

Although there are a few differences of opinion among the classical Ayurvedic scholars as to the proper timing for administering pancha karma therapy, there is a harmonious consensus on at least one point. Both Charaka and Sushruta agree that the most appropriate time to remove excess doshas from the body is at the end of their seasons of aggravation. It is at this time that the doshas are in their most liquid form and can be most easily extracted from the tissues. Thus, the beginning of the spring season is usually the best time to treat Kapha excess and the end of autumn the best time to cleanse both Vata and Pitta excesses. As mentioned earlier, Vata may also be eliminated at the central junction between the early and late phases of the rainy season. In this way, the doshas' excesses are weakened before they become rooted in the body as diseases. The cleansing therapies are not administered even in their appropriate seasons when weather conditions are extremely cold or extremely hot.

The main intent of pancha karma cleansing actions is to persuade the bodily tissues to release their waste and to help restore the natural function of both tissue and dosha. According to the Vedic seers, the bodily tissues are more willing to release ama, the foul, undigested materials stuck in the tissues, at the junction of the seasons. During this time, the body is responding to the natural influences brought on by the changing seasons, and is both vulnerable and pliable. The use of these deeply cleansing and healing therapies is intended to cajole both body and mind to let go of its excesses, toxins, and so on. In this manner, the ama is released from the willing tissues of the body and re-directed into the digestive tract, which then moves it out of the body. Any excess clogging in the mind is also removed in the process.

If, on the other hand, these treatments are administered in an unseasonal and untimely way—within the dosha's full-blown season, for example, or if they are in their first stage of building up—the body can be injured rather than helped. This is because the body is not always willing to let go of its wastes and toxins so that incorrect or untimely cleansing may actually force the ama to go even deeper into the tissues.

THE SEASONS OF NATURAL ACCUMULATION, AGGRAVATION AND ALLEVIATION

	Accumulation	Aggravation	Alleviation
VATA	Summer	Rainy season (early fall) Late winter	Autumn
PITTA	Rainy season	Autumn Rainy season (early fall)	Early winter
KAPHA	Early winter	Spring Rainy season (early fall)	Summer

CHART 3E

PART THREE

Seasonal Cleansing Therapies for Each Dosha

VATA: SEASONS OF AGGRAVATION

Rainy Season (Early Fall)

During the rainy season, the earth releases more gases into the atmosphere, which tends to aggravate Vata. Further aggravation is created by the dampness of the rainy season and the higher acidity in the water at that time. The rainy period comes at a time when the body, having endured the long and harsh time of the northerly phase, is at its nadir of vitality. Even though the rainy season marks the beginning of the southerly phase, a period of strengthening, the body is still too vulnerable to resist the onslaught of the rains.

Vata is the dosha that leaps out of bounds very quickly and is thus afflicted somewhat consistently throughout the year. However, it requires special help at the end of the period of major aggravation which begins in the summer and runs into and throughout the rainy season. Thus Vata's first annual cleansing period comes between the early and late phases of the rainy season.

Although Vata's main season of alleviation is the rainy season (early fall), the next appropriate cleansing period occurs at the end of autumn. In temperate climates, where there is no definitive rainy season, the vitiation of Vata still occurs at this time due to the northerly movement of the sun; therefore, the same seasonal recommendations apply.

Late Winter

Late winter is the next season in which Vata is generally alleviated. The extreme coldness of winter increases the already cold nature of Vata, and the body requires the greatest amounts of physical warmth and nourishing foods. When not amply protected or fed, the body begins to eat its own tissues, and Vata becomes aggravated as a result. Nourishing, warm foods with sour, sweet, and salty tastes are recommended to balance Vata during this time of year. Healing gems such as opal, topaz, and beryl, and aromas such as rose, mint, and jasmine may be used at this time. Ayurvedic massages, warm atmosphere and clothing, and reduced sexual activity are all deemed vital so that Vata may remain balanced throughout this season.

Although there are some cooling influences in tropical and semi-tropical climates at this time of year, the late winter cleansing programs recommended in this book do not apply.

Summer

Vata may become mildly disturbed during the summer, due to the reduction of Kapha in the body caused by the heat of the sun. If Kapha is reduced too severely, Vata suffers since Kapha provides the buffering necessary to the lean and erratic Vata character.

