



Fasting

Please read these guidelines carefully and clarify all queries with your Ayurvedic practitioner prior to commencing the following programme. Also make sure you immediately contact your practitioner during the fast, in case you have any problems, questions or doubts.

If *Panchakarma* is not possible, fasting can be a highly effective alternative. It balances the *doshas*, rectifies *agni* (digestive fire), clears *shrotas* (channels) and strengthens all *dhatu*s (tissues). It removes *aam* (toxic accumulations) from body, mind and emotions, and helps to reduce excess weight and swelling. Fasting improves the overall functioning of the body; provides tranquillity, strength, energy and vitality; increases immunity and also develops the 'inner healer'.

Total fasting on water alone is generally not recommended for more than one and a half days at a time. Very long fasting not only depletes the *agni* (digestive fire), but also gradually increases *vata*. Extending the period of total fasting over two days should only be considered for those with a *kapha* constitution and for patients with fever who should fast until the temperature has returned to normal. Another exception are patients suffering from problems such as arthritis, high blood pressure, diabetes etc. who can benefit greatly from fasting for longer periods, but only under the supervision of a doctor.

In order to prepare the body and enable it to release toxins more effectively, it is extremely important to prepare the body prior to fasting by eating only *mung* soup for three to four days. *Mung* bean soup is very effective for removing toxins and kindling the digestive fire. It can be taken throughout the day, but only when there is genuine hunger and the previous meal has been completely digested (in order to check: drink hot water and if the taste of your last meal comes up, the digestive process has not yet been completed). If you feel like having a 'break' from *mung*, then a soup made from pumpkin, squashes or green leafy vegetables can also be taken once a day.

These days of soup preparation are then followed by one and a half days of total fasting on just a fasting drink (see recipe below). On the afternoon/evening of the second fasting day only a small meal of *mand* without *ghee* (see recipe below) should be taken. It is very important to break the fast in this way in order to avoid taxing of the digestive fire, which has just been re-kindled by the fasting.

On the subsequent five days only the diet described on page 3 should be taken, as it will help to gradually re-accustom your system to normal eating again. This light food also acts as a medium to further flush out toxins from the GI tract. If any other food is taken at this stage, it cannot get digested correctly, old accumulations remain in the body and new toxins form, undoing all the good results you have achieved.

Throughout the entire fasting programme create as much time alone as possible and devote your attention to being with your thoughts and feelings. Apply *ghee* onto the temples and soles of the feet before going to bed to calm the mind and promote sound sleep.

***Mung* Soup Recipe**

Mung beans are less gas producing than other beans, help remove toxins (including heavy metals!) from the body and stimulate the digestive fire. Wash the *mung* beans thoroughly and then soak them either over night or for at least two hours before cooking. Heat *ghee* in a pan and add a teaspoon of turmeric powder, 2 pinches asafoetida (to take the gas quality out of the beans) and two bay leaves. (All ingredients are available in Indian food stores and most health food shops.) Place the soaked beans in a pan and add fresh water. To one part *mung* you need at least three to four parts water. Leave to bubble away for 30-40 minutes, adding water as necessary. Slowly the beans begin to soften and break up. Continue to cook until all the beans are soft. If you use a pressure cooker, the soup is cooked much quicker.

Whilst the beans are cooking, heat some *ghee* in another pan and add one teaspoon of cumin and coriander seeds plus any other herbs or spices (except chillies), such as *garam masala*, black pepper,

kokum etc. Sauté briefly and then add a finely chopped onion, some fresh root ginger and 2-3 cloves of garlic. Sauté until the onions turn golden brown. Once the beans are soft, add the onions and spices plus some rock salt and continue to simmer for a further few minutes. Don't add salt in the beginning, as this makes the beans tougher and therefore take longer to cook. Serve with fresh coriander leaves and *ghee*.

Fasting Drink

During preparation, the actual fast itself and for at least five days afterwards, one of the fasting drinks given below should be taken throughout the day. (The relevant fasting drink for each patient is determined by his or her main imbalance.) This drink helps to keep the body strong, prevent a *doshic* disturbance and support the rectifying of the *agni*. It also helps to digest and eliminate toxins from the body. *Ghee* can be taken internally to reduce *pitta* and support *agni* (1 tsp. with hot water in the morning on an empty stomach). In addition to this drink you can also take hot water, ginger water, fennel tea or other herbal teas. Do not drink excessively; only when you feel like it. Listen to your body and drink according to its needs.

