

A woman with long, dark, curly hair is lying on her back on a white towel-covered surface. Her eyes are closed, and she appears to be in a relaxed state. A hand is holding a brass bowl suspended by chains, from which a thin stream of liquid is being dispensed through a nozzle directly onto her forehead. The background is a soft, out-of-focus purple. To the left of the woman's head, there are several pink and purple lilies.

AYURVEDA

TREATMENT FOR BEGINNERS

THE 101 GUIDE TO AYURVEDA MASSAGE AND YOGA

Ayurveda Treatment for Beginners

The 101 Guide to Ayurveda Massage and Yoga

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Introduction

Ayurveda medicine refers to traditional Hindu medicine. The practice of Ayurveda is considered as a type of alternative and complementary medicine. Ayurveda has been developed thousands of years in India and it is based on the idea that health depends on maintaining the delicate balance between the body, mind as well as spirit. The main focus on Ayurveda is to promote good health and not fight diseases. Ayurveda is an alternative treatment that you ought to try to achieve good health and this book will serve as your guide to understanding the basic concepts and treatments of Ayurveda.

Chapter 1: The Concept Of Ayurveda

Everything in this world is connected. Ayurveda teachings indicate the all living and non-living things are connected. Thus, health is achieved when the mind, spirit and body exist in harmony with the rest of the universe. Any disruption of the interconnected harmony such as injuries, birth defects, emotions, age and seasonal changes can lead to the loss of balance in the universe thus health and sickness results. This chapter will discuss about the concepts of Ayurveda.

The Three Doshas

Every individual is made from the combination of the five elements in the universe – space, air, water, fire and earth. The elements combine inside the body to create three types of energies or life force or energies called *doshas*. The *doshas* control the body and these include the following:

Vata Dosha

Vata dosha refers to the space and air and it is considered as the most powerful of all types of dosha as it controls the basic body functions such as cell division. It also controls the mind, breathing, blood flow, heart function and digestion.

Vata dosha can easily be disrupted by eating dry fruit, eating too after a previous meal, grief, fear and staying up too late. If vata dosha is the main life force in your body, you are likely to develop diseases like anxiety, heart diseases, asthma, nervous system problems, skin problems and rheumatoid arthritis.

Pitta Dosha

The pitta dosha represents fire and water and it controls the metabolism, digestion and appetite. The things that can disrupt pitta dosha include eating sour and spicy foods, fatigue and exposure to too much sunlight. Pitta dosha, if disrupted, may likely lead to anger and other negative emotions, heart disease, Crohn's disease, high blood pressure and infections.

Kapha Dosha

Kapha dosha is represented by the water and earth elements and it controls the muscle growth, body strength and stability, weight and immune system. If the kapha dosha is disrupted, it may cause problems like cancer, diabetes, obesity, nausea, asthma and other lung problems. The things that can disrupt the kapha

dosha are sleeping during the daytime, eating after the stomach is full, eating foods that are high in salt, sugar and water and greed.

It is important to take note that everyone can have a little bit of each dosha thus a person can inherit a mix of unique characteristics of the three doshas. However, one dosha always remain dominant than the others. When working with the three doshas, it is important to remember its principles – *Like increases like and opposites balance each other*. This means that food, weather and other situations that have the same characteristics with the doshas will increase them thus you can adjust the things that you do to improve the flow of positive life force within your body.

The Three Gunas

Another important principle in Ayurveda is the three gunas which refers to the qualities of nature. The three gunas describe the emotional and spiritual characteristics unique to different individuals. This section will discuss the principle of the three gunas and how important they are to Ayurveda.

Sattva

Sattva refers to anything that is light, stable and clear. It is the state that comes from the purity of the mind which leads to the awareness of the spirit that it is connected to God. Sattva is the highest form of all gunas as it helps us manifest our innermost virtues.

Rajas

This refers to the active, turbulent and agitated part of life. It is manifested when we are distracted from our true essence and it is manifested different types of emotions like worry, fear, jealousy, anger, depression, attachment and all other negativities.

