Ayurveda: An Introductory Look from basmati
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Ayurveda isn’t a new study: it’s been practiced for nearly 6,000 years in India. But it’s endured throughout the years because of its holistic approach to health. Often translated as “the science of life,” Ayurveda looks at each individual’s personal constitution as a mix of Vata, Pitta, and Kapha characteristics; your constitution affects your health, personality, and more. In this section, we introduce you to the field of Ayurveda and some of its basic principles. We’ve included a glossary page for quick reference with some of the most basic concepts in Ayurveda and a brief, if perhaps overly simple, definition of each. If you’re looking for a crib sheet to give you the barebones basics of Ayurveda, you’ll find it in this section.
Glossary

Abhyanga—an Ayurvedic massage with warm oil that improves circulation and removes toxins

Agni—“digestive fires”; the essential form of fire and heat; responsible for digestion, assimilation, and absorption

Ahara—balanced diet or food that is consumed

Ama—“undigested”; a toxic byproduct of undigested food in the body; caused by low agni

Asana—yoga pose

Ayurveda—“the science of life”; a system of holistic healing that originated in India 5000-6000 years ago

Bringhana—herbs or foods that nourish all the body’s tissues and all seven layers of the self, especially good for fertility

Chakra—one of seven primary energy plexuses or centers of spiritual power in the body, found near the spinal cord

Dinacharya—“daily routine,” usually involving self-care practices like hygiene, spirituality, meals, sleep, and exercise, that helps align us with natural rhythms and create structure in our lives

Dosha—one of three energies found in nature and in the body (Vata, Pitta, Kapha) that determines an individual’s physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual characteristics

Drishti—a focused gaze that helps develop concentration

Gunas—the three main elemental principles, qualities, or tendencies of yogic and Ayurvedic philosophy (sattva, rajas, and tamas)

Kapha—one of the three doshas; predominated by earth and water; heavy, slow, stable

Kosha—one of five body fields or sheaths (such as physical, energetic, and mental) that make up each being

Ojas—life force or biological energy; the most refined product of digestion; one of three vital essences in the body; ruled by Kapha

Panchakarma—“five actions,” referring to the five traditional deep cleansing Ayurvedic practices used to eliminate excess Vata, Kapha, Pitta, and ama

Pitta—one of the three doshas; predominated by fire and water; light, sharp, hot, oily
Prakriti—constitution; unique ratio of the three doshas that is established at conception; the primordial material energy of which all matter is composed
Prana—vital life force; often conceptualized as breath, but can also be food or water
Pranayama—yogic breathing practices that work with prana to increase awareness
Rajas—one of three gunas (with sattva and tamas); the principle that ignites movement and change
Rasa—has many meanings, most commonly “taste,” but also “juice,” “plasma,” “essence,” and “sap”
Sattva—one of three gunas (with rajas and tamas); life-giving; associated with the qualities of wholesomeness, balance, harmony, goodness, purity, clarity
Sneha—meaning both “oil” and “love,” often used to refer to the therapeutic application of oil or abhyanga
Tamas—one of three gunas (with rajas and sattva); associated with the qualities of decay, death, chaos, imbalance, impurity, lethargy
Tridoshic—balancing all three doshas (Vata, Kapha, Pitta)
Vata—one of the three doshas; predominated by ether and air; light, cold, dry, rough
Vikriti (or Vrakiti) —an individual’s constitution or unique combination of doshas at present (as opposed to Prakriti, which is the constitution at conception); one’s current state of health
Ayurveda: An Introduction

Learn the basics behind Ayurveda, the science of life, with this brief introduction.

Ayurveda is one of the most ancient scientific approaches to holistic healing in human history. As one of the first collected systems of medicinal practice, the roots of Ayurveda can be found in Tibetan, Traditional Chinese, and Early Greek medicine. Originating in India between five and six thousand years ago, Ayurveda is a holistic form of medicine fundamentally based upon the laws of nature to treat the body, mind, and spirit. Originally an oral tradition taught directly from teacher to pupil, the unique approach Ayurveda offers focuses on establishing harmony and balance within an individual through the assistance of diet, as well as daily and seasonal routines. Based on the principles of the Veda, one of the oldest, existing literatures known in human history, Ayurveda is a Sanskrit word literally translating as “the wisdom of life” or “the knowledge of longevity.”

Ayurveda’s principal belief is that the Universe, as well as everything within it, is made up of five elements: air, fire, water, earth, and ether (or space). Following this, the combinations of these elements give rise to three energies, known as “doshas.” The three doshas are recognized as Vata, Pitta, and Kapha and are composed of two main elements. All three doshas are found in the body but each individual generally has one predominating dosha that determines characteristics attributed to the body and mind. Depending upon your constitution, there exists preferable qualities of food, climate, and lifestyle that are beneficial to your unique physical, mental, and spiritual make-up, as well as specific areas to pay attention to that are susceptible to imbalances and disease tendencies.

Vata is comprised of air and space and embodies the quality of movement in the body, governing functions such as circulation, respiration, and elimination. When in balance, if Vata predominates, a person tends to be thin, sensitive, deeply creative, light, energetic, and enthusiastic. Out of balance, Vata tends to experience insomnia, anxiety, dry skin, and a difficulty focusing.

The dosha of Pitta is a combination of the contrasting elements of fire and water, which manifests as transformation. In the body, this affects processes such as the regulation of temperature, chemical reactions, and metabolism. An individual with a primarily Pitta constitution has an inclination towards having a medium physical build and being intensely passionate, intelligent, and driven in nature. When balanced, Pitta exemplifies warmth and friendliness and functions extremely well as a strong, dedicated leader. A Pitta imbalance (excess of heat) reflects easy irritability and a strong temper. A person may suffer from indigestion or other inflammatory conditions as a result.

Kapha dosha combines the elements of water and earth and is responsible for lubrication, protection, and growth. Physiologically, this is expressed as the flow of water to all body parts and organs in addition to maintenance of the proper functioning of the immune system.
When Kapha dominates, a balanced individual has a tendency towards being easygoing and nurturing—the supportive and stable “peace keeper.” Out of balance, Kapha expresses itself as laziness, depression, congestion, and sluggishness.

When a person’s doshas are equalized, their body, mind, and spirit are as well. Ayurveda is a complete healing system in that it takes into account an individual’s unique constitution rather than a one-size-fits-all mentality towards health. The practice discusses the diagnosis and treatment of various ailments and diseases with an approach that is focused on purification and rejuvenation. While modern day Western medicine tends to focus on treating the symptoms, Ayurveda works to first identify and then remove the cause of the problem that is creating the disparity. This is exercised in part by utilizing elemental opposites to bring forth balance. For example: excess heat creating a Pitta imbalance may be treated with a **cooling-based** diet. Ayurveda recognizes that the first place these discrepancies occur is in the digestive tract, and are therefore understandably affected primarily by that which we consume. Early signs of imbalance can occur in various stages as a general feeling that “something is off” and if we are paying attention, can serve as a wake-up call of sorts to shift our behavior and habits. Adjusting our diet and daily activities, and taking herbal supplements, cleanses, and remedies are all tools used to restore an individual to optimal health. If left untreated, these imbalances are likely to develop into serious illnesses, usually in the form of the predictable ailments their dosha is predisposed to be susceptible to.

In order to support the longevity of our health, it is absolutely essential to seek balance in all aspects of our lives in consideration of our unique nature. Ayurveda takes into account the root cause of all ailments with the firm understanding that our dietary and lifestyle choices are the key to the preservation of our wellbeing and, ultimately, our happiness and peace of mind.

*Indi Maxon*
Basic Ayurveda Principles to Live By

Chances are you’ve already adopted some aspects of Ayurveda into your own healthy lifestyle.

Think Ayurveda, and you may start thinking about herbs and medicinal concoctions used to stave off diseases. Well, true, to a point. But that’s not the sole and whole of Ayurveda. Instead, Ayurveda, first and foremost, is a lifestyle, a way of life. The word Ayurveda in itself can be translated as “life science”—in effect, Ayurveda is a set of principles to live your life by, not just recipes of herbal concoctions to drive away that cold (although we’ve got that, too!).

And frankly, when you get down to it, Ayurveda isn’t all that much different from what your grandma told you, or what your mother still yells across. It’s common sense, that’s not so common. So here are 12 Ayurvedic tips to live your life well—tips that give you a healthy body, mind, and soul—and probably have you exclaiming, “Darn, I knew that!”

Tip 1: The Early Bird Gets the Worm, the Sun, & Some Fresh Air

According to Ayurveda, the best time to get up is at the crack of dawn for this is the freshest and most energized part of the day. The new sun brings about pure energy and basking in the sun’s newborn rays is what gives you the best dose of vitamin D. The air is fresh and at its least polluted. The world is silent and peaceful. So getting up as early as you can (which means you sort of have to get to bed early, too) is a healthy choice to make. This is why your mom pounded on your door every morning. (No? Okay, then it was just mine!)

Tip 2: A Healthy Gut Means a Healthy Body

A key to living healthy is having a healthy digestion—and this means you watch what you eat, but also make a schedule of eliminating those toxins from your body on a daily basis. Yep, we are talking about poop here. In Ayurveda, the importance of cleansing your bowels is emphasized strongly—and frankly, it is advised to go for your ablutions first thing in the morning so that you can perform any and all exercises on an empty bowel to get the best toxin-free benefits of working out. Remember that this may take some time to get used to, especially if your bowel is not trained to go at specific times. Combat this by taking in high-fiber foods for dinner—more salads, raw veggies, lentils, and fruits.

Tip 3: Use This Early Wake-Up Call to Get in Exercise

You’ve gotten up early, dragged yourself out of bed with a strong willpower, are done with your morning cleanse, and are outside soaking in the sun. Now what? Put on your sneakers and go for a run, a walk, or a bike ride, or use the green around you to do a set of Surya Namaskar. Exercise is a key component in Ayurveda; it keeps the body in optimum balance,
keeps the weight in check, and most importantly, promotes healthy blood circulation, which is vital in eliminating toxins from the body.

**Tip 4: Begin Your Intake With Something Sweet**

No, we do not mean those glazed donuts or that indulgent shake. Once the exercise is done, resist the urge to take in lost calories at your nearest fast-food joint that opens up at 6 in the morning. Instead go home, back to that kitchen, and mix up a glass of honey lemonade—in a glass of warm water, squeeze in at least half a lemon, if not a full one, and add in 1 tablespoon of honey. Mix well and drink up. The honey is an antibacterial and the lemon gives you a dose of vitamin C—thus eliminating more toxins from your body and keeping you well flushed with disease-preventing agents, too.

**Tip 5: Well Begun is Half Done**

A good breakfast is key to a good day. Do start your day with a dose of healthy cereal—oats, quinoa, or even simple unsweetened cornflakes. Your daily cup of tea or coffee can follow your breakfast so that its natural acid is neutralized by the food content in your stomach. Remember to choose seasonal fruits and vegetables, and cook everything healthily—less oil, some herbs, seasonal spices, and low on salt.

**Tip 6: Hydrate Yourself Through the Day**

Remember when your parents kept filling up that glass of yours with water, insisting you have at least 6-8 glasses a day? Well they were prescribing good Ayurveda. An adequate water intake ensures that your digestive and circulatory systems work well, and you flush out those toxins, too.

**Tip 7: Make a Schedule & Stick to It**

Having a calm mental equilibrium is also a major part of following an Ayurvedic lifestyle—and to do so, it is good to make a list of things to do in the morning, and try and stick to your list to get all your work done in an unhurried, non-stressful way. This gives you a sense of achievement at the end of the day and also keeps you stress-free.

**Tip 8: Find Some Me Time to Introspect & Meditate**

It's really not that difficult to find just 10 minutes in a day where you can practice silence, introspection, meditation or perhaps even have a spiritual conversation with your Creator. These 10 minutes in the day, or more if you can manage them, should be used to realign yourself with the universe—to find your place in it, and to find happiness and joy within yourself.
Tip 9: Spend a Little Time Amidst Nature

This could even be when you exercise—being around **verdant surroundings** is a natural mood lifter and **stress buster**. Green is a calming color, and being around plants and trees with the trilling of birds centers you and **helps you become a calmer, happier person**—ready to take on the day-to-day challenges in general.

Tip 10: Remember to Try DIY, Natural Beauty Care

When it comes to skin or hair care, there’s a lot we can do. From using dairy products to moisturize, **oil to massage**, or even plants like **aloe vera** and **turmeric**—there’s a lot of **beauty from the kitchens** and gardens that we can make on our own and incorporate into our daily lives. If you don’t have time to make your own, make sure to buy as organic as possible when purchasing beauty products, including makeup. Check out the best **vitamins for beauty**, as well as **these toxins to avoid** in your makeup. And if you’re up for making your own, check out some **DIY beauty recipes**.

Tip 11: Sleep For At Least Seven Hours Everyday

Ayurveda stresses getting enough **sleep** in a day—letting your body and mind rest for those hours at night is crucial to both physical and mental health. Not sleeping well or not sleeping enough will only cause your body to slow down and be immune deficient and your brain to become sluggish and slow to react, ultimately increasing stress and related disorders.

Tip 12: Rejuvenate With a Glass of Warm Milk

Sometimes even if we do want to sleep, our minds or bodies cannot find that equilibrium needed to relax enough to fall asleep. Ayurveda says, as do most grandmas, to take in a glass of milk boiled with just a pinch of **cardamom**. The milk, along with the cardamom, will soothe and lull you into a state of relaxation needed to fall asleep.

So that’s it—12 rather easy things to do on an everyday basis that you may have known about, but not known were Ayurvedic in origin.
What is Ama?

A buildup of ama in the body can manifest in a variety of unpleasant symptoms.

Do you wake up every morning feeling fresh and rejuvenated? Is your mind clear and skin glowing? If not, you may be experiencing the accumulation of ama in the body. A body free from ama feels light and generally enthusiastic about life and has a pink tongue and blemish-free complexion. Where Western medicine is left without explanation for certain conditions which seem to never be resolved, Ayurveda is wise to the notion of ama and how to relieve it in order to bring one out of the path of dis-ease and back into alignment with wellness.

What is Ama?

Literally translated as “undigested,” ama is a sort of toxic byproduct of undigested or unassimilated food in the body. It is created as a result of low or ineffective digestive fires, known in Sanskrit as “agni.” In a normal, healthy body, the entirety of food eaten is properly digested by the agni. Approximately half then is taken into the body as nutrients to feed the cells and the other half is eliminated as waste products. If the digestive fires are weak and food is not properly being digested, various symptoms arise in the body, such as:
- Heaviness in the gut
- Waking up tired
- General lethargy
- Unenthusiastic expression for life
- Coated tongue
- Gas/bloating
- Congestion anywhere in the body
- Mental fogginess
- Foul smelling breath or stools

If there is ama in the body, the agni is compromised and in Ayurveda the presence of ama is actually stage one of the development of any dis-ease.

How To Strengthen Agni (Digestive Fire)

There are a few different ways you can work to strengthen your agni, or digestive fire. The first step in removing ama is actually to bring the body’s agni back into full function so that no further ama can be created; this is followed by a detoxification process to release the accumulation of ama. Through breath work, yoga asanas, and various supplements, you can remove ama and improve the strength of your body’s agni.

**Pranayama**

One of the simplest practices to help bring the body’s agni into balance is the pranayama techniques of bastrika and kapalabhati breathing. Both of these breathing practices utilize an intensified drawing in and out of the breath.

**Bastrika** is the practice of strongly moving breath in and out each nostril, one side at a time. So there is a strong inhale and exhale out of the right nostril while blocking the left, and then the right is blocked while a strong inhale and exhale is taken through the left and this process is continued for several minutes. This not only helps to activate the body’s agni, but also stimulates a harmonious balance of the right and left hemispheres of the brain.

**Kapalabhati** breathing is also known as “breath of fire” and is one of the basic shatkarma (cleansing) practices in traditional Hatha yoga. It has also been referred to as the “bellows” breath as it requires that the abdomen be inflated and deflated like a bellows with each breath. In **this breathing practice** the yogi concentrates on a strong exhale through either pursed lips or through the nose while then letting the inhale take care of itself as a bellows. The breaths are in rapid succession and not only increase the body’s agni but also strengthen the abdomen as well as creating the effect known as “the shining skull”—
another translation of this breathing technique in Sanskrit—as it brings clarity of mind and helps to open the third eye center.

**Yoga**

Many yoga postures help to strengthen the body’s digestive fires. One of the most complete ways is to incorporate Surya Namaskara, or the Sun Salutations routine. Not only does this 12 posture series stretch the spine in all ways and activate all of the endocrine glands and chakras in the body, it also moves the lymph and helps to strengthen both the agni as well as the bhuta agni (the spiritual fires), which contribute to the elimination of excessive ama.

**Food/Supplements**

Ghee is an excellent support in bringing the agni up as well as in removing excess ama from the body. Other herbs such as ginger, turmeric, and black pepper support agni in the belly and also move ama.

**How To Remove Ama**

Focusing on eliminating the built-up ama in the body will also result in an increase in agni, so there are various foods and practices which can help with the detoxification process such as starting the day with warm water, or once per week a warm salt water flush (known in Sanskrit as “sankha prakshalana”).

Cutting down on the intake of coffee, dairy products, alcohol, sweet foods, and fried foods is helpful in releasing ama from the body, as these items are generally not fully digested and rendered not useful in the body from the beginning. During the stages of ama detoxification it is a good idea to also avoid fish and eggs as well as other meat products and stick to a diet that is more focused on bringhana foods.

Other supports for removing ama include the Ayurvedic herb triphala and the herbal formula chyawanprash, a mixture of various herbs long revered for their ability to detox ama. Chyawanprash comes in a black, jam-like consistency that can be spooned out or spread on toast.

Eating largely sattvic foods and adding practices such as mantra, meditation, yoga, and Ayurvedic spa treatments such as abhyanga massage will benefit the body much in releasing ama.

**How to Know Ama is Removed**

If you have effectively released built up ama from the body you will know it. Not only will you wake up feeling refreshed and renewed, clear in the mind, but you will find a new love and vigor for your life that once felt lost. Strange symptoms will disappear and your body will feel
lighter and younger again. The skin will begin to glow and you will have a sense that you have reached a new level of health that is obtainable by all people, not only the young. Thanks to the specific knowledge of Ayurveda it is possible to bring health and clarity into the body where once dis-ease, depression, and fatigue sat. By removing ama the body can get a “reset” and start again to approach life from a place of balance and harmony.

Stasia Bliss
Often in Ayurveda you’ll hear about doshas, or the energetic forces that influence all aspects of our physical makeup, mental qualities, and biomedical functioning. The three doshas, Pitta, Vata, and Kapha, are each unique in their characteristics, which you can learn more about in this chapter. Take a quiz to learn your own dominant dosha, and then explore the further information we include to learn how to make the most of your Ayurvedic constitution. We’ve also included an introduction to the chakra system in the body.
A Beginner’s Guide to the Doshas

Ayurvedic theory centers around the three doshas. Learn about them and their characteristics.

Do you have thick hair, thin hair, or maybe coarser hair?

Are you talkative or not?

Prone to anger, fear, or escape in a stressful situation?

Your answers to questions like these form your unique balance of the three doshas according to Ayurvedic theory. Doshas are biological energetic substances that function within one’s body to maintain health and life. The doshas—which are always changing and adapting to the conditions in one’s life—correspond with the three of the five elements that are also constantly changing. The elements of air, fire, and water (which give the respective qualities to the wind, sun, and moon) shift in accordance with one another, whereas the last two of the five life-giving elements, ether and earth, generally remain more constant, and change independently and infrequently.

The doshas wax and wane based on what one’s body needs, and also in response to the exterior environment in which we exist at any given part of the day, month, year. The three doshas regulate our essential physiological tissues, the dhatus, as well as our body’s wastes, or malas. The dhatus include plasma, blood, muscle, fat, bone, bone marrow and nerve and reproductive tissue, and the malas include biological wastes such as sweat, urine, and feces.

In Ayurvedic theory, each person is born with a specific constitution, or prakruti (or prakriti). Prakruti governs how one looks, how one’s body metabolizes, and how one responds both emotionally and mentally to various life circumstances. One’s mind-body type or dosha can be roughly identified based on some clues in the body, mind, and environment. One may tend towards one of the three doshas, or may be a combination of mostly two doshas, but because of the balancing nature of the three, one is rarely an even balance of all three doshas. The balance of each of the key qualities associated with the Vata, Pitta, and Kapha doshas is what makes us each unique.

Vata (Air; secondary: ether)

Season: late fall through early winter – dry, rough, irregular, mobile, cool
Key role: controls bodily functions of motion, transmission, nerve impulses, and sense perception in the body (blood circulation, breathing, blinking, heartbeat)

Associated parts of the body: colon, bladder, uterus, joints, skin (consequence = gas or bloating)

Physical composition: thin, lean, wiry

Mental composition: quick mind, creative thinker, enjoys spontaneity rather than routine

Emotional composition: restless, anxious, likely to scare rather than anger in a stressful situation

Balance compositions with: routine, warmth, serenity, nourishment

Eating habits: enjoys snacking and nibbling rather than sitting for a big meal, eats “airy” foods like popcorn or apples

Balance diet with: grounding, warm, moist foods, like legumes and root vegetables

Other notable traits: sometimes thirsty; light sleeper/insomnia sometimes present; has brittle fingernails; sex drive comes and goes; spends and shares money

Pitta (Fire; secondary: water)

Season: full-on spring through the peak of fiery fall colors – hot, intense, transformative

Key role: controls metabolic functions and rapid transformations in the body

Associated parts of the body: digestive secretions, like stomach acid and the liver’s bile (consequence = burping or sweating)

Physical composition: medium bone frames, well proportioned, moles, fair or reddish skin

Mental composition: enjoy taking the lead, setting your own pace, good memory

Emotional composition: likely to anger rather than scare in a stressful situation

Balance compositions with: cooling, surrendering, moderation

Eating habits: ravenous when hungry, eats “fiery” foods like spicy and hot (temperature) foods

Balance diet with: cooling and soothing foods, like fresh fruits and vegetables

Other notable traits: often thirsty; usually sleeps well; has flexible but strong fingernails; “ready” sex drive; spends money on special items or those necessary for advancement
Kapha (Water; secondary: earth)

**Season:** late winter to the birth of spring – heavy, dense, stable, wet

**Key role:** controls growth in the body by providing moisture, lubrication, and mass in the body’s membranes, active where there are whitish secretions (consequence = slow or sticky bowel movements)

**Associated parts of the body:** lungs, mouth, and orifices

**Physical composition:** solid build, strong frame

**Mental composition:** slow to make decisions, prefer routine, good organizer

**Emotional composition:** pensive, stubborn, tends to isolate or “numb out” in times of stress

**Balance compositions with:** stimulation, warming, exercise, lightening

**Eating habits:** can sustain on little food for a long time, eats heavy, “earthy” foods, like breads, starches, and dense sweets

**Balance diet with:** lighter, crispier foods, like soups and salads

**Other notable traits:** rarely thirsty; sound, heavy sleeper; has strong, thick fingernails; steady sex drive; prefers to save money

Knowing and understanding your dosha is, in Ayurvedic medicine, the mode of getting to know yourself. Your demeanor and preferences and the habits and tendencies you form are a result of your dosha, and change according to imbalances in your body, which can be a result of environmental conditions (like weather and seasons), foods we eat (elemental consumption), stress, emotions, our own actions, and other life circumstances. The three main doshic states are balanced or “equilibrium” (which is desirable but can be hard to maintain), increased or “aggravated” (one dosha is more prominent), and decreased or “reduced” (one dosha is less prominent).

Want to learn more about your dosha? You may also want to take this Basmati dosha quiz, or this quick quiz to better understand your dosha, or mind-body type. You can also learn how to choose a yoga practice or the right exercise based on your dosha.

Gretchen F. Kaija

Source:
Ayurveda is the ancient Indian science of health and philosophy that came about the same time as the Vedic texts, around 1500 BCE. The Rishis, or “seers,” who compiled the Vedas were known for their deep contemplative practices; they looked into their inner world to make observations and connections about living in accordance with the laws of nature. Ayurveda then became a means of preventative health and achieving overall wellbeing; therefore, it encompasses all aspects of being—body, mind, and spirit.

Ayurveda distinguishes the energies that constitute all life on earth. The five elements—earth, water, fire, air, and space—are used to relate the internal, individual experience to the external world we inhabit. The sense of spaciousness in the body after holding a stretch or yoga pose resembles the space between material objects; or, the pot you cook your food in resembles the “pot” of your stomach that digests the food.

The elements condense into what Ayurveda calls the three doshas—Vata, Pitta, and Kapha—corresponding to air, fire, and water. These forces are always at work in the body for different functions and processes. Vata controls movement and the nervous system; Pitta controls digestion; and Kapha affects tissues, wastes, and stability. Everyone has various amounts of the three doshas present, but one or two usually outweigh the others, resulting in predictable body types, traits, and ailments. The brief quiz below will give you an idea of your Ayurvedic constitution. If you already know your type, it’s still beneficial to take the quiz because the doshas fluctuate through the stages of life.

**Eyes, Hair & Skin**

**Eyes**

a) My eyes are narrow and grey, blue, or dark brown in color.
b) My eyes are medium in size and light in color: hazel, green, or light brown.

c) My eyes are large pools reminiscent of a deer and are of either very light or very dark brown.

Hair

a) My hair is dry, curly, or frizzy; it tangles and breaks easily.

b) My hair is straight and reddish or light brown.

c) My hair is thick, wavy, and dark; it can be coarse or oily.

Skin

a) My skin is usually dry and cold. May be susceptible towards eczema and psoriasis.

b) My skin is light or reddish, tends to be warm, and is easily irritated. May be prone to freckles and rashes.

c) My skin is oily, cool, smooth, and luminous.

Frame, Appetite & Exercise

Frame

a) I am very tall or very short and thin/slender with long limbs and protruding joints. I find it difficult to gain or hold onto weight.

b) My body is well proportioned and my build is medium or broad. I can gain or lose weight somewhat easily.

c) I tend to be overweight or curvy with thick bones and a broad frame.

Appetite

a) My appetite varies and I have a tendency to unintentionally skip meals. I have a somewhat sensitive digestion.

b) I have a hearty appetite and hate to miss meals. I crave hot and spicy foods.
c) My appetite is stable and I may have a tendency to crave rich or sweet foods.

**Exercise: Motivation**

a) I love vigorous exercise and heat, though I burnout quickly.

b) I enjoy exercise but don't like to overheat.

c) I'm not particularly interested in vigorous exercise.

**Exercise: Stamina**

a) Sometimes I am so active I become restless. I have difficulty maintaining muscle tone.

b) I can pace myself but much prefer to go all-out in competition.

c) I am slow to find motivation but once I get moving, I have good stamina and coordination.

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**Stress, Sleep & Relationships**

**Stress: Mental**

a) Under stress I tend to be anxious, worried, indecisive, and have restless sleep.

b) When stressed, I become irritated, angry, and critical easily.

c) Under stress I become greedy and stubborn.

**Stress: Physical**

a) I have a tendency towards insomnia, restlessness, and excessive dryness of the skin or stiffness in the joints.

b) I am prone to rashes and excessive heat/inflammation in the body.

c) I tend to become lazy, lethargic; I overeat and oversleep.

**Sleep**
a) I sleep lightly, tossing and turning, but it varies. I usually have trouble falling asleep. I am not a morning person.

b) I sleep well and have vivid, intense dreams. I wake up feeling rested and alert.

c) I love to sleep, often on my stomach. Most nights I sleep 8-12 hours and feel great when I wake up.

**Relationships**

a) I find it difficult to have many close relationships. I enjoy my alone time.

b) I make friends easily and am a natural leader.

c) I enjoy having close friends and family near me.

**Results**

*If you answered mostly A...*

...then your body type is Vata. Vata people are generally thin, narrow in the shoulders and hips, and their joints often crack when they move. Their skin tends to be dry and chaps easily; they sweat very little and love to be out in the sun. Vata types often have erratic eating patterns and issues with digestion because changeability (like the air and wind) is a key trait among Vata people. If you are predominately Vata, it is important to establish routines for going to bed and waking, eating at consistent times, and enjoying foods that are cooked together—like soups, curries, and stews—to help regulate digestion.

*If you answered mostly B...*

...then you are predomnately Pitta, the dosha of fire. Pitta types sweat a lot because they have so much inner heat, and their skin turns red in the sun or during exercise and is prone to freckles and moles. The intensity of the Pitta dosha makes this type love food because they have a strong digestion, but if they miss a meal you do not want to be in their line of fire (!!!). Pitta types apply their intensity to everything they do, making them great leaders and competitors, although their intense nature causes them to anger easily. To keep from getting too fiery, Pitta types should avoid spicy, oily foods, coffee and alcohol, and enjoy cold or raw foods and beverages.

*If you answered mostly C...*
...then you are Kapha, solid and grounded. Kapha is influenced by water and earth elements, making this type of person an easy-going and reliable friend. Kapha types tend to be thick in the waist, buttock, and thighs because they store energy and fluids. Kapha types are natural athletes though they easily struggle with weight gain when they do not exercise regularly. Excitement and newness that attracts Pitta and Vata does not appeal to Kapha types; they'd much rather chill at home with familiar faces around them. Attachment to relaxation and the status quo can make Kapha types complacent or averse to change, making them greedy and stubborn. To balance this tendency, Kaphas need motivation by way of regular exercise times and have the most substantial meal of the day at lunch.

You may be a combination type if your answers are spread between two types. These dual constitutions are Vata-Pitta, Pitta-Kapha, and Vata-Kapha. Observe which dosha is predominant in each category of the quiz to gain some insight about your dual constitution. Understanding your tendencies with digestion and stress in regard to your physicality will give you awareness of your type and how to stay balanced.

This quiz and these explanations provide a sneak peak into your Ayurvedic constitution and may not paint the whole picture for you. Ayurveda is an ancient science that has been practiced and studied over millennia; please consider further reading and more in-depth quizzes with some of the resources below or on Basmati. Once you find out your dosha, you can also read on to find out the right food, exercise, and more for your specific constitution.

Further Resources

Ayurveda: A Life of Balance  by Maya Tiwari
Ayurveda: The Science of Self-Healing  by Dr. Vasant Lad
Prakriti by Dr. Robert E. Svoboda
Joyful Belly Dosha Quiz

Allison Potter
Indi Maxon
The Right Exercise for Your Dosha

Knowing what your dominant dosha is can help you choose the right exercise.

Understanding one’s dosha can help to maximize the benefit of a workout routine. In Ayurveda, or “the science of life,” doshas are the culmination of three energies believed to govern the body and mind. Doshas are derived from the elements. Vata dosha is composed of air and ether; Pitta of fire and water; and Kapha of earth and water. (Read more about the doshas.) Doshas can change over time, as they account for one’s current constitution. If you don’t know your dosha, take this quiz.

Time of Day

The doshas predominate certain times of day and create a guideline for maximizing energy. Kapha time is between 6 a.m. and 10 a.m., where one might experience feelings of heaviness or sluggishness. Ayurveda suggests rising during Vata time, around 5am, which offers mental clarity. The Kapha time is a good time to stimulate the metabolism. Digestive fires are usually at a low, so it is best to eat a light and easily digestible breakfast during this time. Physical labor or rigorous exercise may combat the lull of the morning. Pitta time is between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m., when the digestive fire is strongest. One might consume the largest meal of the day during this time. Vata time exists between 2 p.m. and 6 p.m., and fosters a lightness, and creative or imaginative time. The cycle repeats into the night.

Physical Characteristics and Exercise Recommendations

Physical characteristics of Vata dosha are typically thin with bursts of energy and great agility. Vata types are fast and sharp, yet endurance is not their strong suit. Exercise that balances Vata types is light and grounding such as yoga, tai chi, golf, hiking, walking, or dancing. These exercises provide a grounding effect for the light and airy Vata.

Pitta types are usually muscular, strong, and competitive. To balance Pitta dosha, cool and calming activities are best such as swimming, yoga (a yin or restorative type), or walking by a body of water.

Kapha types are typically big-boned, calm, and have strong endurance. A Kapha type will typically not be fast like a Vata, but can maintain a slow speed for quite some time. To combat the sluggish nature of Kapha, aerobic activities are best like long-distance running, swimming, dancing, or any activity that creates a good sweat.
Intuition

Ayurveda offers a balancing guideline for the individual rather than the masses. With regard to the time of day and a dosha’s tendencies, one may find a more suitable form of movement using Ayurveda. The best exercise for a Kapha type might be wrong for a Vata type, and vice versa. Understanding the characteristics of one’s dosha and how to balance them might help one move in a way that is energizing rather than depleting. Above all, the most important factor in creating an exercise routine is to use one’s intuition. If a routine brings pain or causes exhaustion after, it might not be the right one.

Xenia Sky
Choose a Yoga that Works With Your Dosha

If it’s yoga you’re looking for, learn how to maximize your mat time for your specific dosha.

Maybe you’ve heard yoga is great for your body, mind, and spirit, but you can’t get into it. Maybe you’ve been doing yoga for years, but you don’t feel as connected to your practice as you used to.

Some of us commit to a particular yoga style and never look back, but if you’re still looking for that perfect asana practice, or you want to mix things up in your current practice, you might find the remedy through the discovery of your dosha.

According to Ayurveda, India’s ancient whole-body system of medicine, the five universal elements (earth, water, fire, air, and space) configure themselves in individuals in three energy types, or doshas: **Vata**, **Pitta**, and **Kapha**.

To better understand how our yoga practices affect the doshas (and vice versa), I talked to Jenna Furnari, M.A. in Ayurveda, Certified Ayurvedic Practitioner, E-RYT 500, and Co-Founder of Satyam Yoga Teacher Training in Monterey, California. “The goals of Ayurveda are to sustain health and to treat imbalance not by treating the symptoms, but by removing the cause,” she says. Lifestyle changes, diet modifications, spiritual practices, and herbs make up Ayurveda’s toolbox. Practitioners make recommendations based on the client’s proportion of doshas, or energy and physiological principles.

All three doshas are present in each of us, but one or two tend to be dominant. “Just like everyone has a unique thumbprint, the doshas make up what you can consider your ‘energy print,’” says Furnari. We can use awareness of our individual energy prints to view our bodies, constitutions, and tendencies from a new perspective, “enabling us to make skilled decisions in the way we function and live.” When we’re in balance, the doshas “preserve our health and vitality,” says Furnari. “When imbalanced, they lead to illness or disease.”

According to Furnari, understanding your dosha makeup is the first step toward finding a practice style or approach that cultivates balance. Use these brief summaries (or take our quiz!) to gauge the proportions of these energies in your own body:

**Vata** energy is made up of air and space, and fosters variety and change. Vata types, or those with a dominant Vata dosha, often have a particularly tall or short body frame and cool body temperature. Energetic and creative, they tend towards nervousness, anxiety, and insomnia when imbalanced.

**Pitta**, the combination of fire and water, is the energy of focus and determination, and Pitta types commonly have a medium or athletic build and warm body temperature. They’re quick learners...
with a fiery energy that, when out of balance, can manifest as anger or frustration.

Kapha, made up of water and earth elements, is a calm and methodical energy, and Kapha types may have a broad, evenly proportioned body frame, a steady personality, and a good memory. Too much Kapha energy can lead to greed, stubbornness, and lethargy.

One of the key principles of Ayurveda, Furnari notes, is that “like increases like, and opposites balance.” So if you’re a Pitta type, a yoga practice that creates heat and “fire” in the body will increase, and possibly aggravate, your already-dominant Pitta qualities. We tend to crave things that perpetuate our imbalances, and knowing our “energy print” can help us choose asana practices that oppose, and balance, our prevailing energies.

Once you’ve determined your dominant dosha or doshas, take a look at the practice suggestions below:

**Vata**

You probably gravitate toward: Mystical or esoteric practices, and styles involving creative, intuitive flow and dance elements

For a more grounding practice, try: Classes labeled gentle flow/vinyasa, or Yin

To make any practice more grounding for Vata:

- Keep your eyes open
- Focus on grounding through all four corners of the foot
- Hold poses for at least 3-5 breaths
- Stick to a routine
- Make use of props
- Move through connections mindfully
- Focus on symmetrically aligned poses in which hips are square, such as Warrior I

**Pitta**

You probably gravitate toward: Heating practices such as Ashtanga, hot yoga, and Power Yoga

For a more cooling practice, try: Restorative yoga, Yin yoga

To make any practice more cooling for Pitta:

- Practice with your eyes closed
• Avoid “muscling into” or straining in poses
• Slow the breath, and focus on your exhalation
• Synchronize movement with breath
• Skip chaturangas or connective vinyasas
• Avoid mid-day practice (11 a.m.-2 p.m. is a Pitta time of day)
• Focus on asymmetrical poses that open through the hips, such as Warrior II

**Kapha**

You probably gravitate toward: Yin yoga, slower-paced classes, or no yoga at all

For a more heating practice, try: Vinyasa styles, or practices with rigid structure such as Iyengar

To make any practice more energizing for Kapha:

• Practice heating breaths such as **ujjayi**
• Move at a quicker pace
• Practice regularly, but mix things up (different styles, times, teachers, etc.)
• Focus on backbends
• Make small changes gradually, working up to two to three asana practices a week

Regardless of the style you choose, keep in mind that finding the practices best suited to you is a continuing process. “Practice takes practice,” Furnari says. Our bodies naturally change throughout the day, with each season, and over time. Our practices should change accordingly. Stay curious, listen to your body, and reassess often.

If you’re taking a class with a new teacher, and especially if you’re new to yoga, Furnari suggests arriving early to talk to the teacher about what you’re hoping to receive from the class. If you can, meet with an Ayurvedic specialist, who can help you develop a practice and lifestyle plan tailored to your unique dosha makeup. You can find a yoga class near you or a local practitioner on Basmati’s website.

*Amanda Penn*
How To Eat For Your Dosha

In Ayurveda, food is medicine—so it’s especially important to keep your dosha in mind when eating.

As a country, we’re becoming increasingly more aware of what we eat, and how what we eat makes us feel. The past few years have seen a rise in the popularity of many diets advocating a return to real, whole foods, and prompting us to listen to our bodies. Dietary choices such as Paleo, vegan, raw, and the hormone diet mark a turn away from processed foods and towards a more natural way of eating.

As healthy as these diets are (and I ascribe to more than one of them), they’re limited in that they tend to offer a one-size-fits-all approach to eating. Especially as we learn more about food allergies, we’re finding that what is healthy for one person is not necessarily healthy for the next. We’re turning more often to systems of thought that tailor dietary recommendations to the individual.

The dietary ethos of Ayurveda, the ancient system of medicine originating in India, has a lot in common with the newer, Western trends, but varies its nutritional recommendations based on an individual’s dosha, or prevailing energy type. (To learn whether your dosha is predominantly Vata, Pitta, Kapha, or a combination, take this quiz.)

Also keep in mind that foods can be sattvic (balancing), rajasic (heating), or tamasic (sedating). Generally, you want your diet to consist of mostly sattvic foods. Once you know your doshic type, take a look at the suggestions below to learn what to eat more of, what to avoid, and what foods are balancing for your particular dosha.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sattvic Foods</th>
<th>Rajasic Foods</th>
<th>Tamasic Foods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(balancing, calmly energizing)</td>
<td>(aggressively energizing)</td>
<td>(fatiguing, sedating)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fresh fruit</td>
<td>Strong spices</td>
<td>Leftovers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fresh vegetables</td>
<td>Meat, especially red meat</td>
<td>Fermented foods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beans and grains</td>
<td>Raw garlic and onions</td>
<td>Frozen or canned foods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dairy</td>
<td>Coffee and tea</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Salt</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sugar</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**Vata**

Vata types often have a particularly tall or short body frame and cool body temperature. Energetic and creative, they tend towards nervousness, anxiety, and insomnia when imbalanced.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vata—Eat More:</th>
<th>Vata—Eat Less:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Foods that are grounding, particularly sweet and heavy foods</td>
<td>• Foods that are drying, aggressively energizing, bitter, or astringent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Root vegetables like carrots and potatoes</td>
<td>• <strong>Buckwheat</strong> and <strong>millet</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Green beans</td>
<td>• Cold, raw foods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Most fruits, especially grapefruit, bananas, and melons</td>
<td>• Yeasted bread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Rice</strong></td>
<td>• Strong spices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Oats</strong></td>
<td>• Caffeine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Nuts and seeds</td>
<td>• <strong>Sugar</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mung beans</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Dairy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sesame or olive oil</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**Pitta**

Pitta types commonly have a medium or athletic build and an energetic personality. When out of balance, their energy can manifest as anger or frustration.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pitta—Eat More:</th>
<th>Pitta—Eat Less:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Foods that are cooling, bitter or pungent</td>
<td>• Foods that are heating, sweet, sour, or salty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Leafy greens</td>
<td>• <strong>Tomatoes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Watery and cool fruits such as melons, pears, <strong>apples</strong>, grapes and <strong>mangoes</strong></td>
<td>• <strong>Garlic</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Coconut</strong></td>
<td>• Peppers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Squashes</td>
<td>• Spicy foods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Mushrooms</strong></td>
<td>• <strong>Citrus fruits</strong> such as <strong>grapefruit</strong> and oranges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Barley</strong></td>
<td>• <strong>Papaya</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Rice</strong></td>
<td>• <strong>Honey</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mung beans</td>
<td>• Corn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Watery vegetables such as <strong>cucumber</strong> and <strong>broccoli</strong></td>
<td>• <strong>Buckwheat</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Yeasted bread</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Dairy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Meat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Eggs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• <strong>Coffee</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Alcohol</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Kapha**

Kapha types tend toward evenly proportioned bodies and steady personalities. Too much Kapha energy can lead to greed, stubbornness, and lethargy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kapha—Eat More:</th>
<th>Kapha—Eat Less:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foods that are energizing, bitter, or astringent</td>
<td>Foods that are heavy, sweet, or salty, which increase Earth and Water elements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leafy greens</td>
<td>Root vegetables such as potatoes and carrots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peppers</td>
<td>Oils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruits that are lighter rather than dense: apples, pears, cranberries</td>
<td>Dairy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raw vegetables</td>
<td>Avocado</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mung beans</td>
<td>Wheat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most grains, particularly buckwheat and millet</td>
<td>Tofu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honey</td>
<td>Nuts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spices</td>
<td>Fried foods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Heavy foods</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Amanda Penn*
The Best Tea For Your Dosha

Know which tea keeps your dosha balanced, healthy, and well.

Tea is one of the most consumed beverages in the world, and its popularity in America seems to continue to rise. The thousands of tea varieties available, from traditional caffeinated teas to herbal infusions, can make choosing one overwhelming.

According to the dietary ethos of Ayurveda, an individual’s dosha, or prevailing energy type, can help you wade through the choices to find the teas that best support your health and general wellbeing. Once you’ve taken this dosha quiz, read below to find the best teas for your dosha.

A quick note: Because specialists debate the role of caffeinated teas in an Ayurvedic diet, this list doesn’t include any Camellia sinensis teas such as white, green, or black teas. All three provide numerous health benefits, and if you’d rather not give up your morning matcha latte, you can keep your dosha balanced by noticing when your caffeine intake starts to increase the tendencies of your dominant dosha.

Vata

Energetic and creative Vata types often have a particularly tall or short body frame and cool body temperature. When imbalanced, they’re prone to poor circulation, joint pain, dry skin and brittle nails and hair, and digestive issues such as bloating and constipation. Vatas also tend towards nervousness, anxiety, and insomnia. Sweet, grounding, and stress-relieving teas are great for Vata types.