Fasting Drink for *Pitta* Imbalance

- 3 cups water
- ½ tsp. cumin powder
- ½ tsp. coriander powder
- 1 tsp. rose water
- 3 cardamom (grind the seeds)
- ½ tsp. fennel seed powder
- 1 pinch asafoetida
- 4 basil leaves
- 1 pinch black pepper
- 1 tsp. ginger juice (squeeze the juice from a few slices of root ginger)

Mix everything together in a pan and bring to the boil. Simmer gently for about 5 minutes, remove from the heat and keep it covered for a further 20 minutes. Filter and keep warm in a flask to drink regularly throughout the day.

Fasting Drink for *Vata* Imbalance

Use the same recipe as described above, but add ¼ tsp. *ajwain* powder, 2 pinch asafoetida and ¼ tsp. ginger powder.

Fasting Drink for *Kapha* Imbalance

- 2 tsp. ginger juice (squeeze the juice from a few slices of root ginger)
- 10 basil leaves made into a juice
- 1 pinch asafoetida
- 2 pinch black pepper
- ½ tsp. cumin powder
- 3 cups water

Mix everything together in a pan and bring to the boil. Simmer gently for about 5 minutes, remove from the heat and keep it covered for a further 20 minutes. Filter and keep warm in a flask to drink regularly throughout the day. If you experience dryness in the mouth during the fast, just add half a teaspoon of liquorice root to the flask.

Herbal Remedies during Fasting

The effect of this fast is even more enhanced when combined with herbs individually prescribed for you by an Ayurvedic practitioner. These remedies should be taken with food during the preparation and post-fasting days, but should not be taken during the 1½ days of total fasting.

During the fast some people experience constipation. If this occurs take 1-3 tsp. of Amrutadi powder at night before bed with warm water. Once the bowels start moving then reduce the dosage for the next few nights and then stop. If this remedy is not available to you then take 2 tsp. coarsely ground liquorice

root, 2 tsp. haritaki powder *Terminalia chebula* (if available) and 1 tsp. senna leaves and boil in 2 cups water till it has reduce to ½ cup. Filter and drink this liquid at night before bed with 2-3 tsp. castor oil.

Siddha Paste

Applying *siddha* paste on and around the navel once a day is an effective way to speed up the removal of intestinal blocks and toxic accumulations.

- 1 small onion
- 3 cloves garlic
- 1 tsp. dry ginger powder
- 1 tsp. *ajwain* powder
- ½ tsp. black pepper
- ¼ tsp. asafoetida (*hing*)
- 2 tabs. *Suhruday* (if available)
- 2 tabs. *Anulom* (if available)

Chop the onion and put it into a blender with the garlic. Crush the medicines (if you have them), add the powders and mix everything into a paste, which should have a moist and chutney-like consistency. If it is too runny, add more *ajwain* and ginger powder. Lie comfortably on your back and apply the paste on the stomach all around the navel area. Close your eyes, relax and leave the paste there for at least 15-20 minutes. This paste is also an excellent remedy to apply on any area that is painful, such as the lower back or on strained or aching joints, muscles and tendons.

Diet for the Time after the 1½ Days of Total Fasting

Fasting rectifies *agni*, but in order to establish and maintain a proper functioning of the digestive fire, it is extremely important to return to normal food gradually. Five days is the absolute minimum time needed before a wider variety of foods can be re-introduced without causing digestive problems. This is very important, because if *agni* is not properly supported at this stage, new *aam* and toxins will be created again. Due to the same reason, it is necessary to strictly follow the diet guidelines given to you by your Ayurvedic practitioner and to definitely maintain a meat and wheat-free diet for at least the first 10 days.

