

GREEN UP FOR SPRING: CLEANSING THE AYURVEDIC WAY



With early spring rains and warming temperatures heralding the earth's annual renewal, we as an intimate part of Nature experience this same powerful force that impels “the green shoots to break the winter ground.” Primal energies stir us to clean our closets, organize our desks, repaint rooms, cleanse our bodies and open our hearts, rejuvenating ourselves on every level. As the heavy earthen darkness of Winter yields to the cleansing showers of Spring, Mother Nature herself invites us to bring our bodies into harmony with this seasonal change by lightening up. She offers a bounty of new spring greens (both bitter & astringent in quality) to purify and detoxify our tissues from the heavier diets of winter. Since the beginning of time, ancient cultures have participated in Spring cleansing observances to preserve the health of their communities.



The 5000 yr old science of Ayurveda describes three combinations of energy (doshas) at play in our bodies as well as the natural world: Vata, Pitta & Kapha. Vata, the cold, mobile, drying force of air, & space, (“that which blows”) dominates the season of autumn & early winter; Kapha, a combination of the solid, liquid elements earth and water, (“that which sticks” - think of mud!) is on the rise in late winter and early spring; Pitta, (“that which cooks”) composed of the warmth of fire & fluidity of water, expresses itself thru the seasons of late spring and summer.

By understanding the qualities inherent in each season, we can create health & balance in our physiology and bring more harmony and bliss to our mental & emotional natures.



Kapha, the dosha or natural force that governs strength, immunity, structure & lubrication in our bodies, is oily, slimy, cool, moist, sticky, heavy, stable, strong and soft. As Kapha

slowly accumulates in late winter-early spring, (a result of heavier winter holiday eating and improper digestion & elimination), congestive disturbances like sneezing, coughs and colds may result as the body tries to reduce and balance Kapha . With the seasonal change in the angle of the sun, the earth begins to thaw & warm. This signals us to shift our food intake to lighter, dryer fare in order to open up the body's channels or srotas, to easily clear congestion & toxins, known as ama in Ayurveda. Springtime allergies, though not directly related to Kapha accumulation, do reflect an increase in ama from improper digestion, which ultimately gets deposited in other weakened tissues of the body, creating symptoms. Higher springtime pollen counts can trigger these symptoms.

To balance ourselves with these springtime energies, we can add more warmth, dryness and lightness to the body with Diet, Exercise, special Pranayama techniques, Spices, Herbs, Herbal teas, Ayurvedic fasting and Panchakarma according to our unique constitution. (An Ayurvedic practitioner can individualize all of these practices for you and the latter two require this professional attention.)



DIET:

Favor warm, freshly prepared , whole organic foods that increase light & dry qualities in the body. Include spinach, dandelion greens, endive, lettuces and other cooked leafy greens. Emphasize lighter, dryer grains like millet, quinoa; poultry or dryer fish like sole. Enjoy roasted veggies or whole grain toast, & toasted sandwiches. Fruits like cherries, berries or pomegranates. Apples and pears are also astringent.

Warming, even hot & pungent spices like ginger, cinnamon, cloves, black pepper, cayenne, jalapenos, chili flakes, onions, garlic are all proven remedies for Kapha and help to liquefy toxins for release from tissues. Add while cooking or sprinkle on food. **(CAUTION: Avoid these heating spices in cooking and in the following recipes in cases of high Pitta - inflammatory conditions - such as ulcers, colitis, canker sores, bleeding hemorrhoids etc.)**



Kapha Spice Mix:

- 1 Tbl. Fenugreek seeds
- 2 tbl. Whole coriander seeds
- 1 tbl. Ground ginger
- 1 tbl. Whole cumin seeds
- 1 tbl. Ground turmeric
- 1 tbl. Gr. Cinnamom
- 1 tbl. Dried sage leaves
- 1 tsp. ground cloves
- ½ tsp cayenne pepper or chili powder
- Grind finely in electric grinder and store in spice jar

Ginger Chutney: (reduces Kapha)

- 1 tbl. Lime juice
- 1/3 cu. fresh squeezed orange juice
- ¾ cu. chopped peeled ginger root
- ½ cu. raisins
- Combine in food processor & grind. Enjoy a small taste before or with meals.

Avoid ice cold water & cold juices which can increase congestion & colds esp. during this season. Also avoid sweet, sour & salty foods which also increase congestion like cookies, candies, donuts, ice cream; limit yogurt, (unless freshly homemade in small amts.) cheeses, junk foods, stale food. Cut down on red meats which are very heavy and amagenic.

HERBAL TEAS – some possibilities to reduce Kapha , Ama, and gently stimulate



metabolism, digestion and elimination:

Classic cleanser to clear ama and reduce Kapha:

In a full 1 qt. thermos of boiled water steep & sip thru the day:

1 tsp. fennel

½ tsp. coriander

½ tsp cumin

Ginger Tea:

1 glass warm water

1 tbsp. raw honey (never boil honey) (honey is astringent, drying)

½ fresh lemon or lime

1/8 tsp. fresh grated ginger

Cinnamon Ginger Tea

1 stick cinnamon

3-4 cloves

¼ tsp fresh grated ginger root

Boil in a cup of water 2-3 minutes and when slightly cooler add 1 tbsp. honey



EXERCISE - Keep your metabolism lively with 30 minutes of daily moderate-intensity exercise: brisk walking, hiking, biking are some activities that increase internal heat, prevent congestion, and encourage the release of cellular toxins.



ASANA & PRANAYAMA



Sun Salutations and warrior poses as well as vinyasas (linked, flowing poses) are warming and stimulating for the body. Since the seat of Kapha is in the lungs and stomach, we want to cleanse these organs of excess accumulation of mucous and phlegm, so poses like twists and backbends are also effective.



Kapalabhati (forceful exhale, quiet inhale) & Bhastrika (forceful exhale and inhale) & Surya Bhedana (breathing in through the right nostril and out left) Pranayamas increase heat in the body. Agni Sara kriya helps to increase digestive fire and cleanse the lungs and stomach. (drawing the stomach in and up while holding the breath out). Consult with an instructor of Yoga for proper technique and individual suitability as per constitution.

HERBS- Investigate Triphala, a combination of three(bitter & astringent) fruits , and Trikatu, a combination of three pungents. Both these formulas improve digestion, elimination and reduce congestion. (**Consult your health care provider before taking herbs.**)



BODY THERAPIES AND NETI POT – Cleansing the nasal passages with lukewarm salt water in the spring daily or as needed followed with sesame oil anointing (with a clean little finger, gently oil inside of nose); helps open nasal passages and encourage

sinus drainage. Dry brushing the skin with raw silk gloves, a natural brush or loofa before self massage with oil & showering , will stimulate the lymphatics and promote detoxification through the skin.



AYURVEDIC FASTING & PANCHAKARMA – consult an Ayurvedic Practitioner to learn about these powerful cleansing protocols. One simple method of Ayurvedic fasting is to dine on cleansing Kitchari for lunch and dinner for three to seven days. You can



find many Kitchari recipes online.



***MEDITATION – LAST BUT MOST PRIMARY:
Learn and practice Regular Effortless Meditation, which takes us to the source of our liveliness, Consciousness Itself. From this contact with Pure Consciousness, our energies are perpetually renewed & rejuvenated, bringing eternal Springtime and bliss to every level of our beings.***