Teas for Vata

Ashwagandha: Also known as India’s ginseng, this adaptogen has been used for thousands of years in India to treat stress and anxiety, common Vata complaints. The roots also contain a little iron, making it an especially smart beverage choice for female Vatas with anemia or fatigue (but talk to a doctor before consuming if you’re pregnant or breastfeeding).

Triphala: Named for the three fruits of amalaki, haritaki, and bibhitaki, triphala is known for its gentle laxative effect, perfect for Vata types, whose constitution often tends towards bloating and constipation. Specialists believe Vata energy accumulates in the colon, and triphala helps clear it out of the digestive system. Because the tea is also purported to help eliminate ama in the body, this is a great tea for Vata-Kapha types as well.
Ginger: Warming ginger brings windy Vatas back down to earth. Ginger ignites agni, the digestive fire, clearing out the digestive system, one of the “seats” of Vata in the body. Ginger has numerous health benefits, from relieving gas and heartburn to aiding in the fights against cancer and Alzheimer’s.

Cardamom: Heavy in oils, cardamom seeds are grounding. Rich in vitamins and minerals, cardamom bolsters your immune, digestive, and detoxification systems, and can also ease skin irritation common for Vatas. Cardamom can also ease PMS symptoms, which can be exaggerated when Vata energy is high.

Valerian: Studies have shown that valerian has a sedating effect on the nervous system, and it’s most commonly used for anxiety and sleep disorders. Insomnia is especially common for Vata types, so a tea with valerian root is a great way to end the day.

Cinnamon: The natural sweetness of cinnamon tea is grounding for airy Vatas, and the spiciness can jolt them out of their sometimes-excessive dreaminess. Because cinnamon also tackles typically Pitta concerns like inflammation and high blood pressure, it’s a great choice for Vata-Pitta types.

Pitta

Pitta types are commonly energetic and athletic. When out of balance, their energy can manifest as anger or frustration, and they’re prone to high blood pressure, hypertension, headaches, heartburn, hyperthyroidism, and inflammation. Soothing, cooling teas are best for fiery Pitta.

Teas for Pitta

Brahmi: For Pitta types who want the mental clarity that comes with a cup of coffee, without the overheating effects of caffeine, Brahmi tea has both calming and energizing effects. Studies of the tea, known in research as Bacopa monnieri, indicate that its compounds may improve memory and other cognitive functions, so Type-A Pittas can feel like they’re fitting in some self-improvement while they calm down.

Coriander Seed: The seeds of the cilantro plant, coriander is cooling and thirst quenching, great for Pittas who tend to overheat. Blood is often associated with Pitta energies, and studies have shown that coriander supports blood-sugar balance and cardiovascular health.

Amla: This vitamin C-rich and antioxidant-packed fruit is a powerhouse for Pitta types, who, Rudolf Ballentine, M.D., says, are the most prone to oxidative stress because fire is a primary Pitta element. Amla bolsters immunity and has been used to treat a variety of conditions, from diabetes and gastrointestinal disorders to various types of cancer.

Rose: Another antioxidant-rich tea, the polyphenols in roses help the body repair cellular damage, a result of Pitta’s fast-paced, often high-stress, life. A Taiwanese study provided
scientific evidence for the ancient use of rose to ease menstrual cramps, a
common Pitta complaint. Because rose is also a mild laxative and bolsters the immune
system, this tea is a good choice for Pitta-Vata types.

**Chamomile:** Known for its mellow earthiness and ability to lull you to sleep, chamomile has
a mild sedative effect that can support Pittas during the day, too. A 2011 *Pharmacognosy Review*
details the numerous functions of chamomile, including its anti-inflammatory,
antioxidant, anti-stress, and anticancer properties. As an extra bonus for Pittas, who tend to
have thin, brittle hair, there's evidence that some of the chemicals in chamomile can
strengthen your strands. (If you're pregnant, always check with your doctor before taking
any herbal supplement—chamomile can increase the risk of miscarriage.)

**Lemon Balm:** Mildly citrusy, this herb from the mint family calms the nervous system, helps
soothe headaches, and may lower high blood pressure, all issues often experienced by Pittas.
The thyroid gland is associated with Pitta energy, and lemon balm is often used to treat
hyperthyroidism.

Kapha

**Kapha types** are steady in personality, and when well nourished they're balanced and
healthy. Too much Kapha energy can lead to lethargy, depression, indigestion, colds, and a
slow metabolism. In general, Kaphas benefit from energizing flavors or compounds
and teas made from bitter herbs.

**Teas for Kapha**

**Blue Vervain:** Also known as *Verbena hastata*, blue vervain calms the nervous system and
acts as a diuretic, detoxifying and releasing excess fluid from the body (Kapha bodies often
retain excess water). It also acts as an expectorant, expelling the mucus that often
accumulates in Kapha respiratory tracts.

**Dandelion:** One of a large family of bitter herbs, dandelion counteracts the tamasic effects
that can make Kapha types foggy and lethargic. Full of vitamins A, C, and D,
dandelion tea helps fend off colds and other respiratory illnesses that plague Kaphas, and
the plant can stimulate digestion and bile flow. The leaf acts as a diuretic, alleviating water
retention, and the roots are known for their ability to improve liver function and detoxify the
body.

**Marshmallow Root:** This root can reduce congestion, soothe the throat, decrease lymph
node swelling, and reduce water retention, all good news for Kaphas.

**Kuding:** For the brave Kaphas ready to shock the system, it doesn’t get much more shocking
than kuding tea. According to an article by Subhuti Dharmananda, Ph.D., Director of the
Institute for Traditional Medicine in Portland, kuding has been used in Traditional Chinese
Medicine to “disperse wind-heat,” which makes it appear more appropriate for Vata-
Pitta types, but I’m guessing the spiky bitterness of this tea would be extra beneficial for drowsy Kaphas. The herb has traditionally been used to treat colds, and research shows that it may aid in improving blood circulation and decreasing cholesterol levels, common Kapha ailments.

**Peppermint**: Although it’s a member of the bitter herb family, peppermint’s association with gum and candy canes makes it an appetizing tea for many people. Peppermint is an ancient digestive health aid, and is also great to have on hand when you’re sick—as an antispasmodic, it can ease coughs and decrease vomiting, the menthol can assist in reducing a fever, and peppermint’s antibacterial and anti-inflammatory properties can bolster the immune system.

**Goldenseal**: This root is native to North America and Canada, and its concentration of alkaloids makes it an effective natural antibiotic. A 2006 study published in the *Journal of Lipid Research* found that goldenseal can lower LDL (“bad”) cholesterol. Some studies suggest that goldenseal tea is best used for the short term, for fighting colds and allergies.

*Amanda Penn*
Ayurveda Beauty: Choose an Ubtan For Your Dosha

An indulgent product for your skin that works with your personal constitution.

So let’s begin with what ubtans are. Long before the soap factories were born, ubtans were used to cleanse, exfoliate, and moisturize the skin, as well as give it long-term protection from the elements. To put it simply, ubtans are like an all-in-one product that covers what you use soaps, scrubs, and moisturizers for, along with giving you added sun protection. Sounds absolutely skin-delicious, doesn’t it?

How Do Ubtans Work?

Most ubtans, be they in paste or powder form, are made from ground herbs, legumes, and grains. In basic terms, they rid the skin of impurities, balance its pH, and also provide moisture. In Ayurvedic terms, they draw “heat” from the skin, exfoliate, and firm it up, and also increase blood flow to the skin by stimulating the lymph nodes. Here are three ubtan recipes for you to use in summers, based on your dosha.

Ubtan for Kapha

Those with Kapha dosha are regulated by the body energy and can fall prey to weakness of the skin, regulatory, and immune systems. A dry-ish application works well for the Kapha dosha, with tiny but vigorous circulatory movements.

Mung Dal-Orange Peel Ubtan

- 3 tablespoons mung dal, soaked overnight
- 1 teaspoon fenugreek seeds
- 1 teaspoon dried orange peel or ½ teaspoon Neroli essential oil
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon powder

Drain the mung dal and add all the ingredients in a food processor. Pulse until coarsely ground. Rub onto skin in small circulatory movements and let dry for 10 minutes or so. Wash off with cool water.
Ubtan for Vata

People with Vata dosha are controlled by—and often fall prey to—problems related to the blood and circulatory system of the body, including the heart. Ubtan-wise, they should go for a more liquid-like paste with little to no coarseness and use large circulatory motions.

**Almond-Sesame Ubtan**

- 7 raw, blanched almonds
- 7 tulsi or neem leaves
- 2 tablespoons raw sesame oil
- ¼ cup fresh cream

Zap all ingredients in a mixer till a fine, non-coarse paste with a hint of texture. Apply to face, neck, and décolletage in circular motions. Leave on for 10 minutes or till dry and flaking off. Rinse with cool water.

Ubtan for Pitta

People with Pitta dosha are ruled by their body’s metabolic system and so fall prey to problems related to digestion, nutrition, and temperature. Ubtan-wise, a smooth paste application that does not heat up the skin works best.

**Gram Flour-Cucumber Ubtan**

- 3 tablespoons gram flour (besan)
- 3 tablespoons grated cucumber, with the juice
- pinch of turmeric
- 1 teaspoon sandalwood powder or ½ teaspoon sandalwood essential oil

Stir together ingredients in a bowl (add rosewater to thin out the paste if needed). Apply with gentle circulatory motions and keep on for 10-15 minutes. Gently rinse off with cool water.

Your skin will feel cool and refreshed after the ubtans; do not use any soap or moisturizer to let the ubtans work their magic for the next six hours or so. If you have really dry skin, remember that ubtans often follow abhyangam (oil application). So try massaging your body with your favorite organic oil and then cleansing with the ubtan for skin that gleams with health and joy. You can use an ubtan all over your body as well!

Rima J. Pundir
Balancing Ayurvedic Doshas in Relationship

Understanding how your dosha engages with other doshas can be useful for relationships of all kinds.

In Ayurvedic medicine there are three identified doshas, or basic constitutions: Vata (air), Pitta (fire), and Kapha (earth & water). A person is generally predominant in two doshas, sometimes one main one, though everyone contains all three in varying degrees. It is the goal of Ayurvedic practices and diet to balance the doshas, no matter which is more active, in order to bring a person into optimal health. In a relationship, there are also Ayurvedic doshas manifesting, which when understood and balanced, can be used as the approach to healing relational discord and bringing health to the union.

Let us look at the doshas in greater detail so it may then be examined how they show up in relationship and how balance might be achieved therein.

Do you know what your dominant dosha is? Take the quiz [here](#).

The Doshas

**Vata** is the air element and rules mainly the mind, mental faculties, intellect, inspiration, the nervous system, joints, and the way air moves through the body—including processes of elimination. When over-dominant, a Vata type can come off airy, “spacey,” wispy, or ungrounded and may be bloated, gassy, and anxious in nature. Under-active Vata types can suffer constipation, dull-mindedness, joint stiffness, and pain (like arthritis). People with a thin frame who have difficulty losing weight and tend to lack moisture in their system are usually predominantly Vata. This constitution balances out with sweets and warming, grounding foods such as grains, ginger, and nuts, and does not do as well with an overly raw-food based diet, which is gas-producing.

**Pitta** is the fire element and rules digestive fires, the circulatory system, passion, and action and has a bearing on quick insights and passionate action—this type, in fact, craves action. Pitta is balanced by stillness, meditation, raw foods (which are cooling), and damp conditions. When over-stimulated, this type can tend to anger, impatience, being “hot-tempered,” domineering tendencies, and destructive behaviors.

Chilies, coffee, ginger and other stimulating spices are considered Pitta foods, but are not necessarily good for Pitta-types. Pitta people benefit from pungent and bitter herbs as well as cooling foods like cucumbers, mint, and apples. Pitta people are generally sporty, active, and love the sun. They may tend to abhor the rain, but can thrive in such conditions if taken in moderation with a proper, balancing diet. Pitta people can usually gain and lose weight easily, have strong frames, and tan easily.

**Kapha** is a combination of the earth and water elements—kind of like mud—and rules mucous membranes, the fluids of the body, and the bones and overall structure. Kapha is
grounded, slow, patient, and enduring. A Kapha body might be stockier and hold more weight, and find it less easy to lose. Kapha is more apt to have allergies as mucous is a predominant fluid. These types of people tend to be stubborn and rooted, interested in practical, physical matters. Emotions may run high if imbalanced, though those emotions tend more toward tears and crying rather than anger.

Kapha foods are sticky, dense, wet, and heavy, like porridge, stew, coconut milk, and oils as well as meats and sweets, though Kapha people are better avoiding these things and using more pungent and bitter foods: lentils, light/dry foods, and lots of vegetables. Kapha is stimulated by the Pitta spices and foods such as ginger, coffee, and chilies. Kapha people can suffer from constipation, weight issues, attachment, lethargy, and the tendency to get “stuck in their ways.” However, on the positive side, Kapha people are enduring, trustworthy, loyal, and consistent when healthy.

**Doshas in Relationship**

In any relationship, all of the aforementioned elements are present to varying degrees. Though it matters what each person in the relationship brings to the table in terms of their personal dosha-constitution, other elements such as environment, climate, and the way these elements play out between two people are worth considering as the imbalance of any dosha can greatly impede the relationship.

Even without knowing the individual doshas of each partner, if the two can work to balance and bring into harmony the relational doshas this will result in greater harmony in the union.

**Vata in Relationship**

Vata in relationship is communication; it is intellectual and spiritual compatibility. Vata must be harmonious in order for two people to thrive. Here is how healthy Vata shows up in relations:

- Good communicative skills using non-violent communication and compassionate understanding
- An equal or equivalent intellectual status
- Spiritual compatibility, as in a reasonably agreeable sense of what spirituality is to each person as well as an honoring of the other’s path
- A lack of manipulation
- Sweet words and complimentary attitudes
- Mental connectivity and stimulating conversation

Vata rules the qualities of the astrological signs of Gemini – lending to multiple perspectives and mental acuteness. Vata also has a Mercury-type influence, showing up as a variety of communicative methods and styles.
If Vata conditions are out of whack or imbalanced, an “I’m right” argument can ensue, as well as belittlement, miscommunication and misunderstandings, spiritual disagreements, and superiority power struggles.

**How to Balance Vata in Relationship**

- “Sweet” words and compliments
- Seeing the good in the other person/emphasizing the positive
- Forgiveness
- Refraining from bringing up the past
- Honoring the other’s spiritual path
- Writing a letter to the other – gratitude-oriented, expressing thoughts
- Commitment to non-violent communication

**Pitta in Relationship**

Pitta is the fire, the passion, the inspiration, and the drive in the union. It is the attraction-factor which must be present for two people to initially come together in intimate relation. Pitta manifests as the qualities of the fire signs in astrology of Aries, Leo, and Sagittarius, as well as the Sun and its potency to burn through issues or cause potential harm. It can be hot and fiery, initiate new action, “show-off” and adore travel and change. However, Pitta can also burn through issues and the heart of the matter quickly if left unchecked, and can also be insensitive, sharp, and self-absorbed or egotistical.

In order for Pitta to be in **harmony** the following must be true:

- An active, healthy sex-life/intimacy
- Engagement in similar interests/passions/crafts/sports, etc.
- Being inspiration for the other person
- Ability to digest experiences and ideas together harmoniously
- Honoring the other’s personality, interests and “alone time”
- Moving through change with understanding

If Pitta is **imbalanced** in the relationship it will show up as:

- Lack of sex drive/intimacy or an over-developed sex drive
- Anger or heated debates with a negative resolution or no resolution
- Misfires in where to put relational energy (two different directions)
- Failure to inspire the other person - “Bad taste in the mouth”
- Ego-battles and power struggles
**How to Balance Pitta in Relationship**

- Taking 10 seconds to “cool down” before addressing issues together
- Making intimacy a priority
- Infusing the relationship with “inspirational” methods such as poetry, romance, flowers, dates, flirtation, hand-holding, etc. (“bring the passion back to the union” and “fan the flame” mentality)
- Working-out together and finding other areas on which to “agree on direction” (cohesiveness)
- “Soothing” disagreements with kind words and “cool” things you both enjoy doing: common interests, inspirational sights, etc.

**Kapha in Relationship**

Kapha is the blood, sweat, and tears, the “bones” and the structure of a union. It is the physical manifestation of the two, the house and home and the actual bond between two people. Kapha is the grounding force, the “reality check,” and the exchange of energy and fluids that keeps two people bonded on a very hormonal, biological, and physical level (such as kissing and sex). Kapha influences the surroundings and what grounds you both. It is the “ground” on which you meet one another.

Kapha manifests as the qualities of the astrological sign **Taurus** and **Pisces**—like stubbornness, and an affinity for beauty and fluidity—and holds influences related to Saturn, such as boundaries, structure and time.

When Kapha is strong in a relationship it manifests as:

- Endurance and the willingness to go the distance with each other
- Practical agreements and a sense of humor about “mundane reality”
- Somewhere to call home
- Regular kissing and affection
- Structural agreements in the relationship such as “how it works” and “who does what”

Kapha is the practical reason for coming together and the force which guides its continuation forward. If Kapha is imbalanced in a relationship it might be expressed as:

- Instability—a constant “shifting” of the foundation/break-ups and restarts
- Nowhere to call home
- Fantasies and fears
- Discomfort with bodily fluids, expressions, or the “changing face” of the relationship
- Feeling the union is shaky and doomed to failure
How to Balance Kapha in Relationship

- Having patience
- Stimulating/enduring elements such as life goals, dreams and potential projects
- Adding commitment—the “mud” of the union
- Sticking it out—“brick and mortar”—build the foundation—which may look like buying a home together, having children, thinking long-term/going the long-haul
- Getting “messy” with each other—be willing to “go through the mud” together without the fear of getting dirty or messing up your “personal style” or personal agenda
- Surrendering into the union and all it has to offer as it works through the blocks

By coming to know how the Ayurvedic doshas show up in relationship, two people can learn to balance them out with relative ease and find their union strengthened because of it. If the doshas are out of whack between two people, the relationship could be considered sick. Even if you have two generally healthy people who have balanced doshas in their own bodies, they can still come together in an unbalanced way and manifest an unhealthy union. When this happens, and if left for too long, the relationship can suffer as if it is literally a sick person. When this happens, the two people can either let the relationship continue to suffer, and eventually die, or they can choose to heal the relationship by applying the necessary balancing elements of the ill-nurtured doshas.

By observing the elements playing out in a union and applying the appropriate dosha-remedies, Ayurvedic techniques can become a powerful tool to help heal relationship discords of every sort. As the whole world is made up of the interplay of elements, so is a relationship simply a dance of these things. In the dance of relationship, it is beneficial to find natural solutions to bring harmony to what ought to be a joyful, evolutionary experience. Take a look at where your union might be out of balance and try some of these simple techniques to balance your relationship doshas today. And here's to a happy, healthy union.

Stasia Bliss
Sub-Doshas & How to Best Nourish Them

In addition to the three main doshas, Ayurveda describes 15 sub-doshas.

Just like reality is layered, so too is the body comprised of concentric fields that stack on each other and overlap, working with each other in order to create perfect health in this manifestation vehicle we call the body. By understanding the layers in the body and what their functions are, it becomes easier to see and hear the inner workings by the symptomatic language the body is speaking.

A Look at the Layers

Compartmentalization helps the mind “break down” giant concepts into smaller parts so that understanding is easier. When dealing with the mind-body-spirit connection there are so many moving parts and components to consider when dealing with both dis-ease and evolution, it helps to take the entire concept apart and look at what we are made of so when we “re-member” ourselves we become a fluid field of working parts married in wholeness to ourselves.

In yogic philosophy there are five main body sheaths, or fields: the physical (anamaya kosha), the pranic (pranamaya kosha), the mental field (manamaya kosha), the wisdom body (vinyanamaya kosha) and the bliss body (anandamaya kosha). The prana is also thought to be “divided” into five main vayus (winds) which describe the way in which prana manifests and moves in the body: prana vayu, apana vayu, samana vayu, udana vayu, and vyana vayu.

In Ayurveda, the seven layers of body tissue are called “dhatus” (including the plasma, blood, muscles, fatty tissues, bones, nervous system and reproductive tissues). There are also three main bodily constitution types, or doshas, which represent the elements in the body and how they manifest:

Vata—as Air and Ether
Pitta—as Fire
Kapha—as Water and Earth

These three doshas include 15 sub-doshas which I would like to explore here, for in the awareness of them I have personally more easily been able to access where the body might “break down” and where attention might need to turn for healing.
**Vata Sub-Doshas**

We begin with Vata—of Air and Ether...the element team that is thought in Ayurveda to be the dominant elemental field, for it is both “the space in-between” and the very concept of form itself. Vata is most akin to prana, the life force energy coming into the body through the breath, so in the first 5 sub-doshas we see that each one is related to one of the 5 main pranas in the body as listed above.

**Prana sub-dosha** literally describes and governs the life force energy that comes into the body via various modes: food, breath, **herbs**, beverages, sounds, smells, touch, and all sensory input. This sub-dosha governs the level of vitality in every cell of our body and every thought in our head.

The nervous system is mostly affected by any imbalance in this sub-dosha as prana is responsible for the maintenance and balance of all physiological processes, including the homeostasis of the body in general. If this sub-dosha is out of alignment it is best to utilize **meditation** and **pranayama practices** as well as nervous system nourishing herbs. Prana can also be brought into balance by getting the proper amount of rest for your body, processing stuck emotions, and walking in nature.

**Vyana sub-dosha** has its home in the heart. This flavor of prana is the regulator or “guardian” of the cardiovascular system, the blood, and nutrient delivery. With stuck or imbalanced vyana sub-dosha, cardiovascular problems could arise as well as body stiffness, cold hands and feet, and a blocked **anahata chakra**. In order to bring this sub-dosha back into health and balance it is important to stretch the body, get massages regularly and consume herbs/foods and use oils that are heart supportive such as hawthorn berry and rose.

**Samana sub-dosha** governs the prana in the stomach area and digestive system. How well we are able to assimilate the nutrients from our food and process unused waste products out of the body is dependent on a healthy samana sub-dosha. How we process and “digest” our mental and emotional experiences can be greatly affected by this sub-dosha as well. Dietary changes as well as exercises which massage and open **the navel chakra** and work the lower two bhanda locks are useful in balancing samana in the body.

**Udana sub-dosha** is the governing prana over the outward expression of energy, thoughts and action. Memories, speech, and the exhale breath are all under udana’s care. Issues that arise from an imbalanced udana subdosha include problems with the lungs such as asthma and bronchitis, diaphragm upsets like hiccups, excessive burping or throat conditions including sore throats, hoarseness, and even thyroid conditions can be related. When one is unwilling to express themselves this subdosha is suppressed and can thereby afflict it.

Foods and herbs which support and soothe the throat, act as an expectorant for the lungs, and improve memory are indicated (horehound, lemon, cherry bark, ginkgo biloba, mullein).
Taking quiet time in nature is also beneficial for this sub-dosha as is warm oil treatments on the body like sesame oil self-massage and panchakarma.

**Apana sub-dosha** is the main Vata component that often displays irregularity. It is the imbalance of this sub-dosha that is to blame for many problems associated with Vata and is therefore key to be aware of. It governs the downward flow of prana in the abdomen, ruling such actions as elimination, menstruation, child-birth, urination, and ejaculation, and is often called the “descending wind.” Navel births can often disrupt this sub-dosha as can other surgeries of the lower abdomen because the incision affects the air pressure and regulation within this region of the body. Generally, herbs are turned to in order to bring apana sub-dosha back into balance, but specific massage/bodywork techniques can also help tune into the air in the belly and restore its proper function.

**Pitta Sub-Doshas**

A balance of the elements of fire and water in the body manifests as the Pitta dosha. It is the governing element over the various layers of our digestive capacities in the body/mind/spirit complex and can be more deeply understood by looking at the five sub-doshas which comprise this dosha.

**Alochaka sub-dosha** has action in the eyes and governs the literal way in which we take in light and transform that information into images/impressions/information (think “see” neurotransmitters firing). With the assistance of this sub-dosha we are able to gain mental clarity and reach deeper spiritual insights around how we “see” reality. It brings luster to the color of the eyes themselves and when this sub-dosha is compromised, eyes become dull and lifeless, dark and hollow to the point where you can literally see how someone has “lost the joy of living.” One may only feel clear and certain about their path and the direction they are headed when this sub-dosha is in balance and harmony. Using a **neti pot** affects this sub-dosha as does practicing **kapalabhati breathing** (the “shining skull”). Herbs for the eyes like bilberry and eyebright are also recommended.

**Sadhaka sub-dosha** resides in the “heart-mind” where many believe the soul sits. On a physical level it is over the functions of the heart itself, such as the heartbeat and flow of the blood. On a psychological level, it helps us to process emotions and mental concepts, “digesting” them for deeper insights into how we live our lives and helping us to anchor more firmly on a spiritual path. When one builds up emotions around the heart which block the flow of authentic expression and disallow one to feel and live from the heart, this sub-dosha is compromised. Also, when one always refers to the head and logic over feeling and intuition the fires of sadhaka burn less bright within the soul. Living from the heart helps to strengthen this aspect of self as does using practices such as **HeartMath** (bringing awareness and coherence to the heart waves).

Other assistance for this sub-dosha can be found with rose oil, rose quartz, malachite, brahmari mudra, and hawthorn berry.
**Ranjaka sub-dosha** is the aspect of Pitta which governs the actual color in the body as well as enthusiasm for life in the body. The spleen, liver, and blood are all under ranjaka’s dominion and conditions which affect these such as skin discolorations, cirrhosis, high cholesterol, hepatitis, chronic fatigue syndrome, emotional overload, and blood issues are included. If this sub-dosha is imbalanced one will feel joyless about life, weak in the body and mind and even appear discolored. In order to balance this dosha it is required to relieve the spleen meridian, nourish the body with whole foods and include specific herbs which strengthen the affected organs and systems such as [shilajit](#).

**Bhrajaka sub-dosha** is all about the skin and how it is able to process and receive light and nutrients. Without a healthy bhrajaka Pitta in the body, the skin will manifest rashes, discolorations, eczema, acne, and other skin conditions. The person with this sub-dosha afflicted would also likely feel “irritated” on one or multiple levels. The complexion of the face is determined by this aspect of Pitta and therefore herbs which nourish and strengthen the rakta dhatu—one of the seven layers of body tissue manifesting as blood (largely made up of the fire element)—will assist this sub-dosha. You can nourish rakta by increasing the available iron in the body by ingesting meats and veggies [high in iron](#) as well as herbs that assist in the absorption of iron such as cumin seeds and mint.

**Panchaka sub-dosha** governs the Pitta of the digestive fires known as agni. Its main job is breaking down foods to prepare for nutrient assimilation. This subdosha is also considered in the breaking down of ideas and concepts into usable information and experience. It is closely related to the bhuta agni—or the spiritual fire of the belly and [Manipura](#) chakra. It is imbalanced by over-consumption of salty, pungent, and sour foods. In order to bring this sub-dosha into harmony it is recommended to use general Pitta balancing herbs like fennel, [cardamom](#), and [cinnamon](#) and to practice [meditation](#), drink lots of water and “contemplate the navel.” Literally.

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**Kapha Sub-Doshas**

The interplay and foundational force of the elements earth and water manifest together in the body as the Kapha dosha. This constitution is generally slower moving, heavier, and thicker as it sludges along like the earthen mud of our nature, helping us to feel grounded and solid in our bodies. To better get an understanding of this dosha, the sub-doshas are introduced.

**Bodhaka sub-dosha** is found in the mouth and is the beginning of the digestive process consisting of the saliva. The teeth and gums are coated by and taken care of thanks to the function of this sub-dosha which also insists that taste buds are pristine for drawing up the essence of the foods taken into the body. This sub-dosha is also relevant in the early stages of intimacy through kissing and the exchange of bodily fluids which allows two people to communicate via fluids—which initiates a [chakra exchange of energies](#) and subtle information telepathically. When this sub-dosha is out of whack the enamel on the teeth will
be compromised and one might lose taste in the mouth. There can also be receding gums or dry mouth.

In order to bring this sub-dosha back into balance it is important to drink the proper amount of water. Adding ghee to the diet will help nourish this sub-dosha and herbs which strengthen the gums and teeth can be used such as white oak bark, peppermint, and neem.

**Tarpaka sub-dosha** governs the mental qualities of the Kapha dosha which includes the brain and cerebrospinal fluid and the lubrication thereof. Being slow and steady, grounded in nature, the Kapha sub-dosha tarpaka helps to instill a sense of peace and steadiness in the body/mind complex and one who is imbalanced in this sub-dosha might feel mentally unstable and even “thirst” for a greater sense of calm or peace in life. Dementia and its various stages can also result from an imbalanced tarpaka as it assists in the storing of each and every one of our sensory experiences in the brain. Herbs that feed the brain/nervous system as well as those that help lubricate the body (like aloe) are recommended.

**Sleshaka sub-dosha** takes the idea and bodily experience of lubrication (as mentioned above) and brings it into the joints as the synovial fluids. This sub-dosha can also be thought to be the quality which assists us in moving easily through change in the exterior world.

Practices like yoga and martial arts, plus spinning and dancing, can assist in strengthening the joints as well as this sub-dosha.

**Avalambaka sub-dosha** rules and governs the heart and the lungs, though it can be found moving throughout the body, helping to distribute nourishment everywhere it is needed. Some would call this sub-dosha the king of all Kapha due to its importance in seeing to it that the entire kingdom of the body receives sustenance. If imbalanced, the entire body can suffer, especially the lungs, and so herbs and practices which support the health of the respiratory and circulatory system are indicated (including pranayama and yoga nidra).

**Kledaka sub-dosha** is final in the list of sub-doshas, though far from the least of these. This Kapha type is found in the stomach and the digestive system, acting as the “great protector” and regulator of acids. Kledaka has a strong healthy co-dependent relationship with Pitta fires in the belly, as the two must work intimately and honorably together in order to allow for both the proper breakdown of foods and nutrients as well as the assimilation of them. Aloe vera is another helpful herb for this sub-dosha as it does not interfere with the processes of the belly, unlike antacids which can greatly disturb Kledaka.

There is so much more to know about the many layers of the body tissues and doshas; this has been but a glimpse into the fascinating workings of the elements at play and how they manifest you as a pristine, rejuvenating divine machine. By knowing more of the subtle workings of the body we may become more aware of when they falter, and find greater ease in restoring health and wellness by fine-tuning our consciousness in their direction. When the body talks, it helps to have interpretive skills, and that is how I see knowledge for the layperson of the sub-doshas.

*Stasia Bliss*
Introduction to the Koshas

The body has five koshas, or body fields, with each one connecting to different aspects of our being.

The body is \textit{layered}, stacked like a Russian doll. In yogic philosophy, it is explained how the body is actually made up of various sheaths and what each sheath of the body is responsible for. By coming to know the five main \textit{koshas}, or body fields or sheaths, it is easier to understand what part of us responds to, holds or processes each of our experiences.

Anamaya Kosha

We are most familiar with our \textit{Anamaya Kosha}, for this is the physical part of us, the one we can touch and feel and move at will. To some, the physical sheath is all that is “real” because it is the tangible part of us. The Anamaya Kosha contains all of our physicality: the organs, tissues, glands, nerves, lymph, bones, etc. It is the physical manifestation of us. This layer is also the densest; it is what all the other layers use for expression on this physical plane.

Strengthening the Anamaya Kosha comes through physical activity, exercise, \textit{good foods} and supplements as well as through positive affirmations, a healthy environment and visualization. Just because this field is physical does not mean it is not affected by the other fields, for as we will see, and as we intuitively know: all parts are interconnected.

Pranamaya Kosha

The next field is the pranic field, or energy field. This is the part of us that many see as the aura and is also where the emotional body resides. It is associated with the life-force and is influenced by our breath and spiritual practices which fortify \textit{prana}. We can damage or compromise this layer of body by overuse of drugs, through trauma, or by allowing things, people, or experiences into our personal space that we don’t really wish—on a soul level—to
be there. So under this description can also be sexual experiences which we allow, but are not for our highest good. Other things which can deplete this body include excessive smoking, shallow breathing, and emotional misalignments—which can include not living your life’s passion.

In order to fortify the **Pranamaya Kosha** the practice of **pranayama** is most beneficial as is all forms of vibrational and energy healing which are in alignment with your being. **Crystals**, **essential oils**, energetic bodywork, and **yoga**, as well as fresh food and **water** and **meditation** are all good for enhancing the pranic body.

### Manamaya Kosha

Beyond the Anamaya Kosha and the Pranamaya Kosha is the **Manamaya Kosha**—or the mental field. This is the space of intellect and what one might term “lower mind.” It is in this body that we process and digest information and use our brain and logic to communicate and regurgitate memories and learning. The mental field is where all of the “mental chatter” resides when seeking to quiet the mind. The subconscious plays out in incessant chatter here and fears of the future and happenings of the past repeat on constant replay in the Manamaya Kosha.

The mental body can create stress if not put to rest. It is also the part of us that eventually needs to be brought under conscious control, as the ego and identity are tied to the mental body. It can be considered the ruler of the “lower kingdom” of the body, where the next field, the wisdom body, is the ruler of the “higher kingdom” where inspiration and spiritual knowing reside. We can’t really live without the mental body—it is a necessary component—but we can become too dependent upon it and rely on it when we ought to be using the wisdom body instead.

Practices which help to cultivate a healthy Manamaya Kosha include meditation, visualization, **Yoga Nidra**, deep breathing, affirmations, and alpha brain wave music.

### Vinyanamaya Kosha

Reaching out into the astral and back into spaces of the limitlessness from which we emanate is the wisdom body, the **Vinyanamaya Kosha**. This is the field I see as the connecting point between the physical and the Infinite. In this field we receive inspiration, insight, epiphanies and feelings of connectedness that remind us that we are not confined to these forms. This body is not quite the transcendent field—as the next body—but it rubs up against our bliss body in that it is the part of us which can translate that bliss into words and action.
When we are truly in the flow and manifesting the life we dream of and keep surrendering to a higher knowing with little effort—then we know we are accessing our wisdom body. When we write an inspired piece, when we tune into the zone of no-time with someone or in our own sphere—this too is the wisdom body at work.

In order to strengthen this body, use your intuition when it comes. Allow your consciousness to know that you trust that part of you and that you are open to receiving more. **Meditate.** Spend time in nature. Use consciousness supporting supplements like ORMUS gold and **practice yoga** and **yoga nidra**.

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**Anandamaya Kosha**

Finally, in the greatest expanses of our being, where we are most connected with all that is, we touch our natural state in the **Anandamaya Kosha**—our bliss body. This is the space we access in ecstatic moments, during childbirth, **sex**, and **deep meditation**. This is where we know all and nothing, in the bliss of timelessness and spacelessness where we experience a collapsing of earthly concepts and remember the truth of who we are beyond form.

The Anandamaya Kosha connects all of life and all of space, and it is the permeating substance of all things. It could be seen as the Nirvana to which we aspire wherein we know all and realize our smallness and where we are introduced into a deeper state of being than we usually ever experience in normal waking consciousness.

To nourish this field, sit under a tree, surrender to the earth, to your presence, to the presence which is in and around you all of the time. Move in fluidity of being; show grace, compassion and mercy to all of life. Be Love. These are the components of our humanness which grant us access into the gates of Bliss regularly.

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When we are truly whole and complete we are able to reach and utilize each field at the appropriate times and from a state of integration and oneness. Out of alignment, we find often that the physical is trying to communicate to us through aches, pains and dis-ease. By intending to bring all bodies into alignment we are choosing to live from a place of authenticity, for truly all bodies have the duty and appropriate expression in us.

By understanding the parts, I believe we can better know ourselves as whole.

*Stasia Bliss*
Chakras: The Mystical Rainbow in the Spine

Chakras, or energy plexuses, help you access levels of consciousness and maximize your wellness.

Flying on the serpent of light, passing through initiation after initiation at each energy plexus, the rainbow colors activate and bring new layers and levels of consciousness to the one who opens the gates.

To many cultures and in various mystery schools across the globe, information regarding the mystical rainbow in the spine has been cloaked and hidden. Over the past several decades this information has been coming “out of hiding” and made itself readily available to the masses. This article offers an introduction to what is now considered elementary and foundational spiritual wisdom. If you are not as yet familiar with the energy vortexes in the spine, join me on this journey and begin to open the gates—the gates where your awareness awaits.

Bundled Up

Just like the body has nerve plexuses which bundle together hundreds of nerves in order to distribute them to various regions of the body, so too does the body have energy plexuses, also known as vortexes or chakras, which allow one to “step down” energy from the higher realms into the physical body. There are seven main chakras in the body situated along the spine, as well as several “outside” the body which connect a person to the earth and to higher dimensional planes, including universal awareness.
Mind and Body

The various chakras in the body are intimately related to the level of consciousness one is able to access as well as the degree to which areas of the body are able to maximize their potentiality.

For example, the first chakra in the body, situated at the base of the spine, is the “gauge,” if you will, which allows varying degrees of safety, security, and lack or abundance consciousness to be accessed. When switched all the way “off” or prior to awakening/activation, the person with a closed first chakra feels a lack of safety in the world, is worrisome about basic needs such as food and shelter—to the point of obsessing over them—and lives in what could be termed “lack mentality.”

At the same time, there could be issues with the colon/lower intestine and the process of elimination, as well as with the legs—both intimately connected to the first chakra of the body.

Instead, or on the “other end of the spectrum,” one with an awakened first chakra knows trust in Universal Abundance and that all needs will be provided for. There is no concern for basic safety as the trust in a higher power has anchored into their consciousness, allowing full access to prosperity consciousness.

A Brief Intro of Names and Functions

Here is a list of the seven main chakras in the body and their function and related body parts:

**First Chakra: Moolandhara Chakra (Root Chakra)**

Located at the base of the spine/perineum (in women—located around the G-spot area within the yoni), this chakra governs attitudes of safety/security, grounding, lack/abundance, basic instincts/needs, trust and primal creative urges. It feeds the legs, gonads and intestines, as well as the process of elimination. It is associated with the Earth element, the square, Lord Ganesha, the color red and the sound “LAM.”

**Second Chakra: Swadisthana Chakra (Sacral Chakra)**

Located about 2 inches above the tailbone and about ½ inch to an inch inside the body, this chakra governs attitudes of passion, desire, satisfaction, sexuality, and sensuality. It is the “karmic center” of the body—all ancestral karma comes through the second chakra for processing. It is how we “pass down” information and patterns through DNA.

This chakra, when open and activated, helps us feel satisfied with our lives on a very mundane level, as well as sexually in our bodies. It is the center from which our personal passion begins to sprout. When we are disconnected from this center, or it is still closed up, we might feel dissatisfied, disconnected and even ashamed of our bodies or our sexuality and
muddled about our life’s passion. It is in the process of opening this vital center that we experience the proverbial “dark night of the soul.”

Body parts related to this center are the reproductive organs and glands (ovaries and testes), kidneys, and bladder. It is associated with the Water element, the circle with a crescent, Lord Vishnu, the color orange and the sound “VAM.”

**Third Chakra: Manipura Chakra (Navel Chakra)**

Located at the navel center, the **third chakra**, Manipura, means in Sanskrit “the city of jewels” and it is said that once consciousness has risen above the first two chakras it will not fall again into their grasp. By this it means that once the third chakra of awareness has been pierced and opened, one will be able to access their own “inner jewels” and start discovering the truth of who they are above the consciousness of the first two centers.

Manipura rules motivation, creativity and empowerment. When it is shut down, fear and insecurity arise. It brings energy to the stomach and digestive system and helps in the assimilation of nutrients to the body. Manipura also governs the adrenal glands. It is associated with the Fire element, downward pointing triangle, and the color yellow or gold. Surya or Lakshmi governs this center and the sound is “RAM.”

**Fourth Chakra: Anahata Chakra (Heart Chakra)**

Located in the heart center, **this chakra** is also called the “wish-fulfilling tree” as once one’s consciousness is lifted to open the heart chakra all one’s wishes are bound to come true. This is also a warning that if your heart is not open and you are still experiencing the disempowered version of this center, you may manifest instead your fears and judgments. An opened heart center feels compassion and unconditional love as well as self-nourishment and self-love. It is here that one contacts their inner healer. Anahata also rules the physical heart and lungs as well as the cardiovascular system and the thymus gland in the chest—king of the immune glands.

The color of this center is green, the element is Air and the shape is the six-pointed star. It is associated with Krishna and Radhaa—the manifestation of Divine Love—and the sound is “YAM.”

**Fifth Chakra: Vishuddhi Chakra (Throat Chakra)**

Vishuddhi chakra is located in the throat. Consciousness at this level has to do with the voice and the ability to speak one’s personal truth. A closed **Vishuddhi chakra** would not be able to do this and might resort to fabrications, lies or simply a resistance to speaking what they know to be true for them. An open **throat chakra** creates a bridge of communication between self and others and allows for the vocalization of one’s passion into the world. The throat center also rules the physical throat/neck and the thyroid and parathyroid glands. The associations with this center are the Spirit/Akasha element, an upward pointing triangle, the color blue, Lord Shiva and the sound “HAM.”
Sixth Chakra: Ajna Chakra (Third Eye Chakra)

Located in the center of the brain (at the pineal gland, often shown as the space between the eyebrows), **this chakra** functions to allow one to see from a detached perspective and to step into the “observer” viewpoint and witness one's life. An open **Ajna chakra** brings greater intuition and inspiration, where a closed brow center might find one trapped in the ego mind and functions of intellectualism. The brain is affected by this chakra as are the eyes and pituitary gland. The shape associated with this center is the two-petaled lotus and the color is indigo or purple. The deity usually matched with this center is the half man, half woman (Shiva/Shakti) image of androgyny. The sound is “OM.”

Seventh Chakra: Sahasara Chakra (Crown Chakra)

Located in the crown of the head, the **Sahasara chakra** is also known as the thousand-petaled lotus. It is associated with higher consciousness and a connection to all that is. This is where one either can access universal awareness and connectivity of all-that-is, or not. A rainbow light is usually associated with this center as is the Buddha. It is here that one realizes liberation or Samadhi. The sound associated is “AUM.”

*That Which Animates*

When an individual has the experience of awakening one or numerous chakras, it is because the kundalini shakti—or universal cosmic energy—has started to rise through the spinal cord, bringing awareness to each one. This kundalini energy is often depicted as a serpent or snake, which initially is lying dormant at the base of the spine prior to awakening. If not awakened by other means earlier in life, this generally begins to happen around age 40—also referred to as “a mid-life crisis.” The word “kundalini” literally means “coiled one.”

Upon awakening, there are three main spinal channels (nadis) which need to be purified and “cleansed” in order to allow the kundalini energy to travel unencumbered through the spinal channel. These three nadis (meaning river, or “to flow”) represent the negative, positive, and neutral poles. They are called, respectively: ida, pingala, and sushumna nadi.

*Ida*

The feminine pole in the spine is seen as blue and “negative” —like the yin energy of the yin/yang. This energy flows from the base of the spine and intersects and crosses over at each chakra point, ending at the pineal gland or Ajna chakra. The regulation of this energy can be detected and controlled, to an extent using **Swara Yoga**—the Science of the Breath—whereby the air in the left nostril of the nose is observed in association with Ida Nadi.
When one's breathing is dominant through the left nostril of the nose, Ida Nadi is dominant. Ida domination means more access to the feminine attributes of intuition, inspiration, receptivity, passivity, creativity, timelessness, and nurturing.

**Pingala**

The masculine pole in the spine is seen as red and “positive”—like the yang energy. As the energy flows from the base of the spine, Pingala too intersects and crosses Ida at each spinal center all the way to the third eye center. The regulation of Pingala is likewise detected in the nose by observing the right nostril breathing.