Tamas

Tamas refers to the dark, dull, heavy and inert part of life. It is characterized by vindictive and violent behavior that leads to self-destruction. It often leads to addiction, suicide, depression and anything that can lead to low quality of life even death.

The three gunas serve as the guide on how we should move. Remember that just like the three doshas, the principles of the three gunas are the same such that the more we move in accordance to the characteristics of the guna, the more likely we manifest them.

The Eight Canonical Components In Ayurveda

Ayurveda is derived from Sanskrit literature and it is called the as *the science of eight components (ashtanga)*. The eight ashtanga refers to the eight branches of Ayurveda. This section will discuss about the eight components of Ayurveda.

Kaaya Cikitsa

Translated as general medicine, kaaya cikitsa refers to treating diseases related to the kaya or the process of metabolism. The things that we eat are transformed into substances that the body needs as long as the kaaya is in proper order. The disturbance in the kaaya causes imbalance in the body's homeostasis and physiology. The impaired metabolism can often cause different diseases like obesity and fever thus this branch of Ayurveda medicine can treat such illness.

Baala Cikitsa

This is translated as “pediatrics” thus it deals with diseases related to infants, children and teenagers. The word “baala” refers to child. It also includes the qualities of surrogates and it also refers to breast milk, its purification and diseases related to the intake of vitiated breast milk.

Graha Cikitsa

This branch of Ayurveda deals with diseases that have been inherited or acquired from an unknown cause. In modern term, it is considered as the branch of Ayurveda that deals with idiopathic diseases. In Ayurveda, microorganisms are considered as bad demons that causes diseases.

Saalaakyatantra

This refers to the treatment of diseases related to areas above the neck such as the mouth, nose, eyes and ears. It is simply related to ophthalmology and ENT in modern medical science.

Salyatantra

It is translated as “surgery” in Ayurveda thus it deals with different surgical and orthopedic procedures as well as the removal of foreign objects in the bodies such as arrows, sand and wood. It also refers to the removal of biological foreign objects like pus, dead fetus and dried blood. Salyatantra is also used in the management of inflammation and the use of different surgical instruments as well as the use of prosthetics.

Visha Cikitsa

Visha cikitsa deals with the treatment of animal bites. This is also the branch of Ayurveda that deals with objects that eliminate poison from animals, plants and other types of substances.

Jara Cikitsa

This is the branch of Ayurveda that deals with different aspects of preventative health care. It is also translated as rejuvenate therap. It provides methods and medication to preserve youth and prolong life. It is also related in the promotion of intelligence and boost in the immune system.

Vrsha Cikitsa

Vrsha cikitsa is dubbed as reproductive medicine and it includes treatment for improving the quality of the quality of sperm and egg cells. It also provides methods for the purification of vitiated reproductive cells. This branch in Ayurveda is related to the modern branch of gynecology and embryology.

Chapter 2: Ayurvedic Diagnosis

Doctors practicing Ayurvedic medicine regard the aspect of physical and mental existence as well as the personality as a single unit which means that each change in the units will definitely influence the others. This is the reason why Ayurveda provides a holistic approach in treating patients. This chapter will discuss about how diseases are diagnosed in Ayurveda.

Ayurvedic Visit

Visiting the Ayurveda practitioner is very crucial to get the right treatment. Below are the steps involved during an Ayurvedic visit.

- Checking the weight
- Examination of the stool and urine samples
- Getting the pulse
- Listening to speech and voice
- Looking at the conditions of the eyes, tongue, teeth and skin

The Ayurvedic practitioner will also ask questions about your ability to recover from any illness, behavioral patterns, lifestyle, diet and medical history to come up with the diagnosis.

The Principles Behind Ayurvedic Treatment

The principles behind Ayurvedic treatment depends on your *prakriti* which is your primary dosha. The goal behind Ayurvedic treatment is to cleanse the body from any undigested food termed as *ama* which sticks to the inside of the stomach that can make you sick. Cleansing or *panchakarma* is one part of Ayurveda treatment but there are also other important processes involved. Below are the things involved in Ayurveda treatment.

