



WHAT IS ABHYANGA?

According to Ayurveda, Abhyanga is a major asset of one's daily routine (dinacharya). Abhyanga is the application of warm, herb-infused oil to the entire body from head to toe. This is typically done by massaging each area of the body with the oil, while bringing great focus to any sensations that arise in the process.

This oil massage may be given by a massage therapist that has been trained in the art of Abhyanga; however, to utilize this healing practice in one's daily routine (dinacharya), you will most likely be applying this in the form of a self-oil massage.

BENEFITS OF ABHYANGA:

Abhyanga is the external application of herb-infused oil to the skin. The skin is a gateway to the Nervous System and therefore, although an external application, this practice is highly nourishing to the physical, mental and emotional body. Here is a list of the multitude of benefits you will discover with the consistent practice of Abhyanga:

- Softens and lubricates the skin
- Nourishes and heals dry skin, itchy skin, eczema, psoriasis and other skin conditions
- Increases circulation
- Balances the metabolism and the digestive fire
- Decreases inflammation and soreness in the body
- Beneficial for arthritic conditions
- Reduces stiffness in the muscles
- Promotes healthy Ojas (luster, immunity, vitality)
- Releases toxins that become lodged in various areas of the body
- Removes energetic/emotional obstructions throughout the body
- Promotes quietness and calming of the mind
- Soothes an overstimulated Nervous System
- Balances heightened emotions such as anger, anxiety, fear, worry, depression and sadness
- Reduces stress
- When applied in the evening, induces a sound sleep
- Decreases mainly Vata, however, may decrease any dosha depending on the herbs used in the medicated oil
- Strengthens the seven vital tissues (dhatus) in the body
- Anti-aging to the skin, as it promotes blood flow and prevents wrinkles

HOW TO PERFORM ABHYANGA:

Abhyanga is a mindful practice that should be done with patience, awareness and love. Abhyanga can be an essential part of the morning routine, but alternatively, can be incorporated in the evening before bedtime. Abhyanga ideally will include the entire body, from the scalp to the soles of the feet; however, this healing practice can also be done in a shortened version on the days/nights that time is limited (see below). Abhyanga is an evolving and changing practice to fit whatever you may need that particular day. Remember, it is better to utilize a quickened method and stay consistent, then to skip it when time is short. Like most areas of Ayurvedic healing, consistency is key!

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Place about a half cup of the Abhyanga oil into a small sauce pan on low heat. Slightly warm the oil until it is just slightly warmer than body temperature (about 100-110 degrees). Make sure the oil is not too warm by carefully placing a finger into the oil (only if you are positive it is not too hot), and making sure your finger can withstand the oil temp for over 30 seconds.
2. Once the oil is at a desired temp, place the oil in a small bowl. Take a small amount of the oil into the palm and begin to massage it into the scalp and forehead.
3. Once you have thoroughly massaged the oil over these areas, begin to massage the face, jaw bone and around the ears. Focus on any area of tension. Move down to the neck and then to the shoulders.
4. Continue to the arms, placing great focus on each muscle and joint. Move to the back with focus on the spine, trapezius muscles, shoulder blades, lower back and any areas of soreness and tension.
5. After this, begin to massage the chest and then the stomach. Rub the stomach in a clockwise, circular motion to enhance digestion and stimulate the circulation.
6. Continue to the gluteus muscles, applying deep pressure to relieve stored tension and release any obstruction.
7. Work your way down the legs beginning with the groin, quadriceps, hamstrings and IT band. Massage over the knee area in a circular motion making sure to cover the front, back and sides. Move down to the shins and calves, massaging in a straight, downward motion.
8. The feet are an important way to end the massage, as this really enhances the grounding effects of Abhyanga. Spend a couple minutes on each foot, if time allows. Make sure to focus on all areas including the ankle, heel, sole of the foot, ball of the foot, each toe and the area in between the toes.

THE 5 MINUTE ABHYANGA METHOD:

1. Warm the oil, as seen above, if time permits. If not, warm each oil application in the hands by rubbing them together briskly.
2. Massage the scalp, the forehead, around the ears, jaw bone and neck. Try to give a bit of focus to each area, especially when tender spots are found.
3. Move down to the feet and follow step #8 above.