When breath is dominant in the right nostril one can know that Pingala Nadi is active and so are the masculine qualities of dominance, action, planning, structure, dynamism, aggression, and linearity.

**Sushumna**

The central channel in the spine, around which wraps Ida and Pingala, is known in Sanskrit as “Sushumna Nadi.” After Ida and Pingala are thoroughly purified and cleansed, the central column begins to take more of the cosmic energy and kundalini is sent straight up the spine. Sushumna is the neutral energy in the spine and can be detected when both nostrils are breathing equal amounts of breath in simultaneously. Kundalini takes its fast track up Sushumna, but can only do so once all three nadis and all the chakras have been purified through yoga, meditation, pure intent, surrender, and the release of karma.

**Other Chakras**

Once all the chakras have been opened and activated there is the opportunity to reach other chakras located outside of the body such as Lahun chakra—located about a foot above the head. This chakra is the one often depicted as a halo in paintings and when activated enlarges to encompass all the other chakras to work together as one.

**Other chakras** include a high-heart chakra, an Earth chakra, a chakra to access Akashic Records, a Universal chakra and chakras in the hands, to name a few. In reality, there are chakras all throughout the body; these are simply some of the main chakras with “bigger jobs” acting as hubs for the universal energy in the cosmos to be down-stepped into our bodies for use in both the physical and in how we interact with this dimension.
The Chakra Series

For further reading on each chakra, follow the links below.

First Chakra: Moolandhara Chakra (Root Chakra)
Second Chakra: Swadisthana Chakra (Sacral Chakra)
Third Chakra: Manipura Chakra (Navel Chakra)
Fourth Chakra: Anahata Chakra (Heart Chakra)
Fifth Chakra: Vishuddhi Chakra (Throat Chakra)
Sixth Chakra: Ajna Chakra (Third Eye Chakra)
Seventh Chakra: Sahasara Chakra (Crown Chakra)
High Heart Chakra

How To Align Your Chakras Through Yoga
part 3  DAILY ROUTINES & RITUALS FOR A MODERN AYURVEDA LIFESTYLE

Even though Ayurveda is an ancient practice it’s easy to implement some basic Ayurvedic rituals into your daily, modern life. Read on for things you can add to your daily routine, or dinacharya, to quickly and easily elevate your wellness. You might be surprised to see things like a self-massage with oil on the list: Remember that Ayurveda is a whole-person approach to health, so it’s important to shower all parts of your self with care each and every day.
Rituals to Start Your Day the Ayurveda Way

Mornings aren’t for everyone, and for some, getting out of bed requires immediate caffeine consumption! However, how you begin the day plays a very important role in how you feel and how you tackle the rest of the day, so hold off on that first cup until you’ve warmed up the body! Ayurvedic philosophy emphasizes the importance of morning rituals in your overall health and wellbeing, and sticking to a few of these rituals can align and cleanse your body, helping you gain energy and release toxins, balance your doshas and commit to a practice that can have a huge impact on your life.

Get ready to throw open your shades, welcome the sunshine and greet the day with enthusiasm as you embark on one, or all, of these morning rituals.

1. Rise & Shine

Ancient Ayurvedic theory stresses the importance of waking with the sun and getting out of bed by 6 a.m. Waking up early allows the Vata energy to enter our bodies and gets us moving before the Kapha energy takes its place and causes sluggishness, making it even harder to get out of bed. Ayurvedic experts believe that when you rise with the sun you’re immediately infused with energy, and stepping outside provides an added bonus of fresh air straight to the lungs. Rising this early also gives you time to move your body in a gentle way with sun salutations followed by a brief meditation practice.

2. Splash the Chakras

Sleeping takes a toll on the skin and face, so waking up and splashing the face is a great way to start the day. Use cool water and splash gently on to the face and neck seven times, paying particular attention to the eyes, which are Pitta in nature and tend to overheat. This rinsing method will prep the skin for the day while also rehydrating the sensitive skin. Seven is a sacred number as it matches the number of chakras or energy systems in the body and helps to awaken each for optimal vitality.

3. Scrape Away Toxins

Our bodies eliminate toxins and detox overnight so you may notice that you wake up with a white film on the tongue. In Ayurveda, this white film is referred to as ama, or toxins, lurking in the digestive tract. After using the bathroom and splashing your face, it’s time to get out the metal tongue scraper. Scrape from the back of the mouth to the front for at least seven scrapes and rinse thoroughly between each. Scraping the tongue not only eliminates stuck toxins but also clears the taste buds to get them ready to stoke the digestive fires.
4. Get the Digestive System Moving

Now that your digestive system is ready-to-go post-tongue scraper, the next step is rehydrating after a night of sleep. In Ayurveda, the belief is that the first thing to enter the body sets the tone for the rest of the day. With that in mind, the best way to jump start the digestive system is with filtered hot water, lemon juice and ginger, adding a spoonful of raw honey if you like. The warm water stimulates the digestive tract while citrus fruits are great for detoxification and add important minerals to the body.

5. Dry Brush

Dry brushing the skin is a self-massage technique that refreshes and stimulates the skin and lymphatic system, enhances blood circulation, and releases accumulated toxins to improve all of the systems of the body. Using a long-handled, non-synthetic brush, start at the feet and move towards the heart with light quick strokes, as the lymph is near the surface of the skin. This step is intended to take place right before you shower to get the toxins moving and ready to rinse away.

6. Lubricate and Bathe

After dry skin brushing, it’s time to rinse toxins from the skin. Oiling the skin before rinsing is a great way to lock in moisture and lock out impurities in the water. Ayurveda suggests sesame oil for Vata dosha (warming) or coconut oil for Pitta (cooling). After brushing the skin, rub oil all over the body, paying particular attention to the joints, and massaging oil into skin to help eliminate buildup in muscle tissue while also loosening up the body for the day. End the shower with cool water to allow the skin to settle and increase circulation and continue to eliminate toxins.

7. Eat for Energy

While Ayurvedic theory does emphasize the importance of breakfast, it should not be the largest meal of the day. Sunrise until 10 a.m. is a time for movement that can be slowed down by over-eating in the morning (which overloads the digestive tract and may cause sluggishness). Start with a light breakfast of fruit, green juice, or granola to keep you light on your feet!

Celsea Jenkins
Start Your Day With Warm Lemon Water

We all know we need to drink water to be healthy. In trying to reach the 8 glasses a day goal, you often see people downing tall glasses of ice-cold water. Now this might sound refreshing, especially in the summer. But to truly hydrate your body, sipping warm water all throughout the day is the most effective way to hydrate yourself. This is well known in Ayurveda, which is an ancient healing system that translates to “the science of life.” Ayurveda is filled with fabulous, insightful guidelines to lead you towards a balanced, healthy, happy state of being and living. One daily activity that is encouraged to bring you closer to your balanced, healthy state is drinking warm water with lemon first thing in the morning. This one simple act has so many benefits.

Aid Digestion and Metabolism

Warm water helps stimulate blood flow to the intestines, which helps in promoting peristalsis, or getting the bowels moving, which leads to regular elimination. The atomic composition of lemon juice is similar to saliva and the hydrochloric acid of digestive juices. Adding the lemon juice also encourages the liver to produce bile—an acid that is required for digestion. For an extra digestive and metabolism boost, add some fresh grated ginger root or a pinch of ginger powder.
Detoxify and Cleanse Your System

Lemon juice helps flush out unwanted materials and accumulated toxins (ama) in the digestive tract. Lemons increase the rate of urination in the body. This leads to an increased rate at which toxins are released, which can help keep your urinary tract healthy. The citric acid in lemons helps maximize enzyme function and stimulates the liver, which aids in detoxification.

Balance pH Levels

Lemons are one of the most alkalizing foods for the body. Sure, they are acidic on their own, but inside our bodies they’re alkaline (the citric acid does not create acidity in the body once metabolized). Lemons contain both citric and ascorbic acid—weak acids which are easily metabolized from the body, allowing the mineral content of lemons to help alkalize the blood. Disease states occur when the body pH is acidic. Drinking lemon water regularly can help to remove overall acidity in the body, including uric acid in the joints, which is one of the common causes of pain and inflammation.

Hydrate Your Lymph System

Warm water with lemon juice supports the immune system by hydrating and replacing fluids lost by your body. When your body is deprived of water, your lymphatic system (the drains of our body) can become congested, resulting in a back flow of toxins in your body—the result of which you might feel in any area of your body, like feeling tired, sluggish, decreased immune function, constipation, brain fog, skin breakouts, and hormonal imbalances.

Boost Your Immune System

Ascorbic acid (vitamin C) found in lemons demonstrates anti-inflammatory effects and is used as complementary support for asthma, allergies, and other respiratory symptoms. Lemons also contain saponins, which show antimicrobial properties that may help keep cold and flu at bay. Lemons are also high in vitamin C, which is great for fighting colds. They’re high in potassium, too, which stimulates brain and nerve function.

Decongest

Sipping warm water can bring relief from colds, coughs, and sore throats. People who have throat and nasal congestion can benefit greatly from drinking warm water as it moistens and lubricates the channels to release congestion more easily. Lemons also help reduce the amount of phlegm produced by the body. For added effect, add a teaspoon of honey, which helps as an expectorant.
**Keep Skin Clear**

The vitamin C component and other antioxidants in lemons help combat free radical damage, decreasing wrinkles and blemishes. Vitamin C is vital for healthy glowing skin, while its alkaline nature has been shown to kill some types of bacteria known to cause acne. Since lemon water also purges toxins from your blood, it will help **keep your skin clear** from the inside out.

**More Water Tips For Optimal Health**

Ayurveda says that cold water should be avoided, especially while eating food. Cold water leads to the agni, or digestive fire, getting diminished—which may lead to improper digestion and toxins accumulating in the body. After a workout or exercise, cold or room temperature water can help to cool the body down.

**Try It**

In the morning, squeeze the juice of half an organic lemon into your cup, fill with half hot water and half cool or room temperature water, so that it is warm but not scalding. Sip and enjoy the energizing fresh start to your day.

*Melissa Hill*
Three Self-Care Techniques For Ayurvedic Health

As a system that treats the whole self, Ayurveda suggests slowing down and spending time with your body.

In the west, adhering to “western medicine” does not necessarily equate to health. Yearly trips to the doctor’s office and allopathic treatments rarely bring a person closer to wellness, nor do they contain the necessary elements to inspire an individual to take powerful control over their personal wellbeing and bodily health.

In the east, especially in India, Ayurveda is the system of health translated as “the science of life.” Those who adhere to Ayurvedic principles find not only improved physical health and well-being, but mental clarity, emotional stability, and spiritual attunement.

Ayurveda, as a largely physical system for bodily strength and constitutional balance, is part of what could be called “the trifecta of wellness” in the east—including the bodies of wisdom known as Yoga—for spiritual embodiment, and Tantra—for mental evolution.

Some westerners may perceive Ayurveda as a daunting system, too complex to incorporate easily into daily life. Yet there are certain aspects to this ancient science that are simple to understand and easy to implement into one’s regular schedule which can help improve health and extend life.

Here are three simple, easy to incorporate Ayurveda techniques for improved health.

1. Daily Self Oil Massage

In Ayurvedic medicine, the act of massaging oneself daily with oil is essential to wellbeing. Depending on one’s natural constitution, different oils can be used to keep skin toned and body temperature balanced, such as sesame oil to bring warmth or almond oil to cool. Other oils that can be used are coconut, avocado, olive, apricot, or jojoba.

Either prior to, or after a shower (depending on school of thought or personal preference), self-oil-massage is a great way to retain moisture and correct imbalances in the skin including eczema, psoriasis, and acne. Oil massage also moves the lymph and keeps one psychologically connected to oneself, bringing a sense of grounding, self-nurturance, and healing to an otherwise emotionally dry or mentally instable person. On a simpler note, oil massage just feels good and where a person might have no other physical contact, or regular ability to receive massage, self-massage is a beautiful way to offer self-care and reinforce the important quality of self-love in one’s life. Whether you choose to self-massage prior to or following a daily shower depends on which benefits are most advantageous and appealing to you. Prior to a shower, many practitioners couple oil massage with dry brushing to enhance circulation. After a shower, adding an oil massage to your daily regime helps to lock in heat and moisture while complementing the nurturing qualities of the shower.
2. Post-Meal Digestive Relax Method

After every meal, in order to increase digestive potency and allow the body to focus on breaking down the food and achieving maximum benefits from the food, it is recommended to engage in a post-meal digestive relax posture. Because of the stomach’s position, in Ayurvedic philosophy, it is suggested to lie down on the left side for 10-15 minutes following every meal. In this way, the blood flow is concentrated on the stomach and digestive faculties so as to improve their functions and speed food breakdown and assimilation.

In the west, people are accustomed to eating on the go or hurrying from mealtime on to the next engagement. By taking even just a few minutes post-meal to lie down and acknowledge the digestive process, the body is aided in improved health and the mind is allowed this short break to reflect on what is occurring within. By engaging in such an easy Ayurvedic technique, one is able to extend life by slowing down time, acknowledging the bodily processes and eliminating the disturbances often caused by eating too fast and the indigestion that often occurs by the rushing so many engage in.

3. Cold Water Rinse for Longevity

Many people love their hot showers. We often think of the shower as the place to warm up, get clean, and perhaps gain some life insights. Few like taking cold showers, and if they do, it seems more so for the “wake-up” or “cool-off” benefits than for any other reason. But in Ayurveda, the cold rinse is purely a health-move meant to stimulate the circulatory system, push heat out from the core, and ultimately extend life.

In order to practice the cold-water rinse, take a “regular shower” as usual, followed by a minute or two of cold water at the end (as long as one can handle). The cold water should hit the crown of the head as the first rule and as a bonus area—an anal rinse/massage. This second part assists in tightening the anal sphincter muscles, therefore preventing hemorrhoids, and stimulating the life-force energy known to lay coiled at the base of the spine—referred to as the kundalini.

By enduring the cold-water rinse, in both stages, one is left feeling invigorated and refreshed on every level. Cold water on the crown is especially useful in bringing mental clarity and removing fatigue and is also very good for the eyes, ears, and pineal gland functions.

By utilizing the self-oil massage, post-meal digestive relax and the cold-water rinse for longevity—three very simple Ayurvedic techniques—one can realize improved health and increased body attunement in a relatively short period of time. Try these techniques out for yourself and see how amazing you feel today.

Stasia Bliss
All About the Neti Pot

*All neti pot isn’t just for allergies and sinuses – it can boost the digestive system and more.*

**Using the Neti Pot for Allergies and Beyond**

Jala neti is an extremely beneficial practice to alleviate allergies and sinus irritations and infections and assist one in bringing greater health and wellness into the head and person in general. As part of the original traditional Hatha yoga path, the neti pot has been a basic tool of the *shatkarmas* or “cleansing practices” which allow a yogi or practitioner to prepare for greater awareness and deeper states of consciousness by purifying the body vessel. The neti pot does this by first cleansing the passageways of the head physically, which allows the third eye to likewise be purified and opened.

Neti translates from Sanskrit as “nasal purification” and originally jala neti was the term used to describe the use of salty warm water passed from a small pot with a longish spout through the nose.

**Jala Neti**

There are several ways the neti pot can be used to relieve allergies and sinus irritations. The most common method is *jala neti*, the warm, salty water flush. This is where purified water, just warmer than body temperature, is added to the neti pot with about a half-teaspoon of sea salt or Himalayan salt. This brings the solution into a similar makeup to the body’s...
natural saline state, so it will move through the nasal passageway without being absorbed into the membranes.

To use neti with the prescribed formula of saline water, the practitioner stands with feet apart, bent slightly over at the waist, leaning over a sink, tub or the ground outside. Next, the pot is placed up to one nostril and the mouth is opened, face forward. When ready, and making sure the breath is happening through the mouth, the practitioner leans the head slightly to the opposite direction of the nostril being poured through to allow for a stream of water to pass from one nostril, through the sinus passageways out the other nostril. This will happen within a matter of a few seconds, miraculously.

The initial sensation of neti may seem a bit strange, but it is recommended to continue to pour through the first nostril for half of the neti and then to switch to the other side for the remaining liquid. It is also acceptable to do a second round so as to have poured the entire contents of one neti pot through each nostril.

After completing the neti it is crucial to practice the post-drying method so as to remove any additional water and mucous from the passage. To do this, close off one nostril with the thumb or first finger and exhale short, gentle breaths through the open nostril, making sure not to exert too much pressure and damage the recently washed membranes. The same instruction is repeated on the opposite nostril and then the bāstrika pranayama breath can be implemented where alternate breaths are exhaled out each nostril in order to complete the gentle “blow-drying” of the nose. Some mucous may become present and released through this method and it is cautioned to avoid strongly blowing the nose for a bit after the neti to protect the nasal lining, as it becomes sensitive after the flush and could be more prone to tear.

**Ameroli Neti**

An older Ayurvedic method which is perhaps lesser known and practiced in the west is that of ameroli neti, where the practitioner uses their own urine through a neti pot in order to relieve infection, allergy, or irritation. This practice is extremely beneficial though the main obstacle to overcome in this method is that of the mental blocks regarding using one’s own body fluids. The benefits of ameroli over saline is probably ten-fold in that the body substance contains the vitamins, minerals, and necessary enzymes and elements which perfectly match what the sufferer needs to heal. The ratio of salts to water is exact to the user and every element required for healing is present. Along with the perfect solution, the sensation is hardly noticeable if one can get beyond the mental disturbance that might be blocking them from using the practice due to the makeup being directly from one’s own body.

For relieving intense sinus infection, nothing is better—no medicine, herb, or regime—than using ameroli neti. One try and the practitioner will be convinced that indeed ameroli is some kind of a hidden miracle method. To use, collect the morning flow just after the initial first 10 seconds of urine. Place in a neti pot and use as described above.

Ameroli has been used by yogis and Ayurvedic practitioners for thousands of years in order to safely and powerfully not only relieve suffering from **congestion, allergies**, infections, and the like, but to assist one who is practicing yoga and self-realization methods to **open the**
third eye and come into a deeper awareness of the Self. It has been discovered that ameroli neti is especially beneficial if the practitioner is undertaking deep meditation practices as the over 24 groups of hormones found to be present in the urine assist the cardiovascular system to function properly during deeper states.

If one takes up ameroli neti it is advised that the diet be “clean” and without a lot of sweets, meats or other acid-producing foods. Rather, a largely raw food diet ought to be the norm in order to build up a powerful substance to use during the practice and to avoid any harshness or acidity in the flush.

Other Jala Neti Variations

Besides warm salty water and urine, other variants that can be used in the neti pot for nasal and sinus health are raw milk and ghee. If milk (dugdha neti) is chosen it must be fresh and unpasteurized, and also slightly warmed in order to receive it into the nose without discomfort. Ghrita neti is the neti performed with warm fresh ghee—or clarified butter. The use of ghee in the neti is often recommended in Ayurvedic medicine for purification of the nasal passageway or for certain cancers, autoimmune disorders, inflammations of the nasal passageway, or mental disorders.

Neti for Allergies and Beyond

During a neti flush, either with saline or the ameroli method, the mucous membranes of the nasal passageway are cleaned out of any foreign invaders, pollen, and irritants that are contributing to discomfort. Along with the cleanse, the digestive system receives an equal “reboot” since the sinuses are so closely tied to and related to the digestive functions. Where you have problems in the digestive system, so will there be issues with the sinuses, and vice versa. By utilizing neti, the sinuses are relieved and purified, especially if incorporated into a regular, daily practice. In this way, the bowels are likewise purified by association and the user will find their daily movements more fluid along with a healthier disposition, better sleep, and clearer thinking.

Daily use can be incorporated if one is suffering from sensitivities of smell, colds/flu, sinus infections, allergies, frequent headaches or migraines, regular nosebleeds, issues with the eyes (including eye strains or infections of the eyes), or ear problems/infections. If none of these or similar issues persist, neti can be practiced about twice per week for maintenance and for the other psychic benefits which have been reported through regular jala neti use.

The traditional Hatha yoga text *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* which outlines the use of shatkarmas including neti and other cleansing practices reports the regular use of neti will “destroy all diseases above the throat” as well as “cleanse the cranium and bestow clairvoyance.” Mouth breathing, which is often a problem with children, is caused by distress in the nasal and sinus passages which later leads to memory problems and can be avoided or remedied by regular neti use.
Other benefits of the neti pot:

- relaxation of facial muscles
- youthful appearance
- relief of emotional tension
- relief from depression
- relief from epilepsy
- calmed anxiety and hysteria
- balance of left and right brain hemisphere resulting in alpha brain waves
- harmony and health in central nervous system
- improved digestion
- optimal functioning of frontal lobes of cerebrum
- increase of higher mental functions
- awakening of the psychic channel sushumna nadi
- increased intuition
- stimulated creativity
- chakra and kundalini activation/awakening/balance

Using the neti pot may start as relief for allergies, but as one continues with the practice it will be found that such an addition to one’s regimen has benefits that extend far beyond physical health. As a staple in yogic and Ayurvedic health practices, neti pot usage can be easily added to a wellness program in order to increase health and avoid dis-eases of the future. All one needs is a neti pot and a bit of patience, endurance, and commitment. Start out your neti practice with the basic jala neti technique and see what you’ve been missing.

Stasia Bliss
Call it a bath, a shower or just a wash—bathing is not just a cleansing of the body. If done right, bathing can actually be a therapeutic, rejuvenating ritual for the mind, body and soul; and you don’t need to go to a spa or buy expensive products for it. Just a few steps and a few changes to your bathroom and routine can make your bath refreshing like never before.

**Step 1: The Odors**

As such, bathrooms do get dirty and germ-infested, and so they smell stale. Also, you cannot cleanse your body in a place that’s unclean itself. So the first thing to do is to ensure that your bathroom is clean and free of any offensive sights, odors, and tactile disturbances. You may want to light a scented candle or an aromatherapy infuser with calming scents like lavender, lemon, lemongrass, or rose. Remember to choose a scent that you like, not just the ones mentioned here. Keep a few indoor plants in mini planters in your bathroom—the sight of verdant greenery is calming and uplifting.

**Step 2: The Lights**

Ever wondered why candlelight is relaxing, and lighting from a florescent lamp is not? A candle or an oil lamp is natural light—it is fire, and fire in Ayurveda is a purifying force. Lighting an herbal candle or incense is invigorating because the burning essence of herbs will purify the air around you and invoke a feeling of mental peace and wellbeing. Adjust the lights according to your liking, dim or brighten as per whatever relaxes you at that moment—and change the routine as often as you like. Your state of mind is not the same every day, so you will have to use different ways to calm yourself.

**Step 3: The Water**

A bath is meant to relax as much as it’s supposed to clean. And dousing yourself with water that’s too hot, too cold, and unclean isn’t going to relax you—it can merely put you in an irritable state. So get the water temperature right and make sure it’s clean and pleasing to smell. If having a bath, you may want to add in some bath salts at this point to make the water as soothing to smell and feel as possible. For showers, it’s the soap or wash that will add the scent.

**Step 4: The Sounds**
None of us really associate bathing with sounds—but the sound of water cascading over your body and down to the floor has a soothing rhythm of its own. Try and keep silence during your bath—bathing can also be a time of contemplation and meditation. If your bathroom is not particularly peaceful, you may want to bring in a small music player (make sure it’s waterproof or away from the water for safety purposes) and play music that calms you—instrumental, mantra chants, nature sounds and such. A good choice here is a mixed collection of morning mantras, out of which the Snana Mantra (bath chant) is particularly relevant.

Translated from Sanskrit, the mantra says:

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O holy rivers Ganges and Yamuna, and also Godavari, Saraswati; Narmada, Sindhu and Kaveri; please be present in this water near me and make it holy!
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In effect this mantra is invoking the seven river goddesses of India—the water of each is said to have different mystical and healing properties—to come and be part of the water you are bathing in and make it clean, holy and deeply purifying.

**Step 5: The Sensations**

Bathing is a very tactile sensation, and a time to be aware of your body, inside out. Your soap, body wash, body scrub, and loofah are not instruments of torture—never should they feel rough or leave your skin feeling dry. Remember to make your choice of soap as per smell and feel and not just look. A natural, organic, herbal, or Ayurvedic soap is a good bet, but be sure to choose one from a reputed brand. Try to look at the ingredient list—don’t choose anything that looks like a chemical equation gone bad. The higher the fatty matter of the soap, the better it is for your skin, so use a soap that’s preferably Grade 1 (76% total fatty matter). This is where the organic bit comes in—most soaps use animal fat. If you have chosen to live the organic or the vegan way, you’ll have to choose soaps that are organic and vegan accordingly.

**Step 6: The Ritual**

Bathing is not so much a routine as it is a ritual. There are many Ayurvedic steps to a bath—including the application of oil in a certain manner. That said, we live in a rather rushed world today—so a trick would be to use bath oil infused soap instead. Don’t hurry with the soap all over your body and neither try to slough off your skin with a loofah. Be gentle, calm, and purposeful in soaping your body. Touch your skin, feel your muscles, and realize the strength that is there in your body. The human body is indeed a wonder of nature—accept your fallacies, rejoice in your uniqueness. Let the water cleanse the impurities off your body and the negativity from your mind and heart. And remember to be gentle: your skin has to last you your lifetime. The same goes with shampooing your scalp and conditioning your hair—be gentle, unhurried, and peaceful.
Step 7: The Finale

To every ritual, there is a finale. And the ending of a bath is not supposed to be a hurried towel rub and a rushed wearing of clothes. Most of us tend to work ourselves up into a state of near panic—getting late, will miss that meeting, forgot this, had to do that… Try to keep work out of your bathroom—this is a time to reconnect with yourself.

Pat your skin dry lovingly, and then moisturize with something that smells and feels invigorating to you. Look at yourself in the bathroom mirror and smile—believe in your beauty, in your uniqueness, in your inner strength. Dress yourself, not in a tripping hurry, but calmly and gently.

And when you open that door to step out—smile at the sun, at the sky, at the ground. Applaud and thank nature for having created you. Such is the wonder of a relaxed, Ayurvedic snan (bath).

Rima J. Pundir

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Art of Living
Green Message
If there’s anything this recent political environment has taught us, it is that our power comes from within. Transformation, too—be it societal, cultural, or global—unfolds from within. For this reason, radical self-care is revolutionary, literally transforming the inner and outer worlds together. Today I’d like to share a radical self-care practice of monumental power, pleasure, and purpose…it is the ancient practice of abhyanga.

Abhyanga is sacred self-massage. It’s the Ayurvedic practice of anointing the entire body in warm oil. And it’s incredible.

For hundreds, if not thousands, of years, the culture of India has been one of oil massage. From the very day of birth infants receive regular oil massage to balance, cleanse, and nourish the doshas (or elemental energies) of their unfurling bodies. As they grow older and stronger, they begin to nourish their elders in the very same way. Throughout the entire lifespan (for all that can afford it), oil massage holds a central role in fostering happiness, beauty, resilience, and health.

Today, abhyanga remains paramount to traditional Indian medical (panchakarma) treatments and absolutely foundational to Ayurvedic healing and self-care in general. Based on ancient Vedic texts, emerging science, and a rich history of clinical application, abhyanga may be one of the quickest, most delightful ways to (re)build vitality, navigate the seasons, and paint a grayscale life wildly vibrant.
"The body of one who uses oil massage regularly does not become affected much even if subjected to accidental injuries, or strenuous work. By using oil massage daily, a person is endowed with pleasant touch, trimmed body parts, and becomes strong, charming and least affected by old age."

— Charaka Samhita: Sutrasthana: V: 88-9, Ancient Ayurvedic Text

Regardless of season, Ayurveda proclaims that rising early to self-oil massage is essential for health and, for many reasons, including to attune to the circadian rhythm, to settle and focus the mind, and to breathe in the rich prana that the early morning offers.

Remember when you were but a wee tot, and you awoke not anxious, frustrated, nor depressed, but stoked? And I mean...stoked. Maybe it was for video games or cartoons, or to go play with a friend, or to color or draw, or to romp around in the woods. Whatever it was, if you were like me and had a mostly worry-free childhood, you awoke in radical "YES!": giddy, ecstatic, happy.

For me, consistent abhyanga cultivates my radical "YES!" Almost every single day, I rise excited to awaken my body to heal, play and to, well, just enjoy myself. It sets the rhythm of my day and the tone of my life. In addition to the myriad health (and dare I say beauty) benefits, I am truly worlds more confident, loving, and playful than when I first started. I love abhyanga, and abhyanga loves me.

**Abhyanga: How To**

Let's get down to business.

Set up an abhyanga station that includes a towel placed over a sitting cushion, a small crock pot pre-loaded with sesame oil, and a mirror (abhyanga is the ultimate self-confidence boost...you'll want a mirror).

If you really wanna do it right, consider incense, candles, a speaker prepped with morning grooves, and—best yet—an electric kettle, some tea, and a mug. Breathe in peace for a couple of minutes. No matter the dark dreams or dread for the day, cinnamon-dandelion tea will quickly awaken your dormant joy for the treat to come.

Now, there’s all sorts of "proper" Ayurvedic techniques for abhyanga. And they’re great. But what really unlocks abhyanga’s potential is that you delight in its inherent sensuality. Let yourself go there! With every cell of your being. And really feel the precious gift that you're freely giving to yourself.

For a while I did morning self-massage as if it was just "another obligation," another bullet point on the "to do" list, and that energy limited the experience to but a fraction of what it could’ve been. Don’t fall into that trap. Breathe deeply. Gaze into your own eyes as you receive your own gift. Let "look how much I love myself" be the energy behind every stroke. Breathe deeply, and let abhyanga be all that it may be.
Massage for 10-20 minutes (watch the eyes!), and let sit 10-30 minutes, if you can. This is a great time to stimulate acupuncture points or direct the flow of energetic meridians within your own body. All of your channels will be open and a-flowin’. **Listen deeply: what does your body need?** If you have a sadhana, or spiritual practice, this is the optimal window! Try meditation, qigong, chanting, or gentle yoga (just don’t slip!).

Let it sit! This absorption window allows the body’s largest and most exposed organ to deeply absorb the oil for maximum effect. Sesame oil permeates the skin particularly well; it goes deep, and can even reach and repair intestinal lining. After, shower with soap (a natural castile soap is best) and feel long-held toxins release from your body, for good.

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**Abhyanga Benefits**

After showering, you’ll feel and see a glow about you. Others will notice it, too. Worried you’ll be too oily? That’s why you shower! You’ll find that even if you’re a naturally well-oiled sapiens, self-oil massage has a regulatory effect on the oil secretion of the skin. For instance, even though I’m a largely oily dude (with a strong Pitta dosha), abhyanga leaves me in the "Goldilocks glow"—just right.

Though the early morning is abhyanga’s optimal window of most benefit, it is always available. Having an especially stressful day? Post-work abhyanga is worlds more rewarding than Netflix and beer. Wanna sleep like a baby? Try a Vedic secret: a little sesame oil on the crown, belly, and feet. Anytime you use a fair amount of oil, you really will want to shower after and rid your body of all of the toxins that the oil absorbs.

Totally tridoshic, abhyanga is fabulous for all, regardless of season. That said, it’s especially helpful for Vata types, who suffer from anxiety, coldness, dryness, and a general ungroundedness and lack of energetic containment...imbalances that abhyanga quickly corrects.

Ancient writings and paintings reveal that humans have for millennia utilized medicinal plant oils for healing, pleasure, and ritual. At the deepest level, medicinal body oils—and particularly sesame, which is rather thick and warming—returns us to the comfort of infancy. I imagine the embryo was not a dry, cold life. But oily, warm, contained...a place of all-pervading peace. If we were especially fortunate, our parents might’ve even oil massaged our infant selves to help us relax, sleep, or simply because they loved us and knew it felt good.

During abhyanga, one’s energy and physical bodies feels totally contained in the oceanic balm of oil. Post abhyanga, one feels born again: innocent and clean. Open and strong. Relaxed, while ready-to-roll.

Want to play with different oils? Though sesame oil is typically great for all doshas, it’s especially helpful for balancing Vata. Pitta can use coconut or sunflower, and Kapha can use mustard. If you are not merely one dosha (like most of us), oil mixtures are great. Just pay
attention to the doshic quality of the season. For instance, in the high heat of Summer, I use a one : one mixture of coconut : sesame to cool. In the fall, winter, or even spring, I prefer the warming-grounding quality of sesame alone. Experiment.

You’re right that a massage oil habit isn’t exactly cheap, but it’s not a budget-buster either. It’s certainly worth every drop. An intelligent way to purchase is in bulk, perhaps sharing the bounty with a friend.

The benefits of Abhyanga are as vast as they are deep.

- Nourishes the entire body
- Decreases the effects of aging
- Imparts muscle tone and vigor to the dhatus (tissues) of the body
- Imparts a firmness to the limbs
- Lubricates the joints
- Increases circulation
- Stimulates the internal organs of the body
- Assists in elimination of impurities from the body
- Moves the lymph, aiding in detoxification
- Increases stamina
- Calms the nerves
- Benefits sleep—better, deeper sleep
- Enhances vision
- Makes hair (scalp) grow luxuriantly, thick, soft and glossy
- Softens and smoothens skin; wrinkles are reduced and disappear
- Pacifies Vata and Pitta

Contraindications are few, including:

- Severe levels of toxins
- Very low agni [digestive ability]
- [Severe] obesity, edema, ascites
- Food poisoning, nausea, or vomiting
- Acute infection

Though Ayurveda is grounded in millennia of clinical investigation, modern science is just catching up. In 2011, a pilot study found that abhyanga significantly lessened subjective stress levels of both men and women. Heart rates significantly calmed, too. In my experience, stress level is the single most reliable indicator of one’s health, or lack thereof. Truly, the answer to, “How’s your health?” lives in the question, “How’s your stress?”

Again, Ayurveda’s been privy to the poison of stress for quite some time, and it’s never been clearer to modern science. In the last decade alone, western science has uncovered that stress is the root of many—if not most—modern dis-eases. It’s rather scary stuff. The research shows that stress literally unravels our telomere (DNA) helixes and compromises our very cellular integrity. But not to worry! Ancient Vedic rishis (sages) knew best: it just takes a little intelligent self-care each morning to smooth out stress’s kinks. Ayurveda’s
practical wisdom lives in its simplicity: that if we feel good every day as early and as often as we can, we create the conditions where only health and well-being may bloom.

This is why abhyanga is dynamic, both healing and protective. It’s particularly helpful during seasonal, lifestyle, or even electoral transitions when the body is especially fragile and vulnerable to discomfort and dis-ease. Abhyanga helps to calm fight and flight, reminding the body with each smooth stroke that "It's okay." No matter what’s going on around you, it’s okay.

Perhaps most profoundly, abhyanga is a powerful sadhana, or spiritual practice, that reminds every inch of our beings that we are absolutely divine. As sacred souls already-perfect (with room for improvement), abhyanga inspires us to reclaim our self-acceptance, self-worth, and self-love.

In self-massage abhyanga, there is no limit to our pleasure and bliss; you might even want to set a timer so you can get on with your day! In truth, abhyanga defines "the higher octave of hedonism": that that which truly feels good truly is good. During abhyanga, we remember that our precious souls are worth the absolute highest health and happiness. Regardless of what energies our life may lack, abhyanga empowers us to be the source of our own supply.

The not-so-secret to Ayurveda, and to health in general? Routine. For a moment, consider how your quality of life would differ if you started tomorrow with morning abhyanga. Consider the quality of your life after a month of morning abhyanga. A year? Though your soul will rejoice for even a single morning of abhyanga—and if that’s your only window, do take it—life rewards a skillfully fine-tuned dinacharya (schedule), whose every element supports our highest health and evolution.

At 21, my belly broke down. The health crisis was traumatic. The recovery, a miracle. I cannot overstate how valuable abhyanga was in healing my intestinal lining, revitalizing my adrenals, and detoxifying my organs. Perhaps most importantly, abhyanga taught me to be gentle with myself, and that self-compassion is the first—and perhaps most important—step for self-healing.

Perhaps you’ve noticed—this human experience is just nuts. We’re all going through so much on this hurtling space-rock, and doing the very best that we can. In times of hardship, abhyanga taught me to love myself more, not less.

“Love is oily, soft, and gentle.”

– Dr. Vasant Lad

Who couldn’t use a little more love? A great teaching lives in the Sanskrit word “sneha,” which means both "to oil" and "to love." It really is that simple. Indeed, compassionate self-touch is the very gateway into the field of Love itself. And in a world so tragically estranged from its own tenderness, to cultivate a quality of heart is nothing short of revolutionary. Radical. Remember the Buddha’s counsel:
“Hatred never ends by hatred but by Love alone is healed.
This is the ancient and eternal law.”

Each morning, I rise with the sun and the sweet scent of sesame, and make each stroke a radical prayer for peace. With fierce determination and ruthless compassion, I let the balm of love smooth and clear all obstacles standing in the way of Love. To me, this is the way of the Vedic warrior.

To oil is to Love. And to Love is to protest all that is not-yet Love. Don’t underestimate the tremendous power of your own self-care! Not even for a moment. Our power lives in our freedom to heal. The inner work is the outer work, and your healing is our healing. In the mirror, again and again: Thank you. I forgive you. I love you. Feel it ripple. Namaste.

Blake Roberts

Sources:
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Abhyanga: Your New Favorite Morning Practice

A more detailed how-to for this self-massage with oil.

Every single morning for the past nearly 11 years I have treated myself to one of Ayurveda’s oldest secrets for health and longevity. With herbs and warm oil in hand I rub my entire body down with a gentle massage, which has helped me to retain elastic skin and a vibrant body. Abhyanga is the Ayurvedic term given to describe warm oil self-massage (often with herbs) and it is simply heavenly.

It all started back when I was pregnant with my first son. I had read that regular oil massage could reduce the chance of getting stretch marks. Enough said. I purchased both sesame and almond oil along with some sweet rose oil and frankincense because I had read they were of the highest vibrational herbs and oils available. Simply warming the oil under hot running water was how I began, and each and every day I would practice this technique, either before or after my morning shower.

Abhyanga is incredible not only for the skin, but for the entire body and every system in the body. It helps to move the lymph, tone the muscles, remove toxins, and encourage the proper functioning of all organs and glands.

You can get Abhyanga done by an Ayurvedic massage therapist, which is equally wonderful, but the nice thing about self-massage is that it is a way to increase connection to the self and enhance self-love and body appreciation—which are important elements in the overall health of the body and factors which determine how easily the body can move towards health physically as well as emotionally and psychologically.

How to Self-Oil Massage

It is simple to practice Abhyanga. All you need is a base oil such as sesame, almond, apricot, olive, or coconut. Then, a way to warm the oil is required, such as a cup of boiled water to set your oil in, or you can simply run the oil under hot water if that is all you have access to. Herbs or essential oils are a beautiful addition to warm oil massage, though they are not required.

Start by placing a bit of oil into your hand and massage fingertips into the scalp with circular motions. I often skip the scalp if I am massaging post-shower because then my hair is left greasy, but in a pre-shower massage I love to get my scalp and even tug at my hair. It really stimulates the health of the hair and the entire brain and face get an increase in circulation and relaxation. After the head I move to the face and use only gentle pressure around the eyes, but emphasize the jaw area and the ears. Moving down into the neck, longer strokes are helpful to move the lymph.
From the neck Abhyanga takes you around the shoulders and across the chest. When massaging the arms, stroke towards the heart to return any stagnant blood or toxins to the center of the body. Around joints, such as the elbows, wrists, and fingers, use more circular motions to release synovial fluids and relax tension.

It isn’t necessary to lavish your body with tons of oil, unless you like that or you are taking a shower afterwards (which really does leave you with super soft skin), but using just a small amount of oil does the job.

After the arms, do the chest, navel, and buttocks. When massaging the belly it is important to run your hands in a clockwise direction, the same way that the intestinal system flows. If you massage in the opposite direction you could back up your colon—which is not fun.

From the belly and buttocks, which you can address with long circular motions, the legs and feet are massaged like the arms, with strokes that send blood flow back up to the heart.

The benefits of Abhyanga:

- Pacifying all the doshas
- Nourishing the nervous system
- Calming the mind
- Toning the muscles
- Detoxing the organs and glands
- Moving the lymph
- Relieving fatigue
- Increasing longevity
- Increasing stamina
- Increasing sleep depth and quality
- Nourishing entire system
- Greater pleasure
- Beautifying skin tone
- Improving nerve endings
- Improving circulation
- Lubricating joints
- Relieving aches and pains
- Reducing chance of stretch marks/improved skin elasticity
- Increasing sexual vigor
- Greater body connection
- Improving self-confidence
- Improving self-adoration
- Aligning chakras
- Deepening sense of Self
- Evolving consciousness

Whether you love massage or have never had one, it is worth your time to try a self-massage before your next shower. It may seem like a bit of time add-on at first to get started, but after a few times I promise you will be hooked on the joy and benefits of the ancient healing practice of Abhyanga massage.

Stasia Bliss
Ayurvedic Oral Health: Tongue Scraping & Oil Pulling

*Keep your mouth happy and hygienic with these two simple daily techniques.*

Going to the dentist can be a real drag, and is generally not something that we look forward to. However, it’s important to remember that our oral health sets the foundation for the rest of our body, so it’s imperative that we do everything possible to keep our gums, teeth, and mouth healthy. Ayurvedic tradition has long acknowledged and emphasized the importance of good oral health, dating back to the *Shalyatantra* and *Shalakyatantra* branches of Ayurveda. These texts mention 65 varieties of oral diseases that can arise in seven anatomic locations in or near the mouth, including eight on the lips, 15 on the alveolar margin (ridge above the top teeth and below the bottom that contains the sockets), eight in connection with the teeth, five on the tongue, and nine on the palate. This may seem shocking, but when you think of the important role that our mouth and teeth play on a daily basis it seems feasible.

Research in recent years has even indicated a strong connection between heart health and the gums, which is why dentists emphasize the importance of gum care at each visit. Moreover, studies have suggested that poor gum health can lead to microbes and bacteria infiltrating the bloodstream, which can irritate the arterial walls. Further, the link has been made between *Streptococcus mutans* bacteria in the mouth, which spikes when a high sugar diet is consumed and unhealthy levels of buildup exist in arterial walls of heart patients. It’s also important to remember that our teeth are living tissues that need to be maintained, just like our organs and muscles.

Oil pulling and tongue scraping are two awesome Ayurvedic ways to support your normal brushing and flossing routine, and we’ve detailed each below.

**The Scoop on Tongue Scraping**

We don’t pay the tongue much attention. A dominant feature of our mouths, it works thanklessly to help us enunciate our speech and appreciate and consume our food. Many people prefer to ignore this part of the mouth, especially in the morning, when the furry buildup that has accumulated there overnight has us running for the toothbrush.

Before you brush tomorrow morning, give your tongue a closer look. A dense coating could signal an imbalance beyond the confines of your mouth, and tongue scraping—the act of using a simple tool to remove that coating—may be an easy step toward rebalancing the body.

In an Ayurvedic worldview, the tongue is directly related to all of the vital organs in the body, so looking at the tongue is a helpful way to assess the overall health of the body. The white tongue coating we encounter in the morning is an expression of ama. *Ama*, often translated as “undigested,” is the accretion of impurities in the body and the source of many health issues. The term ama applies to both physical and energetic toxins, and a film on
the tongue can indicate a [doshic](#) imbalance or the presence of undigested food in your system. (Try [these yoga poses](#) to stimulate your digestive fire and prevent the buildup of ama in the first place.)

Especially if you tend toward a [Kapha](#) imbalance or if you’ve been feeling sluggish this summer, ama may be a culprit.

Which brings us back to tongue scraping.

