

ABHYANGA AYURVEDIC SELF-MASSAGE WITH OIL



In Sanskrit, the word for 'oil' and for 'love' are the same ('sneha'). The practice of administering oil to our bodies, and giving ourselves quality touch, is a great act of self-love. Humans need high quality touch, and there is nothing like self-massage of our bodies to give ourselves the feeling of self-love.

Abhyanga is ayurvedic self-massage with oil. The skin is the largest organ of the body. It provides a protective barrier, helps regulate body temperature, synthesizes vitamin D, maintains water electrolyte balance, provides a storehouse of fat, water, salt and glucose and creates an acid base equilibrium by maintaining acid-alkaline levels. Done daily, and using specific oils for one's unique constitution and present health concern, it protects, nourishes and supports the skin and calms the nervous system.

Generally speaking, use sesame oil in the colder months, and coconut or sunflower in the warmer months. The following oils are balancing for these constitutional types

Vata Pacifying Oils

Sesame

Pitta Pacifying Oils

Coconut/Sunflower

Kapha Pacifying

Sesame, Corn, Mustard

Benefits of Abhyanga:

- Deeply nourishes mind, body and consciousness
- Reduces stress and supports a feeling of calm
- Makes skin stronger, healthier, more toned and lustrous

- Supports sleep
- Nurtures positive feelings and emotions
- Supports circulation
- Supports healthy elimination
- Calms the nervous system and mind
- Creates a protective layer between your body and the environment
- Balances endocrine system

How to Practice Abhyanga:

- Pick a warm room
- Place a towel on the floor for spills
- Massage room temperature - warm oil on entire body from head to toe
- Use round strokes on the joints
- Use long strokes on your limbs
- Spend a little extra time on any sore spots
- Spend 5 minutes applying oil
- At least once a week, wait 20 minutes in a warm room before showering
- Get into a steamy hot shower or hot tub Be careful entering the tub as there may be oil on your feet. Step on a wash cloth or other slip-proof surface.
- Do not soap off
- Pat dry with a towel designated for abhyanga as it will accumulate oil in time.
- Keep a small container of dishwashing liquid in the shower and squirt a little on the shower floor to clean off the extra oil so it is not slippery.

Clean up and Maintenance

- Oil may accumulate in your drain. A couple of times a month you can pour 1/4 cup dishwashing liquid down your drain followed by 2 - 3 cups of boiling water, let it sit for 5 minutes, then flush with hot water.
- Clean oiled towels or clothing with regular laundry soap + 1 cup rubbing alcohol or a little dishwashing liquid (experiment).

****Caution:** Oily towels can catch fire, so never dry them on high or leave in a hot car or other hot location.**

Do Not Perform Abhyanga Under these Conditions:

- Acute Illness
- Menstruation
- Intoxication
- Pregnancy
- Infected or broken skin
- Edema
- Blood clots
- Hypoglycemia
- When dealing with a serious illness, always consult your physician