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Exercise Your Way to Health with Ayurveda

By Shreelata Suresh

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Ayurvedic healers recommend exercise on a daily basis for good health and longevity. The ayurvedic approach to exercise focuses not only on the physical benefits exercise imparts, but also on its positive influence on mind, heart, senses and spirit when customized to suit individual needs for balance.

The ayurvedic approach to exercise aims at the following physical benefits:

· Enhanced circulation · Enhanced energy, strength and vitality · Enhanced flexibility and coordination · Good posture · Increased ability to breathe deeper, infusing more prana into the system · A feeling of lightness in the body · Toned muscles and body · Increased efficiency of the digestive system and a balanced appetite and metabolism · Increased efficiency in eliminating toxins from the body

The ayurvedic approach to exercise also aims at the following benefits for mind, heart and spirit:

· Enhanced mental alertness and agility · Enhanced mental strength · Enhanced focus and ability to concentrate · Sense of emotional equilibrium · Enhanced self-esteem and respect for one's body · Self-awareness · Enhanced ability to manage stress · Freedom of spirit

General Ayurvedic Exercise Guidelines

Exercise done to the point of discomfort tends to be counterproductive. When you work out to the point where you are sore, exhausted and straining to breathe normally, your body is generating free radicals, which have been implicated in disease and premature aging. Excessive free radical build-up in the body tends to lower natural immunity. Also, when you work your body so hard that you have to take a day off to rest it after every three days of exercise, you are increasing wear and tear. Over-exercising can interfere with your metabolism as well, slowing it down.

To get the benefits from exercise without the side effects, exercise only as long as you can breathe normally through the nose. When you begin to feel yourself pushing beyond your zone of comfort, slow down and walk until you can resume again without straining. Over time, as your body acclimatizes itself to your new way of working out, you will be able to exercise longer in comfort. Pay heed to your body

and it will guide you towards your optimum exercise type and level.

The ayurvedic texts describe the concept of balaardh—using half your strength or capacity—when you exercise. For example, if you can run a 4–minute mile, you would do it in 8 minutes using the concept of balaardh. As you maintain the exercise program, your capacity will increase, so that the 50% 3 months down the line will be greater than the 50% you do today.

When done this way, you will be able to enjoy exercise and you will stay with it longer, and you won't have the burnout or injuries that often come with working out till you drop. When exercise is done within your comfort zone, it is also nourishing to your heart and emotions and enhances your sense of overall well–being.

Exercise early in the morning. When you work out in the morning, exercise helps elevate energy levels for the day and promotes more restful sleep at night. If you exercise in the evening, you may have trouble settling down to sleep.

Do not exercise on a completely empty stomach or just after a full meal. Eat something light, such as a small portion of stewed fruit, about 15 minutes before you exercise. If you've eaten a full meal, wait at least three hours before you work out, to avoid diverting the body's focus from digesting the meal and assimilating the nutrients.

Do not look on exercise only as the means to another goal such as attaining an ideal weight or being able to compete in an athletic event. Exercise because in itself it is a health–giving activity when done properly.

When exercising, focus on your breathing and the activity you are engaged in, instead of seeking diversion in the form of television or a magazine. Your positive attention on your work–out will add to the therapeutic benefits of the exercise program.

To enhance circulation and the elimination of toxins, ayurvedic healers recommend that exercise be preceded by abhyanga, the ayurvedic warm oil self–massage.

Customize Type of Exercise by Dosha

Ayurveda describes three psycho–physiological principles or doshas–Vata, Pitta and Kapha–that determine our constitution and personalities. Ayurvedic healers recommend that you choose the type of exercise you do, as well as its intensity and duration, based on your predominant dosha and your individual needs for balance.

If you have more Vata in your constitution, you gravitate towards quick bursts of high activity. You are quick to start an exercise program, but also likely to give it up just as quickly. Your mind is constantly in a whirl.

The ideal exercise options to balance Vata should incorporate slow movements, not be too tiring, and help settle the mind and body. Slow dancing, low impact aerobics, tai chi, leisurely swimming in warm

water, badminton, walking and yoga are examples of Vata–balancing exercise activities.

If you are Pitta–predominant, you tend to be fiercely competitive and demanding of yourself. You like to not only compete but win. You look for individual activities that require strength, focus and speed. You tend to get frustrated when you fall short of your goals.

To keep the fire element in balance, exercise options should allow for enjoyment as well as competitiveness, and be cooling for mind and body. Water, ice or snow based activities such as swimming, downhill skiing, rowing, surfing and water–skiing are good choices. Walking or jogging in a cool shady area, tennis and yoga are also good Pitta–balancing options.

Kapha–predominant persons excel at activities requiring endurance and doggedness. They like team sports and do not get upset if the scoreboard is not in their favor. They might not always be motivated to exercise, preferring a more sedentary lifestyle.

Activities to balance Kapha should draw on the strength and endurance power of the Kapha individual

but also seek to stimulate and generate intensity and liveliness. Distance walking or running, basketball, racquetball, football, aerobics, ice skating, cross country skiing and cycling are examples of Kapha–balancing exercise activities.

Note: This information is educational in nature and is not intended to replace standard medical care or advice.

Shreelata Suresh is a yoga instructor who lives in the Bay Area. She writes for various publications on yoga, ayurveda and Indian culture. For more articles on ayurveda and premier ayurvedic products, please visit <http://www.ayurbalance.com>.

Ayurveda Can Help Stop Hair Loss

By Richard Mitchell

Most hair loss sufferers seek solutions from Western medicine or turn to remedies derived from local traditions. Some experts however argue that the ayurvedic system of medicine has much to offer in dealing with hair loss conditions.

Ayurveda is the traditional system of medicine practiced in India and Sri Lanka. It is a complete approach to health care designed to promote a way of life rather than an occasional treatment. As a holistic system of medicine ayurveda focuses on our uniqueness and takes into account our mental attitude, lifestyle and spirit which should not be treated in isolation from each other.

According to ayurveda, the following principles are beneficial to healthy and plentiful hair: The scalp must be kept cool, so protection from sun and washing in cold or lukewarm water are paramount. Sound nutrition is key, so a hair–friendly diet should emphasize proteins, iron, zinc, sulfur, Vitamin C,

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Vitamin B–Complex and essential fatty acids. Use should be made of hair analysis to ascertain toxicity levels and nutritional deficiencies. Oils, for example sesame and coconut, should be applied to the scalp to nourish, lubricate and strengthen the roots. This will also improve circulation to the head.

You can find out more about alternative hair loss treatments by visiting the site listed below.

Richard Mitchell is the creator of the

website that provides information

and guidance to those suffering from premature hair loss.

Ayurveda Can Help Stop Hair Loss

Benefits of Ayurveda

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A Body at it's Best

Ayurveda Treatment For Heart

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