Much of what you take into your body during the day passes over the tongue. If the tongue isn’t clean, toxic ama goes back into your body with the food you eat, muddying up the works.

In addition to clearing your mouth of ama, getting the goop off your tongue can also wake up the taste buds, and if you’re better able to taste your food, you’re less likely to pile on the [salt](#)—an Ayurvedic no-no.

Tongue scraping has also been promoted as a way to tackle bad breath—one study from the University of São Paulo indicates that tongue scraping is 30% more effective at diminishing bad breath than brushing the tongue with a toothbrush. In an interview with the [Vegetarian Times](#), Anthony Dailley, D.D.S., explains that tongue scrapers can reach areas between the taste buds that most toothbrushes can’t. “Brushing your tongue with a toothbrush...is like taking a broom to a shag rug. It’s better than nothing, but it’s not the greatest cleaning method,” he says.

Bacteria aren’t the enemy. We need bacteria to keep our mouths healthy and to aid in the pre-digestion of food. But a thick coating on the tongue is worth your attention.

**The Practice of Tongue Scaping**

Scraping the tongue is pretty much what it sounds like, but be gentle! Gagging or soreness is a sign that you’re attacking that coating a little too vigorously.

Avoid plastic scrapers and opt for a stainless steel version, as the material is ideal for balancing all doshas. Stainless steel scrapers are widely available (check out your local drugstore) and won’t corrode. A spoon also works, but it’s less effective.

Always [start your day](#) with tongue scraping and do so on an empty stomach. Place the edge of the scraper near the base of the tongue (but not so far back that you gag), and gently pull it forward. Scrape the tongue from back to front, reaching as far back in the mouth as possible. Repeat 5-30 times, depending on the extent of the coating, rinsing the scraper between scrapes.

Just as you would with a toothbrush, rinse your scraper after each use (I like to clean mine with a little toothpaste or mouthwash, with an occasional soak in rubbing alcohol).

Spending time with your tongue each morning is also a great opportunity to [analyze it](#). Ayurvedic specialists counsel that the tongue can inform us about the overall health of our bodies. In his tome *Radical Healing*, Rudolf Ballentine writes that a dramatically red tongue can indicate overheating in the body and excess Pitta, so if you notice redness rather than a coating, you might want to incorporate some [cooling exercises](#) into your daily...
routine. A pale tongue indicates a lack of Pittic fire and a purple tongue might be a sign of decreased blood circulation. A dark coating on the tongue could indicate increased toxicity in the body.

Ballentine also notes that the color of your coating may differ depending on your primary dosha: a brown coating indicates Vata types, yellow indicates Pitta types, and a white coating Kapha types.

Once you get into the habit of scraping your tongue every day, you’ll find it becomes an essential part of your morning routine.

The Scoop on Oil Pulling

Oil pulling is an ancient Ayurvedic practice used to promote oral health and detoxification. It involves taking some warm oil, traditionally sesame or coconut oil, and swishing it around your mouth to “pull” away harmful toxins. The first mention of oil pulling comes from the ancient text Caraka Samhita. Caraka, a proponent of oil pulling says, “Keeping of oil gargle provides strength in jaws and voice, development of the face, maximum taste and relish of food. One does not suffer from dryness of throat, lip cracking and teeth become firmly rooted. The teeth do not ache or become sensitive and can chew the hardest food items.” Other claims from the late 1990s have touted huge benefits ranging from proper digestion to relief from aches throughout the body. These claims are not as widely studied, but what we do know is that the act of “pulling” oil through the teeth has a saponification, or cleansing effect, on the gums and has also been shown to enhance immune support against foreign microbes.

What are the benefits? Oil pulling has numerous health benefits. First and foremost, oil pulling pulls bacteria, parasites and other toxins from your teeth, gums and mucus membrane. Bacteria specifically is the root cause of bad breath and cavity formation in your teeth, and oil pulling helps breakdown bacterial membranes, helping to prevent tooth decay, bad breath, and bleeding gums and helping to strengthen your teeth and gums. In addition to the oral health benefits of oil pulling, it is also believed to help stimulate the health of various organs throughout your body as well as the vagus nerve, which is extremely important to digestion and overall health.

The Practice of Oil Pulling

Oil pulling is usually done with unrefined coconut or sesame oils, or a combination of the two, usually with added herbs like turmeric and peppermint to increase benefits.

Using coconut oil is great as it’s super nourishing and gentle but is also able to cut through plaque to remove or “pull” out toxins while also strengthening the teeth. Coconut oil is particularly beneficial because not only does it have antimicrobial properties, but it is a source of omega 3s, which are necessary to balance the high levels of omega 6s that are too often consumed.
The process is much like swishing or gurgling mouthwash. Practice oil pulling after tongue scraping each morning.

Take about one tablespoon of oil in your mouth and swish for up to twenty minutes. People often say that you need to oil pull for 15-20 minutes, but Ayurvedic physicians claim that it’s traditionally done for just 3-5 minutes. Spit the oil out and then brush your teeth. Do not swallow the oil, but be cautious of spitting the oil into your sink as it could clog your pipes.

In Ayurveda, a daily ritual of self-care is called dinacharya. Both oil pulling and tongue scraping are a great way to get your mouth and body ready for a hard day of chewing, tasting, and digesting. Try both together for at least one week to start to notice the benefits.

Oil pulling and tongue scraping should not replace brushing and flossing, but be used to complement your oral hygiene routine. Always follow tongue scraping and oil pulling with a thorough toothbrushing to be sure all of the toxins are removed that the oil pulls out of the gums and mouth.

Celsea Jenkins
Amanda Penn
Natalie Brown
The Ayurvedic Siesta & All of Its Magic

A nap during the right time of day can help your adrenal system recover.

Have you ever noticed that around 1:30, 2:00, or 2:30 p.m. you find yourself longing for coffee, chocolate, or something stimulating?

Sometimes people think they should “wake themselves up” with these stimulants, or go for a run because they are feeling low energy and want to perk up. However, quite the opposite is true—when you feel this way, it is the best time to give your mind and body the rest that it needs. You will be amazed at how much of a positive impact it will have on the rest of your day and evening.

Some countries have a culturally integrated version of what an Ayurvedic doctor recommended to me years ago. In many parts of the world, this concept is called a “siesta,” defined as “a short nap taken in the early afternoon, often after the midday meal.” My Ayurvedic doctor calls it “the 20-minute lie-down” or “20 minutes of horizontal time,” and it will revolutionize your life. It’s a little bit different than taking a nap, but I believe the idea and purpose is the same.

The big idea here is that lying down to rest each afternoon gives your mind, body, and entire nervous system a chance to rest and reboot, thus restoring your energy during the time of day when your energy is at its lowest.

There are a few important aspects of these twenty minutes of horizontal time to make it the most effective:

1. **It is best to do your 20-minutes of horizontal time between 2 and 4 p.m., as this is the time of day when our energy takes a dip.**

   My Ayurvedic doctor referred to this window between 2 and 4 p.m. as “adrenal recovery time.” Basically, this is the time of day when the adrenals are functioning at their lowest and need to recover after being productive all day long. When our adrenals are weak, our brain function is impacted. You may notice that it is harder to be productive or process data after 1:30 or 2:00 in the afternoon, whether it be at work, in school, or something else altogether.

2. **Find a space where you can be uninterrupted if at all possible.**

   If you are lucky enough to work from home or are at home already, go into your bedroom and lie on your bed, and make sure you are comfortable and warm. If anyone is home, let them know you are going to do your 20 minutes of rest and not to disturb you until you are done. If you work in an office, see if you can find an empty room or even go outdoors, or to your car if necessary, where you can best find your peaceful repose.
3. **Take this time to be completely without sensory inputs.**

If you can, cover your eyes with something—an article of clothing, an eye mask, or ideally a weighted eye pillow. Turn off all television, music, and computers—let this be a time where you are taking in no inputs or entertainment. Even peaceful music is a way to occupy your mind, and you want to let your mind go completely blank as much as possible.

4. **You may fall asleep.**

While this is not the goal, this is okay. If you fall asleep, it almost definitely means that you need the sleep/rest. If you are worried about not waking up for your next activity, set an alarm (a peaceful, gentle one if at all possible). I like to set an alarm even when I don’t have something else to do, if only to make sure that I stay lying down for the entire twenty minutes and so I don’t have to keep track of time.

5. **If you don’t have 20 minutes, it’s okay—15 minutes will work, and so will 10.**

Even if you can take 5 minutes, it will make a difference. And if you can’t take your rest time between 2 and 4 p.m., then just see if you can integrate this practice into your daily life when it *will* work. What I have found is that after my daily rest, regardless of length, I am more awake, alert, and able to be productive in ways that seemed impossible before this daily time of rest.

This repose is not meant to be a [meditation](#)—there is nothing you are supposed to be “doing.” If you can successfully lie down for the whole time, you are “doing it right.” Sometimes when I take my horizontal time, I can feel my body resisting, my mind running, and I’ll think that this time was not well spent—until I open my eyes, sit up, and realize that even though my mind was going the whole time, that I do indeed feel much calmer, slowed-down, and clearer-headed nonetheless. If nothing else, it was a time for my mind to stop taking in data and an opportunity for my nervous system to rest, digest, process, and reboot.

*Rachel Leber*
In Ayurveda, ahara refers to a balanced diet, and a person’s ahara is the most important foundation of wellness. We consume food multiple times a day, every day—and how we eat can be just as important as what we eat. Ayurveda has some general rules for everyone when it comes to eating, but there are also more specific guidelines about how different foods affect each dosha—they can be warming or cooling, for example. Unsurprisingly, seasons are important in Ayurveda, too; it’s always preferable to eat what’s in season and organic and then tailor it to your constitution.
Brighana Foods: For All Seven Layers of the Self

Seven foods that nourish all seven layers of the self and lead to greater wellbeing.

Seven—it seems like a consistent, magical, cosmic number. The same number of days it supposedly took to form the earth, the number of main chakras in the body, days of the week, and the main levels of tissue formed in the body...all counted by sevens. What nurtures one doesn’t always nurture all, but when the foods which can nourish the whole are recognized, eating healthy takes on a whole new meaning.

In Ayurvedic medicine it is recognized that there are seven main levels of tissue development and sustenance. Starting with the lymph system and ending up in the essence of the reproductive system, the body is in constant release, repair and rejuvenation of these vital tissues. All seven layers include, and in this order: the fluids (including plasma/lymph/milk), blood, muscles, fat, bones, nervous system, and reproductive fluids. Foods that can nourish all seven layers of the self are known in Ayurvedic medicine to be called Brighana foods, and consuming them not only can help you in coming into physical health and balance, but also can deepen a greater sense of emotional wellbeing.

When one layer of the body's tissues comes out of balance, it inevitably affects all of the other systems. By tracing illnesses back to their root tissue issue, one can begin the path to repair damaged systems and find wholeness again. However, by treading the path of preventative medicine, and beginning to eat a more well-rounded Brighana diet, both physical issues—
and their associated emotional counterparts—can be avoided entirely. By taking in foods which nourish the whole body, no matter what, you run a lower risk of facing health problems and find yourself in the high probability window of living a fulfilling life full of love, joy and full-body bliss.

There is an emotional and spiritual reason for the following recommended foods that reach beyond the nutrition of the foods themselves. Each one individually, but more importantly, balanced with the entire list, makes for a whole individual who is strong in all variants of the constitution and who can access the full flavor of Divine Beingness.

**Organic Fruits and Vegetables**

Live, fresh, raw, organic produce which has not been sprayed with pesticides is the first item on the list. This also assumes these farm-fresh goodies are grown with love and awareness and prepared with a conscious mind and an open heart. The vibration of the food itself is affected by the location it grows and by those who have handled it, so the closer you can get to source, the more nourishing the food will be. In this way you can see that fresh and raw have the capacity to nourish the development and upkeep of all the vital tissues by speaking their inherent language of wholeness.

**Whole Grains**

Making sure to choose whole grains such as quinoa, millet, amaranth, barley, and spelt ensures that the nutrients you receive are well-rounded and contain complex carbohydrates so as not to tax any of the body systems with immediate sugar spikes. In both the process of healing chronic illnesses as well as the mindset of preventative medicine, whole grains are supportive to healing and delicious to consume. It is not so difficult to transition from standard white and even brown rice (which is also fine occasionally) to a more hardy grain, as the taste is fabulous. They also add a flare of variety and depth to the art of cooking that any chef can appreciate.

Whole grains have an inherent sweetness that does not “burn up” quickly. So, for the spirit, they help to invoke the sustainable quality of finding and enduring in the sweetness of life. They teach patience, which is needed to cook them, and add variety into the senses, which helps one to broaden the palate of their personal expression.

**Raw, Fresh Dairy**

I always have to add a clause to this item early on, since eating dairy in India is a very different experience when compared with eating dairy products in the United States. I greatly discourage any dairy consumption in the U.S. unless it is definitely certified raw or made locally. The enzymes in dairy assist in its digestion, and once dairy is pasteurized it becomes a very different little giant, ready to insult the health of the body and throw off the health of the main doshas.
In the United States, I recommend in this category raw goat milk and cheeses, farm-fresh cheeses, raw milk, home-made yogurts/curd, paneer, and the like. I recommend completely avoiding any store-bought milks or cheeses unless the source is clearly known and trusted. There is much in the way of antibiotics in dairy products today which are undesirable and do not support good health or a peaceful state of mind.

Raw dairy items connect one with the “nectar of the Mother”—reminding one of the first food of life, that of the mother’s milk. Especially when drinking warmed raw milk, the spirit is brought back to the first moment of contact with breast milk which ignites a great healing and soothing essence into the soul. Dairy, when consumed at the right time and in balance with the other bringhana foods, can add an element of depth and trust to one’s life if it is missing, or to enhance these qualities for one who is longing.

**Soaked Nuts**

All nuts are best when they have been soaked first. It is best to soak them for anywhere between 3 and 8 hours, depending on the nut (cashew shorter, almonds longer). For the strict intent of this article, almonds and walnuts are the best nuts to choose in order to ensure the health and vitality of all seven dhatus (body tissues).

Nuts provide an oily, fatty substance and quality that allows you to feel protected and cared for, cushioned and warm. The protein they provide also feels of sustenance and gives the sense that one is well provided for and even “rich” in the bounty of life.

**Sweet Juicy Fruits**

This bringhana food consists of mangoes, plums, peaches, nectarines, pears, and apricots. These fruits, which also fall in the first category of “fruits and vegetables,” have their very own heading due to the special qualities they invoke in a person. There is something very spiritually metaphorical about the sweet and juicy fruits. They allow one to truly “suck the juice” out of life and instill a remembrance of childhood when all was sweet and “flowing from lips,” food smeared to faces. It is the joy of picking the fresh, ripe pear from the tree and allowing the juices to run down cheeks as the sunlight fills the sky and all cares flow away.

Sweet, juicy fruits are added to the list because the childlike qualities of life are absolutely essential for true joy and health to exist and if one is engaged in a healing process, negating the laughter and sweetness of childhood could be detrimental to the journey.

**Dried Fruits**

In this category are the especially nourishing dried fruits: dates, figs, raisins, and—I like to add—goji berries. Each one of these is dense in nutrition and packed full of flavor and health benefits. The dried fruits help to balance the other tastes and are especially indicated to bring sweetness back into the body and life, but unlike the dripping sweet and juicy fruits previously mentioned, they speak to that which would age in us. The wrinkles remind us that youth does not promise to stay always, but that sweetness only deepens with time. These
fruits bring wisdom and a knowing that their use in moderation is key, unless specifically working to draw in new life, as in the case with conception.

**Stewed Apples & Mung Dahl**

Both of these foods seem to be panaceas for so many conditions. The “apple a day” idea is found here in the recommendation that apples, especially when the juices are released with heat, can be extremely balancing to the body's pH and nourishing to every layer of being. Mung dahl gets a similar reputation in India, where this simple dahl (which is mung beans simply cooked with several basic Ayurvedic spices such as turmeric and cumin), is touted as the perfect “sattvic food” fit for one who wishes to live for enlightenment and true health.

By consuming a balance of the above foods on a regular basis the body's tissues are able to maintain a state of health and proper regeneration over time. By incorporating such a diet now, the need for drastic measures to “heal” later on will then be avoided, and you will be able to drop into the deeper meaning of existence offered by exploring what some deem the “middle path.”

*Stasia Bliss*
Increase Your Peace Through Whole Foods

Foods that connect you to the earth can lead to more energy and greater overall wellbeing.

Your connection to Earth, to being grounded, feeling cared for and protected is in your hands—literally. It’s in the food you eat. The more whole foods you consume, the more peaceful you become. The body utilizes everything it needs—everything else, whether it be too much of something or a foreign ingredient, is removed. This takes energy—you are energy. So the question becomes: what do you want to do with your energy?

Listening to your body is a great first step. Eating in a peaceful state of mind with no distractions can bring your relationship with food to a whole other level. As you chew each bite [32 times to help aid digestion] it can become a dance where taste meets texture. Intentionally thinking about each ingredient and how it’s benefiting you can turn your meal into a meditative experience.

Each meal should honor the six tastes; the six tastes are associated with the five elements:

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<tr>
<th>TASTE</th>
<th>PREDOMINANT ELEMENTS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sweet</td>
<td>Earth &amp; Water</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sour</td>
<td>Earth &amp; Fire</td>
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<td>Salty</td>
<td>Water &amp; Fire</td>
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<td>Pungent</td>
<td>Air &amp; Fire</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bitter</td>
<td>Air &amp; Ether</td>
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<tr>
<td>Astringent</td>
<td>Air &amp; Earth</td>
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You are the five elements. According to Ayurveda everyone has a different constitution; each constitution is associated with the elements:
Your current constitution is known as your **Vikriti**, which is your current state of health. It’s best determined by an Ayurvedic Health Counselor; however, you can put your curiosity into action here, by taking this simple [Ayurvedic Dosha Quiz](#).

Once your Vikriti is determined, you can relate it to the elements and thus to taste. For example, if your Vikriti is **Vata** [ether and air], consuming more sweet, sour, and salty tastes and less pungent, bitter, and astringent tastes will help you feel more grounded and creative.

If your Vikriti is **Pitta** [fire and water], consuming more sweet, bitter, and astringent tastes and less sour, salty, and pungent tastes will help channel your natural ability to be quick-witted and make good decisions.

If your Vikriti is **Kapha** [earth and water], consuming more pungent, bitter, and astringent tastes and less sweet, sour, and salty tastes will help increase your clarity and enjoyment for life.

Developing a relationship with your food, understanding your current state of health and honoring the six tastes will help create balance in your life and in turn, increase your peace.

_Jaclyn Andrews_
When you contemplate how food tastes to you, you probably think of certain tastes you like or favor, and others that aren’t as appealing to you or you dislike. It turns out that there is a lot more to taste than just personal appeal. The taste of food actually has a profound influence on your health and your experience of your body and mind.

The six tastes come from the five elements. Ayurveda emphasizes including six different ‘tastes’ in our daily diet for optimal health.

Ayurveda emphasizes including six different tastes in our daily diet for optimal health: sweet, sour, salty, pungent, bitter, and astringent. Each ‘taste’ is a combination of two elements of nature, and each taste has an effect on the different doshas. Too much or too little of any of the tastes can lead to imbalance and disease. There is also a polarity to every taste in that each taste has its positive qualities for an individual when used in the proper amount and has negative effects if taken too much or too little for a certain person.

The six tastes govern or influence the chemistry from the body to the mind. When you consume the proper amount of all six tastes for your prakriti or vikriti, your body will respond with the production of healthy tissue and normal physiology. Each person will thrive on different proportions of each taste based on who they are and what they are going through. Taste is to the body what emotion is to the mind. Emotion in the mind tends to produce the taste and effect in the body and vice versa.

If there is too much or too little of a certain taste, the body will respond with dosha. That is where you see the imbalance of the elements as a doshic imbalance or dis-ease.

Take a look at each of the six tastes, what their effects are on our body and mind, and what situations or people they are suited best for.

**The Six Tastes**

**Sweet: Earth & Water**

**Qualities**—Cool, heavy, moist

**Effect**—Soothing, calming, builds tissues. It is the most nourishing and tonifying of all the tastes. Builds ojas and promotes the growth of tissues. Nourishes body and mind. Gives satisfaction and relieves hunger. Important for anyone who has been depleted, dehydrated. Hardest to digest. Overuse creates overgrowth of tissues: obesity, diabetes, an environment for parasites to thrive, nausea, lethargy, and excess mucus.
• Vata: Decreases. Creates a stability that Vata’s air-etherness needs. Earth and water together create mud so you can picture how these elements balance out the light, dry nature of Vata.

• Pitta: Decreases because of its cooling nature.

• Kapha: Increases because it shares all the same qualities.

Examples—Natural sugars, **grains**, sweet herbs like **licorice**, shatavri, comfrey.


**Sour: Fire & Earth**

Qualities—Warm, heavy, unctuous.

Effect—Increases appetite, encourages elimination of waste, invigorates the mind. Too much can dry you up and age you faster because of the fire element. Great for Vata, improves digestion without drying and provides warmth.

• Vata: Decreases.

• Pitta: Increases.

• Kapha: Increases.

Examples—**lemons**, limes, **hawthorn berries**, **apple cider vinegar**, **tomato sauce**, **fermented foods**, pickled foods.


**Salty: Fire & Water**

Qualities—Warm, moisturizing.

Effect—A little bit enhances the flavor of everything else, increases digestion, and is moisturizing. Too much makes food unpalatable, dries you, weakens you, degenerates tissue of the body, accelerates aging, and creates **inflammation**.

• Vata: Decreases.

• Pitta: Increases.

• Kapha: Increases.

Examples—Found in minerals and sea vegetables.

Pungent: Fire & Air

Qualities—Hot, light, dry.

Effect—Gives off a hot, dispersing energy. This taste has a natural ability to help break down accumulation in the body. Increases digestion, appetite, and sweating. Removes excess phlegm, kills parasites, bacteria, and fungus. Too much leads to burning and drying.

- Vata: Increases.
- Pitta: Increases.
- Kapha: Decreases.

Examples—Spices like black pepper, ginger, garlic, chili peppers, jalapenos, wasabi.


Bitter: Air & Ether

Qualities—Cooling, light, and dry.

Effect—Detoxifying, purifies blood and beautifies skin, antagonist of and antidote to too much sweet, restores you from overuse of any of the other tastes.

- Vata: Increases.
- Pitta: Decreases.
- Kapha: Decreases.

Examples—Dark leafy greens, goldenseal, dandelion.

Mind—Asset: stimulates desire for change, dispels illusion, and helps you face reality which in moderation can keep you on a path for growth. Overuse: dissatisfied, nothing’s ever satisfying.

Astringent: Air & Earth

Qualities—Dry, cooling, heavy.
**Effect**—It tonifies tissue, externally heals wounds, pulls tissue together, stops bleeding, dries secretions, not easily digestible.

- Vata: Increases.
- Pitta: Decreases.
- Kapha: Decreases.

**Examples**—Pomegranates, cranberries, haritaki, legumes.

**Mind**—Asset: causes mind to look inward, keeps senses pointed inward. Overuse: contract sensory channels, looking at yourself incessantly, insecurity, fear.

You can see how too much or too little of any of the elements leads to disease.

For example, Kapha needs the least sweet (earth and water) because Kaphas already have an abundance of earth and water elements. Kapha benefits from more pungent taste and then bitter taste. Vata needs less bitter (air and ether) because Vatas already have plenty of air and ether. That means less green juices for Vata types, even though their tendency is to love green juice and just snack here and there throughout the day. They would benefit from the opposite, sitting down for a few bigger meals with grounding qualities, like cooked veggies instead of raw, to feel more balanced. They also benefit from the addition of salty and sour tastes. Pitta needs less pungent (spicy)—even though Pittas tend to crave hot, spicy food the most, it is their demise. Bitter is best for Pitta, and then sweet.

For good health, take into consideration the tastes of the food you are eating at each meal and over the course of the day and strive to get a balance of all the tastes, emphasizing particular tastes based on the season and your body’s constitution.

*Melissa Hill*
The Power of Mealtime Meditation in Three Steps

With just a few changes to your mealtime routine you can be more mindful of eating.

You have the ability to turn each meal into a gift for yourself. It’s a simple yet powerful practice that can change your relationship with food, improve your digestion, and enhance the balance in your life.

This three-step process is designed to build upon itself; becoming a master of each step before moving on to the next is key, though the bonus step at the end can be added at any point. By becoming a master you can increase the meaningfulness and longevity of your practice, as well as unlock the power of putting your health in your own hands. Let’s begin!

**Step One: Eat in a Peaceful State of Mind with No Distractions**

This step sets the tone for your entire experience. Before sitting down with your meal, bring awareness to your surroundings and remove any outside distractions. Relish in the fact that your brain is wired to focus on one thing at a time. In other words, if you’re having a conversation, looking at your phone, watching T.V., etc., chances are you’re not paying attention to the food you’re chewing.

When you sit down with your meal, take a deep breath; create a moment to be grateful for the pleasure and nourishment you are about to receive.

When you become full, take another deep breath and bring closure to your meal; this can help retain satisfaction and mindfully prepares you to transition away from your meal.¹

**Step Two: Chew Each Bite 32 Times & Sip Warm Water**

As with any healthy relationship, the proper amount of time and care should be given to your food. When you start chewing your food, your body begins to recognize the six tastes: sweet, sour, salty, pungent, bitter, and astringent. In this practice, allow your body to lead and let your mind follow; notice each taste—is one bolder than another? Does one taste seem to be missing?

This is an important next step because your mind and body are optimized when your palette is balanced. Balance is acquired when your meal contains all six tastes. This can be accomplished through the foods you select and the herbs and spices you choose.

While mindfully chewing your food, sip on warm water. This benefits the digestive process and facilitates the assimilation of nutrients to your body.
Step Three: Harness the Power of the 20 Attributes

As your relationship with food evolves, you can develop a greater understanding of how it affects your body and the action it has on your mind.

In this step, you’ll determine your current state of health, also known as your constitution or vikriti. Your vikriti is best determined by an Ayurvedic Health Counselor (find one near you); however, you can get an idea of it here by taking this simple Ayurvedic Dosha Quiz. Once your vikriti is determined you can harness the power of the 20 Attributes.

Keeping in mind that like increases like, use the table below to determine which attributes you can increase or decrease to bring balance into your life. For example, if your vikriti is Vata, consider decreasing foods that are dry, light, cold, rough, etc., and increase foods that are hot, sharp, heavy, oily, etc. This can help reduce anxiety and accelerate your enthusiasm.

If your vikriti is Pitta, consider decreasing foods that are hot, sharp, light, etc., and increase foods that are dry, cold, heavy, dense, etc. This can help cut down feelings of anger and promote your entrepreneurial spirit.

If your vikriti is Kapha, consider decreasing foods that are heavy, slow/dull, cold, etc., and increase foods that are hot, sharp, dry, light, etc. This can help boost your energy and alleviate the chances of depression.

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<th>VATA</th>
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<td>Dry</td>
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With this in mind, all constitutions should take into consideration the season. For example, the fall season has attributes of Vata; therefore, during fall Vata’s attributes will increase. The summer season has similar attributes to Pitta, and as follows, Pitta’s attributes will increase during the summer. Winter has comparable attributes to Kapha; accordingly, Kapha will increase during the winter season.²

**Bonus Step: Lie on Your Left Side & Take a Short Walk**

This bonus step can be added at any point! After you eat, lie on your left side for 5-15 minutes. Lying in this position activates the solar energy channel, which is linked to agni.¹ Agni is the fire element, which regulates all transformation. Its primary functions include digestion, absorption, assimilation, and transformation of food and sensations into energy.² Thus, it’s relaxing, rejuvenating and supports good digestion.¹

Afterward, take a short walk and reintroduce yourself to the world. Notice how your mind and body respond to the thoughtful way you nurtured them and enjoy the balance you’ve established by creating a positive relationship with food.

*Jaclyn Andrews*

**Sources:**
Rethinking Comfort Food—and Healthy Food

Eating healthy doesn’t have to mean giving up comfort food: change the way you think about it instead.

Health food starves the soul. (It can starve the body too, depending on what it is, but that’s another conversation.) If you want to feel truly alive, nourished and satisfied, you must take care of the needs of your soul as well as those of your body. If you don’t, you’ll begin to feel brittle and hollow, and wonder what’s missing.

If the word “soul” doesn’t make sense to you, that’s fine. Find a word that does. A word for that part of yourself which is your inner knowing, which is rich, vast, unpredictable, wild, and possibly non-physical. That which animates you.

The types of foods which are powerfully soul-nourishing aren’t always “healthy” in the usual sense. Amongst my clients, in my community, and for myself, I observe again and again four types of food that nourishes people’s souls. And which people desperately crave if they aren’t getting.

1. Food Prepared with Artistry

As much as most of us love fresh fruit, there is something special and different about a wonderful dish made from gorgeous fresh fruit such as a handmade tart or pie. So much attention and touch goes into it. The touch and care of human hands is so nourishing! Even people who don’t eat added sugar and raw-foodists appear to love and appreciate the added care that goes into a homemade dessert. These days I’m always seeing beautiful cakes and pies made from raw fruits and nuts, no sugar added, that take as much care as a traditional dessert. It might taste about the same to just eat an apple and some walnuts sprinkled with cinnamon, but it doesn’t feel the same at all.

2. Food with Deep History

Like all things, foods have their own histories. Some foods are deeply connected to place and to our own ancestral past. What foods did your ancestors eat—your spirit ancestors as well as your blood ancestors?

When you eat those foods, you may feel a resonance in your body. It may just feel “right” somehow. For me, comfort foods from the American South sound a “gong!” in my body, bone-deep. Collard greens, cornbread and beans, all made with some sort of delicious pork, yes please! My dad’s side of the family has been living in South Carolina since the 1600s—that food is in me whether or not I ever take a bite of it. So, when I do, there is an inner resonance that is quite noticeable.
If you don’t know what your ancestors ate, do some research and figure it out. Whether the food is fresh tortillas with beans, spicy roasted goat, shepherd’s pie, or (like me), collard greens, eating those foods will feed you in a way that nothing else ever can.

If you must make modifications to these traditional foods due to the absence of a hard-to-find ingredient, the presence of a food allergy, or any other reason, don’t hesitate to make those adjustments. This is normal, as adaptation is the natural order of things.

3. Garden or Farm-Fresh Foods Bursting with Life and Flavor

There is just nothing quite like produce fresh from the garden, still warm from the sun and bursting with vitality. Many people have fond memories of eating their grandmother’s tomatoes or going to a “u-pick” farm and picking raspberries. Grocery store produce simply can’t compare.

In Ayurveda, we say this is because fresh from the Earth, food is abundant in prana (life force) and the prana slowly dissipates after the food is harvested. So, the sooner after harvest that food is consumed, the better. There is also an irreplaceable magic in getting your hands dirty and growing, or helping to grow, your own food. I’ve even seen children excited about eating green vegetables when they helped plant, tend, harvest, and cook them themselves!

Many of my clients live in city apartments and are not able to grow a garden (although you’d be surprised what you can grow indoors!), so in some cities farmer’s markets and CSAs are good alternatives. If you don’t currently eat produce fresh from the Earth and you are bored with your diet, this is one thing to consider shifting right away that can help you tremendously.

4. Childhood Comfort Foods

Food makes up part of your own private language of nurturing yourself. For someone who grew up with hippie parents, a nurturing comfort food could be a carob-chip cookie made with whole-wheat flour. For someone else, it may be a cheeseburger with extra pickles. What foods nurture and comfort you, heart and soul? What food did your parents and grandparents make for you as a young one?

Whether or not you like it, those foods are a part of you, and eating them, or variations of them, help you connect your present with your past and really OWN the totality of who you are.

These foods may be similar to your ancestral foods, and then again they may not be. If you grew up on doughnuts and fast food, join the club. And…indulge in doughnuts and fast food occasionally. All the better if you make them yourself from scratch. Food Rules author Michael Pollan suggests to “Eat all the junk food you want as long as you cook it yourself.” Depending on what is more nourishing to you—the process or the product—that could be worth experimenting with.
There is no way that eating according to a health plan or a purely scientific approach to nutrition will ever truly satisfy most people. Diet is not a science project. Diet is intricately entwined with culture, memory, history, family, community, and pleasure. You are a multi-faceted, multi-dimensional being. It’s time to feed all those parts of you.

Along this journey of nourishing your soul with food, eat slowly and stay present in your body’s sensations. How does your body feel while you eat and after you finish? Eating with that gentle presence is the opposite of binging or being “out of control” with your eating. Staying present and honoring your needs, body and soul, puts you in a zone beyond “right” and “wrong.” It catapults you into a sacred realm where you can ask yourself, “What is needed now?”, receive an answer, and then respond with love and grace.

Mollie Moorhead

Sources:
In this section, we offer a more nuanced look at some aspects of Ayurveda. Some of these are practices that you may do less often than daily rituals, while others are simply more abstract articles about different concepts in Ayurveda. Each article gives you a deeper look at this ancient practice, and you may find something that resonates strongly with you. We also encourage you to find an Ayurveda practitioner near you to help you explore these concepts—and yourself—more thoroughly.
Mudras of the Five Elements: Healing Hands

Mudras, or symbolic hand gestures, can improve wellbeing inside and out.

The word mudra is a Sanskrit word meaning a hand gesture that symbolizes something— and accordingly bestows joy and happiness. Mudras are considered so very important because it is said that our hands are full of our karmic energy, while our fingers are like plugs that help exchange energy between our pranic force (life energy) and the universal cosmic energy. Mudras, thus, can influence the pranic energy—further branching out into emotional, mental, physical and spiritual energies. By positioning our hands as dictated by the rishis of yore, we link our bodies to the cosmos—thereby easing pain, stimulating hormones, and increasing our pranic vitality. Spread extensively across Hinduism and Buddhism, some 400 mudras already exist. Here are five basic, elemental mudras you can add to your practice today.

The Symbolism of Earth: Prithvi Mudra

According to Ayurveda, the earth or prithvi element is a vital part of our skeleton, muscles, and internal organs. And so, the prithvi mudra helps strengthen the body from the inside. Physiologically speaking, it boosts confidence and determination, and also increases spirituality.
To practice this mudra, sit down cross-legged or in the lotus pose with your back straight. Touch the tip of your ring finger to the tip of your thumb, keeping the other fingers straight and extended. It is said that doing this mudra for 10 minutes three times a day can also eliminate any vitamin or mineral deficiencies as well as improve digestion.

The Symbolism of Fire: Surya Mudra

Quite simply, the fire element in Ayurveda is associated with metabolism as well as body temperature and regulation. Practiced in a seated posture on an empty stomach, the surya mudra is said to help one lose weight, reduce cholesterol and fats, boost metabolism and immunity, and regulate blood pressure and the thyroid.

To practice this mudra, fold your ring finger till it touches the base of your thumb. Fold your thumb over the ring finger so that it touches the second phalanx bone.
The Symbolism of Water: Varuna Mudra

The largest element of the human body is water—so the varuna mudra works on this very component, the water—AKA the blood in the human body. Practicing this mudra is easy as it can be done in any position and at any time of the day for 10 minutes or so—it helps with better blood circulation, eliminates disorders of the blood and skin and also helps balance out the taste in your mouth as well as reduces body aches.

To do this mudra, touch the tip of the little finger to the tip of the thumb. The other three fingers can be extended or left slightly bent.

The Symbolism of Air: Vayu Mudra
If your Ayurvedic dosha is Vata, then you have found the mudra to practice. The vayu mudra regulates bodily air and balances the air element within the body—it helps ease the symptoms and severity of the air element ailments such as gout, flatulence, arthritis, rheumatism, chest pains, and cervical discomfort. It is also said to help with the excessive motor movements in neural diseases such as Parkinson’s.

This mudra can be practiced at any time of the day on a full or empty stomach in a seated pose with the back straight. Fold the index finger towards the base of the thumb, and fold the thumb over the finger so that the tip of the thumb touches the second phalanx of the index finger.

**The Symbolism of Life: Prana Mudra**
The **prana mudra** is said to activate the dormant pranic energy (chi or qi) in our body, thereby energizing our physical and metaphysical self. This mudra is also said to cleanse or detox our aura and help our pranic energy to fall more in line with the cosmos and in doing so, helps our life force to get cosmic energy from the universe.

To do this mudra, sit in padmasana (lotus position) and practice it for 10 minutes, at any time of the day, whenever you are feeling tired physically, mentally, or emotionally. To do this bend the ring and the little finger, touching the tips of both to the tip of your thumb, keeping the other two fingers straight.

Five mudras, inspired and associated with the pancha tattva, the five elements of life. Try doing these for 15-20 days and you will notice a **subtle yet gradual positivity** about you.

*Rima J. Pundir*
Panchakarma: Healing From The Inside Out

_Panchakarma is a highly restorative and detoxifying therapeutic treatment used in Ayurvedic medicine. Deriving from the Sanskrit language, _pancha_ meaning “five” and _karma_ meaning “actions,” panchakarma is a healing treatment that uses a variety of procedures to cleanse the body, revitalize the immune system and re-establish mental and physical balance. It is a completely unique experience for each person and is individualized based on the individual’s particular needs. This is influenced by the individual’s [doshic constitutional make-up](#) and imbalances as well as the state of the immune and digestive systems._

In Ayurveda, habitually destructive choices in diet and lifestyle lead to a build-up of what is referred to as _ama_, a harmful and toxic matter that in turn leads to disease. When the body’s natural ability to cleanse and purify itself is compromised due to repetitive abuse and neglect of one’s health and nutrition, it is believed that panchakarma treatments are able to remove blockages of _ama_ and restore the body back to its natural order and functioning. Although found to be powerfully beneficial in cases of extreme imbalances and dis-ease, it is encouraged for most everyone as a _detoxification_ and process of renewal.

These treatments are generally done with the [turning of the seasons](#), as the coming of each season is believed to reflect naturally occurring changes that both the planet, on a macrocosmic level, and our bodies, on a microcosmic level, are making in synchronicity. A team of medical experts from _Nature Communications_, a nature research journal, found that in winter, for example, our bodies instinctively begin to produce a significantly higher number of “immune responders” in our bloodstream. Simultaneously, the Earth is providing a surplus of fat-storing, high-in-protein foods such as [nuts](#) and [grains](#). At this time, our bodies are more inclined to store nutrients and vitamins to sustain our health through the winter. In spring, our system courses with hormones to burn off our winter fat, build muscle, and retain water. In unison, what springs (quite literally) up during this season change? Leafy greens and fruits! When in balance, our body functions in perfect harmony with the world in which we live. Out of balance, our ability to self-regulate becomes quite a challenge.

Panchakarma induces an exceptionally deep state of relaxation in which the body is able to release, both physically and emotionally, toxins that have accumulated in the bloodstream and tissues. This healing method utilizes the body’s natural systems of elimination to cleanse and purify with specially prepared oils for massage and bathing, herbal enemas, and nasal treatments. Depending on the individual, a selection of the various therapies will be chosen in conjunction with their health care provider and with consideration of what will be most beneficial to them.

_Abhyanga_, for example, is a massage given to encourage lymphatic and arterial circulation, and allows for the enhanced accessibility of nutrients to reach cells as well as for the removal of sluggish waste. _Shirodhara_ is the rhythmical, soothing pouring of warm oil to the
forehead, which is said to “synchronize brain waves and promote a sense of calmness in the mind, body and spirit.”

As an ancient method of holistically therapeutic and essential detoxification, panchakarma is a treatment meant to rejuvenate and heal from the inside out: mentally, physically, and spiritually.

Indi Maxon
An Introduction to Marma

Marma Chikitsa is a therapeutic healing on both the physical and energetic planes by clearing blockages.

Healing the Physical & Subtle Bodies

Healing happens on many levels both gross and subtle. We hold the power to heal our bodies with the foods we eat, heal our thoughts with our contemplative practices, and heal our relationships with awareness and conscious action. Medicine comes through many streams, nourishing the journey we walk to live a balanced and healthy life. In Ancient India, the Rishis, or seers of the time, recognized the range of remedies that support our human experience, and ultimately our path home. One of the healing modalities found in Ayurveda, the Indian “science of life,” is that of Marma Chikitsa—therapeutic healing through subtle energy points in the body.

Marma therapy is a potent practice of release and renewal on both the physical and energetic planes. Through touch, light pressure, or tuning fork vibrations placed on vital energy points of the body known as marmani, one is able to clear blockages and relieve varying manifestations of pain. When classical texts emerged, there was said to be 107 marmani located throughout the entire body, with the 108th marma being the mind. In Vedic ages, marma points were considered bindus, mystical dots on the body. Similar to chakras, our subtle energy centers, marmani hold high concentrations of prana, or life force energy. At times, when we experience physical or emotional suffering, it is linked to blocked flow of prana in a particular place. Grief and loss live in the lungs, worry wears on our hearts, burden sits heavy upon our shoulders, anger and rage rise in the liver, and fear of expression gets caught in our throats...the list goes on. Our emotional baggage is held in our body. With the knowledge of marmani, one is able to revitalize the body, clear the flow of blocked prana, and restore emotional equanimity.

History of Marmani

The Sanskrit word “marma” means “a mortal or vulnerable point.” The science of marmani first emerged in Indian martial art schools, where the knowledge of marma points was used not only for therapeutic healing but also for inflicting injury to opponents. One of the fathers of Ayurveda was a renowned surgeon named Sushruta who applied this knowledge to surgery, emphasizing the importance of these vital energy centers in medical procedures. Today, marma therapy as bodywork is often incorporated into panchakarma treatments—deep detoxification and rejuvenation cleanses that restore holistic health.
The Benefits of Marma Therapy

Marma points are said to be the gateway between the physical and emotional bodies. From a physical perspective, we find marma points located at sites that are rich with nerves and blood vessels. Through the energetic lens, we see marma points fall along several major nadi, the subtle pathways that carry prana throughout the body as well as chakras. We come to understand that our emotions relate to the fabric of the physical body, and thus the healing benefits of marma therapy permeate body, mind and spirit.

Marma therapy has many benefits:

- Calms the nervous system and relieves stress and anxiety, which in turn makes everything in the body function more optimally rather than focus on combating stress
- Restores the autonomic nervous system and balances sympathetic and parasympathetic functioning
- Enhances the mood by releasing endorphins and neurotransmitters such as serotonin and melatonin
- Helps alleviate pain
- Helps bring harmony to doshic imbalances
- Assists in clearing ama or excess toxins from the body
- Improves digestion and absorption
- Increases immunity
- Promotes sleep

Marma therapy is often offered as part of a greater treatment for mind-body healing through Ayurveda, diet & lifestyle, exercise, spiritual practices, and more. Science of marma has evolved over the years and more points on the body have emerged since Sushruta’s original documentation. Today, this science is recognized across different systems of healing, including that of Traditional Chinese Medicine where correlations between marmani and acupressure points have been defined.

We are ever-changing and dynamic in nature. We ebb and flow in and out of balance. Marma therapy is one of many healing modalities that holds the power to transform our journey to health, transcend the layers of our being and ultimately shift our consciousness for a more harmonious life.

Gaby Colletta

Sources:
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Yoga & Ayurveda: Therapy For Harmony & Balance

Ayurveda and yoga can work together to keep you balanced and healthy.

While much of the Western World is acquainted with the ancient practice of yoga, few know of its deep connection to Ayurveda, the science of life. Rooted in the laws of nature, Ayurveda is the healing branch of yoga and the 5000-year-old medicine of holistic being. The science of Ayurveda draws wisdom from the elements of Earth, Water, Fire, Air, and Ether. Believe it or not, the qualities of these elements appear in a yoga practice. Each asana (or pose) carries an energetic remedy. Understanding how to use the elements in your asana yoga practice will help you bring balance and harmony within.