Vata may be nurtured at this time by light, cool, sweet, and nourishing foods, mild and gentle daily routines, decreased sexual activity, gems such as pearl, opal and amethyst, aroma therapy, gentle body rubs, and so on.

Autumn

The end of autumn is generally considered to be the time when all three doshas can be relieved of their excesses. Therefore, if Vata's condition was not alleviated during the rainy season, it may be removed through the elimination therapies at the end of the autumn season.

In an attempt to establish one particular time of year as the best time for cleansing all three doshas, practitioners in the United States, Europe, and England are applying pancha karma primarily during the autumn season and are enjoying successful results. However, we need to remain alert to the fact that we cannot expect to completely standardize this unique and dynamic practice without negatively influencing results, which, in many cases, may prove harmful to health. Also, these therapies should conform to the original uses of matter, energy, and time. Therefore, they must not be performed with equipment that requires electrical energy, nor should they be applied in an untimely manner or employ unnatural or inappropriate substances.

Ayurveda presents a vast and illuminating mandala of healing therapies. Although many of its practices have become virtually extinct, we are fortunate to have available to us still a practicing knowledge of the pancha karma and its supporting therapies. Pancha karma therapies include those treatments that cleanse and eliminate the aggravated doshas, as well as the rejuvenative and restorative sadhanas that help the tissues and doshas to regain their equanimity.

The therapies and the proper time to apply them are described below. More details are provided in the section on the actual treatments and sadhanas. These therapies may be used by all body types, according to how the doshas are behaving.

Vata Seasonal Cleansing Schedule

Climate	Season	Date
Temperate and Tropical	Junction of summer and rainy season (early fall)	July 24 to August 7
Tropical	End of autumn	November 8 to 20
Temperate	Late autumn*	October 20 to November 20

*Cleansing at this time must occur before Yama Damstra (see explanation, pg. 84)

Note: Because autumn is one of the two main transitional seasons of the year (the other being spring), the cleansing time is extended to a longer period during the autumn season, rather than to just the junctional period between autumn and early winter.

Vata Seasonal Cleansing Therapies

Vasti Therapy: The Ayurvedic use of herbal decoction enemas, as well as medicated oil enemas, to clear the excess dosha from the large intestines.

Enema decoctions are derived from herbs such as comfrey, *dashamula*, *gotu kola*, and licorice. The sesame oil enema is usually administered as a separate procedure. These enemas re-direct the apana wind to its normal downward flow and soothe Vata disturbances in the body.

Pinda Sveda: The Ayurvedic use of fomentation therapy to thoroughly invigorate the body.

This therapy stimulates the vital tissues and organs, while alleviating bodily pain. Sveda therapy also awakens cellular memory and removes fear from the mind.

Abhyanga: The application of the Ayurveda system of massage, using herbal medicated oils, sesame oil, sandalwood paste, and so on.

Abhyanga is a vital Ayurvedic practice used to restore equanimity to the body's muscular system. Because this massage also stimulates the body's natural "valium," abhyanga promotes both peace of mind and strength of limb.

Shirovasti: The Ayurvedic practice of pouring medicated oil on the head and allowing it to remain for a period of time.

This therapy promotes mental clarity, stimulates cognitive and experiential memories, and completely revitalizes the body.

Shirobhayanga: The Ayurvedic application of medicated oils to the head. Various Ayurvedic herbs such as *madhuka*, *kesare*, or *devadaru*, are boiled in sesame

oil in preparation for shirobhyanga. The head is then amply massaged with the oil, giving life and balance to the sense organs and rejuvenating the entire body.

Details on these and other healing procedures for Vata are located in Section III, Rejuvenative Sadhanas, and Section IV, Cleansing Therapies.

PITTA: SEASONS OF AGGRAVATION

Autumn

Accumulated Pitta from the rainy season becomes aggravated during the autumn season, a time when the digestive fire is already tremendously affected by the long and dry period of the previous northerly phase. Pitta is further afflicted by the extreme conditions of the rainy season that precedes autumn. As the sun begins to brighten the sky, providing the heat necessary to evaporate the moisture of the rainy season just past, it affects the vulnerable Pitta, causing both the digestion and blood systems to go awry. At this time, the liquid that Pitta has accumulated during the rainy season dampens the digestive fire, resulting in a loss of appetite.