- **Blood purification:** The removal of blood from the body using special types of teas.
- **Massage:** Massage can remove blockage within the body that can disrupt the flow of energy.
- **Medical oils:** Medical oils administered through the nose are related to aromatherapy.
- **Induced vomiting:** Induced vomiting helps remove toxic substances that are inside the stomach.
- **Enemas and laxatives:** The use of enemas and laxatives can help cleanse the intestines from impurities and undigested food.
- **Yoga:** Yoga helps improve the breathing which, in turn, helps achieve internal balance.
- **Herbs:** Ayurveda is known in using plant-based materials to treat different types of diseases. Common substances used in Ayurveda include cinnamon and cardamom.

Chapter 3: Ayurveda Treatments

Ayurvedic treatment deals with diseases that arise from imbalances in the doshas. It is important to take note that the basic treatment principle in Ayurveda is that whenever a problem arises, nature will always provide a solution. The thing is that Ayurveda is not just an ordinary medical practice but it also teaches the patient the way of life.

The treatment in Ayurveda can work from the inside which can emanate outside. The advantage of Ayurveda treatment is that it helps cure the problem and remove the malady forever. Moreover, it is also very economical compared to conventional medicine. This chapter will discuss about the different types of treatments involved in Ayurvedic medicine.

Yoga

Yoga is an integral part in Ayurveda treatment. Different people require different types of yoga practices. In fact, yoga and Ayurveda are intertwined with one another thus you will always think about yoga when talking about Ayurveda and vice versa. While Ayurveda is all about the knowledge of life, yoga is the ancient art of preparing the mind and body for enlightenment and liberation of the soul.

Both yoga and Ayurveda teaches one how to keep the body healthy and how to go on to a healthy spiritual journey. It is important to take note that yoga is the practical side of the Vedic teachings which is part of the Sanskrit while Ayurveda is the healing side of it. Since both yoga and Ayurveda are closely related to each other, the foundations of their philosophies are the same and are described as follows:

- There is a basic state of pure being beyond the realms of intellectual understanding. This state is what all life consciously strives to achieve. This is the state of self-liberation or enlightenment.
- Suffering is the result of our attachment to self-identity and ego.
- The road to end suffering is the path of dissolving the ego. By ending suffering, all negativities like fear and anger are also removed.
- To achieve our goals, it is important to live an ethical life based on the guidelines written in the Yoga Sutra of Patanjali.
- Disturbances in both body and mind will interfere with the path to enlightenment thus Ayurveda keeps all things and forces in balance so that the mind and body will be healthy.

What Kind Of Yoga Is Right For You?

It has been mentioned earlier that different types of people require different types of yoga poses. When determining the type of yoga practice that you should do, it is important to consider the imbalances (and its causes in your life). Also called *vikruti*, the imbalance can set off your regimen and once you

have corrected it, you can stay in good health.

Consulting a trained Ayurvedic doctor will help you determine the sources of your imbalance. In most cases, the *vikturi* largely depends on the dominant *dosha* a person has. For instance, people who have a dominant vata constitution are supported by yoga practices that are calm, quiet and warm while people with pitta constitution should have yoga practices that are calm, quiet and cooling. Lastly, people with kapha nature should support their imbalance with yoga poses that are stimulating and warming. Below is the discussion on the types of *asanas* (yoga poses) for different types of doshas.

1. Asanas For Vata

The asanas perfect for individuals who are mainly vata by nature should be calming as well as grounding. These yoga poses will counter the tendency of the imbalances such as agitation, nervousness and the need for too much space. The yoga poses will help dispel worry, anxiety and fear and will also help treat physical imbalances such as joint pains, lower back pains and constipation.

People with vata constitution have their pelvis, abdomen and large intestines as the main residence of the vata dosha thus many asanas involved for this type of dosha compresses the lower abdomen to cause the particular area taut. Below are the types of poses for people who have predominant vata dosha.

Uttanasana

The standing forward bend pose is a great asana for people who have vata dosha. To do this pose, stand with your feet at shoulder-width apart. Raise the arms over the head as if you are seemingly trying to reach for the sky. You can also bend your elbows and clasp the opposing arms if you don't want to raise your arms. Keep your back straight and bend forward from the hips while exhaling. Bend slowly and as far forward as you possibly can.

