

# Spring Clean your Body with Ayurveda

It's time to lighten up for spring and give our bodies an internal cleanse. The ancient Indian holistic medicine system of Ayurveda has plenty of solutions for our health as we enter the warmer months, whether you want to detox, alleviate hay fever or increase energy. Yoga teacher Louise FitzRoy talks to three Ayurvedic practitioners to reveal their best tips this season.

## CONSUME LESS AND LIGHTER FOOD

Melbourne-based Dominique Salerno, Ayurvedic healer and principal of the Australian Yoga Academy, says it's time to reduce our load on the body as we enter the warmer months.

"Spring is traditionally a time of increased mucous production as the body attempts to cleanse itself of the 'ama' (toxins) it has accumulated over the winter months and the heavy foods we tend to consume during this time," she says.

"This calls for a spring cleanse and is a good time to be mindful of a gradual transition in diet to lighter, seasonal produce, dry skin brushing and increased intake of warm water. Introduce foods to reduce ama such as spices, dried ginger and fresh, lightly cooked fruits and vegetables. Now is a good time to use a neti pot (a device that irrigates the nasal passages) for those who suffer hay fever and allergies."

Dominique says it's also important to reduce your intake of coffee, alcohol, dairy, animal products and refined,



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processed carbohydrates such as bread and pasta.

## EMOTIONAL SPRING CLEANING

"Spring is the season when the liver naturally cleanses itself and this can stir up strong physical and emotional responses," Dominique says.

If your liver needs to cleanse itself, you might experience emotions including anger,

impatience, frustration, resentment, violence, belligerence and aggression in the process. The physical signs may include congestion, inflammation of the eyes, rashes, eczema and skin eruptions, a red tongue with yellow coating, high blood pressure, fluid retention and weight gain.

Dominique says if the liver is congested for a long period of time, the bile in the gall bladder

can accumulate and calcify. If this happens, you may experience similar emotional responses to those listed above, as well as indigestion, flatulence, pain below the right side of the ribs, or a bitter taste in the mouth.

### BALANCING THE DOSHAS

Ayurvedic medicine is based on the concept that our bodies are comprised of three systems or 'doshas' – vata, pitta and kapha. Vata is the air dosha, and helps transport our bodily fluids and eliminate waste. Pitta, the fire dosha, drives our digestion and speed of mental activity. Kapha, the earth and water dosha, governs mental and physical strength and our sense of 'groundedness'. If any of the doshas are out of balance, physical ailments or disease may result.

Melbourne Ayurvedic therapist Vicki Boucher offers a range of treatments to balance the doshas, such as hot oil and dry herbal massages, 'shirodhara' (restorative therapy), 'greeva basti' (treatment for relieving neck pain) and 'janu basti' (knee relief treatment).

She says spring is the perfect time to reduce excess kapha.

"Spring is the perfect time to undertake 'panchakarma'

(the Ayurvedic detoxification system)," she says.

"During the spring, the kapha that has accumulated during the winter is liquefied by the heat of the sun. This liquefaction of kapha causes dampness in the digestion. This dampness reduces 'agni', which is the metabolic fire of digestion."

As a result, Vicki warns you may experience congestion and excess mucous, hay fever, sneezing and watery eyes as the weather warms up. She says gas and acidity can result if there's an imbalance in vata and pitta.

### GETTING STARTED

Maharashi Ayurveda practitioner Faye Shepherd gives personal health care consultations from her clinic in Victoria. She specialises in correcting the imbalances in the doshas before they manifest as disease. She suggests following these tips for ultimate detoxing:

- Exercise to stimulate the metabolism and burn off toxins.
- Don't eat between meals unless hungry. Observe your hunger levels carefully and eat a lighter breakfast.
- Avoid sleeping during the day.
- Be aware of 'ama' clogging the channels of the body in spring when kapha 'melts' in the warmer temperatures. Symptoms will include stiff

and heavy, overweight, sinus problems and congestion.

- Avoid heavy, cold and hard foods to digest such as oils, heavy dairy like ice cream and too much salt. Suspend the pizza for a while! Also avoid heavier fruits such as bananas and melons, or vegetables such as sweet potato, zucchini and cucumber to excess.

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- Favour allergy-fighting spices such as fennel, cumin, turmeric and coriander.
- Eat asparagus, broccoli, cauliflower, fennel, green beans and bitter vegetables like kale.
- Lighter grains such as barley and millet are a tasty change from heavier grains such as wheat or an excess of rice.
- Apples and pears are lighter fruits to include in the diet. NH

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