type="checkbox"/> Avoid
After heavy meal or while fasting	<input type="checkbox"/> Avoid

Advice:

Always get:

- Medical history checked
- Blood tests (CBC, BP, sugar levels)
- Professional Hijama practitioner

Conclusion on Hijama (Cupping Therapy)

Hijama, or wet cupping therapy, is a centuries-old healing practice rooted in Islamic tradition and widely used in Unani, Chinese, and holistic medicine. It involves removing small amounts of blood through suction and light skin incisions to promote detoxification, pain relief, and overall wellness.

Numerous people have reported benefits for conditions such as chronic pain, migraines, hypertension, joint diseases, stress, and skin disorders. Hijama also holds religious significance in Islam as a Sunnah practice of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

However, Hijama is not suitable for everyone. It must be avoided or used with extreme caution in cases like

anemia, pregnancy, bleeding disorders, weak immunity, or uncontrolled diabetes. The procedure should only be performed by a qualified and hygienic practitioner after proper health assessment.

In summary, Hijama can be a powerful natural therapy with physical, mental, and spiritual benefits when done safely and at the right time, on the right person, by the right hands.

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