Touch the floor in front of your feet or clasp your arms behind the heels if you

are very flexible. Remain in that position for a few counts and let the gravity assist you in lengthening your spine. This is a great pose to honor your connection to the Earth. It is important to take note that this pose can put a strain on an injured lower back so extra care should be taken.

Balasana

Translated as the child's pose, this yoga pose is excellent for compressing the pelvis which is the vata region. To do this pose, sit upright with the knees flexed and placed underneath the buttocks. Keep your arms at your side and bend forward from the hips slowly until your head is resting on the floor.

If you are less flexible, place a pillow or folded blanket on the floor in front of you so you may rest your head. This pose is good in treating chronic gas and constipation.

Supta virasana

The reclining hero pose is a good asana for people with vata dosha. To do this position, kneel with the toes together and your buttocks resting on the heel similar with the first position of the child's pose. Now move your legs out to the side of your pelvis. This will leave your buttocks to slide down between both legs. Place your hands firmly on the soles of your feet and lean back onto your elbows. If you are flexible enough, you can bend lower until your back lies down to the floor. This pose does not compress the pelvis but it creates an extension of the lower abdominal muscles as well as the lower back. This action leads to the increase of pressure in the pelvis thus increasing the vata.

Dhanurasana

The bow pose extends the lower back and sends pressure on the pelvis. To do this pose, you need to lie on your stomach with your arms at the sides. Gently lift your head, shoulders as well as chest off the mat and bend both knees. Try to reach your ankles with your hands. Let your legs draw your chest far to the air so that the weight of your body rests on the pelvis.

2. Asanas For Pitta

The best yoga poses for people who are pitta by nature should be calming and cooling. People with pitta dosha are more assertive as well as intense thus the calming pose can help lower down their intensity as well as ease emotions like resentment and anger which they are highly prone to. The asanas for people with pitta dosha can help treat different conditions such as hyperacidity, ulcer, acne and liver diseases.

The asanas for people with pitta dosha are those that can place pressure on the solar plexus and naval regions which is in the intestines where the energy resides. These poses affect the spleen and the liver to help regulate the digestive function. Below are the best asana poses for people with pitta dosha.

Ustrasana

The camel pose is very beneficial with people with pitta dosha as it helps open the abdomen, chest and solar plexus. To do this pose, you need to kneel with your buttocks lifted. Your final pose should resemble you standing on your knees. Place your palms on the buttocks and move your pelvis and thighs forward while extending your lower back. This brings your hands to your heels. Extend your neck as gently as you could while inhaling at the same time.

Bhujangasana

The cobra pose is great for extending the solar plexus. To perform this pose, lay face down and your feet together while the ankles are extended. Bend your elbows and place your hands on the floor by your lower ribs. If you are not flexible, you can place your palms on the floor at the shoulder level. Inhale while extending your elbows and raising your head, chest as well as abdomen off the floor. Keep your pelvic bones on the floor. Exhale and go back to the first position.

Headstand

The headstand can benefit people with pitta dosha but it should be done within a short period of time. Prolonging headstand can heat up the body which is not good for people with the pitta constitution. Moreover, it can also worsen eye diseases.

3. Asanas For Kapha

People with kapha dosha tend to be heavy, cold, slow and sedated by nature. Practicing asana for kapha dosha should be more stimulating to increase the heat. The yoga poses that are best for people with kapha nature should open up the chest and stomach where the kapha dosha is located. The yoga poses can help treat conditions such as pneumonia and bronchitis. It also treats conditions such as emphysema and asthma.

Setu Bandha

The bridge pose is a beneficial asana for people with kapha dosha. To perform this pose, lie flat on your back and your arms kept to your side. The palms of your hands should face down to the floor. Use your elbows and forearms to raise your pelvis from the mat. Make sure to keep your feet and shoulders grounded. This pose can help the flow of energy to the heart chakra.

