Self-Abhyanga
warm oil massage

In Sanskrit, the word for oil or fat – snehana – also means ‘love’ or ‘affection.’
When you really want to care for yourself, why not butter yourself up?

Abhyanga is a method of applying warm oil to your body – an easy and enjoyable way to nurture yourself with love. Like many Ayurvedic principles and practices, abhyanga is simple, yet super-powerful – not to be underestimated in it’s ability to center, calm, protect, nourish, strengthen and restore.
Certain imbalances – as well as complex lives and busy days– exposure you to extra doses of rough, dry, light, mobile, subtle and irregular sensory qualities. As these qualities of the vata dosha accumulate inside and out, it’s common to experience vata-type signs or symptoms, some of which are exhaustion, anxiety, worry, tension, dryness, insomnia, muscle spasms, and constipation or variable digestion.

The warmth, soothing touch and moist, nourishing, insulating qualities of abhyanga help bring high vata down. Abhyanga massage strokes help re-establish the normal, healthy, five-direction movement of Vata through your body, while enhancing overall circulation.

By balancing prana vayu (as aspect of vata’s movement), abhyanga can calm your mind, support your memory and nourish your nervous system, leaving you feeling grounded, yet focused and alert. Self- abhyanga also promotes balanced emotions.

Abhyanga will nourish and protect your skin, moisturizing and insulates the skin to leave it feeling soft and looking lustrous.

Regular performance of abhyanga, especially followed by svedhana (steam treatment) can loosen deep-seated toxins in joints and tissues, preparing the body to eliminated problematic wastes. abhyanga strengthens and lubricates your joints, leaving them nourished and supple, and making them more resilient to wear and tear. Abhyanga supports the strength and tone of muscles, too If you do yoga, a gym work out or other exercise several times a week, you may notice that your muscles feel stronger and are more resilient to injury.

Ayurvedic texts say abhyanga will keep your energy levels high and stable during the day, while promoting easy, restorative sleep at night while restoring your youth, vitality and joy.

Your own experience will show you the true value of this ancient practice. Why not give abhyanga a try?
Self-Abhyanga

Instructions

Prepare ~ Take the Patch Test ~ Prior to applying any new substance to your skin, it’s wise to perform a patch test to rule out any potential reaction or sensitivity. Find complete patch test directions here: http://www.ayurmama.com/patch-test/

Materials ~
• 2-3 ounces oil as directed by your practitioner.
  In general, use those recommended here:
  for Vata: untoasted, organic sesame or almond oil
  for Pitta: brahmi or coconut oil
  for Kapha: mustard or sesame oil
or purchase a high-quality herbalized oil for your dosha. Try: http://aromabliss.com/Daily.htm
• old, absorbent cotton towel or mat
• paper towels

Technique ~
1. Warm your Oil
   - Aromatherapy Diffuser method: pour oil in top. Light candle below. Avoid over-heating.
   - Direct Heat method: fill a large stainless-steel spoon or ladle with oil. Light a candle and hold the filled spoon directly over the flame. Place on a small plate or in small bowl to hold while performing abhyanga.
   - Bottle-in-sink method: Fill a small, glass bottle with a few ounces oil. Place the bottle in a sink, pot or crock-pot filled with warm water until oil is warm to the touch.
2. Undress completely to stand on an old towel or mat in a comfortably warm, draft-free room. Your bathroom may be the ideal location, or any room that’s private, warm and has a floor that’s easy to clean, in case you drops of oil scatter.
3. Apply ample oil to the crown of the head, then work the oil into your scalp with your fingers in outward circles. (Working oil into your scalp is actually an important aspect of abhyanga, but might leave your hair looking greasy, even after a shampoo.)
If you aren’t comfortable with the ‘grunge’ look, save the scalp portion of abhyanga for the weekend or a day when your hair doesn’t need to look dry and fluffy!

4. Take more oil into your palm, applying liberally to the left side of your body from shoulders to feet, working downward. Then apply to the right.

5. Bring your hands up to your left shoulder again, repeating your path of oil application. This time massaging the oil into your skin, giving each part of your body adequate attention.

Use **long, up-and-down strokes over the long limbs.**

Use rotational **circular (clockwise) strokes over joints, chest and abdomen.**

If you notice a dry area, rub in a bit more warm oil.

Your full self-abhyanga should take about 5 minutes.

6. Sit quietly with eyes closed for 10-20 minutes. You can meditate now, or if that’s not an option, you might read or do a few easy morning chores while your oil penetrates. Take care as you move about not to slip or to become chilled in any way.

7. Pat excess oil, if any, off with paper towels.

8. Take a warm bath or shower, being very careful not to slip. Wipe excess oil off your feet before stepping off the towel or mat. Use a very gentle, non-soap cleanser and a gentle shampoo.

9. Pat your skin with a towel and apply moisturizing lotion or gentle, natural dusting powder suitable for you.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Towels, mats and any clothing you use for abhyanga will become stained and eventually oil-saturated. Placing oily cloth in the laundry has been known to cause staining of other fabrics or worse-dryer fires!

You have two safe options for taking care of oily cloth:

1 - If cloth is only lightly oily and not saturated, wash the SAME DAY with hot water and adequate soap or detergent. Monitor the drying session to ensure there is no problem.

2 - Opt to use old mats or towels. Do not launder them at all, but periodically throw them away safely and replace.

When you practice self-abhyanga, I hope you will allow yourself to experience the nourishment, and feel a deep contentment, true serenity.

With care,

*Niïka*

For more self-care visit [AYURMAMA.com](http://AYURMAMA.com)