First, let's look at Ayurveda...

Each person comes into this life as a unique mixture of constitutional elements – Earth, Water, Fire, Air, and Ether. These elements comprise what is referred to as the three doshas: Vata (Air and Ether), Pitta (Fire and Water), and Kapha (Water and Earth). Every person is born with a natural constitution known as his or her prakriti. Your prakriti is a composition of these three doshas, usually with one or two being dominant. Throughout the ebb and flow of life, we experience both physical and emotional events that affect the natural balance of the doshas. Often after such experiences, we are left feeling stressed, disconnected, and depleted with low ojas, our immune boosting life force. Ayurveda empowers the individual to identify the doshas that are vitiated or out of balance and helps to define a road map back to one’s natural state of being. Through this self-healing medicine, we are able to examine our lifestyles and daily routines, integrating an array of practices that bring emotional, physical, and mental harmony back into our lives. Yoga is one of these practices that, with the insight of Ayurveda, can help bring balance.

How do Ayurveda & yoga play together?

In classical yoga, we have come to understand that moving through a sequence of asanas (poses) and pranayama breathing exercises can help direct the flow of energy in the body. These practices help release blockages that may be the cause of physical and emotional turbulence.

Each asana has specific elemental qualities that move the prana life force through the Nadi channels and chakra energy centers of the body. Some poses are uplifting and ascending, while others are grounding and descending. Some build heat, while others cool. A teacher may guide you to Utkatasana Chair Pose and suddenly you notice fire and heat building in the body. A few breaths later you may find yourself in Child’s Pose, soaking in nourishment of the Earth, feeling grounded and supported. Perhaps you are balancing in Dancer’s Pose and soon notice the energy directing upward as you lift your leg higher, opening your heart.
and elevating the Air and Ether in the body. In fact, even choosing where you set your drishti (gaze) can affect the elements within. Focusing a drishti towards the Earth will yield more grounding and stability while moving your drishti towards the sky will inspire the mobility and spaciousness of Air and Ether. Each pose lends itself to a digestive fire within the body that facilitates the flow of energy, allowing you to ultimately find balance and healing.

**A Yoga Sequence for Healing**

We now understand that Ayurveda helps us balance our doshas and align with our natural constitution. We also know that yoga asanas contain qualities that help direct the flow of energy and elevate specific elements in our bodies. Here is where the magic begins...

Once you determine your imbalance, you can create a yoga sequence that will pacify your vitiated dosha. Your sequence can increase specific elements and qualities in the body that will instill peace. It is when you combine the knowledge of Ayurveda with the practices of yoga that one can use the two as a therapy and healing modality to bring harmony to the body, mind, and soul.

One of the most common imbalances that people experience is that of Vata. This is because Vata—being associated with movement—is usually the first dosha to be affected. In our fast-paced, ever-changing society it is easy to constantly find ourselves on the go. There comes a point when this constant movement becomes too much, and we find that we’re triggered into stress and depletion. When this happens, we can heal ourselves with a yoga practice that brings us back down to Earth, metaphorically and energetically. We can use asanas that elevate Water and Earth elements in the body. These are poses that are close to the ground, tonifying, supportive—poses that direct the energy towards our feet. This can be challenging for many people—because the law of nature suggests that we are inclined to keep moving at the current pace. Think here of Newton’s first law—an object in motion will stay in motion; an object in rest will stay at rest. If you are constantly moving, your inclination will be to travel through a yoga sequence that is intense and ever-changing. The challenge comes when you recognize that you actually benefit from slowing down, shifting gears, and adapting to a slower practice. A similar challenge can be said for someone experiencing a Kapha imbalance. These folks tend to feel sluggish, inert, essentially glued to the couch. The prospect of mobilizing seems far-fetched. But when they arrive at the mat and flow through a purifying sequence, one that invites movement, perhaps incorporates inversions and creates uplifting energy in the body, that person inevitably feels much better and balanced. This is the magic of Ayurveda and yoga.

To learn more about your natural constitution, perhaps consult an Ayurvedic Counselor who can better help you understand your prakriti. If you are seeking guidance on how to develop a yoga sequence to best pacify your unique imbalance, you can meet with an Ayurvedic Yoga Therapist who can advise, educate, and teach you the best practices for your imbalance.

*Gaby Colletta*
When You Need Rajas

Ayurvedic philosophy honors the three basic natures that rule existence: one of those is rajas.

In yogic and Ayurvedic philosophy there are three basic natures or “gunas” said to rule existence. They are sattva (life/sentience), rajas (change), and tamas (decay/death). Let’s explore the basics of these elements and when as humans, we crave, demand, or need rajas—the Ayurvedic element of change.

**Sattvic** is the ruling nature, which can also be seen as the spiritual element of reality. It manifests as purity, clarity, transcendence, light, harmony, balance, and still-mindedness. One who is largely sattvic in nature is focused on a spiritual life and spends much time in meditation, in service, and in activities which encourage bodily health, harmony, stillness, and peace of mind. **Sattvic foods** are those with very little spice, so as to not distract or overly stimulate the body or mind. Foods like kitchari, dal, milk, ghee, and plain grains are sattvic. The **Vata dosha** is most related to the sattvic element, as it is more mental and “of the mind,” suggesting a freedom from bodily habits and addictions.

**Tamas** is inertia, ignorance, veiling—it is that which breaks down the old; it is decay and the stagnation which leads to decay. The **tamasic nature** is closest to the **Kapha dosha** in that it is slow-moving and earth-bound. Tamasic actions tend to slow the body functions, often “welcoming” dis-ease and death such as over-eating, smoking, drinking, meat-eating, addiction, and laziness. However, tamas is also that which allows for the renewal of life again as it brings decay and death. In Balinese traditions where the Hindu faith has intermingled with animism, both the sattvic nature as well as the tamasic nature are honored each morning as the two elements co-exist in the universe and together allow for peace, harmony and paradise to exist through the duality they exemplify.

Where sattva is life-giving and sustaining, tamas is life-less, like leftover food, without the enzymes which bring nutrients to the body. **Rajas** is the spice and the actual act of eating and breaking down of the food.

**Rajas** is the element which governs movement, stimulation, and what could be called “the fire of life.” It is the equivalence of the **Pitta dosha**. Without the rajasic nature, there is no change, no movement, no evolution.

The rajasic nature is necessary whenever we want to transition from one thing to another: hungry to full, dirty to clean, latent to actualized, from one place to another—it is the travel, from one idea to the next—it is the catalyst. **Rajas is the transition.** If you would like to enliven a meal you would add spices such as ginger, chili, garlic, onion—all rajasic in nature.

Relationships often need the rajasic element in order to keep them alive and vibrant; otherwise stagnation will occur. If too much of the tamasic element is allowed to enter in—as
with the tendency to slip into routine or “take each other for granted” —death will creep into the union. Often death is a necessary element in order to invite newness into the picture. This is when one must learn how to become an alchemist of substances in order to breathe the proper amount of life in, with ample change and stimulation, and allow just enough death and decay in—in order to transform the previous elements constituting the union.

In baking, rajas is the combining of the ingredients, the stirring, the application of the heat. Rajas is a necessary part of life, as it is the time “in-between” seasons, the “winds of change” so to speak. By honoring when you need rajas in your life you can come to sync with the beautiful and wise Ayurvedic element of change.

As an archetype, rajas is depicted by Kali and Durga aspects of the Divine Mother, which herald change and the release of the old, making room for the new. Rajas assists when things are too tamasic or too sattvic—thus becoming “stuck” in a pattern which could become confining. By learning to note when rajas has graciously entered your life, calling you into the winds of change, asking you to end something so new may be created, you enable yourself to become flexible, transformative, and a shape-shifter of your personal reality. When you can do this, you have come into alignment with the rajasic nature and by so doing, life will bless you and grant access to a greater reality, one that is always beyond the doors of change.

By knowing when to honor Rajas, the Ayurvedic element of change, life can bless you with the energy of transformation, which allows for grace and abundance to enter in. To traverse the Ayurvedic gunas with honor, recognize the elements as they come into play in your life and be willing to rise to the occasion and become one with them. Not one of them can exist alone, as they make up the wholeness of “all that is.” Without rajas, nothing new would ever be known, and nothing unknown would ever be discovered.

Stasia Bliss
Honoring the Tamasic Nature

How stagnation, death, and decay serve.

For a brief discussion of the three main elemental principles (or gunas) of yogic and Ayurvedic philosophy (sattva, rajas, and tamas), please refer to “When You Need Rajas.” Then keep reading to explore the tamasic nature of stagnation, decay, and death, and how honoring this element in our lives can serve us wildly.

There is so much celebration of life. We naturally honor it, rejoice in it, and feel moved to joy over the birth of a child, new relationships, marriages, and new jobs. We applaud the first day of school and new opportunities presented to us. Even the first blooms of spring, flurries of winter, and falling leaves in autumn receive our natural awe. On the contrary, it seems we are almost trained to mourn endings and transitions, divorces, job losses, and deaths—and rightfully so, on one hand. Though it is true that these experiences inherently contain within them an element of sadness and grief (perhaps even deeply carved, which needs attention and commitment to work through), what is often overlooked is the beauty and potential they also contain.

I would like to “turn the stone over” on our endings and reveal with you the “other aspect” hiding beneath the obvious surface, which we have all had the opportunity to acknowledge at one time in our life or another—when we have made it through ending’s portal. For where once there was ignorance, when we shed the light on an issue, even just a little, suddenly a world previously unseen to us is revealed. This is just as true with that which we mourn as death having light as with what we rejoice as life-giving having.

My partner spent a spell of his life, before us, homeless—living on the street. Had he lived in India, he would have been seen as a Sadhu, a holy man, and would have been fed and likely revered for his unique insights and vision. He would have been dropped coins and flowers as he sat meditating on the side of the road while he navigated inner realms of personal insight and revelations dictating both the present moment and the future of his life. However, in this country, he was not treated with such respect or dignity. Often, he speaks from his time on the streets telling me how you can, if you are lucky, find treasures in the trash, if you are willing to look. But only if you are brave enough to go beyond shame, or hungry enough.

The story of searching for the treasures in trash perfectly illustrates the insights I wish to reveal on the tamasic nature of reality—described as ignorance, decay, stagnation, and death. There is treasure there, in all of it, if you are brave enough or hungry enough to dive past the muck, the decayed relationship, the lost job, the failed marriage, the death. A good friend of mine takes mostly spoiled cantaloupes and makes the most amazing cantaloupe smoothies. The treasure lies in wait for the discovering, but you can only find it if you are willing to follow inertia to the bottom—if you are willing to surrender to the ignorance inherently in the situation and truly “not know” for a spell, to throw your hands up and...
Sometimes all you have to eat is leftovers.

In Tantra, the “left-handed” path is known as aghori. This is the path that acknowledges that god or the divine can be found in the things thought to be taboo by society, like the cremation ground, death, corpses, and one’s own feces. It is believed that due to the mental blocks inherent in approaching these things, if you can “get past it” mentally then your progress to enlightenment can be accelerated by taking the left-handed path. Deviant sex falls into this category as does binge eating, excessive sugar, coffee, marijuana, drug use, and so forth, as long as it is specifically approached as a pathway to the divine, consciously. It takes a strong mind to engage these activities and not fall victim to the tamasic qualities inherent within them, to such an extreme. This is why the one who can is deemed the aghori master in India. The aghori master can dance in praise and devotion to the divine on a corpse in the cremation ground during an eclipsed moon at midnight smoking ganja and transcend. These stories are fodder for horror movies—definitely not a path for everyone. Aghori is the most extreme branch of Tantra. Tantra itself, when understood correctly, is that which acknowledges the Divine in every face and every place—that the toilet and temple alike are equal in their holiness and ability to connect one with God/Goddess.

The death nature is so valuable in that it allows for all that was previously known to be our “limit”—our ceiling, our expected reality, our world—is suddenly discarded and we are faced with the opportunity to find new again—a greater truth. Our biggest mistakes often precede our greatest moments. We use our trip-ups, our little deaths, our follies to catapult our lives forward. Garbage makes for the most amazing compost, which grows the finest foods with the densest nutrition.

Honoring the breakdown, the decay, and the ignorance is seeing that it has arrived on the scene because it is exactly the element called for at that moment in time. It is necessary. It is the key to the next moment, which will inevitably come, which will be rajasic (change) or sattvic (clarity).

There is no lesser player in the three major gunas of creation: sattva, rajas and tamas. Together they make up the trinity of existence according to yogic and Ayurvedic philosophy and together open up a portal into better understanding reality and evolving our lives. By learning to honor each element as it shows up in our lives, we are allowing ourselves to dance with the universe and find harmony in the various expressions of existence.

Just as there is beauty and honor to be found in the tamasic nature, that which we have always revered and praised can also hold secret, dark caves of detest. This is the side of things most people choose to look away from or deemphasize, often merely for the sake of remaining positive or staying optimistic. I know I am guilty of such. Even so, these darker aspects of the sattvic nature exist. During the deepest, most divine meditative bliss, the blaring siren may ring. A new baby brings sleepless nights, lovers bring heartache, and as the song says—“Every rose has its thorn.” Such is the nature of a universe which contains all things. Even the Divine Mother of existence has a rarely acknowledged horrifying side. But
back to the beauty hidden inside of death rather than the death hidden within beauty (which is an entirely different, valid topic).

The tamasic nature which rules ignorance, decay, inertia, death, and breakdown—at its finest—is life providing us a gateway through which to apply the principle of observation. According to quantum physics, the main component affecting any change in reality is that of the observer. *What we look at shifts.*

So, the next time you are feeling stagnant and you think you should “get moving” or you see the signs of something once beautiful in your life decaying, remember to honor the tamasic element at play...because the finest cheese is just mold.

*Stasia Bliss*
Honoring the uniqueness of each season contributes to individual wellness in Ayurveda. Being in tune with the world is a natural way to balance and align ourselves with the cyclical nature of the universe. Ayurveda is about living in balance, within our bodies and in relation to the world around us. Understanding our body’s unique constitution, or dosha, and being mindful of the seasons is key. The change of seasons affects the earth, its soil, and the microbes in the soil. These changes affect our bodies as well. Additionally, each dosha in Ayurveda corresponds to a specific season, and everyone may experience doshic imbalances during seasonal changes—it’s important to understand how the seasons affect you and how to best keep your whole being in balance during these transitional times.
Tips to Balance Pitta in Summer

Summer is the season of Pitta: learn to balance its fiery nature.

Summer often brings mixed reactions: some revel in the long, warm days, enjoying innumerable outdoor activities, while others seek cooling respite from the sun’s rays and thick humidity. In the ancient practice of Ayurveda, summer (particularly late summer) is the season of Pitta—the fiery, transformative energy at work in both nature and the body. Pitta is the fire that digests food and thoughts or ideas, so it’s essential, but it can easily get too intense as things heat up.

If your dominant dosha is Pitta, you can naturally run hot and be more prone to agitation. Hot flashes, impatience, a drive for perfection, and an excess of stomach acid are all Pitta-dominant symptoms that are exaggerated during the hot summer months. What you eat and when you engage in activities during summer is all about balancing internal and external heat. Here are some tips to stay cool and balance Pitta so you can enjoy the most out of the summer without all the aggravation.

To prevent sunburn, avoid sugar, dairy, and processed/fried foods.

As a general rule of thumb, it’s good to avoid dairy and processed or fried foods as they promote inflammation and allergic responses. These foods increase Pitta energy, which is already heated. Qualities of food that produce more fire or heat in the body are oily, hot, and intense. Processed foods, especially fried foods, contain some kind of vegetable oil (corn, soy, safflower), which irritates the Pitta dosha. To calm Pitta, enjoy foods that are cold or raw and not cooked in excess oil. When there is too much internal heat and inflammation, we are more susceptible to bad sunburns, which can ruin your vacation and cause serious damage to your skin.

To alleviate sunburn, eat red, orange, and pink fruits and vegetables.

It may seem counterintuitive, but red foods tend to be rich in lycopene, which helps reduce the inflammation caused by sunburn. There’s a reason tomatoes and melons grow abundantly during the hottest months! Grapefruit, watermelon, and pomegranate are also excellent sources of lycopene, and the antioxidants in pomegranate help your skin rejuvenate. If you are Pitta dominant, be mindful of the amount of tomatoes you consume and don’t combine them with spices or chilies.
Go for a walk or jog early in the morning. Exercising in the sun or heat can really irritate Pitta, and can make you more short-tempered and prone to conflict. Prevent unnecessary strife by avoiding the midday sun and enjoy early morning or evening swims in cool water. Plan your workouts for either the beginning or end of your day, and try meditating in a quiet and shaded spot for a few minutes before lunch. Quiet, contemplative practices keep Pitta balanced and engaged.

These are just a few ways to stay calm, cool, and collected during the summer months using Ayurvedic principles. Everyone has a unique constitution of Vata, Pitta and Kapha; it’s important to observe how these practices benefit you and utilize them in a way that fits your lifestyle and needs.

Allison L. Potter
Ayurveda Summer Skin Tips

Take care of your summer skin the Ayurveda way – it’s all about cooling, refreshing, and detoxing.

What Ayurveda prescribes as summer skin care is not so different from what experts claim today, but it does give you some organic alternatives to skin care that help you keep away from harsh chemicals and more...

An ancient Ayurvedic text, the Sushruta Samhita, names seven layers of the skin and goes on to say that depending on the dosha affecting various layers, various skin problems emerge. This is not so different from what science says today—which is why we tend to put on oodles of sun protection and moisturizer.

First, Avabhasini: Pimples, Acne
Second, Lohita: Moles, Dark Circles, Black Pigmentation
Third, Shweta: Eczema, Allergic Rashes
Fourth, Tamra: Different types of Leprosy
Fifth, Vedini: Herpes
Sixth, Rohini: Cancer, Tumor, Elephantiasis
Seventh, Mamsadhara: Abscess, Fistula

Ayurveda's Summer Skin Damage Factors

The Sun

Too much sun in the summers increases Pitta and Vata in the body and so Pitta-based skin problems such as prickly heat and rashes and Vata-based dryness become the norm. Ayurveda prescribes aloe vera-based sunscreen lotions as well as a cotton-clad body, along with headgear to move in the sun. Drinking plenty of water flushes the system and cools the body—and keeps the skin hydrated as well.

The AC

While air conditioners reduce humidity and keep you cool, they do so at the cost of your skin—since the air becomes dry, the skin too gets leached of moisture and though it may not “feel” dry as it does in winters, it will certainly look dry (and a tad aged).
summers, you need to switch to mild soaps with herbs such as lemongrass, rose, or lavender to keep the skin moist and hydrated but not oily.

The Air Pollution

Hot, dry, and dust-laden winds—coupled with the air pollution—often clog the pores of the skin in summer, further exacerbated by summer oiliness and sweating. The skin needs to be cleansed well at least twice a day but with a mild cleanser with a little milk protein, glycerin, turmeric or aloe vera. Sandalwood is also cooling in summers, as is the extract of cucumber and coconut.

A Bad Lifestyle

Finally, too much rich food and too little exercise worsens your health—and of course your skin health as well. In summers it’s best to stick to summer fruits and vegetables—full of juicy goodness and cooling properties. Sweating it out every morning to a brisk walk, jog, or even some hot yoga (just turn the darn AC off) will keep your skin glowing and full of vitality as well.

An All-Skin Ubtan

Finally, when the heat starts to make your skin feel bleh, try this ubtan that suits all skin types and can be made to suit any and all doshas as well.

You’ll need:

- 1 cup besan (gram flour)
- ½ teaspoon turmeric
- 2 tablespoons sandalwood powder
- 3 tablespoons rosewater

For Vata Dosha

Combine all the ingredients with a half cup warm ghee or coconut oil. Smooth into the skin with a gentle circular motion and rinse off with warm water once it is dry.

For Pitta Dosha

Combine all the ingredients with a half cup fresh aloe vera juice/pulp. Add a half cup coconut water and stir to blend. Smooth into the skin with quick movements and rinse off with cool water once it is dry.
For Kapha Dosha

Combine all the ingredients with 1 cup of yogurt. Work into wet skin vigorously and rinse off with warm water once it is dry.

(For more dosha-specific ubtan recipes, read this.)

Remember: Stay out of the sun in peak hours, wear breathable fabrics, and use water-based hydration to keep the skin cool and fresh in the summers and free of skin woes.

Rima J. Pundir
As the summer winds down and nights wander in with cool breezes our bodies call out for different things to keep us healthy and strong. Where the heat of the blazing summer sun was once enough to call forth the power of our immunity, without its penetrating rays staying strong in the sky, we require a bit more to support the seasonal transition into fall that leads the way to winter's doorway. Here are some essential nutrition tips for fall-transition and beyond.

**Start with a Glass of Warm Water**

After leaving the fires of summer and moving into the fall and winter—which are more governed by the wind/air element—it is powerful and soothing to add a bit of warmth to the system first thing in the morning to get everything going. **Warm water** alone is enough to stoke the digestive fires and move stagnant materials in the colon on their way. Adding a bit of **lemon juice** and **raw honey** will also stimulate proper pH and enzymatic functions.

**Salt Your Bath**

Adding a bit of **Himalayan pink salt** into a **nice warm bath** along with a scoop of Epsom salts and a few drops of **lavender** oil will gently heat the body and encourage a detox of the system while giving much needed **magnesium** to tissues, which promotes relaxation and a calm disposition—all elements which assist the body in not taking on stress as the seasons change.

**Try Toning**

**Sound is a powerful tool** we have at our fingertips which allows us to instantly change the frequency of our bodies and minds. By plugging the ears and gently humming or ommm-ing the body's vibrational frequency is tuned, organs are brought into harmony, and cells are encouraged to work optimally. The humming sound is called “Brahmari mudra” in yoga and literally helps to calm the heart and balance the immune system. Using toning through the seasonal transition can ensure the body makes a smooth switch from summer into the cooler temperatures and more stressful environment of fall and wintertime.
Movement is Key

By keeping the body mobile through running, walking, dance, yoga, or some other means, the immune system is supported by moving the lymph and ensuring proper function of all the endocrine glands. Movement is also the key to a graceful transition as our bodies can find the subtle harmony in the atmosphere that exists behind mind, emotion, and all the hustle-bustle. There is a silent dance happening behind the scenes at all times, dictating the movement of the planets, the tide, and the seasonal transitions. By getting in-tune with this dance through moving our own bodies we may receive intuitive guidance on how best to support our bodies in this change.

Indulge in Warm and Sweet

In the Ayurvedic tradition it is known that summer is high in Pitta (the fire element) and fall and winter are high in Vata (space and air). In order to appease the coolness that comes with fall, sweet foods, along with warming foods and spices, are recommended such as heated grains, soups, and heavy sweets such as rice pudding. Spices like ginger, cardamom, cumin, cinnamon, and cloves help warm the body and ward off colds and flu. Sweet, heavy fruits such as bananas, cherries, peaches, grapes, melons, and mango are best. As the coolness of fall finds its way to our seats, let the warm and the sweet be our bodily treat.

Consider an Intestinal Cleanse

According to Chinese Traditional Medicine, late summer rules the stomach and early fall the large intestine. This means the transitional months that turn summer to autumn are when these organs are most active and it is the best time to cleanse them. How do we do it?

Start with a gentle dose of clarified butter everyday, also known as ghee. In the Ayurvedic tradition it is known that ghee contains butyric acid, a critical enzyme to help the stomach and the intestines do their job. Without butyric acid, inflammatory conditions develop. So, it’s a good place to start. Next, add in some raw salads (you can drizzle the ghee on top) with some various sprouts and seeds to add some additional fiber to your diet. Hearty grains are great for cleansing and the avoidance of white flours, white sugar, and pastas is of significant import.

During the seasonal transition, cutting back on red meats and adding fresh, lightly steamed or warmed veggies into your diet, along with some cleansing herbs such as ginger, fennel, peppermint, slippery elm, and turkey rhubarb—a good place to begin. You can also find intestinal cleansing formulas at your local health food store containing a bit stronger herbs for the colon such as Cascara Sagrada or Senna. As a beginner, I would start with Cascara Sagrada, as it is milder. An additional dose of fiber such as chia seeds, flax seeds, and apples really help to soothe and move the colon.
Get on Beat with the Circadian Rhythm

It's so easy to leave the lights on and stay up late in this age of technology and possibility, but what is it doing to our natural rhythm? And thereby, our ability to maintain natural immunity? The fall is not too late for a camping trip! Sleeping out under the stars for even two nights helps to reset your body's natural clocks. Back in the city, try turning the lights down or off when the sun goes down to encourage everyone into bed earlier. Use candles instead of overhead lights and get up with the sun! This way, as winter approaches, it becomes more natural for your body to stay in harmony with nature and tell you when there is imbalance on its way.

Preparation Equals Avoidance

Have you ever noticed that when you are prepared for something, like a natural disaster, a dramatic event, or a storm, it doesn't happen? Murphy's law applies. The same is true for winter, and at the very best—getting prepared means you are ready if sickness starts to head your way.

One way to prepare is by putting together an amazing natural remedy that can ward off any tricky body invader and make colds and flu into a distant memory of the past. Here's the simple recipe gleaned through Dr. Christopher's herbal medicine school (The School of Natural Healing).

Master Tonic

**Equal Parts:**
- Cayenne peppers
- Onion
- Garlic
- Horseradish
- Ginger
- Several bottles of Raw Apple Cider Vinegar (with the Mother)

Fill a Mason jar (choose your size) halfway with apple cider vinegar.

Chop or send through a food processor: cayenne, onion, garlic, horseradish, and ginger.

Add the chopped ingredients to the Mason jar and cover with more apple cider vinegar until you reach about 1 inch from the top of the jar. Place the lid on and store in a dark, cool place for at least 2 weeks (1 month if you want a really strong batch). I like to go from moon to moon—so New Moon to New Moon or Full Moon to Full Moon.

Shake the bottle several times per day to help extract the properties into the vinegar.
At the end of the time period, strain through a cloth and into bottles. This formula will keep for 2 years unrefrigerated. Use about 1 to 3 teaspoons at a time at first onset of a cold/flu.

Ease fall transition months by incorporating as many of the above ideas into your regimen for greater health and a more fluid dance into the vernal months to come. By coming into alignment with the changes at hand, we can find joy and fulfillment in how the seasons transition and avoid the problems that may arise by resisting the natural flow of life.

Stasia Bliss

Sources:
PositiveHealth.com: Chinese Medicine Calendar
Mapi.com: Ayurvedic seasons
Balance Your Vata in Autumn

Vata energy in autumn can make you feel scattered and fatigued; use these tips to stay balanced.

Vata, the dominant energy of autumn, often brings a sense of buoyancy and spaciousness, but it can also heighten already-existing tensions. Even if you’re among the fortunate not directly grappling with external or situational stressors, the change of season may leave you feeling anxious, scattered, and fatigued.

Luckily, some of the best ways to balance Vata in the fall are the most intuitive. While autumn highlights the Vata elements of motion, ether and air, it also provides the resources to ground us: The harvest offers sweet, dense fruits and vegetables, the decreasing sunlight encourages more time in bed, and falling snowflakes or a blazing hearth provide the perfect objects of meditation. Everything we can do to stay warm, nourished, and grounded will benefit us this Vata season.

Use this guide to stay grounded and keep your blustery Vata inclinations in check this fall.

What to Eat to Balance Vata This Fall

A good guideline for any time of year, eat what’s in season:

- **Apples**
- **Cranberries**
- Pears
- **Beets**
- **Brussels sprouts**
- **Pomegranates**
- **Pumpkins** and other squash
- **Root vegetables** like sweet potatoes and turnips

In general, increase your intake of sweet and heavy foods and filling grains, seeds, and nuts:

- **Rice**
- **Oats**
- Mung beans
- **Quinoa**
- **Walnuts**

Dairy is especially nourishing in the fall, and oils like sesame and olive oil are grounding and great for cooking or drizzling. As much as possible, avoid raw foods and indulge in hot soups, stews, and casseroles, and keep sugar intake to a minimum, as it can aggravate Vata energy. Finally, make an effort to eat regularly—as school and work schedules rev up and holiday season approaches, it’s easy to skip a meal, but regular meals balance erratic energy.
What to Drink to Balance Vata This Fall

Just like with food, think sweet and warm: **hot water with lemon**, warm milk or **milk alternative** with a little sweetener (try this [golden milk recipe](#)), or **tea**: brahmi, ginger, ashwagandha, triphala, cardamom, valerian, and cinnamon are all good choices that warm, ground, and relieve stress.

Stay **hydrated**—our liquid intake tends to decrease when the temperature goes down, but it’s still important to drink plenty of water, especially for Vata types.

How to Exercise to Balance Vata This Fall

It’s tempting to **exercise** vigorously to warm the body up, but if you’re feeling frazzled, focus on activities with smooth, gentle movements.

Walking, biking, hiking, and tai chi are all great Vata season choices. Vata-pacifying **yoga styles** include gentle vinyasa flow, yin yoga, and restorative yoga.

To make your home yoga practice more balancing for the fall, go for stretching poses on the floor, staying close to the earth. When practicing standing poses, ground down through all four corners of the foot and hold the pose for five or more breaths. Move through connections slowly and mindfully, and make use of **lots of props**.

How to Practice Self-Care & Balance Vata This Fall

Ayurvedic specialists often believe Vata plays a part in the spreading of illness in the body, making self-care especially important. Try:

- **Self-massage** (Abhyanga) with sesame or almond oil
- **Baths**
- **Meditation**
  - Shirodhara—an Ayurvedic therapy in which a practitioner applies a stream of warm oil to the forehead to soothe the nervous system
- **Jala neti**—clearing your nasal passages with a neti pot

As light dwindles, our bodies crave more **sleep**—if possible, allow yourself extra time in bed.

While in excess, Vata can cause restlessness and **anxiety**, it also fosters creativity, so make space in your day to express yourself.

Following the impulse toward coziness and **hygge** this fall will help you stay healthy and enjoy the change of seasons.

*Amanda Penn*
Rebalancing Vata With Grounding Foods

In Ayurveda, winter means the season of Vata—light, airy, and dry, among other things. There is a propensity for individuals, particularly those experiencing a Vata imbalance, to feel ungrounded. As the seasons change, here are some good general rules to follow, especially if you are someone who’s prone to a Vata imbalance.

This season of change, dominated by cold, dry Vata, draws us toward heavier foods that grow in or near the ground as we look to warm and prepare the body for winter. This is the time to step away from raw or lightly cooked dishes and think about things that are slow, warm, and substantial.

Ojas is the positive form of the Kapha dosha. In other words, it’s the antidote to an overabundance of Vata. Ojas-building foods for fall include root vegetables like carrots, beets, or turnips, as well as other things like squash or pumpkins. Think about things that grow on or near the ground. Eat vegetables (and fruits, which pumpkins and squashes technically are) that touch the soil where they grow. These heavier foods help create that crucial grounding and warming sensation that carry us through the Vata season with added stability and groundedness.

Who Needs Grounding Foods?

Everyone, but especially people who are experiencing a Vata imbalance. This can manifest itself in the form of symptoms like cold, dry skin; anxiety; and weight loss.

What Should You Eat?

Root vegetables: parsnips, carrots, beets, rutabagas, sweet potatoes, yams, onions, garlic, shallots.

Foods that grow near the earth: pumpkins, squash, zucchini, leeks, asparagus.

When Should You Eat?

Anytime! But try to eat slowly and in a peaceful, stable environment if possible. You’ll want to eat regularly and avoid fasting to balance out the lightweight qualities of Vata.
Why Do These Foods Help?

Foods that are nourishing, are served warm and moist, and tend toward sweet or salty flavors and smooth textures bring out more grounded Kapha energy. These foods help maintain proper weight, hydration, and body temperature.

Where Can You Get These Foods?

Many farmers’ markets extend into October, November, and even December; otherwise, check the organic section at your grocery store. Make sure to buy fresh, not frozen, as the goal is to maximize warmth and combat the cold with your diet. For a detailed list of seasonal fruits and vegetables, check out this chart. Bonus: it’s printable, so hang it on your fridge to remember to add some of these foods to your grocery list.

How Should You Prepare These Foods?

Slow cooking is essential for these denser fall foods. Anything with a rough raw texture, like shallots and onion, needs extra attention to make sure it is cooked till soft. One ideal cooking method is oven roasting. Any combination of vegetables can be prepared this way—make sure to roast them with plenty of oil (try olive or coconut) to balance Vata’s dryness. Another great method is the slow-cooked soup or stew. Use a slow cooker or a big pot to simmer ingredients for hours, bringing out their softness. Don’t forget to drink plenty of fluids, and supplement these ingredients with hearty grains (like rich, dense bread) and spices (think nutmeg and cloves).

These simple cooking methods maximize ease and relaxation and bring warmth to your house and your diet.

Elyse Hauser
Shift Your Diet With the Seasons: Fall

As fall arrives, eat to reflect the change in seasons: think warming foods that are easy on digestion.

The only consistency in our lives as humans is change. In Ayurvedic tradition, autumn symbolizes the pinnacle of transition in the course of the year. We witness change and transition in the landscape and in the later rise and earlier descent of the sun, and we certainly can feel it in the air and in our bodies.

Contrary to Western tradition, there are three seasons that align with the three doshas, or energies, according to Ayurveda: Vata, Pitta, and Kapha. As the hot summer (Pitta) season cools into the cold winter (Kapha) season, the autumn (Vata) season prompts a shift in our pace, our mood, and our diet. School or work picks back up for some in September, and we snuggle in for cooler nights. We may mourn the heat of the summer sun or shiver as the trees shake off their foliage. Undeniably, our bodies seek to stoke from within, through our agni—internal fire, that warmth of summer associated with the Pitta dosha.

The Vata season generally begins in October, when trees begin to change color, and ends just before the coldest part of the winter. It is characterized as cold, windy, dry, rough, and inconsistent, and so we aim to balance these external characteristics by shifting our diet towards a routine of warm, soothing, wholesome and non-acidic foods. Moving toward a more consistent diet of foods that ignite the agni also helps to mitigate Vata imbalances including stress, restlessness, dry skin, indigestion, constipation, or muscle soreness.

Some dietary habits that support a balanced Vata:

- Eating warm or roasted foods such as root vegetables—NOT raw/cold foods such as salads, dry cereals, and dried fruits
- Favoring stews, soups, pastas, warm morning cereals, or cooked fruits
- Cooking and spicing foods with a combination of sweet, sour, and salty flavors
- Selecting foods that are easily digestible, such as rice, rather than beans
- Drinking warm herbal teas (before bed) with ginger, honey, ghee, warm milk
- Avoiding coffee and other caffeinated drinks
- Keeping a routine: not skipping breakfast, morning meditation, evening tea, etc.

You may find that you already tend towards these foods as the seasons change, and more of these types of foods become available. After eating a Vata-balancing meal, nothing feels better than gentle yoga, meditation with energizing essential oils, or a warm bath.

Gretchen F. Kaija
Ayurveda Winter Skincare Tips

As the air gets cooler and drier, don’t neglect your skin: improving circulation is a winter focus.

While the winter season means holidays, sledding, and brisk walks in fresh snow, it can also mean trouble for your skin. Clogged pores, dead skin accumulation, dryness and itchiness are some of the misery that accompanies the season of snowflakes and cheer. Cooler temperatures and dry conditions can leave your face feeling dehydrated and in serious need of rejuvenation. And while we may rush to beauty counters to grab body butters and deep moisturizers to combat these skin woes, topical lotions don’t really get to the core of the problem and instead just coat over it. Instead of reaching for the Vaseline (no thanks, petroleum!), look to Ayurveda for hydrated and happy skin from the inside out.

Ayurvedic Techniques

Garshana: Dry Brush

Dry brushing is best done in the morning or before a shower. Take a long-handled bristle brush and perform long strokes, starting from your toes and heading up your body; always brush towards your heart. For more sensitive areas like the stomach and breasts, use a circular motion. Gentle bristle brushes are available for the face. It’s best to shower following dry brushing.

Abhyanga: Self-Massage

For many, there is no greater relaxant than a massage—but what about self-massage? Specifically, self-massage with oils for your particular body type. To perform this Ayurvedic ritual, warm sesame, coconut, or sunflower oil, depending on your dosha type (take the quiz here) and, starting from your temple and working down, massage your body.

Among the many benefits of abhyanga are increased circulation, a nourished body, and protection against aging effects. After your massage, take a warm bath or shower and revel in your supple skin. If oiling before soaping sounds strange, consider this: When you soap first and moisturize later you first strip the moisture off the skin and then try and replenish it. But when you oil first, you protect your skin from the harsh chemicals of your soap and so no moisturizer is needed post bathing.

Extend the same TLC to the skin under your hair (the scalp). Winter often means the onset of itchy scalp and dandruff. But that dandruff might be nothing more than the dry, flaky skin of your scalp—massage some warm oil on your scalp at night, or at least 30 minutes prior to your shampoo on a regular basis. You may never need conditioner post-shampoo again!
Remember to brush the oil through—from the scalp to root ends—the brushing will also increase blood circulation to your scalp, making it healthier and itch-free.

**Ubtans: Exfoliate**

Winter skin can get dull, with dead skin cells building up over time. The solution? Ubtans. Ubtans are special pastes made from pantry staples: blend chickpea flour with dry milk powder for a moisturizing exfoliant, or try recipes using traditional blends like *Ashwagandha* and Rhassoul clay. You can also create an *ubtan for your specific dosha*. Gently wash your face with warm water, and then apply the ubtan (mixed with water, yogurt, or even cucumber juice) to your face in a circular motion. Once face is fully covered, rinse your face and pat dry—your skin should feel extra soft and smooth!

**Ahara: Diet**

There are no shortcuts here—while supplements like omega-3 oils can give you a helpful boost, a healthy diet filled with whole, organic foods is your first step towards beautiful winter skin—not to mention a healthy body. Here are some general tips for the season:

- Eat seasonal fruits and veggies. Nature provides certain produce in specific seasons for a reason: primarily because our bodies need the nutrients which that season’s bounty provides. Look for *seasonal foods* like *winter squash* and *pumpkin*; cruciferous vegetables like *cauliflower*, *broccoli*, and *kale*; and nourishing fats like *pumpkin seeds*, *ghee*, and *pastured eggs*. These *grounding foods* are perfect for cold weather.

- Avoid iced drinks and reach for *hot, comforting drinks* like chai, *herbal tea*, or *ginger tea*—the better for warming up post-sledding, anyway!

- Increase your intake of healthy fats. Your skin’s hydration depends a lot upon your body’s physiological state. If your diet is lacking in healthy fats, winter is the time to make up for it, be it in the form of *olive oil*, *ghee*, *nuts*, or *seeds*. We are not advocating you dip into your fried food cravings—but do add a spoonful of healthy oil in your *salads*, top your *curries* or *lentils* with a dollop of ghee, and take a trail mix of unsalted nuts and seeds to go.

- Stay hydrated. In winter, it’s important to drink before you feel thirsty. While we all run to the kitchen to drink *oodles of water* in the summer, many of us forget that it’s equally important to hydrate in winter, too. If water feels too bland for you in winters, switch over to sugarless *green tea* or healthy drinks like *kombucha*. Frankly, even a nighttime glass of warm milk adds to *hydration*, be it *dairy*, *soy*, or *nut*. 
Ayurvedic Tips

Protect your skin from the elements.

In winter, remember to bundle up as well as you can—especially the ears. In Ayurveda, ears are considered prone to Vata (air) since they have space between them. Covering your ears is one way of protecting your body from any winter-related infections and woes.

The same goes for the skin, too. In winter, it is advised to cover any exposed skin to protect it from harsh winter winds so that the skin can retain its natural moisture—hydration as well as radiance. Hats, scarves, gloves, and hoods—consider them to be your skin’s best friends this cold, albeit cheery, season.

Pamper your hands and feet.

Bundled into socks and shoes, the feet tend to get stinky in winter. The cause is an odorous bacteria—the solution is to wash your feet with soap and water 2-3 times a day and then to dry your feet completely with a towel (remember to wipe between the toes) before you wear a clean pair of socks. All this soaping and washing can cause the skin on the feet, particularly on the heels, to go dry. A good solution is to wash and dry feet just before bedtime and then slather on some coconut or olive oil before slipping into socks at bedtime.

For your hands, keep a small bottle of olive oil at the basin and after every hand wash, dry your hands and rub in a drop or two of olive oil to keep the skin protected from the drying cold.

Keep exercising.

Being bundled up is no excuse to skip the workout. In fact, winter is the perfect time to lose those extra pounds because your body is already burning calories to keep itself warm—try adding a good exercise routine to your day to further make your body sweat out the toxins and burn away the extra fat. If you’re not worried about weight loss, winter is still a good time to exercise—it increases circulation.

Jade Belzberg
Rima J. Pundir
While seeing an Ayurvedic practitioner is the best way to ensure individual healing, there are a few common remedies that are relatively simple to use and apply. You’ll notice some trends here—a lot of the same ingredients keep popping up, and you’ll get to read more about some of them in the next section on food and recipes.
Sip On Kadha For Colds: Ayurvedic Herbal Tea

This might be different from the tea you’re used to sipping, but it’ll cure your cough in no time.

Indian kitchens and kitchen gardens come stocked with plenty of herbs and spices that we use to flavor our food and dishes with alacrity—and sometimes with quite a heavy hand as many a tourist who has tasted Indian food has paid testament to with watery eyes, a runny nose and a tongue that seems to be on fire!

That said, many of these herbs and spices find mention in ancient Ayurvedic texts, for as Hippocrates so rightly said, food is medicine. And we’ll reach for those herbal teas when in need—to alleviate coughs and colds, calm down the monthly PMS rage, and even help that unstable stomach.

Sometimes though, you do get bogged down with a dry cough that simply refuses to quit and leaves you with a sore throat, an irritated audience, and a voice that rivals Kermit’s—and not in a good way. Most Indians, at this stage, rely on kadha, or karha, a tea or concoction where herbs and spices are boiled, usually in water, to extract all their benefits—which is then cooled a bit, but served warm and can also be stored in the fridge and then reheated and sipped on 3-4 times in a day.

So here’s a kadha that really works on dry, persistent cough and a sore throat that simply refuses to get better, medicines be darned.
Ayurvedic Cough Concoction, or Kadha

- 4-5 bay leaves (*tej patta*) (in a pinch, you can also use the leaves of the cinnamon tree or allspice)
- 2-inch piece *ginger* (*adrak*), peeled and crushed for maximum efficacy
- 4-inch stick of licorice (*mulethi*)
- 10-12 peppercorns, crushed (*kali mirch*)
- 4 green cardamoms (*elaichâ*), crushed
- 1 teaspoon fennel seeds (*saunf*)
- 5-6 crushed holy basil leaves (*tulsi*)
- **Honey** (*shahad*) to taste

Boil 3 cups water and add in everything but the honey. Simmer for 10-15 minutes, till the water level has halved and is dark green/brown in color. Strain the water and discard the herbs and spices. Measure about 50-100ml of this concoction, and sip it warm. In case you find this too hot (read: spicy) for your taste, add in 1 teaspoon honey to sweeten before you sip. You can have this twice a day in summers or four times a day in winters—all the herbs and spices used in this herbal “tea” are Pitta inducing. In summers they may unnecessarily cause too much heat in the digestive system and have an adverse effect. In winters, this becomes an advantage.

We hope this helps soothe your cough, alleviate that sore throat and also help in curing away that flu faster as its spiciness helps dissolve and expel any and all congestion.

*Rima J. Pundir*
The insurance-medical-pharmaceutical complex generates billions of dollars in revenues annually from people with seasonal allergies. There’s no cure. This leaves only lifestyle, prevention, and treatment considerations for anyone seeking some relief.