Suryanamaskar

Sun salutation is very good exercise for people with kapha dosha. It helps in treating depression and obesity which are common conditions for kapha people. This is a good pose because it is active and it creates heat as well as opens up the chest. To do this pose, start by standing straight with your feet touching each other. Bend your elbows and bring your palms together in your chest. Raise your arms above the head and extend into a backbend. Bend forward and bring the hands to the floor. Bend your knees to protect your back. From this point, lunge backward using the right leg and bending the other.

The kapha can benefit from all types of stretching and movement. However, make sure that the poses do not exert too much pressure on the lower abdomen

as the lungs and kidneys are the weak organs of patients with kapha dosha.

Other Factors To Consider In Doing Yoga

The human body consists of different types of doshas and the different doshas play great significance at different times of the day. The reason is that the human body experiences fluctuation of the different doshas. Having said this, it is important that we pay attention to the influence of our age to the energy that our body has. This will allow us to determine which types of poses should be included in your regime. Below are the other factors to consider on which types of yoga poses that you should do.

Age

The age plays a very important factor in determining which type of yoga poses people should do. . For instance, our bodies are affected by the kapha doshas from birth to our puberty. From puberty to our retirement years, we are heavily influenced by the pitta dosha. The later years of our lives are affected by vata.

Seasons

The different types of seasons can also affect the type of asana that we should do. For instance, the cold season increases the kapha dosha in our body while the summer months increase the pitta dosha. The windy season can also increase the vata dosha. During the kapha (cold) season, practicing warming and stimulating asanas is required while practicing cooling poses during the pitta season is preferred. Lastly, the vata season should encourage people to do more vata poses.

Time

The time of the day can also affect the balance of doshas. Kapha influences people during 6:00 to 10:00 for both morning and evening while pitta increases between 10:00 and 2:00 (both am and pm). Vata also increases between 2:00 and 6:00 (both am and pm). Finding the right time to practice the

poses is very important to prevent imbalances.

Massage

Massage is necessary in Ayurveda as it helps remove the body from toxins as well as support the immune system. It has played a very important role among Ayurveda practitioners and it has been mentioned in Ayurvedic texts which date back at 4,000 years old. It is often used in conjunction with spices, herbs and aromatic oils. Ayurveda encourages people to do self-massage to improve well-being. This section will discuss what you need to know about massage and Ayurveda.

Self-Massage Techniques

Self-massage is a great technique to help boost the lymphatic system by inducing the production of healthy white blood cells. A good lymphatic system can boost the immune system by helping the fluid move easily through the blood vessels. Below are the self-massage techniques that you can use to boost your immune system.

- Use a brush or a loofah to whisk the skin gently. Move towards the heart. Do not forget to brush from the hands and towards the armpits. Also brush the legs and begin from the ankles while moving up using swift strokes.
- Slide your fingers beneath your jaw and locate the lymph nodes. The lymph nodes are tiny pearl-shaped structures that you will feel just underneath the jaw line. Once you have located it, use your fingers and press gently but swiftly. Repeat for several times for every hour.
- Place a clean tennis ball in your armpit and pump your arm while the tennis ball is in your armpit. This will help promote healthy and functional lymph nodes.

Bodywork Techniques

The bodywork techniques in Ayurveda are related to massage. Below are the types of Ayurveda techniques that can help improve the condition of your body and treat different types of illnesses.

Acupressure

Ayurveda also uses acupressure – use of finger pressure – to stimulate different points of the body. This technique is used in traditional Chinese medicine but it has also been adopted by Ayurveda medicine because it can help clear the path of the body for the energy to flow freely.

Craniosacral Therapy

This type of touch therapy is used to adjust the flow of energy to its proper rhythm. It is used to address problems related to musculoskeletal and neuromuscular system of the body.

Myofascial Release

This refers to using massage to relieve tension and tightness in the muscles and connective tissues. Ayurveda practitioners use sustained pressure to the affected area to relieve the restrictions as well as restore its original range of motion.

Thai Yoga Massage

This type of yoga massage involves the therapists using their whole bodies to move and stretch the patient's body so that the energy lines up properly. This is a combination of yoga, shiatsu and acupressure.

