

# Ayurvedic Lifestyle



## Self Care

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*Yesterday is but a shadow. Tomorrow is only a dream.  
But today well lived makes every yesterday a memory  
of happiness and every tomorrow a vision of hope.  
Live well therefore this day.*

-Anonymous.

## Daily routine

### Dina-carya

The term 'dina' means day and 'carya' denotes routine, the word 'carya' coming from the root 'car', which means 'to move, to follow or to walk'. Hence Dina-carya is the path we follow to the beat of nature's heart leading us to joy and enlightenment. This is why a teacher or master is known as 'acarya', or one who flows with nature's rhythm.

### The importance of dina-carya

The small habits we perform consistently on a daily basis have immense accumulative benefit in our life. Ayurvedic daily routines teach us to ride nature's waves so we can effortlessly float through each day. Dina-carya is the foundation of health, happiness and spiritual advancement.

The following is a sample day with some suggested times. Adjust it according to your schedule's convenience. A steady routine gives your physiology a healthy rhythm. Once we resonate with the rhythm of mother nature she embraces us in the cosmic dance of growth and vitality. Aim to minimise stress and tend to your highest priorities.

Your Ideal time	Ideal time	Daily routine
	6-7am	Awakening. Visualisations and affirmations. Emptying bowels bladder. Brushing teeth, scraping tongue, washing mouth, cleansing nose eyes and ears. Exercising. Massaging body, face and scalp. Shower.
	7-8am	Yoga asanas -Pranayama. Meditation/ reading from a spiritually enlivening text. Dressing and grooming.
	8-9am	Prepare and take breakfast.
	9-12noon	Perform daily duties in the most positive consciousness.
	12-1pm	Lunch and a gentle walk, appreciating nature.
	1-5pm	Continue daily duties. Plan the schedule for the following day.
	6-6.30pm	Give yourself a foot massage. Have a shower or bath. Meditation & pranayama.

	7-8pm	Prepare and have dinner. Spend some time with family.
	8.30-9pm	Have a gentle walk. Assess your performance during the day and contemplate the lessons given.
	9.30-10pm	Prepare to sleep.
	10pm	Go to bed

## Awakening

Observe how animals rise with the sun. They are in tune with the natural circadian rhythms of the universe. Similarly we can aim to rise and rest early. Our minds have greatest clarity in the morning so this is the best time for spiritual and intellectual practices. The morning sunlight is filled with life force (prana) whereas the noon sun can drain us of life.

## Visualisating / affirming

Imagery is very potent at the three transitional points of your day. This is known as samkalpa in ayurveda or yoga. It can be practiced at any time, the best time being early in the morning, upon waking, at twilight and before sleep. Ideally creative visualisation (imagery) is performed in a quiet room at a time when you won't be disturbed, however it can be done anywhere at any time.

If you prefer to sit while visualising, place your feet flat on the floor, your palms in your lap or by your side, keeping your spine straight and your head in alignment with your body. You may prefer to lie down in which case keep your legs slightly apart, your palms by your side, facing upwards and your head in alignment with your body. Gently close your eyes and relax your whole body. Bring your awareness to your breathing. Feel your whole body becoming heavy and sinking into the floor as if you were resting in a warm cloud.

A simple visualisation is to picture your ideal state of physical and emotional wellbeing. See yourself effortlessly and joyfully moving through the day spreading love and light to everyone you contact. A simple affirmation is "every day in every way my life is getting better and better" or "I embody health, vitality and love."

## Physical cleansing

Proper evacuation of wastes ensures good health whereas incomplete evacuation is the harbinger of all disease. The morning is the natural time for emptying the bowel and bladder. This ideally occurs before eating. Once the internal world is pure you can ingest fresh energising food.

Signs of health include an easy and complete bowel motion and urination. They should be regular, without a strong smell, colour or shape. Stools shouldn't sink or have a fatty look or contain undigested food particles. Cleansing of all orifices is considered important to protect our sensory clarity. The teeth, tongue, eyes and ears are all purified in the morning. Brushing the teeth and scraping the tongue should be done in the morning before we ingest anything. Scraping the tongue can be very beneficial for the prevention of gum, dental and heart diseases. A smooth edged steel, copper or silver tongue scraper. Alternatively a spoon can be used.

## Self massage

This is essential to improve the circulation. Self-massage is a wonderfully relaxing and grounding meditation. It is best to use cold-pressed sesame, olive or almond oil that has been warmed slightly.

## Exercise

Exercises are performed preferably after self massage. This nourishes our entire body especially our neuro-muscular system and lubricates the joints.

## Bathing / shower

A lukewarm shower or bath is always preferable. Hot water is detrimental to one's vision and hair hence it should not be used on the head. Body brushing during or before a shower is extremely beneficial to remove dead skin cells and stimulate the deep and superficial circulation. Bathing should be done either before meals or 2-3 hours after eating. Never take a shower or bath on a full stomach as this diverts the circulation from the digestive process.