Choosing **how to alleviate allergies** is an important personal choice. It’s deciding between the profit-oriented healthcare industry selling products and services versus Ayurveda holistic medicine seeking optimal body and mind balance for health. Allergy industry advertising and marketing promote retail medicine, rather than holistic wellness.

Ayurveda is a more integrated approach for dealing with the causes and effects of allergies. Popping allergy pills can be a last resort option. Thinking your symptoms are making you miserable goes a long way to actually feeling miserable. Western medicine seems at times too heavy-handed for living in harmony with nature, which unfortunately includes hay fever.

Allergies and associated symptoms are caused by exposure to pollen, mold, and other substances. More than 50 million Americans are affected by allergies. Among the most common symptoms are nasal congestion, headaches, sneezing, wheezing, runny nose, itchy and watery eyes, scratchy throat, and coughing.

There are many home remedies and lifestyle adaptations for relieving the symptoms and avoiding some of the worst reactions when exposed to allergens. Perhaps the most well-known is the Ayurveda **neti pot** for cleansing the nasal passages with salt water. Some claim **yoga** helps rebalance the body to alleviate allergy symptoms.

What follows are recommendations and behavioral suggestions from the **American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology**, the **Mayo Clinic**, and other allergy experts for alleviating and avoiding symptoms as much as possible. Some offer merely temporary relief,
but they can be combined with others as part of regular lifestyle habits and environmental tweaks to mitigate symptoms.

- Wear wraparound sunglasses to keep allergens from entering the eyes.
- Avoid air-drying clothes outside where allergens accumulate.
- Open windows only partially or not at all to keep allergens outside.
- Shower in the evening to wash allergens off your hair and skin.
- Bathe pets more frequently to wash pollen off their fur.
- **Breathe steam** whenever possible to alleviate congestion, including steam rooms and hot showers. **Eucalyptus oil** can be added to shower floors for added steam relief, opening nasal passages.
- Inhale steam from **hot tea** (especially **peppermint** tea) and other steaming hot foods.
- Eat spicy hot foods including **hot chili peppers**, **garlic**, horseradish, **mustard**, and **onions** to help clear nasal passages.
- Eat **local raw honey** to gradually desensitize immune system reactions to local pollens.
- Change clothes after spending time outdoors and wipe off shoes to avoid bringing allergens indoors.
- Avoid outdoor activities on dry windy days when the air is swirling with allergens.
- Plan outdoor activities and exercise later in the afternoon, because pollen counts are highest during mornings. Similarly, pollen counts are lowest after rain clears the air.
- Keep grass trimmed to 2 inches to prevent it from pollinating and make it less able to trap pollen from nearby flowers and trees.
- Use HEPA filters on vacuums, air conditioners, and furnaces to trap allergens.
- Consider **herbal remedies for allergies** as opposed to pharmaceuticals.

*Jim Emerson*
Hives are medically known as urticaria. They are the sudden appearance of itchy bumps on the skin. Most hives occur on the face, neck, arms, and legs and range from small bumps to larger ones. They also come in groups, known as plaques. While they cause itching, sometimes urticaria can also burn or sting.

**What causes hives?**

Hives are a common allergic reaction to food (common allergies include nuts, chocolate, fruits, and milk). Other causes are insect bites or contact with chemicals, latex, nettle, and medications. Exposure to extreme temperatures or prolonged contact with water are some more (albeit uncommon) causes.

**Why do hives itch?**

When the body comes in contact with an allergen it releases a protein called histamine. Histamine triggers leaks in the small blood vessels under the skin, causing the red bumps and itchiness.

**How long do hives last?**

Hives are generally categorized into two types, depending on their longevity. Acute urticaria can last from 24 hours up to 6 weeks. Chronic urticaria is any episode that lasts 6 weeks and beyond.

**What's the cure for hives?**

The cure to any allergic reaction is anti-allergy medication prescribed by a physician (though you can also look for nature's antihistamines). As with every allergy—the only way to stave it off is to stay away from the root cause. Your doctor may recommend you undergo an allergy test to find out what caused the hives in the first place, particularly if they are frequent or turning chronic.

**Is it hives or a rash?**

Sometimes an itchy rash is just a rash. The one way to differentiate between a rash and hives is that the hives are migratory—as in, they rarely stay in one place for more than 24 hours.
Ayurvedic Precautions & Remedies for Hives

• Do not eat any sweet food as sugar will make the itching worse, be it sugar, jaggery, or alcohol. You can have honey.

• Keep meals light and digestible to give your digestive system a good flushing.

• Try and eat cooked split gram (split legumes), bitter gourd, and pomegranates, as they have skin-soothing properties.

• Avoid ghee or refined oil and instead, use mustard oil for cooking.

• Avoid any exposure to excessive temperatures or climate.

• Turmeric improves the body’s immunity and health quotient by a lot. One teaspoon of turmeric mixed with a glass of milk or downed with warm water at night should work to halt the spread of hives.

• Steep stinging nettle in hot water for 10-15 minutes to form a dark green tea. Add some honey to sweeten and keep sipping half a cup of this concoction 2-3 times a day. The itching should ease.

• Massage the skin with room-temperature organic mustard oil for 15 minutes, and then take a bath with an organic or castile soap with cool water.

• Make a thick paste of 2 cups oatmeal and 3 teaspoons cornstarch with water. Apply this paste on the affected areas till the itching subsides.

• Applying aloe vera pulp or extract to the affected areas will also help in reducing the inflammation.

As an erstwhile victim of hives (I was and am allergic to “pasteurized” milk), I can well imagine the utter misery of being itchy all over. The only thing that works is a complete banishment of the allergy source to blame. Which, of course, is always easier said than done! Just remember, this too shall pass...

Rima J. Pundir
Ayurveda is what I like to call the magic juju for healing body, mind and soul. We know it as the sister science to yoga, the natural approach of preventative medicine and holistic health, and directly translated it teaches us “the science of life.” Ayurvedic practices—cultivating harmonious habits in diet and lifestyle—are part of what makes this preventative potion so powerful. However, when it comes to fixing injury, bandaging our bodily problems, and finding quick fixes—we often flee to our Western counterparts. Now don’t get me wrong, if you chop off your finger while cooking some Kichari, Ayurveda doesn’t promise to grow you a new one (at least not in this lifetime). If that happens, high tail it to the closest ER. But what Ayurveda can do is heal the body even if disease has passed the point of prevention.

This is a story of how I healed a torn ligament in my knee, in 6 weeks, with my Ayurvedic cauldron of remedies and a hell of a lot of intention. Read on if you’re curious about castor oil wraps, accidently dying your leg orange, eating an obscene amount of blueberries or learning how to “yoga” without moving.

The Injury

Picture this: First snowstorm of the season. A skier and snowboarder collide. Not the romantic kind. A twisted knee. An embarrassing descent down the mountain. Sled-lifted off of a green run (for those non-snow-sporters—green is the easiest route you can take). Suffice to say this may have been the Universe’s way of telling me to slow down. And so here I was, two days before teaching yoga at a new studio and I was immobile.

Then what happened?

My knee swelled to the size of a ripe grapefruit and I was sentenced to the couch...which for a yoga teacher, rock climber, Pitta-Vata personality... felt like punishment.

And so the healing magic commenced...
Step One: Turmeric wrap.

There are perks to living with your Ayurvedic classmate. My roommate immediately whipped up some Golden Paste—a recipe of turmeric powder, water, pepper, and coconut oil. (The last two ingredients aid in absorption.) Turmeric is the king inflammatory fighter—both when applied topically and also when ingested. And thus, we painted my knee bright orange, wrapped it in plastic wrap and elevated it to decrease swelling. If you’re trying this at home, be warned: you WILL dye your bathtub orange when rinsing, and you will have an orange knee for the remainder of the week.


I put turmeric in everything. Literally everything. At this point I had discovered that my injury was likely a sprain or slight tear in my ligament. My body needed a troop of healers. So I called in the forces:

- **Vitamin C**: the anti-inflammatory and protector of collagen
- **Zinc**: more inflammation reduction
- **Protein**: the building blocks of the body
- **Vitamins B6 and B12**: to aid in the formation of amino acids (the building blocks of protein)
- **Magnesium**: for bone formation and protein synthesis
- **Antioxidants**: to control the free radicals so the body can focus on healing my knee

I ate foods filled with the above, drank bone broth like it was water and indulged in golden milk daily. If you haven’t tried this nectar of healing, I highly recommend it. Golden Milk is like chai for Ayurveda nerds. My go-to recipe was hemp milk, turmeric, coconut oil, cinnamon, ginger, pepper, and honey...belly-warming goodness.

Step Three: Castor oil wraps, comfrey & gemstones.

Week Two. At this point I began to lather on thick castor oil, wrapped it like a burrito in flannel, topped off with plastic wrap and a heating pad. These castor oil packs are known to decrease inflammation and joint pain while increasing circulation. Since this ceremony occurred several times a day, especially in the earlier weeks of treatment, I began to incorporate crystal and gemstone healing as well—sometimes placing specific stones directly on my knee. For me, even the process of sending intention into healing seemed to mend the torn pieces of my body. When I wasn’t in my leg wrap, I slathered some comfrey salve onto my joint. Comfrey is another one of those herbal superheroes that reduce inflammation and heal pulled muscles or ligaments.
Step Four: Healing & manifesting through Yoga Nidra.

For those unfamiliar with this practice, *Yoga Nidra* directly translates to “Yogic Sleep” but it is far from simply that. In fact, it is a deeply meditative state in which healing occurs across the physical and subtle bodies. More than healing, it is a place in which the practitioner becomes a conscious creator, a dreamweaver, a manifester. Yes, in this practice you create your own reality—one that transcends your Nidra state and accompanies you in your waking life. It was here I saw myself healed and whole.

Step Five: Using the breath to mend across states of consciousness...Pranayama and Kundalini.

Have you heard of the notion that *Prana flows where awareness goes*? Prana being that life-force present in all living things, that magic essence that has the power to transform, mend, invigorate, and enliven anything it enters. Prior to the injury I was a devout Vinyasa practitioner. Flow yoga daily. Little did I foresee, this injury would invite me to deepen my breath practice and explore new traditions of *Yoga*. A dear friend and Kundalini teacher began leading me through this tradition. For the record, *Kundalini* is a very active practice tied with *breathing* and *meditation*. However, since he was aware of my injury, he tailored the sequence to include a lot of floor Kriyas or cleansing practices. *Kundalini Yoga* works intimately with *Prana* (as does all Yoga, but here I discovered a visceral focus on breath and *mantra*). Often when our bodies feel physical pain, tightness, holding, gripping—it is a sign that Prana is not flowing freely. And because mind and body are so deeply connected, blockages often require breaking through physical and emotional clutter with the magic of Prana. As you could imagine, my knee was in need of a Pranic tune-up. And so it was through *Kundalini* and various *Pranayama breathing exercises* that I began to move Prana in my body, to use the breath to sew and heal.

Step Five: Guiding thoughts with intention, positivity & fate.

To me, this was paramount. I am a big believer in the power of manifesting—of speaking to the Universe with specificity and intention. I am convinced that the injury was a sign—a wakeup call for *self-care* and *self-love*, an invitation to challenge negative thought patterns and replace them with *positive ones*, a welcoming of new experiences and lessons, and a deepening of my personal practices. Seeing life’s challenges through this lens paints more light into moments of darkness.

Finally, a last word...every body is different. These were the magic ingredients, the fairy dust, to *my* healing process. *You are your healer and intuition is your guide*. Trust.

*Gaby Colletta*
Four Ayurvedic Methods To Heal Sore Muscles

Give those overworked muscles some relief with these natural remedies.

Intense workouts, heavy lifting, and manual labor can all lead to sore muscles. Reaching into the kitchen cabinet or bending over to pick something up off the floor can provoke the pain. The discomfort can cause the simplest task to become unbearable. Ibuprofen may be your immediate response. While it may provide temporary relief, relying on pain medications time and time again can have adverse side effects, causing more issues.

Before you grab a bottle of pills, try a natural Ayurvedic approach instead. In Ayurveda, muscle soreness is a sign that your Vata is aggravated. Calm the Vata in you with one of these techniques. You may find that a slight change in your lifestyle may be the ticket to rid your body of sore muscles.

Warm Bath

A soothing warm bath is key in muscle pain relief. Make the most of your bath by adding either Epsom salt, ginger, or aromatherapy oils. Epsom salt contains magnesium sulfate, which aids in muscle relaxation; ginger is anti-inflammatory; and aromatherapy oils provide therapeutic properties that ease the body. The warm water with a boost creates a calming environment that aids the muscles in relaxing.

Yoga

Yoga can strengthen and loosen muscles beyond your average stretching. If you find yourself stiff and sore, add a yoga routine into your day. Stagnant muscles that experience exertion can cause soreness, so remaining motionless will do no good. Gentle yoga will take heed to tender muscles without aggravation. You will find that over time you reduce the chance of sore muscles by practicing yoga regularly.

Diet

What you eat is the most determining factor in your body's performance. Think of your body in terms of a machine. A well-oiled machine runs at peak performance compared to a rusty one. Same thing goes for your body. A diet rich in nutrients leaves the body functioning in prime health compared to a diet of empty calories. Return your body back to normal by providing the nutrients it needs through Vata-pacifying food. Warm meals, sweets, and slightly spicy foods calm Vata and ease muscles. Here are more ways to eat for your dosha.
Herbal Remedies

Herbs play a significant role in Ayurveda. Rather than a cure, herbs are consumed daily as a means to keep balance in one’s body. When the body gets out of whack, increasing specific herbs is part of the restoration process. Turmeric, ginger, cardamom, garlic, and guggulu can help. They contain anti-inflammatory properties that will stomp out the pain.

Carissa Stanz
Ayurvedic Hacks For Pain Free Periods

You can treat the various symptoms of menstruation with natural Ayurveda remedies.

According to Ayurveda, the menstrual period should happen every 28 days, last about three days, and be pain free. That said, if you do face painful periods then here is what you should know and do...

The fact that during our periods we often get mild to severe cramps along with mood swings, lethargy and a general feeling of ill-being means that there is an imbalance in the body, mostly of the Kapha or the Pitta dosha. With a Kapha dosha imbalance, additional symptoms may include **headache, nausea**, lack of appetite, and diarrhea, while a Pitta dosha imbalance may have **symptoms** such as excessive bleeding, irritability, instable temper, and hot flashes.

Ayurveda prescribes **rest and relaxation**, abstinence from sex, light and easily digestible foods, and **plenty of fluid intake** to help one recover from menses. So the simple thing to do when having your period is to try and “slow down.” Your body is convalescing in a way during the menses, so it’s a good thing to take it easy, eat nutritious but easily digestible food, **drink water**, and stick to just **light walks for exercise** (or **light yoga**).

Here are five Ayurvedic remedies you can try to tackle those irritating and sometimes even **debilitating cramps**:

### A Hot Glass of Turmeric Milk

**Turmeric** (haldi) is one herb bursting with all the goodness of nature there is. It’s an anti-inflammatory, a pain-reliever, and antibacterial, and an antifungal. A glass of **turmeric milk** (preferably **cow’s milk** since it is lower in fat content) at night can alleviate body soreness and cramps. To make the milk, grate 1 teaspoon of raw turmeric in a glass of milk and heat it on low for 4-5 minutes. Add in some **honey** and drink up.

### Jaggery with Carom

Jaggery (gur) and carom or caraway seeds are excellent digestives and will go a long way in fixing any excess Vata in the body. Heat 1 teaspoon of **ghee** in a pan and sprinkle in a pinch of carom seeds. Once they sputter, add in 1 teaspoon crushed jaggery and let it melt. Other than being rather nice to eat, this pasty and sweet concoction will right your stomach for sure.
Munch on Flaxseeds

Flaxseeds are known to balance hormonal levels—consuming 1-2 teaspoons of these a day will counteract any raised prostaglandin levels and those cramps will poof away in no time. You can add them to your salads or simply eat them by themselves.

Ginger-Lemon Tea

Ginger is a great digestive aid as well as an anti-inflammatory while lemon detoxifies and flushes the system with a healthy dose of nature’s best antioxidant, vitamin C! Boil two teaspoons crushed ginger in two cups water. Add in the juice of a lemon and two teaspoons honey. Strain and sip through the day to alleviate any digestive issues or cramps.

Holy Basil for Pain Relief

Holy basil or tulsi is another great hormone regulator and since it restores balance to the body, it will take away those period-related cramps and fatigue, too. Steep a handful of fresh or dried tulsi leaves in two cups of boiling water for 5-10 minutes. Strain and sip through the day.

I leave you with this thought: in ancient India, those with their menses often were not allowed to cook or do their chores, slept in separate rooms, and even were asked to eat simpler foods, abstaining from dairy products and meats. It’s easy enough to pooh at these practices, but there is a deep-seated logic behind this. By letting them off their chores, ancient India gave them a much-needed break—menstruation is when one is releasing all the pranic energy she had stored in order to support fertility. When the fertility does not happen, both the rasa (tissue) and the rakta (blood) dhatu is expelled from the body and at this time, she is considered all powerful spiritually and yet physically vulnerable since she is draining herself of the stored energy. By giving her rest, abstaining from sex, and feeding her light, nutritious food, these old practices did exactly what we are asking you to do today for you to have happy, pain-free menses!

Rima J. Pundir
An Ayurvedic Approach to Anxiety

Anxiety results from an accumulation of Vata in the body; get rebalanced for relief.

According to the philosophy of Ayurveda, anxiety is the manifestation of an imbalance in the body that originates in the mind, causing psychological changes similar to the body’s inherent response to stress. The core belief is that the body has an inherent wisdom and is able to return the body, mind and spirit to a healthy, balanced state. It is truly amazing when we think about how immensely resilient our bodies are, despite the difficulties we often tend to impose upon them.

The practice of Ayurveda emphasizes that the body is composed of elements that combine to create three main body/mind compositions known as doshas. Each dosha has various attributes and generally speaking, all individuals have both a primary and secondary dosha type. Vata is comprised of air and space and embodies the quality of movement in the body, governing functions such as circulation, respiration and elimination. When in balance, if Vata pre-dominates, a person tends to be thin, sensitive, deeply creative, light, energetic, and enthusiastic. The dosha of Pitta is a combination of the contrasting elements of fire and water, which manifests as transformation. In the body, this affects processes such as the regulation of temperature, chemical reactions, and metabolism. An individual with a primarily Pitta constitution has an inclination towards having a medium physical build and being intensely passionate, intelligent, and driven in nature. Kapha dosha combines the elements of water and earth. Physiologically, this is expressed as the flow of water to all body parts and organs in addition to maintenance of the proper functioning of the immune system. When Kapha dominates, a balanced individual has a tendency towards being easygoing, nurturing, the supportive and stable “peace keeper.”

According to Ayurveda practices, anxiety is the result of an excess accumulation of Vata in the nervous system. The first step in addressing any imbalance or illness is to first identify and then remove the cause. In the case of anxiety, it is either a Vata-aggravating diet or lifestyle tendency. When it comes to our dietary habits, all food is said to cater to different doshas and contain various elemental compositions. It is believed that Vata can be brought back into balance by incorporating opposite quality foods and lifestyle practices into your routine. As far as diet is concerned, all processed and fried foods should be avoided as well as light, airy products such as crackers and popcorn, which are all aggravating to Vata. It is important to counterbalance this dosha with seasonal and organic foods such as root vegetables. Meals should be regular and prepared warm, soft, and easy to digest. Limit cold food and drinks as well as caffeine and alcohol, which both heighten the presence of Vata in the nervous system. Preparing warm milk with ginger and cinnamon spices is a perfect sleep and relaxation aid before bed.
**Abhyanga** is a term meaning “self oil massage” which is also extremely beneficial in pacifying Vata. It is believed that the effects of this practice are similar to the feelings of safety and stability *generated by love*. For optimal results, this should be done daily. Pairing this with time set aside for relaxation such as **reading**, listening to uplifting music, and writing **positive affirmations** for yourself is a great way to ensure a healthier mind and body and reduce **built-up stress** and **anxiety**. One of my personal favorite affirmations for anxiety comes from the amazing writer and speaker Louise Hay who says, “Life supports me and wants me to be fulfilled and happy.” Regular, moderate **exercise** is also strongly recommended to **ease stress** and keep the body’s circulation in order.

Ayurveda is a holistic approach, meaning that healing takes place on a spiritual, physical, and emotional level. Try incorporating several of these suggestions into your routine and enjoy a more relaxed and peaceful state of well-being.

*Indi Maxon*
How to Use Ayurveda to Quit Smoking

Ayurveda offers a holistic approach to addiction.

It’s a well-known fact that smoking is both addictive and unhealthy for you. While I have met a few people who quit smoking cold turkey, there are plenty of people who greatly struggle with kicking the nasty nicotine habit. If you or someone you know wants to quit smoking, here is how Ayurveda can help.

Intention.

Your intention to quit smoking is an important step in the Ayurveda process. Most people have the desire to quit, but aren’t really sure how. Letting your friends, family, and co-workers know about your intention can help you gain support in helping you quit.

Herbs.

Herbs are a common method used in Ayurveda. Herbs such as lobelia are said to help to reduce nicotine cravings in smokers by mimicking similar effects that nicotine has on the brain. Licorice root is another herb utilized because of its suggested use in satisfying the oral cravings of smokers. Medicinal smoking is often prescribed for smokers who need to get over their cravings of nicotine. Some Ayurveda physicians recommend herbal cigarettes free of nicotine to help their patients. These cigarettes contain herbs such as passionflower, turmeric, tulsi, cinnamon, gangal, mulethi, clove, and guggulu.

Exercise.

Ayurveda strongly encourages exercise because it teaches, as well as enhances, self-discipline. Discipline is important to have in order to quit and stay away from cigarettes for good. Exercise can help improve your lungs, health, mental balance, awareness, and focus. It can be a much healthier substitute for cigarettes.

Diet.

Another highly encouraged way of using Ayurveda to quit smoking is by eating a healthy vegetarian diet. Drinking lots of water while eating a healthy diet containing milk, ghee, fruits, and vegetables is highly recommended during your days of quitting. Cutting out things that enhance nicotine cravings such as coffee, sugar, or alcohol is also common in the Ayurveda dieting method.
Yoga.

In Ayurveda, yoga is often used alongside many of the methods mentioned above. Meditation, breathing exercises, and awareness are great aids in assisting people with quitting smoking. Sometimes there is a deeper, hidden meaning behind your smoking addiction, which meditation can help you uncover. Because yoga emphasizes bringing forth awareness of the body, mind, and spirit, it can help lessen or even stop a person’s desire to continue smoking. Pranayama or controlled breathing exercises can help smokers deal with urges, stress, and the anxiety smokers often feel when they try to quit.

All in all, Ayurveda offers a vast array of natural treatments to help you quit smoking in order to obtain the healthy lifestyle you deserve. Don’t give up; you can do it.

Jaima Mavity
Ayurveda emphasizes the health benefits of more foods than we could possibly mention here, but we’ve included information on some herbs and ingredients that it relies on most. Use this as a jumping off point to learn more about how Ayurveda uses food as medicine, and then explore the wider world of foods that heal.
Tulsi: Queen of All Ayurvedic Herbs

You might know it as holy basil—tulsi is one of the most important herbs in Ayurveda tradition.

In India, especially in the south, tulsi plants (also known as Holy Basil) sit on every windowsill and in every temple, believed to be a protector and a blessing to every inhabitant and visitor. In Ayurvedic medicine, born in India, tulsi is regarded as the queen of all herbs, so magical and beneficial is it.

There is a reason every Indian home is decorated with the small and often thin stalks of the green (and sometimes purple) tulsi plant outside. Just its presence alone offers extreme benefits, medicinally and spiritually. Scientific studies have proven tulsi to be effective in guarding against every major bacteria and virus, even the aroma alone. It is both a disinfectant and a germicide. Dedicated Indian believers will honor their tulsi twice per day, lighting a candle and giving thanks for the protection and blessings of Lord Vishnu, for whom the plant is said to represent, or be “consort of” and be prized by.

In Ayurvedic medicine, tulsi is the “queen of all herbs” as it is known to be one of the most powerful and adaptive herbs—applicable and morphable to almost any condition—just like a proper queen. For fevers, it is thought magical. In lung conditions including bronchitis, asthma, **colds**, and **congestion**, tulsi knows no parallel. It has even been known to heal the damaging effects of **smoking**. However, to truly understand the scope of tulsi’s benefits, it is crucial to look at the vast array of conditions and issues it has been used for with astonishing results:

- Cancer
- Stress-reduction
- Kidney stones
- Oral care
- Mosquito deterrent/Malaria
- Skin care and anti-acne
- Sinus care
- Immune health
- Headaches
- Anti-fungal
- High blood pressure
- Anti-aging tonic
- HIV inhibitor
- Anti-protozoa
- Eye care
- Protects and heals from poisoning
- Lessens labor pains
- Digestive health
- Anti-worm/parasite
- Wound healer
- Adaptogen
- Diabetes
- Hormone balance
- Vitamin K source
- Anti-inflammatory
- Natural Glaucoma treatment
...And the list goes on and on!

Tulsi is queen of herbs because you can use the entire plant—stems, root, leaves, flower, seeds, and all...and for basically any ailment, so diverse are its uses. Also known as “Holy Basil,” tulsi is held sacred in both the Hindu religion and within the ancient system of Ayurvedic medicine. In both systems, which are mutually supportive, this herb is prized above all others, and touted as an essential part of a dietary system for promoting and sustaining excellent health and well-being, including psychological and spiritual health.

Though it has been some time since my experience with tulsi in a Vishnu temple in India, I do not let too much time pass between cups of tulsi tea, often blended with other herbs such as rose, jasmine, peppermint, ginseng, and cacao. The taste of tulsi on its own, however, is amazingly delicious and soothing.

As a spiritual companion and gentle reminder to surrender into peace, into love and into that which sustains all—tulsi is the queen. It is a superb replacement for daily coffee as a longevity and health support that brings peace into your home and strength into your heart. For the immune system and energy systems of the body, there is no equal—for tulsi truly is the Queen of Ayurvedic herbs and her queendom is the multi-layered, multidimensional body/mind. Go forth and enjoy some tulsi today, and feel the peace.

Stasia Bliss

Sources:
https://draxe.com/tulsi/
Turmeric: The Root & Remedy of Ayurvedic Healing

Also popular in an Ayurvedic toolkit, turmeric is used for everything from inflammation to digestion.

Turmeric, botanically known as *Curcuma longa*, has long been revered as a sacred plant for healers of many traditions. Used as food, medicine, and in ritual, this rhizomatous plant holds a well-respected power.

Today we recognize turmeric for its arsenal of curative properties: a potent anti-inflammatory rivaling the strength of pharmaceuticals; a digestive tonic supporting the liver, heart, and circulatory system; a powerful antioxidant bolstering immunity and more. Modern day research reveals this root’s ability to combat a vast array of ailments including diabetes, Alzheimer’s, cancer...the list continues. It only took us 4500 years to catch on to what the Ancient Rishis and Ayurvedic practitioners of the time already knew—this plant has a potent prabhav, or what Ayurveda calls a magical healing power to bring harmony and holistic health.

**History: Tracing Turmeric's Roots**

Turmeric’s traditional uses are steeped in Ancient Vedic culture. Archeologists discovered traces of the plant in pots unearthed near New Delhi, India, that date back to 2500 BCE. It was used as a culinary spice, a remedy, a natural dye, and a ceremonial plant. In past and present, it plays a prominent role in Ayurvedic medicine. Ayurveda, which translates to “the science or knowledge of life,” is an ancient system of holistic healing intended to bring balance to body, mind, and spirit. In early literature, we see this root called by many names, some that include Haridra “the Yellow One,” Guari “The One Whose Face is Light and Shining,” Kanchani “Golden Goddess,” and Bhadra “Auspicious or Lucky.” It is believed that the ancient sages came to know the medicinal properties of plants through direct perception, sitting and meditating upon the plant until the seer and the seen become one. The classical text, *Charaka Samhita*, states turmeric’s therapeutic benefit and power to bring healing to even the deadliest of poisons from snakebite. Throughout Eastern traditions, turmeric is used as prevention and therapy of disease.

**Turmeric in Ritual**

Turmeric is entwined into many traditions of ceremony and ritual. The plant was dried and made into beads worn around one’s neck as a protective talisman in South India, believed to ward off evil and bring healing. The plant was seen as the Divine Mother pregnant with prosperity, bringing good fortune to those who honored her. In some yogic traditions turmeric served as a subtle energetic cleanser, tuning the chakra centers of the body. It is woven into
sacred ceremony, devotional pujas, and even weddings as the bride and groom anoint each other's foreheads. In other practices, the bride is given a mangala sutra, a necklace dyed yellow with turmeric paste to honor the partnership and household. This “Golden Goddess” was even used as a vibrant natural dye to color Buddhist robes and garments throughout the centuries. Much of the power of this plant comes in the years of honor and gratitude poured into its cultivation and uses.

**Traditional Use of Turmeric**

Turmeric is considered a tri-doshic remedy, meaning it can pacify all three *doshas*: Vata, Pitta, and Kapha. However, excess use can aggravate Pitta and Vata. It stokes our agni or digestive fire, and helps reduce *ama*, or toxins, from the body. It benefits the rasa and rakta dhatus, affecting the waters and blood of the body. Turmeric has an affinity for the circulatory system and since the blood pulses through every part of our being, it supports a vast array of functions in the body. With its bitter and pungent rasa (taste), turmeric warms and cleanses the body.

**Benefits of Turmeric**

- Acts as a powerful anti-inflammatory
- Promotes digestion
- Provides a potent source of antioxidants
- Supports brain and nervous system
- Alleviates joint pain and enables mobility
- Cleanses liver
- Bolsters immune system

**Turmeric takes many forms:**

- Culinary spice and prepared in food
- Herbal tea
- Decoction
- Tincture
- Salves, lotions, pastes
Turmeric for Inflammation

Turmeric is amazing and has numerous health benefits, most notably its ability to combat inflammation in our bodies. Ayurveda encourages using food as medicine (because it is)! Turmeric is a root, so it is a food—and can be consumed like one. That means you can cook with it, grate it up, and cook it into your dishes like these, or buy it already ground up and dried in powder form, usually found in the spice section at your local health food store or food co-op. It can be made into a tea by steeping it in hot water or you can make it into Golden Milk for a delicious way to drink this amazing root.

As for how much to take—it depends on what your desired outcome is and what your health situation is. For general health purposes, consume some turmeric every day. General recommendations are 1 to 3 grams a day as a long-term health-promoting dose that most everyone would benefit from. That could be about 2 capsules to get in 1 gram (1000mg) or a half-teaspoon of dried powder, which is about 1600mg, that you can mix into your food or beverages.

If you have a particular inflammation issue you are trying to rectify (either acute injury or chronic inflammatory process), then usually a much larger dose is recommended. Instead of 1,000mg a day, a dose of 1,000-3,000mg a few times a day or in one large dose would likely be more effective. Turmeric has been studied and shown safe to be taken at doses as large as 8-12g per day for a few months. You could consume this amount in one dose of a Tablespoon of powder stirred into hot water or a teaspoon at a time 3 times a day. Some people don’t mind the taste of just mixing it with a small amount of water and drinking it down. If this is not appealing to you, you can make it into more of a latte-like beverage with warm milk of your choice, a little honey, coconut oil, vanilla, and cinnamon. You can also cook it right into your food with some ghee or coconut oil in things like rice, potatoes, eggs, greens, etc.

For more suggestions on how to get more turmeric in your diet, see here. If eating 3-4 teaspoons of turmeric seems like a lot to stomach, you might try using the capsules or tablets. This is not as cost effective, but it is more convenient. Another factor is your ability to digest the turmeric. If your stomach has trouble with one large dose, you might be better off spacing it out every few hours and combining it with food. Ideally, digestive enhancing aids like ginger and black pepper can help, as well as heating it with some healthy fat like ghee or coconut oil to increase its absorption and help its delivery to the deeper tissue layers of your body.

Turmeric v. Curcumin Extract

Curcumin is one of the main studied active ingredients in turmeric that scientists attribute its anti-inflammatory properties to. Turmeric root is roughly 3-5% curcumin. So yes, curcumin extract is amazing for pain and inflammation, but there are many, many more constituents of turmeric that haven’t been studied yet that contribute to its amazing healing qualities. People have started extracting the curcumin and putting it in capsule and tincture
form. While there are cases where this can be useful to get in a high amount of curcumin in a small dose, like in cases of acute trauma and pain, there are more properties in the whole herb that make it complete and healing on many levels. The whole is more than the sum of its parts, and nature designed things just perfectly to work synergistically in ways we don’t fully understand. So yes, we can extract singular parts and aspects to analyze and make use of, but in the long run and for the big picture, the whole herb is usually the best.

Throughout history and in modern day living, this golden spice is a staple in every Ayurvedic medicine cabinet. Discover the many ways to connect with this plant and invite it to be part of your healing journey, be it a tasty addition to your next dish or way to remedy an ailment.

Gaby Colletta
Melissa Hill

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Ginger is a bit of a conundrum for not only does it ease constipation and improve digestion, it is also a great tool to fight against bloating, indigestion, and even diarrhea. So basically it’s one all-rounder spice, being good for the digestive system on the whole. And this healthy spice has plenty other benefits to be reaped as well.

The Origins of Adraka in Ayurveda

The English name ginger is derived from the Latin term ‘zingiberi’ which originally came from the Sanskrit term ‘singabera’—AKA the horn of antlers. This, of course, referred to the shape of the ginger rhizome.

When it comes to the qualities of (fresh) ginger, Ayurveda lists out many beneficial ones in a sutra, the gist of what is:

- Rochaka: stimulates the appetite
- Deepana: improves digestive strength
- Vrushya: is an aphrodisiac
- Vibandha: prevents and resolves constipation
- Katu: has a pungent taste
- Ushna: is hot and effective in potency
- Guru: is a heavy spice
- Rooksha: is drying
- Madhura Vipaka: undergoes sweet taste conversion after digestion
- Hrudy: acts as cardiac tonic, congenial for heart
- Ruchida: improves taste and is useful in relieving anorexia
- Shophahara: relieves swelling or edema and is anti-inflammatory
- Kaphahara: balances Kapha, useful in a phlegmy cough and asthma
- Kantamayaapaha: useful in throat disorders
- Svarya: improves voice and gives a clearer tone
- Vibandhahara: relieves constipation
- Anahahara: relieves bloating and flatulence
• Shoolajit: relieves abdominal or colic pain
• Bhedini: relieves constipation
• Jihva Vishodhana: cleanses and clears tongue and removes the white coating
• Kaphavatahara: balances Kapha and Vata doshas to ideal levels
• Shwasahara: useful in the treatment of asthma and chronic respiratory disorders
• Kasahara: useful in alleviating a cough and cold
• Vamihara: relieves vomiting and eases nausea
• Hikkahara: cures hiccups

So basically, eating fresh ginger just before meals or even during meals enhances digestion. In Ayurvedic terms, it stokes the digestive fire but also whets the appetite, improves assimilation and transportation of nutrients to targeted body tissues, and clears the microcirculatory channels of the body. Traditional Ayurvedic texts recommend ginger for therapeutic use for joint pain, motion or airsickness, which modern science, by way of worldwide research, ratifies. Ginger balances out the Kapha and Vata doshas of your body—thereby reducing flatulence, acidity, and improper digestion, as well as alleviating allergies, seasonal coughs, colds, and congestion.

How To Eat Ginger

• My ma often used to quick pickle ginger to be had before or during meals. She would wash and wipe dry raw ginger, scrape off any rough parts and then julienne them. She would then salt the julienned ginger and let it air dry for 20-30 minutes. By this time, the ginger would have turned pink. She would then bottle it up and juice a lemon over it. A good shake and into the refrigerator it went to chill. Crunchy, salty, lemony ginger made for a good appetizer and a great accompaniment to heavier meals.

• If you can eat raw ginger, great—but if you find ginger a bit tough or hot to eat by itself then try adding two or three thin slices to your dishes as they cook. Or you can always make a ginger-garlic broth.

• You can also sauté some grated ginger in a tablespoon of ghee and add the mixture to dishes as a tadka.

• Another way to enjoy ginger is to make a ginger tea, adding further restorative herbs and spices like basil, lemon, and even honey to sweeten the concoction.

• The dry ginger powder is equally beneficial as well. One teaspoon of dry ginger powder (3-5g) taken at bedtime with a glass of warm water has plenty benefits too—reduces cholesterol, improves digestion, makes your heart healthy, and even helps you whittle off those extra pounds.
Ten Beneficial Uses of Ginger: Ayurveda & Modern Science

1. **Immunity**
   Call it grandma’s remedy but drinking ginger with lemon and honey is a popular cold and flu remedy the world over. Ginger also has thermogenic properties, so it can warm up the body in the cold and, more importantly, promotes healthy sweating. This heat-induced sweating comprises a potent germ-fighting agent called dermcidin and stays on the surface of the skin where it works to provide protection against bacteria like E. coli and fungi like Candida.

2. **Digestion**
   Ginger has carminative properties that help eliminate the natural gases of digestion and so it helps to prevent bloating and flatulence. It also has spasmolytic properties that relax the GI muscles and soothe any stomachaches and pains. Such is its efficacy that it is often used to treat colic in children and also can help alleviate the symptoms of diarrhea and food poisoning.

3. **Nausea**
   Be it your garden variety motion sickness, morning sickness in pregnant women, or even debilitating nausea that is a staple enemy of chemotherapy, ginger always reduces the severity of nausea.

4. **Inflammation**
   A very potent anti-inflammatory compound called gingerol in ginger makes it very good to alleviate joint and muscle pain. A study shows that ginger starts to heal inflammation at a cellular level and is potent enough to be at par with NSAIDs (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs). While eating ginger works, as do medicines derived from it, applying ginger oil on achy joints and muscles is great therapy too.

5. **Pain Relief**
   Since ginger reduces bloating and inflammation, it works as good pain relief for migraine headaches and menstrual cramps. Drinking ginger tea at the onset of a migraine attack stifles prostaglandins which then blocks the pain and also alleviates nausea. It also reduces the pain associated with dysmenorrhea (painful menstruation) and is effective in controlling accompanying diarrhea or bloating.

6. **Diabetes**
   Ginger is proving to be an effective tool in glycemic control for people with type 2 diabetes. One clinical trial has concluded that diabetic patients that consumed three grams of dry ginger for 30 days had a significant reduction in blood glucose, triglyceride, and in total and LDL cholesterol levels—good news for all! Basically, ginger works on diabetes by stimulating insulin release and increasing insulin sensitivity along with improving a person’s overall health.
7. **Heart**
   Ginger has plenty of **potassium**, manganese, chromium, **magnesium**, and **zinc**, and it goes a long way in proving longevity to the heart. Many studies have shown positive results in that the unique temperament of ginger’s compounds **lower cholesterol** and prevent artery narrowing, thereby regulating blood pressure and improving blood flow: all of which helps reduce the risk of heart attacks and strokes.

8. **Respiratory System**
   Certain studies have indicated that ginger has the ability to treat respiratory conditions (including asthma) as it clears the micro-circulatory systems of the body and heals **inflammation** at a cellular level.

9. **Longevity**
   We all know that **antioxidants** are extremely important as they provide protection against free radicals, which helps reduce skin aging and many degenerative diseases that come with **aging**, such as heart disease, diabetes, **arthritis**, **Alzheimer’s**, and more. Ginger is an extra-potent antioxidant since it contains 25 different antioxidant properties on its own!

10. **Cancer Prevention**
    Many studies have pointed out that ginger is rather effective in killing off cancer cells. When cancer cells come in contact with ginger, they tend to commit suicide (apoptosis) or start attacking each other (autophagy). Till date ginger has been linked to a future cure for various cancers, namely ovarian, breast, prostate, colon, rectal, liver, lung, and pancreatic cancer as well as melanomas.

So, boil it down in any way and ginger is a great tool to remain in good health. Do go ahead and include bits of it in your daily diet—sip on **ginger tea**, add some to your **curries** or **desserts**, and gulp down half a teaspoon of dry ginger powder at night with a glass of warm water. It will give you good digestion and better circulation, and drive away those pesky allergies too. Ginger up, says Ayurveda.

*Rima J. Pundir*
The Multiple Benefits of Neem

Neem can be used all over the home and garden as well as in your body.

Think of neem and most think of the natural, harmless EPA-registered pesticide that doesn’t harm the flora or fauna. But neem or *Azadirachta indica* is a far more useful plant than just a crop sprayer. Native to southern Asia, neem has its roots deep into the ancient medical science of India, the Ayurveda. So where all could neem be used, and how, and where do you get it?

Where do you get neem?

If you live in an area that doesn’t get frozen solid in winter, and remains comfortably warm in the summers, then you could actually grow a neem tree at home in your backyard. There are many neem tree suppliers in the U.S. and other places so getting a tree is not a problem, but it has to be protected from the cold. Your tree will die of frost instantly as neem is basically a warm-weather tree. In case you are unable to grow the tree, you can choose to get leaf or bark extracts as capsules or as a dried powder for consumption as well as dried leaves and neem *essential oil* for external use.

Benefits of neem

**In the garden:** Neem trees tend to keep mosquitoes and other *pesky bugs* away from your garden. Neem is also a very effective *organic pesticide*, and excellent to use when planting potatoes, tubers, and other ground creepers. They affect larvae of various insects and stop them from molting, thereby debilitating the insects in the growth stage. Neem-based *pesticides* are safe for humans and *pets*, as well as for the *birds*, *bees*, and other *good bugs* in the garden.

**As a home pest controller:** If your cupboards tend to get mildew or mold, or even irritating pests such as *ants*, roaches, or silverfish, then keeping dried neem leaves in your shelves will prevent any damage to clothes, *books*, or other accessories and apparel. It will also take away that “wet” smell of mold and work as a cupboard freshener. You can also add a few drops of neem essential oil to your diffuser to stave off any *mosquito bites*.

**Skin problems:** Have a skin rash? If you have fresh neem leaves, grind them to a paste and apply on the affected areas. Neem leaves contain antibacterial agents that treat mild infections. You can also choose to add dried neem leaves to your *bathwater* for the same effect. Oily skins can benefit from the antibacterial and antifungal action of neem—a daily application of neem paste on the face will reduce the appearance of blackheads, whiteheads, *acne*, and even scars.
Medicinal Uses: If you seem to be plagued with colds and congestion all the time, having neem supplements can amp up your immunity, thus making you healthier. Ensure you get your supplements from a trustworthy and licensed source. Furthermore, certain drug trials in India have shown neem to be an effective and economical early cancer treatment drug. The trials are on to prove its long-term efficacy and safety and hopefully sometime in the future we’ll see neem as a first-go treatment for early stages of cancer!

Rima J. Pundir
Healing the Whole Self with Ashwagandha

Ashwagandha is an adaptogenic herb that helps balance adrenal function, among other things.

There are a multitude of herbs that have reportedly numerous healing properties and can be effective for treatment in a wide array of conditions. Ashwagandha, or Indian ginseng, is one of these herbs. Ayurvedic practitioners in India have been utilizing this ancient herb (or root) for many issues, especially for conditions that have root in the brain, including memory, cognitive functions in general, the regulation of neurotransmitters, and insomnia. The healing benefits of Ashwagandha reach far beyond the brain into all areas of the body, for if one does not have health in the brain, one is sure to falter in the “lower” body systems. Let us take a closer look at this herb and its multidimensional components.