In order for Pitta to retrieve its normal and excellent digestion, the Ayurvedic purgative therapy of *virechana* is recommended (see below). The best time of the autumn season for any form of cleansing therapy is at the tail end of Pitta's accumulation, i.e. the latter part of the season when the dosha is in its most fluent form. In tropical and semi-tropical climates, the best time is at the end of autumn.

Rainy Season

There are many Ayurvedic healing therapies that, while not part of the pancha karma or herbal therapies, may be observed during both the rainy season and throughout the autumn period. These include massage geared to Pitta types, using aromatic and cooling oils such as coconut oil combined with sandalwood essential oil; daily body brushing; altering one's activities to those that are milder and more harmonious, especially during the initial stages of doshic vulnerability; aroma therapy using oils like mint, licorice, sandalwood, jasmine, or vetiver, to calm the mind and stomach; healing gems such as pearl, coral, emerald, and crystal quartz.

Pitta Seasonal Cleansing Schedule

Climate	Season	Date
Temperate	Late autumn*	October 20 to November 20
Tropical	End of autumn	November 8 to 20

*Cleansing at this time must occur before Yama Damstra (see explanation, pg. 84)

Pitta Seasonal Cleansing Therapies

Virechana Therapy: The use of Ayurvedic purgatives to clear the lower pathways of the body.

This therapy helps to purify the blood and to cleanse the stomach, sweat glands, small intestines, colon, kidneys, liver, and spleen. Substances such as psyllium husk, castor oil, senna leaves, cow's milk with ghee, flaxseed, *trivrit* and *triphalā* are used to induce purgation.

Rakta Moksha: Although this form of therapy, commonly referred to as blood-letting, is seldom used in India today, and is illegal in the United States and Europe, when performed correctly it is an effective form of therapy to extract toxins from the blood.

Generally, toxins that accumulated under the skin and around the marma points (the energy junctions of the body's meridians) were eliminated through the process of blood-letting. Because Pitta manifests in the waste products of blood, many skin ailments, such as rash, eczema, and acne, are caused by toxins circulating in the blood system. The drawing of a small amount of blood from the vein relieves the blood tension created by these toxins. Internal use of certain bitter herbs, such as *neem*, dandelion leaves, burdock root, calamus root, and turmeric, may also be used to purify the blood.

Shirodhara: The use of a decoction, such as medicated ghee and buttermilk, sugarcane juice, and herbal oils on the forehead, to relieve ulcerations in the head and body and burning sensations or pain in the head.

In the traditional Ayurvedic application, the person lies down on a wide, seasoned, wooden log. A vessel called *dhara chatti*, which resembles a wide top funnel, or a *dhara patra*, a pot with a hole in the bottom, is used, through which the medicated oil is dripped rhythmically onto the center of the forehead where the third eye is located. Shirodhara is a beautiful therapy which awakens our cognitive state and fills the entire bodily organism into a state of calmness. This therapy is used to balance all three doshas, employing those medicated oils and substances best suited to the different doshas and various ailments.

Details on these and other healing procedures for Pitta are located in the Rejuvenative Sadhanas (Section III) and Cleansing Therapies (Section IV).

KAPHA: SEASONS OF AGGRAVATION

Spring

Although Kapha enjoys the strongest stamina of the three doshas, she experiences her fragility in the springtime. After the long, cold, and inert periods of early and late winter, Kapha begins to thaw so that most of the semi-frozen wastes accumulated during the previous seasons liquify.

Kapha's imbalances are expressed through the feeling of lethargy, colds, tonsillitis, sore throat, lung congestion, cold body extremities, and so on. Winter changes to spring, almost at the very height of the northerly phase of the sun, when strength and vigor tend to become depleted by the sun's harshness. The thawing out of liquid waste in the body retards both the digestive fire and the body's metabolism, which is why Kapha's potential listlessness and lethargy increase. The gap before the full bloom of the spring season is the best time of year for the Kapha dosha to be thoroughly cleansed by means of both the elimination therapies and rejuvenative sadhanas. These processes relieve the excess dosha when it is in its most fluid form and not yet rooted in the body in the form of disease. Kapha then has plenty of time to mobilize during the remaining season.

