

# An Introduction to Panchakarma

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Disease free condition is the best source of virtue, wealth, gratification and emancipation while diseases are the destroyers of this (source of) welfare and life itself. This reference comes from one of the classical texts of Ayurveda, the Charaka Samhita.

*CS. SU 1:15-17*

Ayurveda is the science of life. It's the healing system that gives us the knowledge how to live our life - guiding us through diet, lifestyle and exercise habits to restore balance to the body, mind, and our consciousness.



The signature aim of Ayurveda is to emphasize prevention of disease over the curing of disease.

Prevention and treatment of disease can be done through the incredible source of Ayurvedic knowledge by learning how to live in harmony. This harmony can be achieved by adhering to a combination of the following:

- Dinacharya/ Daily Routine
- Rtucharya/ Seasonal Routine
- Ratri charya/ Nightly Routine
- Shamana/ pacifying treatment
- Body Purification procedures (Shodhanan/Panchakarma treatment)
- Rasayana/ Rejuvenation treatment
- Yoga

Improper diet, habits, lifestyle, incompatible food combinations, season changes, trauma, grief, repressed emotions, and stress factors can change the equilibrium of the Doshas (Vata, Pitta, Kapha) and affect our Agni (gastric fire) and produce Ama (toxins).

This Ama/ toxins can enter the blood stream and circulate throughout our system, clogging channels. This will affect our Prana (Vital life energy), Ojas (Immunity) and Tejas (cellular metabolic energy) resulting in disease.

# Introduction to Panchakarma

Panchakarma is truly the Soul of Ayurveda and a Panchakarma programme will help to get in touch with your soul. Panchakarma is a Sanskrit term that translates as the five (pancha) actions (karma) necessary to cleanse the body of accumulated waste material.

## Benefits of Panchakarma

Cleansing of the digestive tract, increases energy and vitality, increased happiness, improved digestion and assimilation, improved fertility, strengthened the endocrine system, assists in balancing the mind, strengthens the immune system, reduces stress and anxiety, promotes a healthy sleep, detoxifies the liver and blood, healthy weight loss, improved complexion and skin tone.

## Steps to Panchakarma

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### Deepana/Pachana

First with Deepana/ Pachana herbs and diet to digest the ama and make the agni function well.

The herbs and diet advise will be given to you in your Pre-panchakarma consultation at the clinic. Herbs such as Ginger, Black Pepper, Long pepper are used.

This process is usually 3-7 days.

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### Snehana/Oleation

Snehana/ Oleation of the body (internal/abhyantar through the intake of medicated ghee and external/bahya through the full body oil Abhyanga massage) is completed.

Snehanam sneha vishyanda mardav kledakarkam *Ch. Su.22.*

The Sneha/ oil acts as liquefaction, softening, moistening of the toxins.

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### Swedana

Swedana , the sudation therapy, is used after Snehana to open the dhatus and srotas and it will liquefy the toxins and increases the movement of the toxins into the gastrointestinal tract.

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## Vamana

This is the best treatment for aggravated Kapha Dosha.

Vamana is a process which eliminates doshas (malas) through induced vomiting. When there is congestion in the lungs causing repeated flare up of bronchitis, colds, cough, Asthma.

Therapeutic vomiting is also indicated in chronic Asthma, diabetes. Chronic cold, lymphatic congestion, chronic indigestion, certain skin disease, and oedema as well as other Kaphaja vyadhi/ Kapha ailments.

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## Virechana

This is the best treatment for aggravated Pitta dosha.

When excess Pitta is accumulated in the gall bladder, liver, and small intestine it tends to result in rashes, skin inflammation, acne, increased body heat...

A herbal laxative is administered in the early morning to expel the Malas/ toxins through the downward tracts. After administration of the virechana herb a series of loose bowel movements follow.

After a successful virechana the digestion improves, appetite increases, abdominal bloating and heaviness disappear and the mind feels calm and clear. It deeply cleanses the blood, liver and bile.

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## Basti / Enema therapy

Basti treatment is the main treatment for increased doshas, predominantly Vata.

There are 2 types of basti, one is Niruha basti (eliminating basti) and one is called Anuvasana basti (oil based enema). The 2 bastis are done in alternation to reach deeper, affecting all of the body tissues (dhatus).

It is best if the Basti can be practiced over 8 days, this is called Yoga basti.

Many Vata disease such as arthritis, rheumatism, muscle spasm, sciatica, backache, joint pains, headaches, constipation, gynaecological disorders, infertility .... are treated with this treatment.

Just as a tree irrigated with water at the root produces blue leaves, become beautiful with tender leaves, and during the course of time grows to produce flowers and fruits, similarly a person becomes young and beautiful by the administration of Anuvasana.

*Charaka.Si 1:29*

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Enema though situated in the large intestine draws out impurity from head to the feet by its power just as the sun takes away sap of the earth even staying in the sky.

*Sushruta Chi 35:27*

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## Nasya

Nasya has a therapeutic effect on all dosha and subdoshas as it pacifies Prana Vayu immediately.

Nasya is also called Shirovirechana shiro (head) + Virechana (purgation).

This is the procedure by which Medicines are introduced via the nasal passages. The medicines used for this treatment include oil (most common), powders, paste, swarasa, decoctions and smoke.

Prana, life force energy enters the body through the breath taken in through the nose. Prana is in the brain and maintains sensory and motor functions. Prana also governs mental activities, memory, concentration and intellectual activities.

Benefits include disease prevention of the ear, nose, throat and head. Treatment for hair loss, premature greying and skin conditions. Strengthening the sense organs. Gynaecological disorders, the common cold, migraines, headaches, facial paralysis, and allergies.

### 3 types of Nasya

- Virechana (purgative): drains out the doshas in the nasal passage and the throat and relieves the head of its heaviness. Ideal for headaches related to Kapha dosha, dullness, sinus congestion and nasal polyps.
- Brimhana (nourishing): effective in Vata and Pitta conditions. Migraines, dryness of the mouth and nose, speech impediments, eye disease, tinnitus, insomnia, cervical spondylitis, paralysis, dementia, macular degeneration, trigeminal neuralgia, tension headaches.
- Shamana (palliative): useful in premature greying of the hair, chronic eye disease, skin patches, hyper pigmentation, alopecia and hair loss.

Duration of the treatment: 7-14 days

After the completion of the treatment it is advised to gargle and follow with the inhalation of medicinal smoke (Dhumapana).

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## Raktamokshana

This is a therapy for managing disease caused by rakta and pitta.

Raktamokshana is the fifth panchakarma therapy in which impure blood is taken out by various methods.

Raktamokshana can be done with or without surgical instruments.

Without instruments it is done by:

- Jalauka/ leech therapy
- Shringa vacharana (cows horn)
- Ghatyantra/ pot
- Alabu (pumpkin)

Indications are skin disease, Acne, boils, mouth ulcers, and skin itchiness.

## Tips for your Panchkarma Treatment

During your panchakarma you should avoid long distance travelling, computers, too much talking, loud music/ noises and a mono diet of Kitchadi should be followed. Cold drinks, deep fried, sugary, salty and hot and spicy food should be avoided.

We would love to hear from you if you have any questions.

Warmly, Karin and the Lakshmi team.