The Brain

Through the regulation of the neurotransmitter serotonin in the brain, Ashwagandha helps the body find greater peace of mind as well as effectively bringing down the production of cortisol, which, when consistently produced, contributes to a perpetual state of stress. Studies have actually shown that the use of Ashwagandha was, in many cases, more effective than anti-depressants in balancing out brain chemistry.

Holistic Healing

When looking at the overall profile of this herb, I am led to the conclusion that Ayurvedic medicine found value in it because of its ability to address a patient as a whole being—including and acknowledging the mind, body, and spirit connection as equal portions of a whole. What begins in the head continues to the feet. The ingestion of Ashwagandha cannot only affect the brain, in other words—if benefiting a person with imbalances in the head, it is inevitable that balancing the brain chemistry will domino into an array of body-adjustments, proving helpful to the entire person as a whole.

Stress

Today’s world is kept high-paced, emphasizing value in the enormous amount of stress that is both generated and recycled throughout the system and within man. The constant expectation kept on “fast” and “instant” has created people who are constantly running from one thing to another, jumping from thought to thought and carrying stress along as if it was a cherished passenger from the past—into an unknown future they most surely must include.
Stress is not a friend, however, except when consulted in small doses, and on the occasion where lives are being saved and quick-turn decisions are needed. But in the way that this world has employed stress and anxiety to “take care” of time and deadlines, to inform the heart and the mind of the value of things...this stress has become a tyrant which eventually transforms into the grim-reaper for many.

Adaptogen

Ashwagandha has a way of soothing the soul, calming the mind, nourishing the body. It is a well-known adaptogen in India, which means it is able to bring the body back into a state of balance where stresses are handled with ease and without harm to the system. Basically, this herb makes you more resilient in a world where much is expected of you, even when you don’t feel able to fully deliver.

Adrenal fatigue is becoming more and more common these days, especially with the rise of technology and our modern go-go-go atmosphere. Your adrenal glands, which are situated just above your kidneys, are responsible for pumping out hormones which keep your body going. These include aldosterone, cortisol, and testosterone. Aldosterone helps to maintain the body’s salt and water levels, whereas cortisol helps to regulate body metabolism. When your adrenals get “fatigued” from a stressful life event, physical illness, or malnutrition, they’re not able to provide the body with these hormones which may cause symptoms of adrenal fatigue such as chronic tiredness, low blood pressure, weight loss, body aches, loss of body hair, and skin discoloration. As an adaptogenic herb, ashwagandha “supports” the function of the organ or gland as opposed to being a mimetic herb, which “mimics” certain hormones and chemical reactions in the body. It is recommended to take 600-1000mg twice per day to help cope with any stresses, either emotional or physical.

Self-Judgment and Anxiety

Some of the biggest stresses in the body result from the way in which we conduct our self-talk. Societal expectations then become judgmental mind chatter, which berates the self for not being able to keep up, make do or “make ends meet.” The constant need to “keep up with the Joneses” has created a perpetual anxiety in humanity which cannot help but create illness in both body and mind. This self-deprecating stress is also the biggest killer of spiritual connectedness. When one feels “less than” those around him or her, he or she often cannot find the inner fortitude and strength to care for oneself and the psyche of the mind, which includes spirituality.

If the body is in constant stress, thinking only of what must be accomplished, or reflecting obsessively over that which has already passed, it goes into a certain state of “basic survival.” The functions of each body system are compromised and ill-health is most definitely an eventual result.
Sex

Ashwagandha is key for a healthy sex life and if you’ve been feeling a little “meh” in bed lately, it might be time to bring a little bit of this root into your daily rotation. In a study, 50 women were given 300mg of Ashwagandha root twice per day for 8 weeks. It was no surprise that the SFI (sexual function index) dramatically increased in the Ashwagandha group versus the placebo group. It was also observed that the female group who took the Ashwagandha had lower scores on the FSDS (female sexual distress scale), which measures worry and distress related to sexual activity. But it’s not just women who are seeing results. Ashwagandha was also tested in infertile men. In the study, 180 infertile men were given 5g of Ashwagandha powder per day for 3 months. Sperm concentration and motility improved dramatically in all test subjects.

Diabetes

Diabetes is one of the fastest growing dis-eases in the United States currently. This is an epidemic, and though type 1 is thought to generally be caused by genetics or autoimmunity, there have been a wide array of both studies and cases where type 1 is reversed through lifestyle alterations, supplementation, and nutrition.

Ashwagandha is one of the foremost herbs (along with Shilajit) in Ayurvedic medicine for the treatment and even reversal of type 1 and type 2 diabetes. It does this largely by nourishing and balancing the endocrine glands as well as regulating insulin and even helping to regenerate the pancreas. Beyond these specifics, Ashwagandha assists the body in becoming more aware of itself and its needs. It reboots the system, regulates what has run amok, and reminds the body of health and a state of well-being by touching on all the main systems.

Blood Sugar

In a 2000 study, Ashwagandha powder was administered to human subjects daily for 30 days. A significant decrease in blood glucose levels was observed, comparable to that of an oral hypoglycemic drug. That’s pretty impressive! If you experience symptoms of low blood sugar or hypoglycemia—you might want to give Ashwagandha a try.

Thyroid Health

Another gland that is responsible for pumping hormones is the thyroid, and Ashwagandha has been proven to stimulate thyroid function. Daily doses of the root have shown to improve both an over-active and under-active thyroid. Try a teaspoon of Ashwagandha powder in a cup of hot milk or milk alternative to get your daily dose in.

Hair Growth
Ashwagandha is known to aid in stress-related hair loss caused by too much cortisol being pumped out of the adrenals. This is why hair loss is commonly associated with stressful life events or any kind of prolonged stress to the body. In a recent study, Ashwagandha was tested against hair loss in human subjects over a 60-day period. 125 mg of the root was taken each day and at the end of the 60 days, there was a 14.5% reduction in cortisol that was observed in the test subjects. Try blending up a spoonful of Ashwagandha powder in your morning smoothie for an easy way to boost your hair health.

**Cancer**

Cancer is another biggie for this amazing herb. Both in the prevention of and in the healing and recovery process, Ashwagandha shows the body how to stay in balance and also how to return to it. It is one of the best herbs to take to prevent damage to the blood cells from radiation and is therefore recommended prior to chemotherapy and radiation treatment to help a patient keep their hair and maintain a healthier immune system after such violent attacks.

**Health Benefits from Ashwagandha:**

- Thyroid health
- Anti-inflammatory
- Longevity
- Health tonic
- Better sleep
- Mental health
- Body and cell rejuvenation
- Endurance energy
- Cardiovascular health
- Respiratory health
- Memory
- Neuro-protection
- Improved quality of life
- Fertility
- Creativity
- Adrenal health/recovery
- Blood sugar metabolism
- Immune support
- Illness recovery
- Stamina
- Increased peace and joy
- Brain health

If you are looking for a holistic herb that can treat and support your entire mind-body-spirit complex, you may need to look no further than Ashwagandha. Revered for thousands of years in India, this ancient herb is showing how it can nourish, heal and rejuvenate not only the body, but direct energy towards the health of the mind and spirit as well. This herb may truly be a godsend, or perhaps a goddess disguised as an herb.

*Stasia Bliss
Jennifer Enchin*
Triphala: The Ancient Ayurvedic Remedy

The three fruits of triphala correspond to the three doshas: the combination is used for a variety of reasons.

Triphala is a traditional Ayurvedic herbal formulation consisting of three fruits native to the Indian subcontinent: Amalaki (*Emblica officinalis*), Bibhitaki (*Terminalia belerica*) and Haritaki (*Terminalia chebula*). Triphala translates literally to mean “three fruits,” and comes from combining the Sanskrit words “tri” meaning three, “phala” meaning fruit, and “churcha,” which means powder. Appropriately named, triphala is made from the dried powder of these three fruits, though the triphala supplement can be found as powder, capsule, tablet, or liquid extract.

The three fruits of triphala each correspond to one of the three doshas of Indian Ayurvedic medicine, and together they contain five of the six tastes recognized in Ayurveda (sweet, sour, bitter, pungent, and astringent) with only salty not included on the list. Used for over 2,000 years, triphala is a staple of Ayurvedic medicine. References to the use of triphala can be found in the *Sushruta Samhita*, which is dated to 1500 BC. As such, triphala is one of the longest-used herbal remedies in the world. In India, triphala is considered the best and most versatile of all herbal formulas.

**What are the Benefits of Triphala?**

Triphala is used to tone and support normal bowel activity and overall digestive function, and helps to restore muscular function and contractility of the intestinal wall. More specifically, triphala assists with natural internal cleansing, maintains regularity, nourishes and rejuvenates the tissues of the intestinal walls, supports healthy digestion and absorption, and is a natural antioxidant, protecting cells from the damaging effects of free radicals. Triphala is considered to be a natural alternative to over-the-counter laxatives, which can often irritate the bowels excessively.

In addition to helping in areas of digestion and bowel movement, triphala is used to support healthy respiration and cardiovascular health; to lower cholesterol levels; to support urinary, reproductive, and nervous system health; and to naturally treat cancer. Triphala contains gallic acid, ellagic acid, and chebulinic acid, which are all strong antioxidants, as well as flavonoids and polyphenols, which have antibacterial, anti-inflammatory, and antidiarrheal properties. In addition to its many other uses, triphala can be applied topically to reduce healing time of bruises and sunburns, and has been used as a tonic in hair and in eyewashes.
What do each of the 'Three Fruits' of Triphala do?

Amalaki 'Amla'
Of the three fruits, Amalaki has a cooling effect that manages Pitta, supporting natural functions of the liver and the immune system, and it supports intestinal repair. Additionally, it has 20 times the vitamin C content of an orange. As such, it is often used to treat the common cold and fever. While useful for all doshas, it’s particularly effective for balancing the Pitta dosha.

Bibhitaki
Bibhitaki is particularly good for Kapha, supporting the respiratory system, and is said to be a powerful detoxifier of the body. Of the three fruits, Bibhitaki aids digestion by pulling old mucus off the intestinal walls. Bibhitaki is used in traditional Indian Ayurvedic medicine for the treatment of diabetes, high blood pressure, and rheumatism.

Haritaki
Haritaki is understood as having a “heating” nature according to the Ayurvedic system, and is nonetheless good for all three doshas; it is particularly calming to the Vata dosha. Haritaki strengthens the intestinal muscles to contract more efficiently when the bowels need to move, and is known for its “scraping” effect, which removes toxins and helps maintain healthy levels of weight. Haritaki has been used in Indian and Iranian medicine to treat dementia and diabetes and has anti-inflammatory properties.

How To Take Triphala
Triphala is usually taken on an empty stomach and can be ingested in a few different ways: the powder form can be used to make a tea by adding a half-teaspoon of powder to one cup of hot water. The powder can be put into a spoonful of honey or ghee before a meal, if you prefer. The tablets and capsule forms are typically taken once or twice a day, before food, and the liquid supplement is usually taken as 30 drops in water or juice, one to three times daily. All of that said, please always consult your Ayurvedic health consultant or local health practitioner, or at the very least read the directions on the packaging.

Larger doses of triphala tend to have more laxative effects while smaller doses tend to be more gradual and blood purifying (if you find yourself having very loose bowels for an extended period of time, you may be taking too much). While triphala can be taken over long periods of time, it is recommended that every 10 weeks, you should take a break for two to three weeks to give the body a rest and to maintain the effectiveness of the remedy.

Rachel Leber
Imagine a tree that cures almost anything that ails you. If there were ever a tree, *Moringa oleifera*—or drumstick tree—would be it. Referred to as the “miracle tree,” Moringa is used by Ayurveda practitioners to help prevent about 300 different diseases in patients. From the leaves to the bark, the tree can be used for medicinal purposes. Native to South Asia, Moringa is commonly used in curries and stews. It can be ground into a paste or powder, or enjoyed as a tea. It is so healthy, in fact, that it is said to be more nutritious than kale. So what is it about this tree that makes it so special?

*Moringa oleifera* has an astounding nutrition content. Consuming Moringa is like taking the alphabet of vitamins. It contains vitamins A, B, C, D, E, and K. Vitamin A keeps our vision in check while vitamin B provides fuel for the body and keeps the nervous system stable. Vitamin C is most known for a healthy immune system while vitamin D promotes bone growth. Vitamin E is a powerhouse of antioxidants, and vitamin K allows the blood to coagulate properly. Along with the vitamin count, Moringa is high in protein and essential amino acids that can only be obtained through food. In fact, it contains all 18 amino acids. Consider its substantial amount of minerals, and it is easy to see how for nutrition alone it is well sought after.

Medicinally, Moringa can be consumed or used as an ointment. Since it contains antibiotic, anti-inflammatory, anti-ulcer, and antispasmodic properties, it has been used for a multitude of illnesses. It releases jaw stiffness, clears the body of ulcers, removes toxins from the blood, and is taken for heart problems. When used as an ointment, it soothes joint pain and eases arthritis; when made into a paste and smeared on the forehead it cures a headache. It’s easy to digest, aiding in stomach problems. The oil is even used for healthy hair.

As a food source, it can be found growing in tropic and subtropic areas. In sandy regions where food is hard to grow, Moringa thrives. It is a cheap food that provides necessary nutrients, especially to poorer regions. The leaves can be eaten like the greens of a salad while the pods can be prepared as you would green beans. The leaves can also be dried and stored. The versatility and rich nutrition content of Moringa is one step towards curing malnutrition.

With all these benefits, it is easy to see why Moringa is considered the “miracle tree.” From a boost in nutrients to healing what ails you, Moringa is truly a gift of nature. Do something good for your body and add *Moringa oleifera* to your diet.
Medicinal Uses For Gotu Kola

A small plant with big healing potential.

Gotu Kola (*Centella asiatica*) has been considered a cure-all for thousands of years. It is an herb of longevity in Traditional Chinese Medicine and Ayurvedic medicine with good reason: this slender, tiny herb is packed full of some truly amazing health and healing benefits.

There are three aspects of health that are most commonly associated with the power of Gotu Kola, all associated with cognitive abilities: boosting brain power, sharpening memory, and enhancing mood. Gotu Kola strengthens blood circulation, which is one of the main reasons it is so beneficial to the brain.

I began taking Gotu Kola when I was in college. I needed a boost and I wanted it to be a natural one. It really helped me out a lot! I noticed a difference within the first week of adding Gotu Kola to my diet. My head seemed much clearer. I seemed to be remembering more, sleeping better, and just having a better feeling of well-being overall.

You can drink Gotu Kola tea once or twice a day or take a supplement in the morning with your breakfast.

**Detoxify Kidneys**

The mild diuretic properties increase the flow of urine in the body. This helps to cleanse the body of toxins and excess salts and fats, which helps keep the kidneys refreshed. When your kidneys are in good shape, you tend to have more energy and feel better because your body is clean.

**Heal Wounds**

Gotu Kola produces saponins called Triterpenoids. These saponins are a chemical compound that naturally helps the healing process of wounds, allowing for a speedy recovery. These compounds also strengthen the skin and increase the blood supply to the affected area. Gotu Kola also boosts antioxidants—not only to the whole body but directly to any wounds.

**Ease Anxiety & Nervous Disorders**

The same exact Triterpenoids that help heal wounds are responsible for producing a calming effect when it comes to anxiety issues and nervousness. Gotu Kola can actually decrease how often and how severe the attacks are. It helps lower stress levels and also stimulates healthy sleep.
Regulate Blood Pressure

The Triterpenoids relieve tension in the arteries and blood vessels, making Gotu Kola a great option for regulating blood pressure. Taking it regularly can potentially reduce the risk of heart attacks and strokes. Gotu Kola can also help ease various heart conditions.

Improve Circulation

Gotu Kola naturally strengthens the walls of our capillaries and blood vessels, which optimizes and boosts the body’s circulatory system. It also increases and stimulates blood flow, creating better oxygenation. It is a win-win for the whole body and helps some of our most important organs: the brain, lungs, kidneys, and heart.

Ease Stomach Issues

This traditional medicine has been used for a very long time to ease aches and pains within the gastrointestinal system. The anti-inflammatory properties ease Irritable Bowel Syndrome and the antioxidants of the leaves are beneficial to the flora in our gut, stomach, and colon.

Protect Skin

Gotu Kola is a natural skin and beauty product. It reduces wrinkles, scars, and blemishes. No, this isn’t a commercial, but Gotu Kola can be found in some natural and organic skin and beauty care products for those very reasons. Once again, it’s the antioxidants that are responsible for this benefit.
Shilajit: Food Of The Immortals Rocks Your Health

Known as “the destroyer of weakness,” Shilajit battles blood sugar problems, inflammation, and more.

I first came across Shilajit on a raw foods website back when I owned a raw chocolate company and I was researching other superfoods to add into our ever-changing concoctions of healing delights. After learning of Shilajit’s incredible properties my business partner and I added this Ayurvedic herb, which showed up as a black powder, into a chocolate bar with some food-grade Frankincense oil, reishi mushrooms, spirulina and a few other ingredients, dubbing it our “Immortal Blend.” I have truly never met an herb like Shilajit who could impress me so much upon our first meeting.

More recently, my oldest son was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes and I put him on a raw foods diet to balance his blood sugars, which it did. In my research to find him the best of the best in healing herbs and medicinals to support his body’s process of re-calibrating and regeneration, I came across Shilajit yet again. By simply typing “shilajit” and “diabetes” into my Google search engine I came across article after article of how Shilajit was one of the main Ayurvedic herbs used for conditions of not only blood sugar metabolism, but a host of other body ailments as well. In Ayurveda, Shilajit is known as “the destroyer of weakness” and it is thought to be the herb associated with Shiva—God of destruction.

Created in the cracks and crevices of the Himalayan mountains over millions of years through the pressure of mountains and the transformation of a sea bed turned to lush jungles, Shilajit is a sort of organic mass rich in fulvic acid and multiple other minerals. This densely nutritious substance has long been known as the “food of the immortals” and is actually the only natural source of fulvic acid on the planet. Found in the mountains of China, Tibet, and Burma, and known also as “blood of the mountains” or “juice of the rocks,” this incredible substance treats a myriad of health disorders and helps to bring the body back to a state of homeostasis.

Often seen as a black powder, the higher quality Shilajit is actually more like a black tar, and in its most refined state, a white small rock known as “White stone oil”—which is even more rare and refined. You take it in by dissolving the substance in either warm or cooled water and drinking it as a usually heavily diluted formula.

**Shilajit is especially helpful for:** inflammation, dissolving kidney stones, diabetes (by regenerating pancreas cells), nervous system disorders (by reducing stress/anxiety and strengthening nerves), thyroid issues, digestive problems, arthritis, asthma, tissue and bone repair, immune system health, and many other conditions. These benefits of Shilajit are awesome, and after reacquainting myself with the herb in a glass of warm water one day (after I ordered some for my son and started fixing it for him) I had a profound experience. I could actually feel the sensation of my body “evening out.” It felt like homeostasis coming into play. I didn’t know you could feel that—but I sensed it in every part of me. My right side
wanted to match the energetics on my left, places where I had felt pain seemed to be being “fed” by what felt like an invisible force—it was incredible.

For my son, his blood sugar went through some very obvious shifts the day he started taking Shilajit. He was already coming into balance with the raw foods and other herbs he was taking (marine phytoplankton and nopal cactus to name a couple), but Shilajit seemed to “seal the deal” on the leveling of his blood sugars. He is only 9, so the dose he received was a bit less, but the results were faster with him than they might be for an adult because of his body’s ability to self-correct more quickly due to his young age.

The benefits of Shilajit interest me most in the cognitive enhancement capacities, the off-the-charts antioxidants, and the anti-aging results. Shilajit also helps the body get more out of sleep and respond to stresses better. One of the most amazing things about Shilajit is the evidence that has shown that it speeds up the healing of damaged tissues and broken bones by double.

The Charaka Samhita is one of the Ancient Ayurvedic texts which speaks about the benefits of Shilajit. It states “that there is no imbalance in the universe, which is not effectively helped by Shilajit when it is administered at the appropriate time, in combination with suitable herbs and by adopting the prescribed method. When administered to a healthy person, with similar conditions, it produces immense energy.”

Other benefits of Shilajit:

- Enhanced sexual function/libido
- Bone strength (by keeping calcium in the bones)
- Jaundice
- Anemia
- Epilepsy
- Hemorrhoids
- Alzheimer’s
- Bronchitis/Lung issues/Asthma
- Kidney/Bladder issues
- Adrenal function
- Obesity
- Infections
- Stamina
- Work out recovery
- Blood sugar metabolism
- Insomnia
- Memory
- Alcohol withdrawal
- Energy
- Mood enhancement
- Anti-aging
- Chakra balance
- Grounding
- Motivation
- Confidence
- Emotional Balance
- Detoxification

There are endless reasons to take Shilajit. It is one panacea that I feel surpasses all others. I truly believe that if you take no other supplements that you ought to give Shilajit a try. It also helps other supplements you do take to work better. It is that good.
It is important to source your Shilajit wisely, as there are many impostors on the market. It is recommended when to start out using Shilajit with just a tiny bit and test your body’s response.

To enhance health and well being, improve your state of mind and remove the deep body and mind sabotaging elements of a life lived in a world steeped in stressors, “The Destroyer of Weakness” may be the answer you have been looking for.

Stasia Bliss
An Ayurvedic Approach to Green Tea

If you must consume caffeine, green tea is one of the best kinds—its antioxidants and benefits are worth it.

Green tea offers seemingly countless benefits: lowered cancer risk, arthritis relief, fat loss, and improved cognitive function among them.

However, most green teas contain caffeine. There’s debate among specialists about the role of caffeine in an Ayurvedic diet, and many will tell you that caffeine is rajasic, a quality that, when amplified, increases restlessness and greed and amplifies doshic imbalances, whether they stem from Vata, Pitta, or Kapha energies.

Still, it’s difficult to cut out caffeine, and green tea can be a good substitute for coffee (although coffee has its benefits, too). Depending on the individual, green tea’s stellar antioxidant profile and proven benefits may outweigh its rajasic side effects.

When choosing a green tea, it can be helpful to keep your dosha in mind: Kaphas can better tolerate varieties with more caffeine, and in some cases, caffeine can balance out Kaphic lethargy. Vata and Pitta types may want to choose a decaffeinated version, but keep in mind that lower levels of caffeine often mean lower levels of antioxidants.

For all you green tea lovers, the good news is that many herbs can help counteract the over-stimulating effects of tea, and many of these combinations are sold in stores. If you’d like to reap the benefits of green tea without letting its caffeine content wreak havoc on your doshic balance, try these green tea varieties that either counter the rajasic influence of caffeine or have other Ayurvedic or health benefits:

**Jasmine Green Tea:** Studies indicate that the scent of jasmine has a sedating effect on the nervous system, countering some of the stimulation of caffeine, so be sure to sniff while you sip.

**Moroccan Mint Green Tea:** The spearmint in these tea blends soothes digestive issues and nausea, especially pertinent to Vata and Pitta types. Spearmint is also a member of the bitter herb family, and bitter tastes are balancing for Kapha types. Mint can also mitigate headaches, a common side effect of caffeine consumption.

**Bancha Tea:** Although it lacks the prestige of its brother tea gyokuro, bancha is cheaper and has more catechins, important antioxidants. It’s highly astringent, great for Kaphas, and contains relatively low caffeine levels.

**Ginger Green Tea:** Ginger bolsters the immune system and reduces inflammation, which can be caused by elevated stress hormones (a side effect of caffeine consumption).

**Cinnamon Green Tea:** Cinnamon is another addition that fights inflammation, and its natural sweetness is thought to ground airy Vatas and quick-moving Pittas, who are most at risk of being carried away by a caffeine high.
**Genmaicha Tea:** This green tea contains roasted brown rice kernels, a sattvic food that leaves you serene and energized. The warm, nutty flavor mellows Vata and Pitta types.

**Matcha Tea:** This popular powdered green tea contains concentrated levels of L-thianine, known to calm anxiety, and it’s full of chlorophyll, which has **detoxifying** properties.

**Kukicha Tea:** This blend is naturally low in caffeine and high in minerals like calcium because it utilizes the whole *Camellia sinensis* plant, including stems and twigs.

For all dosha types, caffeine increases the levels of stress hormones in the body, so keep an eye on how you’re feeling after your morning cup. The best time to get your green tea fix is between 6 and 10 a.m., the first of two periods during the day when Kapha energy is at its peak. Steep your tea for less than the directed time to lower the caffeine content.

* Amanda Penn
An Ayurvedic Wake-Up Call From Almonds

Almonds help the nervous system deal with stress, improve the overall look of skin, and so much more.

When I was at yoga school in India I encountered many other students who were also on an Ayurvedic path. It was actually my first interface with Ayurveda in action. I remember seeing one student in particular who sat with a bowl full of soaked almonds in the morning, peeling the skins, adding them to the yogic diet we were already being fed. My interest was immediately piqued. I was interested in what he was doing, as he obviously chose almonds over any other food to bring to our silent morning meals.

Ayurveda has known for thousands of years the benefits of consuming almonds for not only health, but intellectual soundness. Protecting the nerves of the body is a job fulfilled by the myelin sheath, made up of fats such as those found in almonds. By consuming almonds on a regular basis, the nervous system is guaranteed optimal performance—the result of which is a calm, stress-free disposition, critical for the aspiring yogi.

Since one’s yoga practice is deepened by a healthy nervous system (especially the vagus nerve, which correlates to the kundalini energy and the awakening human), Ayurveda chimes in as to the ways in which to keep the nervous system healthy and well insulated. Almonds play a large important role in doing just this.

Soaking almonds overnight changes the acidity found in the nut to a more alkaline disposition. By peeling the skins in the morning and consuming around nine nuts per person, the body receives a boost of not only proteins, which are easily digestible and gentle on the stomach, but also a fatty, rich component is added to the system so as to better be able to take on the stresses of the day.

The brain is dominant in its need for the fatty myelin sheath that almonds so gracefully support. By lending raw materials to one of our most vital organs, the intellect is amply blessed to perform its most dutiful task of drawing in information and dissecting it as per our need to communicate, discern choices, and make wise decisions for life and the future.

The skin is also thankful for the addition of almonds into the diet as well as the external application of the oils. Smooth, supple skin is one of the benefits of utilizing the richness of almonds and the fats they so graciously offer. Along the same silky wavelength, almonds contribute to feeling sexier as they are an aphrodisiac in their effect on the body. The supple goodness of almonds helps the body to stay lubricated and excited about both inner connections—such as those found in the brain—as well as the outer connections we make with others, especially in the bedroom.

One of the blessed gifts of almonds, to men, is the buildup of Ojas in the body, which is the sexual energy of the body. By consuming almonds regularly men may find themselves more drawn to connect intimately and can also find their sexual juices replenished quicker if already sexually active (especially with a thread of saffron in the mix).
If seeking to become more fertile, almonds are definitely recommended for both men and women as they contribute to reproductive health more than any other nut. Post-partum strength and vigor is also a side effect of consuming soaked, peeled almonds. Along these same lines, breast milk is enhanced and fortified and the body's ability to recover from the stress and strain of childbirth is multiplied.

After I gave birth to my oldest boy I consumed copious amounts of almond meal in a mixture containing cardamom, dates, pistachios, and ghee. It was absolutely delicious and gave me a great deal of strength and endurance that was very much welcomed after a long, intense labor.

If you want to not only feel more intelligent, but look younger too, nothing supports your quest more than consuming Ayurvedically-sound almonds regularly. Almond oils not only protect and feed the brain, but keep your skin smooth and wrinkle-free, defying the rules of gravity and holding true to the natural youthful state of a body who is following the laws of nature and the science of health—as found in Ayurveda.

Almonds are one of the best sources of Vitamin E you can find in any food, and so it is that almonds help to heal wounds as well as keeping the skin healthy and strong.

For those who are lactose intolerant, almond milk is an excellent and delicious replacement and it is so very easy to make. I love adding spices like cardamom, cinnamon, or vanilla to my homemade soaked almond milk and always find my body in a state of gratitude after consuming such a nourishing beverage (which is also completely enjoyable).

Out of all the nuts, almonds are the best for intellectual health as well as physical well-being. Long praised by yogis of old who understood the need to choose foods wisely in order to open easily to spiritual development and insight, almonds have been revered for centuries as a gift from the divine to nourish the nervous system (and beyond) for total health and peace of mind.

Stasia Bliss
For the Love of Ghee

*Ghee—it’s better than butter and the most sattvic food you can eat.*

If you have never reaped the delicious, deeply nutritious benefits of ghee (also known as clarified butter), you haven't fully lived—and you haven't fully yogified. For once you taste, feel, know the incredible service ghee can do for you and your body, mind, and spirit, you will fall in everlasting love. Here's everything you ever wanted to know about ghee, just for the health of it.

Created by pure alchemy, ghee is transformed butter, made by heating butter up to remove the milk proteins and other impurities. When milk proteins and the other “unfriendlies” in butter are separated out, the result is that lactose- and casein-intolerant people are free to enjoy. It becomes the most sattvic food you can eat. You could basically call it *Ascended Butter.*

**How does this work?**

Regular, grass-fed, organic, unsalted butter is placed on medium heat for several hours (preferably in a non-leaching pan—to preserve flavors). During this process the milk fats eventually rise to the top of the butter as a foamy substance, and then fall to the bottom. After the process is complete, the ghee is strained through a cheesecloth and stored in a container safe from air and sunlight—revealing the golden, awesomely translucent liquid of life.

**Why is this awesome?**

Much like the *alchemy of relationship* (where the lower, base attitudes and expressions of two people combine in the melting pot of divine union in order to transform into two more conscious, loving expressions of themselves), butter, in its normal, basic, straight-from-the-cow state is placed in a safe container over a heating element and allowed the time to break down its less than human-friendly traits and find the true gold within. For this end it is often referred to as “liquid gold” as the clarification process brings forward incredible properties, once hidden in the basic butter substance.

**Why choose ghee?**

In India, the cow is revered as sacred, holy, and not to be harmed or killed. It is thought to be a physical manifestation of the Divine Mother who provides all substance and nurturing for her people. The cow is decorated, celebrated and all provisions are brought forth from her—for all people to use: dung for firewood; and milk for the raw milk itself, for curd, yogurt, and
ghee. The latter three are all put through a process in order to bring forth the beneficial qualities of the raw milk itself, ghee being the most prized.

**Digestive Health Is Everything**

Perhaps you have heard it said, if your gut is healthy, your whole body will thrive. It is true. If the digestive system struggles, all the other systems in the body will also falter. Ghee is like medicine for the gut; it provides a very crucial element for digestive support—butyric acid.

In a normal, healthy person, the beneficial bacteria living in the intestines take fiber and create butyric acid, which is essential for good digestion, adequate uptake of nutrients, and a strong immune system. Butyric acid helps the body make killer T cells and it also protects against leaky gut, Crohn’s, ulcerative colitis, and other inflammations of the bowels. In other words, people suffering from the aforementioned dis-eases are lacking in butyric acid.

Ghee is full of butyric acid and has long been used in Ayurvedic medicine to treat inflammation of the intestinal tract as well as other stomach upsets. Overall, the medicinal properties of ghee on the gut alone are worth the investment—of either time or money—to bring ghee into one’s daily ritual.

**Nutritional Components & Weight Loss**

Not only does ghee assist the digestive tract in maintaining health or in healing distress, it is also chock full of nutrition that anyone could use to fortify the physical body and remove the causes of stress. Vitamin A and vitamin E are both rich in ghee, and since they are oil soluble, ghee is the perfect carrier for such nutrients to be readily accessed by the body.

Medium-chain fatty acids are high in ghee, which help the body produce energy and when found in high supply in the body, turn the metabolism toward other less-beneficial fats and break them down, helping you lose weight (if that is your desire).

Vitamin K2 is also found in ghee in rich supply, helping protect bone health and allowing calcium to be properly absorbed by the body. Ghee is also a great source of an omega 6 fatty acid known as CLA (conjugated linoleic acid), an antioxidant which not only guards against cancers and viral infections but helps to burn fat and boost the immune system to boot.

**Ghee for Emotional Health**

Every time an emotion is felt in the body, a corresponding hormone is released into the bloodstream. Stressful emotions produce adrenaline, cortisol, and norepinephrine. Feelings of love produce oxytocin and vasopressin, and with the experience of bliss and ecstasy the hormone anandamide is created. Hormones, when not properly dealt with in the body, are stored in the fat cells.

Ghee is the perfect food for emotional health as it encourages these stray hormones to take a ride out of the body without unwanted storage. Ghee takes the place of “bad fats” and acts as
a cleansing agent to the cells of the body as hormones are attracted to the fat in ghee and allowed to leave the body without harm.

**Ghee as the Perfect Sattvic Food**

*Sattvic* is from the Sanskrit word *Sattva* which translates as “pure, essence, vital, energy, clean, conscious, strong, true, honest, wise, rudiment of life.” *Sattva* is one of the three *gunas* (qualities or tendencies) of Ayurveda and yogic philosophy, the others being *rajas* (passionate, agitated, emotional, stimulant, change) and *tamas* (stagnant, weak, spoiled, latent, slow, dark, stale, unripe). [These three gunas are related to the *dosha body types* in Ayurvedic medicine where Vata is closest to sattvic, Pitta to rajas, and Kapha to tamas, though they do not translate exactly.]

Ghee is said to be one of the most *sattvic* foods as its nature is pure, its essence accessible, and the energy derived from the consumption of ghee is clean, strong, and true. A person who takes the time to make their own ghee is also put through a transformative process where their consciousness is refined and in the consumption of it, a wisdom and connection with one’s authentic nature is revealed.

**From Butter to Ghee—in Greatness**

Where butter contains the potential to become ghee, as it births from the Mother and has all the inner elements present, only through the process of refinement do the actual, purified properties reveal themselves. Ghee is a spiritual metaphor for personal transformation as well as a means to assist one in obtaining a more enlightened state—consisting of a clearer mind, balanced emotions and a stronger body. Ghee is a spiritual tool which elicits mental, emotional, and physical benefits for awesome health today and deeper connection with Source now.

Ghee not only offers a myriad of incredible benefits, it is also extremely delicious and enhances the flavor of any food it is combined with. With a high smoke point of around 500 degrees Fahrenheit, ghee is an oil every kitchen should sport and every tongue ought to take the chance to delight in and take flight in!

For the love of ghee, pick up a few sticks of unsalted, grass-fed butter today and get to clarifying and receive everything you always wanted to experience in health, peace of mind and great taste from the love of ghee.

*Stasia Bliss*
Seven Amazing Ayurveda Uses For Raisins

Raisins may seem like a common, unexciting food—but they have a ton of benefits in Ayurveda.

Vitis vinifera Linn, otherwise known as raisins, have been a common ingredient used in many Ayurveda dishes over the years. Many people specializing in Ayurveda encourage the mixing of healing foods, such as raisins, in with everyday foods.

1. Balancing Pitta and Vatta

Need to balance your Pitta or Vata doshas? Eat a few raisins! The sweetness or madhura in raisins is great for helping the apana vata. This sub-dosha involves areas of the kidneys, colon, rectum, and bladder. Raisins are known to be helpful and nurturing to these particular areas of the body. They also assist and heal the Pitta dosha, as well as many Pitta sub-doshas by protecting the skin from sun damage, aiding the bhrajaka pitta sub-dosha. Raisins strengthen the eyes (alochaka pitta), help sharpen the mind (sadhaka pitta), and improve or ease digestion (pachaka pitta).

2. Lubricating Respiratory System

In Ayurveda practice, raisins have often been used for lubricating stiff areas of the body. The part of the body that raisins provide the most lubrication for is the respiratory system. Raisins have often been used as an Ayurvedic method for soothing and helping people who have poor lungs.

3. Brain Food

Need a boost for your brain? Raisins contain a high source of the vital trace-mineral Boron. This mineral improves functions of the brain such as memory, concentration, focus, and coordination.

4. Supporting Fertility

In Ayurveda, bringhana foods are foods that support women who want to increase their fertility. Among these foods, raisins are often recommended to increase fertility. Want to know an interesting fact? They are mentioned as being used for fertility power in biblical literature as well.
5. Supporting Bowel Health

Raisins have often been used as a natural laxative to relieve constipation and encourage bowel movements. Since they are dried fruit, they contain a lot of fiber, which helps support a healthy bowel movement. Because raisins maintain a healthy balance between beneficial and bad bacteria in the intestine, they help keep the intestinal area healthy and running regularly. They also help prevent over-loosening of stools by absorbing liquid in the intestinal tract.

6. Increasing Energy

If you’re looking for a quick source of energy to help end sudden fatigue, look no further. Due to their high amounts of carbohydrates, raisins are recommended as a healthy source of instant energy. They are known as an excellent source of vitamins and minerals such as vitamin B, calcium, potassium, and iron as well. There’s a reason raisins are in trail mix!

7. Lowering Blood Pressure

Did you know that 1 cup of raisins has about 1,236 mg of potassium? That’s awesome! Why? Because potassium causes the kidneys to excrete excess sodium in the body. Keeping your sodium levels low means helping to decrease high blood pressure.

Raisins are certainly a power food, but they should be eaten in moderation like most sweet foods because of their high glycemic index. It is also recommended to eat cinnamon with your raisins—not just because it tastes good, but because it helps to lower the glycemic index. Another thing you should know is that because raisins are so sweet and weighty, they have been known to disrupt the Kapha dosha. This is another good reason to not go overboard with consumption. You should also obtain raisins that do not have any added sugar and are not presoaked in sulfur.

For those of you who would like to include more raisins in your diet, try this Ayurveda Rice Pudding recipe. It’s delicious and raisins go perfectly with it! It’s also fun to mix them in oatmeal, trail mix, and even salads.

Note: Raisins are highly toxic to dogs, so don’t share these goodies with your furry friends.

Jaima Mavity
The Boosting Benefits of Buttermilk

Buttermilk is kind of like thinner yogurt—make your own for an extra healthful treat.

Let’s begin with what buttermilk actually is. While many confuse it with a yogurt-and-water whip (lassi), buttermilk is actually the liquid left after you churn butter from cream. While it’s still a concept the world is slowly coming around to, traditional buttermilk is very common in Indian and Asian households and equally well-known amongst the dairy farmers of the world.

**Can buttermilk be made at home?**

Absolutely—in fact the best and the healthiest buttermilk is that which you make at home. You can either gather the cream off the top of your (full-fat) milk container or choose to buy a carton of full-fat cream from your local dairy farmer’s shelf. Empty out the cream into a large bowl and leave it at room temperature for 3-4 hours. Once the cream has turned just slightly odorous, use a manual butter churner or even a low-speed whisk to start churning out the butter. Don’t lose patience. Depending on the quality and temperature of the cream, it may take 5-10 minutes for the butter globules to start gathering. If the cream feels too cold, add a dash of hot water to it and if it feels too warm, add in some cold water; this will speed up the process.

Once the butter globules start forming, scoop them out with a sieve, keeping the liquid behind. Whip and scoop till all the butter is out. The pale liquid that you are now left with is buttermilk, in all its natural goodness. By whisking the cream, you shake loose its natural emulsification, thus letting the fat-rich butter come to the top while the heavy proteins are left in the liquid. Most of the fat is out, so buttermilk is naturally low-fat, but it’s a high-protein liquid that’s good for you in more ways than one.

**Can I drink buttermilk?**

Of course, buttermilk actually tastes like thinned down yogurt so you can drink it the way you like: just as is, sweetened, flavored, or even as a salty, spicy drink. In India, spiced buttermilk (chaas) is served as a meal accompaniment to aid digestion. Flavored with cumin, asafetida, ginger, and curry leaves, chaas is particularly useful when indulging in heavy, oily meals as it creates an optimal acid-base environment in the stomach.
Health Benefits of Buttermilk

Why is buttermilk so healthy? Basically, milk is also a relatively healthy drink (though the jury is still out on this). That said, you get the full benefits from milk only when it’s full-fat. Unfortunately, dairy fat is saturated and considered unhealthy. The good thing about buttermilk is that it retains all the protein, mineral, and vitamin benefits of full-fat milk, but leaves the fat out, thus giving you a healthier glass than milk.

**Good for the lactose-intolerant**: Since all the fat and sugars are out of buttermilk, it’s easily digested and tolerated by even the lactose-intolerant.

**High in proteins**: Proteins are brain food as well as the building blocks of muscles. For anyone looking to increase their mental acuity or increase their muscle mass, buttermilk can be an excellent substitute for that daily glass of milk.

**Good in mineral and vitamin content**: High in vitamin B complex with riboflavin in particular, buttermilk also gives you all the calcium and potassium benefits of milk, along with trace amounts of phosphorus.

**Considered a digestive aid in Ayurveda**: If you are prone to acidity and have an overall sensitive digestive system then buttermilk can be a helpful digestive aid. It washes down the spices, soothes an irritated stomach lining, and helps with optimal food absorption. Scientifically speaking, buttermilk is a low-pH food and so becomes a digestive aid in balancing the stomach acid content.

**Combats cholesterol and high blood pressure**: The proteins in buttermilk are antioxidant in nature in that they heal the body from the inside out and help repel the harm that free radicals cause. Thus, buttermilk helps in lowering cholesterol and aiding in proper blood flow as well as providing general longevity.

Buttermilk in Cooking

Buttermilk is an excellent softening, leavening and tenderizing agent. Plus, its low-fat and high-protein content make it a great substitute for milk and yogurt. Here are some ways you can use it in cooking.

**Meat marinade**: Buttermilk tenderizes meat and lets the flavors of other condiments and spices soak in, thus making it an excellent marinade and batter ingredient.

**Perk up pancakes and waffles**: You can substitute the milk needed to make pancake batter with buttermilk to make them fluffier.

**Smoothies and slushies**: We all use milk and yogurt to make summer fresh smoothies and creamy slushies or slurpees—buttermilk works as a wonderful substitute for yogurt, and is a tad healthier.

**Soften cakes, cookies, and other baked goods**: Adding buttermilk to your cake or cookie batter ensures that you will end up baking melt-in-the-mouth treats due to its leavening properties.
Creamy curries and gravies: You can add buttermilk to gravies or curries to add some creamy, tangy goodness. Plus, it also works as an excellent chili pepper douser—if your curry is too hot, add in some buttermilk. It will reduce the spicy burn.

Softer breads: The benefits that your cakes get will carry over to your bread too—the leavening agents of buttermilk help you make softer, fluffier breads, especially when making whole-wheat or multi-grain ones.

Creamed or mashed vegetables: Be it mashed potatoes or creamed spinach, you can use buttermilk in both—and more. Even creamy vegetables can be churned out by using buttermilk as a substitute to low-fat milk.

Custard and creamy desserts: Finally, custards, cobblers, icings, pastry creams, and mousse can all benefit from a healthy dash of buttermilk. If the recipe calls for milk, reach for buttermilk instead.

Commercial Buttermilk vs. the Real Thing

Commercial buttermilk is more often a fake, dressed-up version of the real thing (unless you see words like natural, organic, or hand-churned on the package). Mostly used in bakeries and large-scale kitchens, commercial buttermilk is often made from low-grade skim milk, which in turn is a reject from cheese and butter companies. To make it more like buttermilk, various souring and thickening agents are added to it to make it closer in smell, feel, and taste to its original inspiration. The problem with this kind of industrial buttermilk is that it has nothing to offer in terms of health benefits. If you do buy buttermilk off the shelf, make sure it’s from a reliable, organic farm source for you to get the real taste as well as all its health benefits.

Sources:
http://www.chowhound.com/pictures/22-recipes-to-use-up-leftover-buttermilk/fried-calamari
The Beauty of Rosewater

Rosewater makes you more beautiful, inside and out, balancing all doshas and inspiring youthfulness.

In Ayurveda, the Science of Life, rosewater is essential and used as both a medicine and a beauty treatment to balance the doshas and maintain youth. The beauty of the rose has long been appreciated and utilized as a symbol of love and healing and rosewater is a gorgeous method by which to reap the benefits of the glorious rose, year-round.