Rainy Season

Kapha experiences similar difficulties during the rainy season (early fall), a time when the spring seasonal process is reversed. The end of the summer heat and the ensuing decline in strength is braced up by the damp and humid cold of the rainy season. Due to Kapha's reduced digestive fire, a feeling of listlessness may again prevail, along with Kapha's enormous inclination to hoard excesses within the body. During this period, replenishing therapies used to maintain Kapha's balance include: seasonally appropriate foods; Ayurvedic massage with *aguru* oil; inhalation therapies using aromas such as sage, eucalyptus, peppermint, and aromatic smoke; *collyrium*, various salves for the eyes; and healing gems such as emerald, lapis lazuli, ruby, and garnet.

Kapha Seasonal Cleansing Schedule

Climate	Season	Date
Temperate and Tropical	End of late winter into spring	March 21 to April 21

Note: Because spring is one of the two main transitional seasons of the year (the other being autumn), the cleansing time has been extended to

a longer period during the spring season, rather than to just the junctural period between the late winter and the spring.

Kapha Seasonal Cleansing Therapies

Vamana Therapy: Vamana, also known as emesis therapy, is an ancient therapeutic method for eliminating Kapha's accumulation through the upper pathways.

For example, two glasses of salt water, or an herbal decoction, are taken in the morning. This solution aggravates Kapha and induces vomiting. The tongue is usually rubbed with the index and middle fingers to stimulate the reflex action of throwing up. Vamana releases congestion from the lungs and provides immediate relief for asthmatic and bronchial attacks. Vamana is used for serious Kapha disorders and to help with other ailments such as skin diseases, diabetes, chronic disorders of the lungs and stomach, sinusitis and tonsillitis.

Oil massage and fomentation applied to the chest on the evening before the emesis therapy are the preliminary steps taken to induce the state most conducive to this therapy.

Nasya: The nasal application of medication in both powder and liquid form.

The powdered medication is inserted into the nose through a tube and the liquid medication is applied with a dropper. The nose is the gateway to the cerebral, sensory, and motor functions of the body. Disorders associated with the movement of prana are usually corrected by nasya therapy. Kapha excess stored in the throat, nose, sinus, and head are also removed from the body as a result of nasya. Herbal powders, such as *gotu kola* and *shatavari*, as well as substances such as milk, ghee, medicated oils, ginger and garlic are used, depending on the dosha and the nature of the disorder.



PART FOUR

Relationship Between the Doshas and the Seasons

The doshas are to the body what the seasons are to the earth. Both the doshas and the seasons are created from the five elements. The elemental aspects of the seasons are in the form of galactic space, wind, sun, moon, rain, and the earth. Here, we are urged to understand the interplay between the doshas and the seasonal influences within the primacy of the five elements. The doshas are not simply the dynamic energy within the body, rather they are influenced primarily by seasonal variations. Knowledge of the seasons is germane to the balancing of the doshas. Therefore, a thorough understanding of the function of the doshas within the body necessitates an understanding of the variations within each season, the junction between seasons, and the annual rotation of the six seasons.

In many cases, the designated seasonal tastes and qualities appear to be contradictory. For this reason, the following charts are provided to assist you in coordinating your body type with its seasonal tastes and qualities.

BALANCING SEASONAL TASTES AND BODY TYPE TASTES

The apparent contradictions between the tastes and qualities beneficial to each body type, and the tastes and qualities suggested by the cyclical nature of the seasons, are to be understood in the following way: The tastes which are generally good for each body type may become heightened or prevalent in the body and external environment due to seasonal influences. For example, of the six tastes, the pungent flavor naturally predominates during the summer; although considered a generally good all-year taste for Kapha types, it needs to be used in the summer season with discretion. Similarly, the salty taste which predominates during autumn, although considered a generally excellent all-year taste for Vata types, needs to be reduced during the autumn season, even by Vata types. In the early winter, the sweet taste predominates, and although generally an excellent all-year taste for Pitta types, needs to be reduced during the early winter, even by Pitta types.

The tastes and qualities of our body, and the external environment created by the five elements, are further influenced by the dynamic inter-relationship of the earth, sun and moon. As the earth makes its annual revolution around the sun,

half of the year, called the northerly phase period, is heavily influenced by the effects of the sun sucking the moisturizing salves from the earth's surface. As a result of this absorbent action, the qualities and tastes dominantly produced by the earth's vegetation and atmosphere are predominately pungent, bitter, and astringent. The seasons which correspond with these tastes are late winter, spring, and summer, respectively. During these periods, our bodily tissues are then saturated with more of these three tastes than usual. Subsequently, we need to use the other three tastes—sweet, sour, and salty—and their qualities in order to promote balance within the organism.