Head Massage

Head massage is very important in Ayurvedic medicine because it can help stimulate the hair growth as well as improve the concentration.

All Day Ayurveda Routine

It is important that you follow healthy routines every day to keep your dosha energized. Ayurveda principles believe that the key to good health is to live in tune with nature so that you can align your system. Ayurvedic traditions require practitioners to practice morning and nighttime routines called *dinacharya*. The rituals will provide practitioners calm and sustainable energy to support everything that they do all the time. Below is a discussion of the different types of *dinacharya* that you should practice every day.

Ayurveda Practices In The Morning

Doing Ayurvedic practices during the morning is very crucial to provide balance and stability to your energy. It is crucial that you follow the Ayurvedic morning rituals below:

Wake Up At Predawn

According to Ayurveda principles, predawn hours are dominated by the vata dosha thus you feel vibrant energy coursing through your body. If you wake up after sunrise, this time is dominated by the kapha dosha thus you will feel very sluggish. Make it a habit to wake up at predawn because the atmosphere is quiet thus it is easier for you to meditate.

Nasal Cleansing

While you are sleeping, the body collects pollens, dusts, germs and other things that can cause congestions. It is important to do nasal cleansing to rinse the sinuses using a tool called *neti pot*. In fact, the practice of *jala neti* (nasal cleansing) is part of the morning meditation practice. It helps equalize the flow of energy between the nostrils and lungs.

Do Tongue Scraping

Tongue scraping is an important practice in Ayurveda. While sleeping, the tongue collects *ama* or toxins that can cause illnesses. To remove the toxins, scraping the tongue for several times can help remove the toxins. It also helps stimulate the digestive function and it prepares the body for its first meal of the day.

Drink Lemon Water

Before eating anything, it is important that you drink a cup of warm lemon water. This drink will help flush out the kidneys and the entire gastrointestinal tract. It also stimulates the *Agni* – digestive fire – so that you can readily metabolize your meals.

Massage

Treating yourself to a 10-minute massage every morning can help warm the body and also detoxify the skin. It can also help stimulate the circulation as well as the nervous system.

Ayurveda Practices At Nighttime

Nighttime should be spent unwinding of what happened during the rest of the day. It is the time to cool down the body in preparation of sleeping. Below are the different Ayurveda practices that you can do at nighttime.

Dim The Lights

As the sun sets, it is important to lower the lights inside your home. This is essential because it signals the body as well as the mind that the activities for the day are coming to an end. Dimming the lights also refers to minimizing the use of electronic devices an hour before going to bed.

Infusion Or Aromatherapy

Lighting up incense or a scented candle can have a calming and grounding

effect. In Ayurveda, it is crucial to use aromatherapy because it can induce relaxation and also improve memory.

Do Foot Massage

The foot has several *marma* points. *Marma* points refer to Ayurvedic pressure points; doing a foot massage can help relax the entire body. It is important to take note that the foot has different nerve endings that are connected to the different parts and organs of the body. Doing foot massage does not only improve the circulation of blood but also it can help deal with organ-specific diseases.

Drink Organic Milk With Ground Cardamom

Boil organic milk and add ground nutmeg and cardamom. Milk is a known remedy for insomnia. Ayurveda uses different herbs and spices to induce different effects to the body. Nutmeg and cardamom, for example, provide deep relaxation to the body.

Breathe

Breathing is very important to keep yourself calm. Before going to bed, do *nadi shodhana* which is also called alternate nostril breathing. This is a cleaning breathing exercise that can calm the mind. To do this breathing exercise, you need to place your right thumb over the right nostril in order to close the airway. While the right nostril is closed, inhale through your left nostril. Do this for 10 rounds before alternating on the other nostrils.

Conclusion

Ayurveda is mainly focused on providing the body with good overall well-being. It is not focused on treating diseases but rather on preventing them from occurring. This is the reason why Ayurvedic principles involve the use of different types of activities to achieve healthy lifestyles. Practicing Ayurveda requires a lot of commitment and discipline. You need to live a life of full of passion to be able to benefit from this lifestyle. Hopefully this book has taught you valuable information on how to achieve better lives with Ayurveda.