Traveling in India I was delighted to find the taste of rose in many Indian sweets, along with milk and pistachios. I had always loved the rose, but had never considered eating it. Later I came upon a rose jam which was literal icing on the cake of my love affair with roses, for even the taste of this delightful flower helps to calm anger, balance the heart, and bring connectivity to both joy and unconditional love within the heart and between people.

Rosewater splashed on the face is a quick, thorough way to cleanse oneself of negativity and create a field of healing and positive intent. It is also perfect for balancing the pH of the skin and is a fantastic remedy during the summer heat, or any “hot” moment—physically or emotionally—to really cool things down and create the vibration of harmony.

In Ayurveda, roses are known to balance an over Pitta-condition, while at the same time helping to maintain the inner fires—such as digestive fires—known as agni. The buta agni, or “Spiritual Fires” are also maintained with a regular dose of rosewater or rose in any form. Just as love and passion in relationships are easily kept afire by the giving of roses, so too does the use of the essence of rose assist the body in maintaining inner fires as well as a balance with all the other elements.

While I was pregnant with my first child I used to apply a combination of rose oil and frankincense oil in an almond oil base, regularly, to my skin in order to prevent stretch marks and keep my whole field vibrationally high and “charged.” I have no doubt this regular practice kept me in good spirits and maintained incredible elasticity in my skin. Beyond any “surface” benefits of rose, it is also known to help activate any latent qualities hiding in dormant DNA as well as healing DNA that has been negatively affected.

Rose petals in the bath is a picture of relaxation and delight, but did you know that literally bathing with rosewater or rose petals in your tub will raise your vibration, balance your doshas and deliver you into a spiritually strong state capable of accessing deeper wisdom, abundance, and rejuvenation? It’s true. Cleopatra used to bathe in rose petals to “stay beautiful” and strong. There is nothing like a rose-laden bed for health and beauty.

Each of the three main Ayurvedic doshas (Vata, Kapha, Pitta) also have sub-doshas which are responsible for various specific functions of the body. A sub-dosha of Pitta, termed the sadhaka Pitta, is responsible for the balance of emotions and how they affect the heart. Rosewater, in particular, helps to balance this sub-dosha and soothe the body in the way it responds emotionally to situations, including those deeply concerning the heart.
As one of the highest frequency oils on the planet (320 hz), rose oil is a potent “game-changer” when you are feeling down or immune-compromised. Since the normal body vibrates around 60 hz, incorporating rose oil into your reality can drastically change the way you feel and act. Rosewater simply sprayed on the face, body, or in food can help to bring calm and relief where once there was anxiety. (Try making your own rosewater to use.)

Rose made into a poultice with other herbs like sandalwood has been used to soothe burns. Placed into a mortar, the petals of roses along with some raw honey and saffron make an incredible face mask. So amazing are the benefits of rose for the skin, enhancing youth, and lending a glow, that only rose can inspire.

There are so many uses and ways to enjoy the incredible, potent, healing power of rose and rosewater, one could write an entire book on the subject. If you love roses, but have never expanded your experience with them beyond the long stem or vase, now is the time to explore and discover all that roses have to offer. From the dining table to the bath, both inside and out, rosewater and rose oil are your new best friends for spiritual evolution, youth and wellness on every level. Time to rose-up!

Stasia Bliss
Hippocrates famously said “Let food be thy medicine,” and Ayurveda has long held similar beliefs. Our busy lives, the number of diets, and conflicting messages about what we should eat can be overwhelming. Ayurveda offers us a holistic, intuitive, easy approach to eating. Since it’s been in use for at least 5,000 years, we can rest assured that it’s safe and effective. There are a whole host of recipes in Ayurvedic treatment that help balance the doshas, ease seasonal transitions, and foster health in everyone. Some of the ingredients might be new to you, but it’s worth seeking out some new products at a health or natural foods store or international market. Consider it a culinary adventure—one that leaves you healthier, to boot!
Kitchari: A Naturally Cleansing & Balancing Dish

Give your body a chance to detox: kitchari is a staple Indian dish that’s good for all three doshas.

Kitchari is a fundamental dish in Ayurvedic cooking—and there are as many different recipes as there are cooks. No matter the specific ingredients (which are pretty basic, by the way!), kitchari is designed to be a cleansing and balancing recipe that gives your digestive system a chance to reset and **rid itself of toxins** while comforting all three doshas. It’s the perfect transition meal—eat it in fall or spring for the most potent impact.

Since there are so many different approaches to kitchari (and spellings, too—you’ll often see khichadi), we’ve included two different cooks’ own special recipes, as well as their personal perspectives on what makes this dish so powerful.

Kitchari: A Detoxing & Rebalancing Stew For All Three Doshas

In Ayurvedic philosophy, fall and spring are considered ideal times to **cleanse the body** and prepare for the coming season. During these transitions, we’re often left feeling heavy or out of balance. If you’ve felt this way, adding kitchari to your diet, or doing a kitchari cleanse, may be very beneficial. Kitchari is ideal for cleansing and balancing each of the **three doshas**—Vata, Pitta, and Kapha—which are the three constitutions in Ayurveda that define our behavior, as well as our emotional and physical health. It is believed that when our doshas are in balance we are able to operate at our highest potential.

**What is Kitchari?**

Kitchari is a stew that is fundamental to Ayurvedic cooking. It is light, easy to digest, high in protein, and considered a very sattvic food, which means fresh, juicy, light, nourishing, and tasty. Sattvic foods provide necessary energy while also helping the consumer to re-gain balance. Although kitchari is made of a few very basic key ingredients, there is still plenty of flavor from several key spices and seeds that play an important role in detoxing the body. Kitchari is also tri-doshic, meaning it’s balancing for all three doshas; however, **identifying your constitution** before making this dish is important to help tailor the recipe to your dosha.

**The Healing Power of Kitchari**

Although kitchari is extremely basic in ingredients, it also provides amazing healing benefits, including aiding in digestive stress, balancing **metabolism**, cleansing the blood and **liver**, assisting in **healthy weight loss**, and helping the body’s tissues to detox what they don’t
need while absorbing beneficial nutrients. Consuming kitchari while cleansing maximizes the body’s ability to eliminate toxins without denying your body the nutrients it needs.

There are many recipe variations out there, from simple (just a few ingredients), to extremely hearty and complex. I’m a big fan of adding extra veggies to make the dish more filling, while also adding a variety of flavors and textures. Some of the seeds can be quite difficult to find in a normal grocery store, so you may want to order them online or try a specialty health store or international market.

**INGREDIENTS**

- 1/2 cup of dry mung dal (also known as split yellow lentils)
- 1 cup high quality organic Indian basmati rice or quinoa
- 2-3 tablespoons ghee (preferable) or coconut oil
- 1 tablespoon black mustard seeds
- 1 tablespoon fennel seeds
- 1 tablespoon mustard seeds
- 1 tablespoon turmeric (I love turmeric, so I went heavy on this one)
- 1 tablespoon cumin
- 1/2 teaspoon ground coriander
- 1/2 teaspoon fresh cracked pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- 2-inch piece of fresh ginger root, minced (cut it up smaller than you think you need to)
- 4-6 cups water (more water will make it soupier)
- 6-7 cups assorted vegetables (I used yams, cauliflower and cilantro for garnish)
- 1 tablespoon Himalayan pink sea salt (or regular sea salt)
- 1 tablespoon lime

**INSTRUCTIONS**

1. **The day before**: Wash the mung beans and rice (or quinoa) thoroughly, and soak the beans overnight to make them easier to digest. Cook rice the day before as well to give it time to set and cool before adding it to the rest of the ingredients.

2. Add coconut oil or ghee to a large eco-friendly sauté pan and allow it to melt to its liquid form. Add seeds to the oil and sauté until they pop.
3. Next, add the spices (minus the salt), ginger, rice, and beans to the oil. Coat the rice and beans with the spices and seeds, adding everything relatively quickly to avoid burning the spices or overheating the oil.

4. Begin to add water or broth slowly to the pot, stirring as you go. Add any extra vegetables that you have prepared, and stir everything together gently.

5. Allow water to come to a boil and then lower the heat. Cover and cook for another 45 minutes, or until all of your vegetables are soft. At the very end of cooking, add the salt.

6. Allow the mixture to cool slightly, then add cilantro and more coconut oil or ghee as garnish and serve warm. Enjoy!

Keep in mind that Ayurvedic tradition doesn’t promote eating leftovers or re-heating foods, but I broke the rules and ate my kitchari for several days afterwards, and it kept well! Avoid heating in the microwave and re-season as needed.

Celsea Jenkins

**Kitchari: An Alternative to an Elimination Diet**

If you are on the road to figuring out how to feel your healthiest, it is likely you’ll want to embark on an elimination diet to understand which foods make you feel less than your best. And no doubt about it, an elimination diet can help you figure out if dairy is what causes you to bloat, or if nuts are what give you that hollow feeling in your stomach, or if it’s **wheat giving you chronic headaches**. Sometimes the weeks put into eliminating one food group from your life after another gives you a better understanding than simple blood tests since those tests can give false results but you know exactly how you feel when you eat something. The problem is we don’t always have weeks to focus on eliminating foods, so luckily there is another way to help garner clues into your own personal body’s yays and nays, and it happens to be how I started to put together my own puzzle of food intolerances. The alternative I’m referring to can be summed up in one word...kitchari. Well, actually two words: kitchari cleanse.

Kitchari is an Ayurvedic dish that is made up of mung dahl and **rice**, mixed with certain spices prepared in **ghee**. It is my understanding that this is a common home meal in India and everyone has their own way of making it, so there are plenty of recipes to be found online, but I like making it the way my master herbal teacher taught us in class, which is a very simple variation that I’ll share below. To understand how healing kitchari truly is, one must know a bit about Ayurveda, which is the ancient Indian healing system that is still in practice today. Ayurveda recognizes **three doshas** (Vata, Pitta, and Kapha) which are part of every single person in different proportions. Usually people do have one primary dosha which is the one that can most easily become aggravated, though any dosha could be out of balance in any body. Ayurveda seeks to keep all aspects balanced, so if a person is primarily Vata and their Vata is aggravated, causing problems such as **anxiety** or constipation, then Ayurvedic method would include **balancing out Vata** in that person. The same is true for the other doshas. In other words, **knowing your dosha** make-up helps you understand how to counter the primary’s tendency to spin out of control. This is something that sometimes
causes a bit of confusion as some people get the idea that if they are primarily Pitta, for example, then they should enhance their Pitta qualities. The opposite is true. If one is primarily Pitta, one should focus on countering those qualities, not fanning those flames. (And Pittas can indeed be fiery!) One way to work on this is through eating foods that balance out the aggravated dosha. Kitchari is known as tri-doshic because it is actually balancing to all three doshas and that is what makes it so healing.

**Using Kitchari as a Cleanse**

It can be used as a cleanse by eating nothing but kitchari for 3 days or 6 days, or whatever amount of time you choose, though my herbal teacher suggested 6 days as best. What that means is eating three meals of kitchari per day for six days without restricting the amount of the meals, but not stuffing oneself either. This allows the digestive system to heal because it is not taking in aggravating foods, plus the food it is taking in is health-enhancing to the digestive system. This is how I figured out my biggest barrier to feeling my best was gluten. After doing a kitchari cleanse which had me feeling fantastic—no bloating, no headaches, less stress and anxiety—I felt like I could even see better and definitely think better. Then once I started eating wheat again, all those symptoms came right back. As much as I didn’t want to admit it, it was more than obvious what my biggest bugger was, and it only took six days of cleansing to figure it out. Well, seven I guess, since I didn’t know until after the cleanse was over and started to eat my regular foods again. Still, that beats the weeks of eliminating one food at a time, but of course, it is indeed a matter of personal tastes. If nothing else, kitchari is a great dish to have in the fall because it is warm, comforting, and somehow peace-inducing. As I said earlier, there are plenty of recipes online, but the simplest one I’ve found is the one my herbal master gave out and it’s the one I still use today, albeit with one little spicy addition and a change in the rice used. I use brown basmati rice instead of white basmati rice, and I added ginger to the recipe because it suits my Vata dosha. If you know your dosha tendencies, then use ginger accordingly, but if you do not, then omit the ginger just to be on the safe side. Using a kitchari cleanse makes it that easy to modify to your own personal tastes.

**INGREDIENTS**

- 1 cup mung beans, soaked overnight in water
- 1 cup brown basmati rice (or white basmati rice)
- 1 tablespoon ghee
- 1 tablespoon each turmeric, cumin, coriander, and ginger
- 4 cups water

**INSTRUCTIONS**
1. After soaking the mung beans overnight (or at least 6 hours), cook them in 4 cups of water until they are thoroughly soft, about half an hour.

2. Cook rice according to its instructions, depending on white or brown, then mix together with beans.

3. Warm the ghee in a sauce or sauté pan and add the spices, cooking until fragrant, about 2 minutes or so.

4. Mix the spices and ghee with the rice and beans. Eat often and be well.

Kristen Moore

We've got another kitchari recipe on our site—check it out here!
Ayurvedic Cool Down: Curd Rice

To give your stomach a chance to reset, try this comforting, cooling dish.

The next time your stomach’s a little under the weather, or you’ve just been dining on too many calories and need a filling meal that gives you respite, you need to assemble just two main ingredients—curd and rice—and make a simple yet tasty dish (curd rice)! Oh, and curd is just another name for yogurt!

The Benefits of Curd Rice

Before we give you the recipe, here are the whys of eating curd rice.

**It’s great for digestion:** Easy to digest, the probiotics present in curd ease bloating and indigestion as the healthy bacteria make gut flora healthy thereby easing any indigestion or abdominal pain.

**It cools the body, inside out:** According to Ayurveda, curd is like a natural fire extinguisher and cools the Pitta or the heat in the body. The next time you’ve overheated your system with rich food and spices, curd rice is the way to go.

**It’s a good weight loss aid:** Curd rice is low on calories, especially when you compare it to the same amount of pilaf, risottos, or even fried rice. It fills the stomach with the good stuff and becomes a great companion in case you are on the road to losing that stubborn belly fat.

**It can help ease the stress:** The healthier you eat, the more you equip your brain and body to deal with stress—and since curd contains probiotics, antioxidants, and healthy dairy fat—curd rice can help ease some of that virulent stress as well.

**It increases your immunity:** Since this is one easily-digested meal, it gives your body the energy to recover during an illness, plus the antioxidants in curd also help boost your immunity levels.

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**Curd Rice**

**INGREDIENTS**

- 2 cups pre-cooked, slightly overdone rice, drained

For the curd mixture:

- 2 cups curd/yogurt
- 1 cucumber, grated
• 2 green chilies, chopped (use one to lessen the heat or more to add some spice)
• 2 tablespoons chopped cilantro/coriander (or parsley)
• Salt, to taste

For the tadka:
• 2 tablespoons mustard oil
• 1 teaspoon split Bengal gram
• 10-12 curry leaves
• 1/2 teaspoon mustard seeds
• pinch of asafetida
• 1-inch piece of ginger, peeled and grated

**Instructions**

1. Beat the curd/yogurt till smooth and fold in the cucumber, green chilies, cilantro/coriander, and salt.
2. Add the rice to the curd mixture.
3. Heat the mustard oil till it smokes. Let it cool.
4. Once cool, switch on the heat again but keep it on low. Add the split Bengal gram, curry leaves, mustard seeds, asafetida, and ginger till the spluttering stops. Add this tadka to the rice and curd mixture—stir once and dig in! (Add some black pepper or oregano if you like.)

*Rima J. Pundir*
Rice Pudding: For Emotional and Physical Support

This Ayurvedic recipe is a big bowl of comfort—for your body and your soul.

Have you ever had an amazing stir fry or rice-dominant dinner and then didn’t know what to do with the leftover rice? Here’s how to make an amazing and soothing rice pudding recipe, Ayurvedic style, for breakfast out of last night’s dinner. This recipe will not only support your physical body and satisfy your hunger, but will boost you emotionally as well. You’ll never waste rice again!

But first, read about some of the amazing health benefits you get from the ingredients in this delicious recipe.

**Benefits of Ayurvedic Rice Pudding**

**Cardamom:** Cardamom is a most uplifting digestive. It soothes the tummy, assists in removing unwanted gases and toxins in the bowels, freshens the breath and helps remove pathogens from the body. It is also a fantastic anti-acidic way to start the day. Some say cardamom helps you with self-control and to regain a sense of objectivity and perspective when you’ve lost it. Basically, it helps you take responsibility for yourself and your life choices. What an herb!

**Cinnamon:** Cinnamon keeps the blood sugar balanced and is important for pancreas health. It actually forces muscle cells to convert sugar from the bloodstream into energy. This amazing herb, which was once as valuable as gold, has anti-inflammatory, anti-fungal, anti-cancer and anti-bacterial properties. It can also regulate blood pressure, which is helpful for irregular or painful menstruation as well as those struggling with high or low blood pressure. Cinnamon just regulates—giving you the pressure and flow your body needs. And with this regulatory property comes sexual harmony as well, for cinnamon supports the reproductive organs as well as the sexual relationship between people and allows for vulnerability, clarity, and confidence in sexual and intimate love.

**Cloves:** Cloves are great for digestion as well as pain relief. The oils are anti-inflammatory and emotionally help you increase stamina and feel generally more empowered about your life. I’ve also read that cloves are great for setting up healthy boundaries—and who couldn’t use a bit more of that? I put together a “boundary support” body/room spray made up of clove and black pepper essential oils and it is incredibly empowering. Getting a little clove into your system in the morning is like a pow-wow with your energy field, letting it know that
you are not open for psychic attack or boundary violations that day! *(Beware of cloves’ potent oils and avoid using clove oil directly on your skin.)*

**Black Peppercorns:** As I mentioned, along with clove, black peppercorns are like psychic protection. They are also not about the illusion or fake-dynamics at all. The energy of black pepper says “be yourself” and “get real,” which is fantastic, because physically, peppercorns are a no-nonsense kind of spice. They are one of those spices that tickle the taste buds and let your stomach know that food is on the way, stimulating the release of hydrochloric acid in the stomach. The beautiful skin of black peppercorns assists the body in the release of fat cells and the carminative properties of this spice move gas and bloating along with vigor.

Apparently, black peppercorns used to be **traded as currency** and as an offering to Divinity in ancient Greece as well as to pay taxes to the tax collector. Peppercorns would determine the wealth of a person and were key in ceremonies to honor the sacred. In this vein, starting your morning with black peppercorn-infused breakfast pudding is a way of honoring yourself and the divinity within you, and a way to access centuries of prosperity consciousness from the comfort of your cereal bowl!

**Ginger:** Ginger is the spice of power. According to energy medicine and essential oil doctrine, this ancient root assists one in overcoming victim mentality and activating the inner warrior self. It encourages full presence in one’s life and is a catalyst for change. Physically, ginger aids in digestion and assures balance and the absence of digestive upset. It is also extremely anti-inflammatory and can help one with physical pain (try swapping regular pain medication for increasing increments of ginger, over time). Ginger is also a fantastic immune system aid and wards against **common colds**, the flu, and all manner of infectious diseases, fungal infections, and sinus conditions.

**Almonds, Cashews and Pistachios:** Though **almonds** are most renowned in Ayurvedic medicine as the sattvic nut, both **cashews** and pistachios are often used for **added protein** and for help in balancing the various **doshas**.

In India, I first came into contact with the cashew tree where we ate the fruit and found fresh nuts as the seeds. Cashews contain a high quantity of natural copper, which are great conductors of feminine energy in the body. The copper helps to connect one to the water element and to the aspects of the goddess available for access in each person. Copper also assists in hair growth. Cashews benefit the heart and are high in magnesium and **antioxidants**.

As a natural provider of **vitamin B6**, vitamin E, and **vitamin A**, pistachios are great for your skin, your eyes, and your immune system. These tiny purple and green nuts can make you feel fuller faster and thereby cut down on how much you eat, helping you to maintain balanced weight. By their color signature, pistachios support the heart center and the third-eye in refinement of skills and attunement.

**Raisins:** Always an Ayurvedic favorite, eating **raisins** is like taking medicine without knowing that you are. This tiny, sweet, dried grape is among one of the most prized foods in Ayurvedic medicine and has been known to be an extremely beneficial and nutritious addition to the diet for thousands of years. Raisins, when coupled with spices such as cardamom and cinnamon—like in this Ayurvedic soothing rice pudding—help to lower the glycemic index,
which is extremely important to good health. When added to milks and nut milks, raisins alleviate thirst, and when soaked in water or liquid and made soft, as we do here, they help the bowels to move and stay regular. Only the Kapha dosha should take care when adding raisins to their diet, so as to not increase sluggishness.

**Dates:** A most nourishing food, dates are especially excellent for pregnant and birthing mothers. This sweet fruit is a great balancer of the Vata dosha, the imbalance of which is the cause of any joint pains or inflammation. Eating dates helps the joints, and they are a great source of iron and potassium. Dates are great for breakfast in combination with all the aforementioned spices as they are anti-acidic to the stomach.

**Coconut:** I can't say enough amazing things about coconut and neither can Ayurvedic medicine, where it is revered for its healing and sacred properties. In Asian and Island countries, the coconut symbolizes the head, and is therefore used to show full awareness and consciousness of the Divine, as well as the willingness to give over the mind/ego to a higher power—when cracked.

The water is life-giving and is the only known substance on earth that can replace our blood plasma exactly, if needed. It is full of electrolytes and the flesh is rich in omega fatty acids. Fresh young coconut water can help remove toxins from the body and soothe the digestive system. Coconut shreds from the more mature nut are best consumed with the spices and herbs in this recipe, so as to counteract any of the heavier aspects of the fruit.

As you can see, making soothing, Ayurvedic friendly breakfast pudding out of last night's rice is a fabulous idea to start the day. Plus, it's fast and easy while combining health supportive spices to start your day off right! So, next time you find yourself with leftover rice, get ready to create the most delicious breakfast pudding and never waste again! I've also done this with other grains like barley, quinoa, and millet. Experiment and have a great time brewing up something special for your family today!

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**Rice Pudding**

**INGREDIENTS**

- Pre-cooked brown or white rice (2-3 cups or more)
- Almond, coconut, or other nut milk (3-4 cups or enough to cover rice)
- 2-3 cardamom pods or 1 teaspoon dried/ground cardamom
- 1 cinnamon stick or 1-2 teaspoons dried/ground cinnamon
- 2-3 tablespoons maple syrup
- 3-4 cloves – whole
- 4-5 black peppercorns – whole
- 1-inch fresh ginger, sliced, or 1-2 teaspoons dried/ground ginger
- handful of cashews or pistachios, raw (or other nut)
• handful of raisins or dates or both, chopped
• 1/2 cup coconut shreds, unsweetened (optional)

**INSTRUCTIONS**

1. Place all ingredients in a big pot or crockpot, and then place on simmer.
2. Let cook on low for about an hour to get all the spices infused into the rice.

*Stasia Bliss*

Sources:
*Emotional Healing with Essential Oils* by Daniel Macdonald
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Ayurvedic Tummy Calmer: Ginger Garlic Broth

This warm broth soothes the digestive system, reduces inflammation, and boosts immunity.

Cold? Cough? Stomach a bit upset? Make a ginger garlic broth that you can sip as a soup, or have with rice to detoxify your system and heal yourself with these Ayurvedic ‘heating’ herbs.

The gingerol in ginger and the allicin in garlic are two of the best medicines that your vegetable vendor or kitchen garden can provide. They are digestive and heating and have a whole lot of antibiotic and anti-pyretic properties that can drive off colds, coughs, and even your normal everyday stomach ailments.

Ginger is rich in phenolic compounds that reduce gastro-intestinal irritation, stimulate bile production, and also alleviate nausea. It’s also a pain reliever and can reduce both muscle pain brought on by too vigorous an exercise as well as painful stomach cramps that accompany periods. It’s also an anti-inflammatory and can reduce inflammation of inner tissues as well.

Garlic, on the other hand, can boost the workings of the immune system and its antioxidant powers can aid in providing longevity, too. It reduces cholesterol and lowers blood pressure, is a friend of your heart, and is an athletic performance enhancer too. Best of all, garlic also reduces heavy metal toxicity in the body and is great for bone health.

Now that we’ve done a quick revision of why these two are more medicines than herbs, here’s a recipe that combines the best in them both, be it medicinal or taste, and alleviates plenty—from coughs and fevers, to stomach ailments and headaches...

It’s a recipe that has been passed down from generation to generation in my mom’s family, and the years of its existence haven’t seen it change at all—except the salt and pepper to taste bit!
Ayurvedic Ginger Garlic Broth

**INGREDIENTS**

- 2 teaspoons ghee
- 1/2 teaspoons cumin seeds
- 1-inch piece of ginger, washed, peeled, and grated
- 1 garlic bulb, the cloves peeled, chopped, and crushed
- 1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper (or to taste)
- Pinch of turmeric powder
- 1-1/2 cups water
- 1 teaspoon finely minced cilantro (coriander) leaves
- Salt & pepper to taste

**INSTRUCTIONS**

1. Heat ghee in a pan and add in the cumin seeds.
2. Once they sputter, add in the garlic and ginger and fry on low till slightly pink.
3. Put in salt, pepper, turmeric and cayenne pepper and mix well.
4. Add in the water and give everything a vigorous stir.
5. Let the water come to boil and then simmer on low till the broth is reduced to about one cup.
6. You can strain it if you like, since the goodness of the garlic and ginger are in the liquid already. Garnish with cilantro and serve piping hot as a soup, broth or with a little rice.

*Rima J. Pundir*
The Healing Benefits of Ginger Tea

Simmering a few basic ingredients in water for twenty minutes yields the ultimate tonic.

Ginger tea is the “ultimate medicine” according to Ayurveda. Not only does it warm the body and balance Vata-types, it’s also a healer for your digestion and immune health. And it’s incredibly easy to make, too!

**Digestive Health**

Ginger works on your digestion in several different ways. For one thing, the compound in ginger called “gingerol” is known to be a potent anti-inflammatory and pain reliever. Ginger can completely obliterate menstrual cramps and calm stomach pain. Ginger is also a master at balancing gut bacteria by reducing E. coli in the system. If you suffer from IBS, bloating, or any kind of stomach issues—ginger is the answer.

**Immune Health**

Not only is ginger great for your digestive health, but it will also take your immune health to a whole new level. Ginger promotes healthy sweating. When you eat ginger, your sweat contains a germ-fighting agent called dermicidin which protects the body from infections and viruses, keeping you safe from the flu that gets passed around.

**Ginger Tea**

**INGREDIENTS**

- ginger
- 4 cups water
- honey (optional)

**INSTRUCTIONS**

1. Grab a thumb-sized piece of ginger and slice it thinly (this provides a maximum surface area for a highly concentrated tea).
2. Pour about 4 cups of water into a pot, add the ginger slices, and bring to a boil.
3. Reduce, cover, and let simmer for about 20 minutes.
4. Scoop into a mug and add some raw honey for even more immune-boosting benefits.

Not quite feeling tea, but want the amazing benefits of ginger? Try a broth!

Jennifer Enchin
Fall Foods: Mixed Mushrooms on Toast

*Mushrooms are the perfect food to eat when the summer turns cooler.*

Being healthy is an incomparable life experience, and the way we eat plays a huge role in our health. We all want great health, but for many people, it seems complicated. Our busy lives, the number of diets, and conflicting messages about what we should eat can be overwhelming. Ayurveda offers us a holistic, intuitive, easy approach to eating. Since it’s been in use for at least 5,000 years, we can rest assured that it’s safe and effective.

Ayurveda is about living in balance, within our bodies and in relation to the world around us. Understanding our body’s unique constitution, or *dosha*, and being mindful of the seasons is key. The change of seasons affects the earth, its soil, and the microbes in the soil. These changes affect our bodies as well.

There are three seasons in Ayurveda: winter, spring, and summer. What we call fall is understood as an important transitional time during which our bodies prepare for the impending cold of winter. Depending on where you are, it might still be quite hot, or there might be a distinctive chill in the air. During this time, Ayurveda recommends transitioning from summer, or Pitta, foods to winter, or Vata foods, in order to support the body during the seasonal change. One food that I love eating this time of year is *mushrooms*.

**Why Mushrooms?**

Mushrooms are fascinating and beguiling. They can appear overnight, repair soil by removing toxins, and also happen to make up the *largest living organism* (2,200 acres in
Oregon. They’re nutrient dense. Even the common button mushroom is 1/3 protein, and they have the most vitamin D of any nonmeat food. Which brings me to why they’re great to eat in the fall. We rely on the sun to meet our daily requirement of vitamin D. This important antioxidant, which research has shown acts like a hormone, is stored in our body fat. As the hours of daylight diminish during the approach of winter, eating mushrooms is a great way to stock up on vitamin D.

Mushrooms come in an array of shapes, flavors, and textures. There are thousands of varieties, but only twenty-five are consumed by humans. Mushrooms have a dense cell wall and should be cooked thoroughly in order for the body to assimilate their nutrients (except for truffles, which are best eaten raw).

I usually buy the most interesting, freshest mushrooms I can find. I use them in a variety of ways: soups, omelets, pizzas, duxelles, salads...there are so many ways! I’m sharing one of my favorites here, sautéed and placed atop toast.

This recipe is simple, rich in flavor, and versatile. Feel free to experiment with different types of mushrooms; try serving on small pieces of toast for an appetizer, wrap them in a crepe, or add a fried or poached egg on top for a more substantial meal.

A few notes before starting: Ghee is one of the best fats to cook with as it remains stable when heated, as opposed to many other oils that turn rancid. I particularly like ghee in this recipe as it has a beautiful nutty flavor that works really well with the other ingredients. However, if you don’t have ghee you can also use butter or olive oil. Also, in order to brown the mushrooms and toast the nuts, don’t overcrowd the pan or else you’ll end up steaming instead of browning, and the flavors will be subdued.

**Mixed Mushrooms on Toast**

**INGREDIENTS**

- Ghee (or butter or olive oil)
- 2 shallots, thinly sliced
- 12 ounces mixed shiitake, maitake, and reishi mushrooms, wiped clean and thinly sliced
- 1/4 cup almonds, chopped
- 1/4 teaspoon ground coriander seeds
- Sea salt
- Black pepper, freshly ground
- Flat leaf parsley, chopped, for garnish
- Toasted bread

**DIRECTIONS**
1. In a large frying pan, heat ghee. When hot, add shallots and a little salt. Cook until shallots begin to soften.

2. Add mushrooms and cook until softened.

3. Add almonds, coriander, and pepper.

4. After the mushrooms have browned, add a little more ghee, and additional salt and pepper to taste.

5. Place on toasted bread and top with parsley.

Shiraz Leyva

Photo: Shiraz Leyva
Serve Up Stinging Nettle

This nettle leaf saag might sound intimidating, but it’s full of nutrients you don’t want to miss out on.

The first time I encountered the stinging nettle, I was unaware. I met its dark green leaves at a friend’s house (a friend who has a definite imp on her shoulder) and she asked me to touch them. Unsuspectingly and whole-heartedly I did, to a hand that felt it had just been stung by a million different bugs. Admittedly, it’s not very painful, but it does leave you with a buzzy feeling of ants walking down your veins. However, the rather prickly exterior of this plant hides many benefits within.

Why Does The Stinging Nettle Sting?

The leaves and stems of this plant are covered with fine hairs, which act like micro needles. When you brush up against this plant, the tip of the fine hairs break and the base becomes a needle that injects potent chemicals like serotonin, histamine, and acetylcholine that cause pain, redness, numbness, and swelling. It’s a defense mechanism of the plant, much like a rose or cactus has thorns.

That said, it does have a host of benefits, but don’t worry—you don’t have to get stung to reap them from this plant.

Why Should You Include Nettle in Your Diet

Nettle leaf, despite its rather bad temper, hides a host of benefits that can be reaped by eating them. Here is a list of them that will make you reach out for it, even if you have to don thick rubber gloves!

- Nettle leaf is incredibly rich in iron and vitamin C, that in turn aids in iron absorption—so in case you have anemia, you can supplement your diet with it.
- Rich in vitamin K, nettle leaf can prevent the easy bruising and nosebleeds you are so prone to by helping the blood clot.
• Nettle leaf is a diuretic and also helps to flush urea out of the body—so it’s a blessing for anyone suffering from gout or kidney stones.

• Nettle leaves are high in silica which in turn helps to keep the skin, hair, and joints as young as possible.

• Nettle has also shown promise in asthmatic and bronchial relief by easing inflammation in the sinus and lung pathways.

How to Pick Nettle Leaves

To safely pick nettle leaves and avoid the sting, don thick gloves and use tongs to pluck the tender leaves on top—leaving the bottom leaves and stem intact for the plant to further grow and flourish.

You might have known nettle leaf as a tea. The taste of nettle is similar to that of spinach and you can further choose to use nettle leaf pure in soups, pasta, or curries as you wish. Now let us introduce you to nettle leaf greens or saag in Indian cooking.

NETTLE LEAF SAAG

A traditional Indian dish often cooked in and around the foothills of the Himalayas, nettle leaves are valued for their iron-rich properties and other healthful benefits. This is a seasonal plant that grows mostly in Indian winters.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 kg nettle leaves
- 2 teaspoons wild or dog mustard seeds (jakhiya)
- 2 tablespoons oil
- Salt and pepper to taste

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Pluck and wash the nettle leaves while wearing thick rubber gloves.

2. Blanch the leaves in hot water for a minute or so and then transfer into a deep-bottomed pot, adding ½ cup water and a little salt, and cook them further for 10 minutes or so till the leaves have softened.

3. Use a blender to puree the cooked leaves once cool.

4. In a pan, add the oil and let it smoke.

5. Add the mustard seeds and let them sputter a bit, and now add in the pureed leaves and cook for another 5-10 minutes till the puree has thickened. Add salt and pepper to taste.
Notes: In case it tastes a bit bland to you, you can further garnish with chopped garlic, 2-3 tablespoons cream, and some cooked and chopped chicken as well. You can serve this with rice, roti or even as a side dish for some tasty health.

Rima J. Pundir
Golden Milk Recipe

Turmeric gives this beverage its golden hue—and its inflammation-fighting abilities.

Golden milk, or turmeric milk, has been a staple in Ayurvedic traditions for thousands of years. This powerful concoction helps to fight inflammation in the body and combat common illnesses including skin conditions like psoriasis, arthritis, headaches, diabetes, digestive problems, mood disorders, and even Alzheimer’s. Drinking this ancient elixir is like taking several powerful prescribed medications without all of the terrible side effects!

Not only is turmeric packed with anti-inflammatory properties, it’s also known for its antiseptic and antioxidant properties and it boasts an abundance of vitamins and minerals as well, including calcium and fiber. Most of these benefits are derived from curcumin, which gives the turmeric its golden color (caution: it can also dye anything that it touches). Turmeric has been shown to be somewhat difficult for the body to absorb, so this recipe has combined the right ingredients to get the most out of this comforting powerhouse and an extra dose of nutrients from potent spices as well.

This comforting concoction is a great way to end your day and prep your body for a great night’s sleep while also strengthening immunity and detoxifying the body.

Golden Milk

**INGREDIENTS**

- 1/2 cup turmeric powder
- 1 cup spring or filtered water (+ 1/2 extra water if paste is too thick)
- 1-1/2 teaspoons ground black pepper (helps the body absorb curcumin)
• 5 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil or coconut oil
• 1 cup milk of your choice (making your own nut milk is recommended to avoid added chemicals and ingredients)
• Raw, unfiltered honey (to taste)
• Pure extra virgin coconut oil (leave this out if you use coconut milk)
• Optional: organic ground cardamom and organic ground cinnamon

**INSTRUCTIONS**

1. Mix water (1 cup filtered water) with turmeric powder in a pan and slowly heat it up and stir for 6-10 minutes until you get a thick paste (add the additional ½ cup water if it is too thick).
2. Add black pepper and oil to the paste created in Step 1, and continue stirring until all the ingredients are fully mixed in together.
3. Allow the paste to cool. This golden paste can be stored in the refrigerator in a jar for up to 1-2 weeks.
4. When you’re ready to make a cup of golden milk, heat the cup of milk.
5. Add the cardamom and cinnamon. Add the turmeric paste.
6. Heat the mixture until steaming but do not let it boil. Give it a good stir and strain the cinnamon and cardamom and serve.

_Celsea Jenkins_
No matter how much I cook, food never ceases to amaze me, and every fall, I fall in love with apples all over again. During this time of year, many varieties are at the height of their flavor and texture. In nature they’re falling from tree branches, and in grocery stores and farmers’ markets they’re abundantly available.

In Ayurveda, there’s a time of year for all real, whole foods. Most apples ripen from June through November. Raw apples are good during the summer and fall transition, as they’re thought to support the body by dissipating the heat that has accumulated during the warm months. November through February is the time for cooked apples, which create warmth and moisture, and balance out the Vata dosha qualities of winter: cold, airy, dry, and light.

Once the cold comes on I love cooking apples with honey and spices in a slow cooker until the fragrance is intoxicating and the mixture thickens and becomes golden and bubbly. Cooking apples in this way makes them remarkably versatile, comforting, and delicious.

Today I’m sharing a version of my recipe with a crisp topping that is gluten- and sugar-free. These spice scented apples can be served on their own or with the crisp topping. They can be used as a crepe or pie filling, or added to oatmeal. They’re best warm, which allows the spices to sing, but they also work quite well with yogurt, served as a parfait with the crisp. There are so many ways to enjoy this recipe.

And by the way, I usually don’t peel the apples when I make this. The peel is nutritious, and I like the texture that it adds to this particular recipe.

APPLE CRISP

INGREDIENTS

Apple Base/Filling:

- 3 lbs apples, peeled (if desired), cored and thinly sliced (Gala, Braeburn, or Empire work well)
• 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
• 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
• 1/8 teaspoon ground allspice
• 1/8 teaspoon ground cardamom
• 1/8 teaspoon ground nutmeg
• 1/2 teaspoon sea salt
• 1 vanilla pod, scraped, pod reserved
• 3 tablespoons raw honey
• 2 tablespoons grass-fed ghee (or butter)

Crisp Topping:
• 1/2 cup almond flour
• 3 tablespoons coconut flour
• 1 tablespoon dried shredded coconut
• 1/4 teaspoon sea salt
• 2 tablespoons grass fed ghee (or butter)
• 2 tablespoons raw honey
• 1/4 cup whole, gluten free oats

Instructions

1. In a slow cooker, toss apples with lemon juice, salt, spice mixture, and honey. Scrape vanilla bean and add to mixture, along with the pod. Mix well and dot with ghee (or butter). Cover and cook on high for 4 hours, stirring occasionally.

2. While the apples are cooking, prepare the crisp. Preheat oven to 350°F. Place all ingredients except for oats in a food processor. Mix until texture is chunky, then add oats and mix again until just combined. (Don’t over mix or you’ll end up with a dusty texture.)

3. Place the mix on a lined baking sheet, forming clumps with your hands, which helps the topping hold together. Bake for ten minutes, turning halfway through, until mixture toasts to golden brown. Let cool for ten minutes.

4. Spoon warm apple mixture into bowls and top with crisp.

Shiraz Leyva
Photo: Shiraz Leyva
There’s a myth about living an Ayurvedic lifestyle that in order to live pure, you must follow the **sattvic** diet—vegetarianism and eating only that which is above the ground. In Ayurveda, the **tamasic** diet (non-vegetarian and eating that which also grows under the ground and has strong, pungent flavors) has its own value too—for the mind, body, and soul.

Ayurveda believes that if you have killed an animal to be consumed as food no part of it should go to waste—for that means you are being ungrateful to the soul who has just sacrificed itself for you. So if you like your red meat and have had your fill of goat stew, why waste the trotters?

**Why is it healthy?**

In Ayurveda, goat meat is actually considered just right—as it’s neither too heavy nor too light—and can be consumed in all seasons, since it’s so nourishing and doesn’t aggravate or imbalance any **dosha**. One of the healthiest parts of a goat you can consume is the trotters (or feet)—which are boiled and simmered into a liquid broth for any duration between 2 to 10 hours. The bones are discarded and the **bone broth** that remains is healthy and nourishing enough to be considered **both medicine and food**. A few benefits:

**Eradicates cold, cough, and chest infections:** When you boil bones into a broth, you get the nutritive benefits of both cartilage and marrow which in turn strengthen the body and help it fight off infections.

**Gives you great skin:** Trotter soup (or even **bone broth**) is a great source of collagen and hyaluronic acid—and when you take in these in the form of broth, you help your **skin** heal faster and age slower.

**Prevents or treats mineral deficiencies:** When you boil bones, they become soft for all the **calcium** and other minerals such as phosphorus, **magnesium**, sulfur, fluoride, and **potassium** leach into the broth. Ergo, when you drink the broth, you drink in the goodness of those minerals.
**Keeps you calm and well equipped with sleep:** Mineral deficiencies can often lead to anxiety, irritability, and brain fog, as well as insomnia—trotter soup can help you up those depleted levels and improve digestion as well—making you happier and more restful.

**Improves your heart and bones:** Bone soup is a natural source of an anti-inflammatory supplement, chondroitin sulfate, which helps to lessen joint pain and improves blood circulation. It also helps control cholesterol levels and prevents blood clots and subsequent strokes.

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**Trotter Soup (Paya Soup)**

**INGREDIENTS**

- 5-6 goat trotters (you’ll get these at your butcher shop with the skin burnt off and cleaned, split into smaller pieces)
- 2 teaspoons crushed or grated ginger
- 2 teaspoons crushed or grated garlic
- 1 thinly sliced onion
- Herbs or spices of your choice (in this recipe we’ll use 2 leaves of all spice, a few crushed peppercorns and cloves, 3 crushed cardamom and a pinch of asafetida)
- Salt and pepper to taste

**INSTRUCTIONS**

1. Wash the trotters well in warm water.
2. In a pressure cooker or a stockpot, add a dollop of ghee and sauté the onions till translucent. Drop in the trotters and add in enough water to completely cover them.
3. Add in the garlic, ginger, and your choice of herbs and spices—and salt and pepper to taste.
4. If using a stock pot, let the broth boil on high and simmer for the next 2-3 hours. Keep adding water in between to keep the broth level above the trotters.
5. If using a pressure cooker, cook for 6-7 whistles and then simmer for another 20 minutes before turning off the heat.
6. Let the broth cool a bit, and then discard the bones but retain any leftover skin/marrow. Scoop out any visible condiments and serve piping hot with a dash of hot sauce.

*Rima J. Pundir*
This ebook features just a few select recipes with an emphasis on their Ayurvedic application. Here are some of our other favorite Ayurveda-inspired dishes, sure to please your palette and imbue you with wellness. You can also search our website for recipes featuring Ayurveda-friendly ingredients, like lemons, ghee, and buttermilk.

**Spring Salad with Tangy Lemongrass Dressing (with essential oils)**

**Jamu Juice: The Best Way to Enjoy Turmeric**

**Turmeric Carrot Tomato Soup (vegan)**

**Chickpea Turmeric Soup with Fresh Cilantro**

**This Watermelon Gazpacho is Summer in a Bowl**

**No Bake Blissful Energy Bites**

**Cooking with the Seasons: 4 Spring Recipes**

Our website is full of even more healthy recipes; you can find the whole list here: [www.basmati.com/tags/recipes](http://www.basmati.com/tags/recipes).
Growing your own herbs and veggies?
We have an ebook on [Organic and Sustainable Home Gardening](#).

Read more about [Ayurveda](#) on our website.

Find a practitioner [here](#).

Find a yoga studio near you [here](#).