Likewise, during the remaining half of the year, called the southerly phase, when the sun is farther away from the earth, the soothing coolness of the moon predominates. This is a period of release and relief for the earth in which the energy of the remaining three substantial tastes—sweet, sour, and salty—increases. The seasons which correspond with these tastes are early fall/rainy season, autumn, and early winter respectively. Here, we seek balance through the tastes and qualities of the more pungent, bitter, and astringent food and activities.

Each of the six tastes, when expressed in foods, contributes to life in a different and quantitative way. The sweet taste is the most dominant in the universe, comprising more than seventy percent of all foods in nature existing on the earth, due to its nurturing, building and sustaining nature. The five remaining tastes—sour, salty, pungent, bitter, and astringent—are supporting principles and are used primarily as accents and condiments to food and life. The exception here is when these tastes are naturally dominant in a particular food, e.g., the sour taste of grapefruit; the natural salt in most watery vegetables, such as zucchini and cabbage, and the pungency of ginger root, garlic, peppers, and most herbs. Bitter exists in foods like vegetable and salad greens, while as alkaloids and glycosides, it exists predominantly in herbs and medicines. The astringent principle is fundamental to medicines, as in the tannin of barks, for example. It may also be found in foods such as uncooked legumes. All six tastes form the basis, in varying degrees, for all the foods and principles of nature.

Tastes Within the Body

Ayurveda perceives the tastes as an intrinsic language permeating all of nature, present in every structure of the universe. We generally associate tastes with the obvious sensory organ of the tongue and the foods it receives. In the therapeutic aspects of Ayurvedic healing and cleansing regimens and sadhanas, taste must necessarily be viewed in its more all-encompassing light. Each taste is formed by two of the five elements combining in varying units.

The doshas and dhatus may be viewed as the bodily equivalent to the universal tastes. They function primarily through the instinct of taste. Certain tastes within the doshas and dhatus are heightened and disturbed by seasonal changes, as they are in the foods we eat. For example, the rasa dhatu, the body's plasma,

lymph, and chyle tissue, consisting mostly of the water element, is in fact the body's sweet tissue. During the winter season, when the sweet taste is dominant, it is most adversarial toward the rasa dhatu. Similarly, rakta dhatu—blood, essentially—has fire as its dominant nature, and is the body's pungent tissue. During the summer, the pungent taste is considerably pronounced and directly affects the rakta dhatu. Asthi dhatu, the bone tissue of the body, pervaded by air and space, may be thought of as the body's bitter tissue. In the autumn and early winter, the bitter taste is heightened, and asthi dhatu is generally adversely affected. The nature or general quality of the doshas may also be related to taste. Vata, which is predominantly air and space, may be called the bitter dosha; Pitta, which is mostly fire and water, may be called the pungent dosha; and Kapha, predominantly water and earth, may be called the sweet dosha.

Simply put, we need to eat more of the tastes that are presently not as prevalent in the universe and in our bodies. In this way, our internal tastes are calmed and nurtured so that we are more able to flow in gentle balance with earthly nature. A chart is provided below to help you braid your personal body type requirements with the overall scheme of the earth's seasonal influences. This interphasing process will require patience and practice. After a full year's observance of the seasonal cycles and junctions, and their correspondence to your prakriti (constitutional nature), you will be better able to identify and implement the routine that best suits you, adapting it as necessary through your remaining years.

Ayurveda's presentation of the universal tastes is the basis of all sadhanas, whether they relate to our foods, activities, lifestyle, or dreams. Knowledge of the six tastes is especially relevant in Ayurveda's seasonal healing and cleansing therapies, the tastes being yet another part of the alphabet which forms the complete language of nature.

No taste is ever used exclusively of the others; a combination of all six tastes must, in some way, be present. Like the body, every form of life and atmospheric condition is a combination of all six tastes, each entity demonstrating varying degrees of the five elements imbued in the six tastes. It is essential to use all six tastes throughout the year, while emphasizing those tastes which are more vital to your health, given your individual prakriti and the requirements of the seasons.