A bath or shower has the following effects: clears the mind, cleanses the etheric body, improves the quality of sleep, purifies the skin, improves immunity, acts as a circulatory stimulant and aphrodisiac.

## Breathing – pranayama

This is the best done after exercising and bathing. These simple yogic breathing techniques purify our lymphatic system, raise immunity and boost energy reserves.

## Meditating

As the body and breath are exercised and stretched, this is the perfect time for chanting, repeating some positive phrases or mantras or creative visualisation. Meditation improves focus and brings one in touch with the self or awareness.

## Eating

This involves three major components, namely the cook, the food and the eater. Preparing food with love improves absorption. It is not how much you eat. It is how much you absorb from the food you ingest that is of prime importance.

There is wise saying “what you put on your mind is more important than what you put on your plate”. We also have to consider the compatibility of the food to our system, though it is healthy food. There should be different textures and all six tastes in a meal.

To make it more complete and meaningful, the eater should involve all their five sense organs whilst eating. After sunset our body starts winding down. All bodily functions slow down. Our pulse rate and blood pressure drop. Since the digestion is dull at this time a light dinner is always better. It is also good for a quality sleep. This allows the body to rest rather than pouring energy into digestion. If it is late and you are really hungry just have a light, tasty soup. See the rules of eating to optimise nutrition and digestion.

## Daily service

*Service is the rent we pay for living on this earth* - Mother Theresa

Perform meaningful and fulfilling work with utmost devotion, love and mindfulness. Take 10 minutes out during the day to connect with nature and listen to your inner yearnings.

## Reflection

Reflecting on what the day taught you and what could be improved is the best way to counter negative conditioning. Thank a higher power for helping you achieve your goals and have gratitude for the blessings in your life.

*As Ayurvedic ascholar Vagbhata said - One who regularly reflects on how their day and night are passing and adapts the right way will never perpetuate suffering.*

Retire

Mentally and physically prepare for sleep.

Four pillars of health

Proper nutrition, Ahara, is the first pillar of health. The food, the eater, the digestion, the time, the quantity, the preparation and the combination are some of the most important aspects of eating. Nidra, is rest. The timing, quantity, quality, duration etc are some of the main aspects to examine. Maithunam, literally meaning relationship -between us and our surroundings -people, work, nature and most importantly with ourselves are vital to a healthy life. Vyayama, exercise is the fourth pillar. Vyayama also stands for correct posture.

1. Nutrition - Aaharam
2. Rest & Exercise - Nidra & Vyaayaama
3. Relationship - Maithunam
4. Exercise - Vyayama

Here we will discuss the scientific way of eating.

1. Nutrition - Aharam

Are you just what you eat? In Ayurveda, the proper transformation of food into healthy tissue is based on the strength of the digestive fire (agni). The assimilation of nutrients and elimination of wastes is largely dependent on the efficiency of the digestive fire. So, Ayurveda believes you are what you assimilate. Perfect digestion creates radiant health and strong immunity. Unbalanced digestive fire leads to the improper transformation of food into toxins, the basis of all disease.

Signs of perfect digestion Clear, smooth skin; bright, clear eyes; balanced moods; regular and healthy appetite; absence of gastric disturbances and other diseases; glossy hair; light, flexible body; deep, refreshing sleep; abundant energy and vitality; positive attitude and lifestyle habits.

Signs of poor digestion Irregular appetite; frequent indigestion; weight loss / gain; coating of tongue; blotchy, dry or oily skin; lifeless hair; dull eyes; bloated abdomen with cramps / gas; undigested food in stool, dark or cloudy urine; disturbed sleep that isn't refreshing; excess mucous; body pains; gastrointestinal disorders and general fatigue.

How did I get poor digestion? The following are some of the factors that contribute towards a weak digestion. By guarding against these you can prevent and treat most illnesses:

- Taking the wrong foods at the wrong time, in the wrong amount, in the wrong way or in a negative mental or physical environment. The most common dietary indiscretion in developed countries is over eating causing a phenomenon known as “the under-nutrition of over consumption”
- Premature stimulation, suppression or failure to attend to the body's natural urges such as thirst, hunger, urination, defecation, sleep, passing flatus & sneezing.
- Taking cold drinks or foods such as ice cream.

- Taking synthetic prescription / recreational drugs.
- Exposure to external toxins such as air pollutants, chemical beauty products and perfumes.
- Prolonged emotional strain such as stress, grief, anger and denial.

### Optimise your nutrition

By practicing the following tips you will create perfect digestion. Remember to eat your liquids & drink your solids!