Post-Fasting Regime:

- 1st Day *Mand* with spices, but no *ghee*. Eat and chew the soup; don't drink it!
- 2nd Day *Mand* or watery *mung* soup with *ghee*.
- 3rd Day *Peya* with spices and *ghee*.
- 4th Day *Mung* soup and rice or *vilepi* with *ghee*, or vegetable soup.
- 5th Day *Vilepi*, *mung* soup or vegetable soup and rice with *ghee*.

It is very important during this whole programme to only eat when you are hungry, never to fill your stomach to its full capacity and not to eat the next meal until the previous one has been completely digested, i.e. 3-4 hrs after eating or when there is pure belching after taking some hot water. Try to take your meals in a calm and quiet atmosphere, focusing on the food and chewing it well.

Mand, Peya and Vilepi Recipes

Mand, *peya* and *vilepi* are three types of *khichadi*. *Khichadi* is a special Indian dish, which is very easy to digest, highly nutritious and, most importantly, it ignites the digestive fires. All three *khichadis* are prepared in the same way, but require different amounts of water. The amounts of water given below apply when cooking in a pressure cooker; more water should be added when cooking with a normal pan.

- Mand*: 1 part rice, *mung* (split or whole) and vegetables to 8 parts water.
- Peya*: 1 part rice, *mung* (split or whole) and vegetables to 6 parts water.
- Vilepi*: 1 part rice, *mung* (split or whole) and vegetables to 4 parts water.

Cooking instructions:

Wash the *mung* beans thoroughly and then soak them for at least two hours before cooking. Heat *ghee* in a pan and add cumin seeds, some finely chopped onion, root ginger and garlic and sauté until golden brown. Stir in 1 tsp. turmeric powder, $\frac{1}{8}$ tsp. asafoetida, some black pepper, a few bay leaves, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. coriander powder and 1 tsp. *garam masala*. At this stage don't add salt, as it makes the beans tougher and they would therefore take longer to cook. Add to the pan $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of rice, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of *mung* beans and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of chopped vegetables such as carrots, pumpkin, courgettes or asparagus. Now add the required amount of water as stated above. In a normal pan you might need to add more water and cook for about 30 minutes, whereas in a pressure cooker it will cook within about five minutes after coming to pressure.

When the *khichadi* is ready, i.e. the beans have dissolved and the rice is completely soft and broken up, add a little salt and serve with *ghee* and fresh coriander leaves.

Mand should have a very watery consistency (blending it in a liquidizer helps to improve its flavour). *Peya* is like a thick soup and *vilepi* has a consistency similar to mashed potatoes. Use a thermos flask to take some soup with you to work.

An Ideal Time for Fasting

There are many natural rhythms and factors, which have a profound influence on the human body, and the cycle of the moon is a particularly powerful one. The gravitational force of the moon creates not only the tidal movements, but also affects certain physiological functions in every human being, animal and plant on earth. For example, a waning moon (the period of roughly fourteen days in which the moon travels from a full to a new moon) has a detoxifying effect on all living beings, and the closer the time to a new moon is the stronger this action becomes. Therefore, it is recommended to begin any fast on the day after a full moon night in order to achieve optimum cleansing results. If you want to cleanse periodically, then it is most beneficial to do so at the joint between two seasons: especially when winter becomes spring and when late summer turns into autumn.

Also try to plan your cleanse in such a way that the period of total fasting (1½ days) is on a weekend or on days when you are not working, so that you have time for yourself and can give your body and mind the full rest they require. On these particular days try to be alone as much as possible and avoid reading, watching TV or doing any house work. Take rest, listen to music and just be with whatever thoughts, emotions and feelings arise.

Day-by-Day Schedule

Day 1 Only Mung soup, Fasting Drink, herbal teas and hot water. Apply Siddha paste

Day 2	as above
Day 3	as above
Day 4	as above
Day 5	No food to be taken the whole day. Take only the Fasting drink, herbal teas and hot water. Apply Siddha paste
Day 6	As Day 5

Afternoon/Evening of Day 6: break the fast with *Mand* (see recipe)

Day 7	Follow the Post-Fasting Regime shown on page 3, plus take the Fasting Drink, herbal teas and hot water. Apply Siddha paste
Day 8	see Day 7
Day 9	as above
Day 10	as above
Day 11	as above