THE TASTES OF THE SEASONS

Northerly Phase (Winter Solstice to Summer Solstice)			
Season	Dry Tastes	Element Composition	Dosha
Late winter	bitter	air and space	Vata
Spring	astringent	air and earth	Vata & Kapha
Summer	pungent	air and fire	Vata & Pitta

Note: the dry tastes are created by the progressive northward movement of the sun

Southerly Phase (Summer Solstice to Winter Solstice)			
Season	Moist Tastes	Element Composition	Dosha
Rainy season (early fall)	sour	earth and fire	Pitta & Kapha
Autumn	salty	water and fire	Pitta
Early winter	sweet	water and earth	Kapha

Note: the moist tastes are created by the progressive southward movement of the sun

CHART 3F

Beneficial Tastes According to Doshas

Vata: sweet, sour, salty

Pitta: sweet, bitter, astringent

Kapha: pungent, bitter, astringent

These are the general rule only and need to be altered according to the dynamic demands of each season.

SEASONAL TASTE ADJUSTMENTS

	VATA	PITTA	KAPHA
LATE WINTER	Major: sour, salty, unctuous Minor: sweet	Major: sweet, sour,* salty,* warm, unctuous Minor: bitter, astringent, cool, light	Major: sour,* astringent, pungent, warm, moderate unctuous Minor: bitter, salty, dry
SPRING	Major: sweet, salty, warm, moderate unctuous, alkaline Minor: sour, pungent	Major: sweet, bitter pungent,* warm Minor: astringent, cool, alkaline	Major: pungent, moderate astringent, alkaline, warm, dry Minor: bitter, salty
SUMMER	Major: sweet, sour, warm, moderate unctuous Minor: bitter, salty, cool, light	Major: sweet, bitter, cool, moderate unctuous Minor: astringent, light	Major: bitter, astringent, moderate sweet, warm, dry Minor: pungent, cool
RAINY SEASON (early fall) Temperate Climates	Major: sweet, moderate bitter,* salty, moderate unctuous, warm Minor: sour	Major: bitter, astringent, moderate salty, moderate sweet, warm, moderate unctuous Minor: pungent, cool	Major: bitter, astringent, pungent, warm, light Minor: salty, sour, dry
Tropical and Semitropical Climates	Major: sweet, salty, moderate unctuous, warm Minor: bitter, pungent	Major: sweet, bitter, salty,* warm, moderate unctuous Minor: astringent, pungent	Major: moderate salty,* pungent, bitter, warm, moderate unctuous Minor: astringent, dry
AUTUMN	Major: sweet, sour, warm, light Minor: salty, astringent	Major: sweet, bitter, astringent, cool, light Minor: pungent	Major: bitter, astringent, moderate sweet, warm, light
EARLY WINTER	Major: salty, bitter,* moderate sour, warm, unctuous Minor: pungent, sweet	Major: bitter, astringent, moderate pungent,* warm, moderate unctuous Minor: sweet	Major: pungent, astringent, bitter, warm, moderate unctuous Minor: salty

CHART 3G

* Vata types: If strong tendency to Vata disorders, use as minor tastes and increase the use of sweet and salty tastes during the seasons indicated.

* Pitta types: If strong tendency to Pitta disorders, use as minor tastes and increase the use of bitter, astringent and sweet tastes during the seasons indicated.

* Kapha types: If strong tendency to Kapha disorders, use as minor tastes and increase the use of pungent, bitter and astringent tastes during the seasons indicated.

Transitioning the Seasons

Although this transitioning pattern may seem tedious, it possesses great rhythm. Having practiced it once at the crossing of one season into the next, you will experience a natural ease during the next crossing. Intrinsically, we observe this pattern to some degree without realizing it. The simple act of putting away one season's clothes and bringing out the next season's reflects this rhythm. Rarely do our actions declare an abrupt end to the affairs of a particular season.

The Seasonal Junctions According to the Calendar

Late winter to spring

March 24 to April 7

Spring to summer

May 24 to June 7

Northerly to southerly phases

June 8 to June 24

Summer to rainy season (early fall)

July 24 to August 7

Rainy season (early fall) to autumn

September 23 to October 7

Autumn (Yama Damstra) to early winter

November 22 to December 9

Early winter to late winter

January 24 to February 7