1. BEFORE EATING	2. DURING EATING	3. AFTER EATING
<p>Am I really hungry? It is best to eat only when you are really hungry and when the previous meal has been fully digested (roughly 5 hours).</p> <p>Do I need to go to the toilet first? It is recommended to empty one's bowels and bladder before eating. It is a sign of ill health to empty one's bowels immediately after eating.</p> <p>Did I wash my hands, face &amp; feet? Simple hygiene is important to avoid illness. Avoid taking a full shower or swim within three hours after eating as it draws the circulation away from the digestion.</p> <p>Am I in congenial surroundings? Good company, conversation &amp; surroundings are conducive to a contented mind, which assists proper digestion.</p> <p>Did I express my gratitude? This may be in the form of a prayer to a higher power or at least to the people who helped to provide the meal.</p>	<p>Am I rushing? Eat at a moderate speed, taking care to chew each mouthful at least 10-20 times.</p> <p>Am I appreciating this meal? Take time to appreciate the sound, the aroma, the texture, appearance and the taste of the food.</p> <p>Do I need a drink? Small quantities of warm drinks encourage efficient absorption, elimination and the action of the digestive fire.</p> <p>Am I satisfied? It is important to remember that the stomach is only the size of a fist. In order to avoid over eating make it a practice to fill your stomach half with solid food, a quarter with liquids and leave the remaining one quarter empty for space to circulate to aid digestion.</p>	<p>One should avoid heavy labour, exercise or mental work for at least thirty minutes after eating.</p> <p>A slow walk for five minutes is advised. Sleep is best avoided for three hours after eating as this causes the formation of toxins.</p> <p>However, one may lie on the left side for up to fifteen minutes. A yoga pose known as <b>Vajrasana</b> is a good sitting posture to aid digestion.</p>

### THE IDEAL DIET

An ideal meal in Ayurvedic nutrition has all the following qualities:

- Fresh, locally grown, seasonal and organic ingredients.
- Consists of dishes with all the six tastes.

- Consists of many textures.
- Has a good balance between heavy and light, moist and dry, cooked and raw, cooling and heating foods.
- Suitable to the climate, the constitution of the eater, lifestyle and the condition of the body.
- Appears, tastes and smells delicious.
- Prepared lovingly in hygienic conditions.
- There are complementary proteins such as rice & dhal.
- Heavier foods should be eaten earlier in the meal and lighter foods towards the end.
- Cooking in healthy earthen, ceramic, bronze, copper or stainless steel vessels.
- In general avoid alcohol, meat, yeast, carbonated drinks, caffeinated drinks, tobacco, refined sugar, white flour, additives, preservatives and canned food.
- Eaten with full awareness.

## BOOSTING YOUR DIGESTIVE FIRE

Before eating: 15 minutes before eating try the following recipe. Mix half a tsp grated ginger with half a tsp. lemon juice and a pinch of rock salt.

After eating: Chew one teaspoon of equal parts of fennel seeds, cumin seeds, cardamom seeds, black pepper and rock sugar.

Fasting Fasting is often the most effective way to purify your body of toxins. In Ayurveda, fasts are tailored according to the individuals degree of toxic accumulation, their strength and specific imbalance. To maintain health one is advised to have a cleansing tea fast or a warm water fast one day a fortnight in order to give the digestive system a rest, to re-establish proper eating habits and to expel accumulated toxins.

A mental purification is followed at the same time which involves silence other than prayers or affirmations, avoiding exposure to television, radio or noise and adherence to the principles of honesty, celibacy, cleanliness and service to others. Heavy mental and physical exertion is avoided at this time, however short walks in nature and self-massage are considered highly beneficial.

Eat to live

Once you have purified your body and established healthy eating habits nutrition should be easy to maintain. Obsessively worrying about your diet or feeling remorse after dietary indiscretion sets up a self-destructive pattern. We are not “living to eat” but we also have to be careful that we don’t feed disease. By slowly incorporating these Ayurvedic principles into your life the benefits experienced should be incentive enough to follow them with ease.

## 2. Rest -Nidra

*Sleep decides whether one will be healthy or sick, energetic or weak, underweight or overweight, fertile or infertile, wise or foolish and alive or dead - Vagbhata*

Sleep is the process through which we rejuvenative, repair and revive our system. This is the time our body and mind goes through repair and rebuilding.

Best time: Sleep between 9 and 10 pm gives maximum quality. To improve sleep a gentle exercise is good before an early dinner. Foot massage in the evening also aids deep sleep.

Direction of the head: Head should be directed to east or south to optimise sleep. This is to do with the magnetic fields of our body and that of the earth.

Position of the bedroom: This should be decided based on Vastu Shastra principles. Feng Shui is the Chinese version of Indian Vastu Shastra.

Signs of good sleep: One feels refreshed and energised after a good sleep. Sleep is peaceful, and is mostly unaware of dreams. One feels positive and happy after a good sleep. There won't be puffy eyes, headaches, sinus congestion, heaviness of the body, tiredness, aches and pain etc in the morning.

### 3. Relationship - Maithunam

Our relationship with the nature, society, family, colleagues and ourself is important in building a healthy life. The first two limbs of yoga discusses this. Sexual relationship is also given importance in Ayurvedic texts as it is the most physical and intimate act of a relationship. General rules include -use aphrodisiacs, reduce the frequency in summer, sickness, low energy conditions and focus more on quality rather than quantity.

### 4. Exercise – Vyayama

*With the proper amount of exercise the body becomes light and efficient, the metabolic fire becomes strong and keen, fat is reduced and the physique becomes compact. The correct exercise brings strength and flexibility and thus a healthy life. - Vagbhata*

When? Exercise is best performed before eating. This prevents the formation of toxins in the system. It is never done soon after eating and just before eating or sleeping. It should be 2-3 hours after eating a normal meal.

How much? Exercise is done until one's half strength is used. Over exercise results in depletion and permanent damage of the body. Reduce the intensity and duration during summer, but you may perform it to your maximum capacity during cold seasons.

What type? Strengthening and stretching in symmetry in the right combination for your bodily requirements.

### How much can I improve? (general)

	5 = very true - 0 = not at all
I get headaches often	5 4 3 2 1 0
I feel heavy/tired when I wake up	5 4 3 2 1 0
I feel sleepy/tired after a meal	5 4 3 2 1 0
I get shaky/irritable/tired if I miss a meal	5 4 3 2 1 0
I get gas/bloated with some food	5 4 3 2 1 0
I get diarrhoea / constipation	5 4 3 2 1 0
I get tired in the afternoon	5 4 3 2 1 0
I have negative / upsetting dreams in my sleep	5 4 3 2 1 0
I get sore joints / back / neck	5 4 3 2 1 0
I have weight problems (loss / gain)	5 4 3 2 1 0

Though I eat fairly well, my energy is low	5 4 3 2 1 0
I get mouth ulcers/ cold sores	5 4 3 2 1 0
I get sinus/hay fever in winter	5 4 3 2 1 0
My scalp is itchy / my nails are ridged	5 4 3 2 1 0
I get stiff/tight joints	5 4 3 2 1 0
My hair falls especially under stress	5 4 3 2 1 0
I have difficulty making decisions	5 4 3 2 1 0
I get pain/blood with my bowel movement	5 4 3 2 1 0
I get rashes/itchy skin/psoriasis/eczema	5 4 3 2 1 0
I think the world is a very bad place	5 4 3 2 1 0
Total: I can improve another	%

## Digestion

I don't get hungry periodically	5 4 3 2 1 0
I never feel satisfied after a meal	5 4 3 2 1 0
I don't feel energised and relaxed after a meal	5 4 3 2 1 0
I crave sugar/salt/carbohydrate after a meal	5 4 3 2 1 0
Many times I feel sick after a meal	5 4 3 2 1 0
I take a long time to recover from a meal	5 4 3 2 1 0
I feel hypoglycaemic if a meal is delayed	5 4 3 2 1 0
I get headaches if a meal is missed or delayed	5 4 3 2 1 0
I get headaches during fasting	5 4 3 2 1 0
I tend to overeat	5 4 3 2 1 0
I am in a hurry and don't chew my food at all	5 4 3 2 1 0
I worry a lot during eating	5 4 3 2 1 0
I talk a lot during eating	5 4 3 2 1 0
I watch TV/read book /news paper while eating	5 4 3 2 1 0
I get gas/bloating often	5 4 3 2 1 0
Total: I can improve another	/75

## Sleep

I don't sleep well	5 4 3 2 1 0
I toss and turn	5 4 3 2 1 0
I get night sweats	5 4 3 2 1 0

I get nightmares	5 4 3 2 1 0
My sleep is light, any noise can disturb me	5 4 3 2 1 0
I remember my dreams	5 4 3 2 1 0
I am a “late night” person	5 4 3 2 1 0
I don’t wake up refreshed, energised / positive	5 4 3 2 1 0
I am slow, sluggish and cranky in the morning	5 4 3 2 1 0
I feel like having more sleep in the morning	5 4 3 2 1 0
Total: I can improve another	/50

## Relationships

I could improve	
my relationship with my spirit	5 4 3 2 1 0
my relationship with myself	5 4 3 2 1 0
my relationship with my spouse	5 4 3 2 1 0
my relationship with my friends	5 4 3 2 1 0
my relationship with my family	5 4 3 2 1 0
my relationship with my colleagues	5 4 3 2 1 0
my relationship with society	5 4 3 2 1 0
Total: I can improve another	/35

**Four B’s for perfect health:**

*Keep you brain moving, Keep your breath moving,  
Keep your body moving, Keep your bowels moving.*