

What is cleansing
how to cleanse
why cleanse

AYURVEDA AND CLEANSING

Nourishment for the body, mind and soul.

The practices and principles of Ayurveda are rapidly merging into the present day fabric of the holistic health community. This is largely due to the rising popularity of yoga, Ayurveda's appealing universal principles, and the sharing of information by leading ayurvedic authorities such as Dr. Deepak Chopra, Dr. David Frawley, Dr. Vasant Ladd, Nimai Nitai Das and others.

Still, many have an unclear understanding of what Ayurveda is. Nor are they aware of the emphasis ayurveda gives concerning the importance of seasonal cleansing for the body, mind and soul, especially in the spring and early summer.

WHAT IS CLEANSING:

Cleansing is an opportunity to relieve the burden imposed on the body and mind due to externally and internally derived toxins. It is remarkable how positively the body responds when we give it a chance. By making simple dietary and lifestyle changes, reducing stress, eliminating toxins, and improving our nutritional intake, wonderful shifts take place. After a balanced cleanse, people often experience less aches and pains, improved digestion, better energy, calmer minds, better skin, loss of excess weight, a deeper connection with themselves, and a sense of empowerment that comes from taking their health in their own hands.

WHY CLEANSE:

We clean our homes, our cars, our skin. We have a tendency, however, to neglect our internal body and our minds? Never before, in recorded history, have we been so consistently exposed to biological, chemical, heavy metal, electrical, emotional, psychological, and even spiritual stressors. In addition, the nutritional quality of our

produce has significantly diminished in just the past 40 years. The synergistic effect of stress, toxicity, and nutritional depletion can be devastating. That's the bad news. The good news is that synergy works even better in a positive direction. By managing our stress more effectively, improving our nutritional status, eliminating stored toxins and reducing toxic exposure, our cleanse will be a great success.

AYURVEDA AND CLEANSING:

Cleansing was originally taught in India's ancient system of medicine known as ayurveda. Ayurveda is a Sanskrit word which means knowledge of the totality of life. It is the sister of the yoga system. While there are many health benefits from practicing the various forms of yoga, the goal of yoga is to experientially realize who we are in truth. Ayurveda is said to be a gift from the devas (divine beings) to assist us in maintaining health, while living our lives to the fullest and growing to our greatest potential. Specifically, ayurveda includes improving our quality of life, strengthening our resistance to disease, eliminating disease, and increasing our awareness.

The basic principles of ayurveda, when understood, serve as a foundation for safe, healthy, balanced cleansing and rejuvenation programs.

THE WISDOM WITHIN:

The many spiritual paths from India and religions throughout the world all express the awesome and inconceivable intelligence that so perfectly maintains this living universe. This intelligence in Sanskrit is called Buddhi, or universal life intelligence. Every thing is working in perfect order. All the planets are floating in space in perfect harmony. For example, if the earth paused for just a moment in its rotation, we would likely freeze or burn in an instant. The laws of nature, the seasons, natural cycles, the interconnectedness and dependency of all living beings, and even natural disasters, while beyond our comprehension are all guided by Buddhi, or divine intelligence. This same buddhi is what organizes and manages the functioning of our bodies.

THE CAUSE OF ALL DISEASE:

If this vastly intelligent Buddhi controls the workings of our body, then what is the cause of premature illness, distress or disease? If Buddhi is so intelligent, why does it stop working so well? The ayurvedic answer to this is contained in a very interesting Sanskrit word: Prajnaparadha. Prajna means wisdom and aparadha means to offend. Prajnaparadha means to *offend our own inner wisdom*, intelligence, and experience by ignoring (not listening to) the wisdom that lies within each and every one of us. For example, babies and as children know when they have had enough to eat. When regularly forced to eat more than we want, slowly we begin to lose connection with our body's wisdom. Children start out being naturally connected to their inner wisdom and guidance systems. When we become conditioned by parents, teachers, friends, religions and society and when a child continues to behave in an unnatural way for him or her due to such external pressures, s/he eventually will lose contact with the simple and innocent inner voice of wisdom. This inner voice comes from our center, our soul, our atma. Ayurveda starts out with the understanding that we all have this source of wisdom within. As we begin to lose touch with it, day after day, we make choices not from our center of wisdom, gut knowing and intuition, but rather from outside of ourselves. Offending or ignoring our own wisdom becomes commonplace. The more we do this, the same natural intelligence that guides the planets in space and the meridians and cells of our bodies, becomes blocked. Buddhi, interfered from flowing intelligently, first shows up in our consciousness and mind, then in the emotional body, and finally the within the cellular structure and physiology of the body. Fortunately, when we become aware that our deepest suffering is caused by "offending our own wisdom", we can become blessed with the desire to free ourselves from suffering. Yoga teachings says this is part of the divine plan. Diving deeper into ourselves thru cleansing, yoga, meditation, healing, chanting, praying, sacred ritual, religion, loving and serving helps us to connect to our soul essence, atma, and birth right of inner wisdom.

THE FOUR AYURVEDIC PRINCIPLES OF HEALTH, CLEANSING AND

REJUVENATION:

When most people think of Ayurveda they think of the doshas or body-mind types. While this is largely part of the foundation of Ayurveda, there are four other fundamental ayurvedic principles often overlooked. These principles, when understood even to a small degree, can change the way we look at our health forever. They are simple, yet profound. And they relate to the importance of seasonal cleansing.

The first principle is Prana. It is often translated as life energy and chi. Prana is the life force which buddhi (natural intelligence) directs through specific channels and directions of our body. Prana carries life force through the body energizing every cell of the body.

The next principle is called Agni. Agni means fire. In this context it means the fire of digestion or the power to transform food into our body. When we eat some broccoli our agni must transform it into all the tissues of our body. This whole process takes approximately 32 days. Weak agni means poor transformation, which translates into weak or compromised tissues. Agni is not, however, limited to digestion of food alone. Just as the body must digest food, we must also digest and transform emotions, feelings, sensory impressions, thoughts, ideas, concepts; all that we experience through our mind and senses. Think of all that we exposed to in the unlimited forms of media on a daily basis. The agni of the mind is called tejas, which is associated with the fire like perceptive and intelligent powers of the mind. When tejas is weak we will tend to experience mental apathy, depression, rumination and unprocessed thoughts and feelings. Strong tejas grants us mental clarity, boldness, creativity, strong intelligence and the capacity to penetrate deeply into any subject or problem.

The next Ayurvedic principle is called Ojas. Ojas, related to the immune system, is the essence of our physical being and tissues. It is the most distilled substance in our body. Ojas is said to be located in the heart and the ovaries or testes. When our ojas is strong, we have good immunity, resistance to both the onset of disease and to the severity of disease. Good Ojas also gives strong mental and emotional

resilience and offers potential for good character and spiritual depth.

Finally, the fourth principle is called Ama, or toxin. Ama is considered to be the secondary cause of all disease. Ama is caused by incompletely digested food and ingesting low quality foods and toxins such as high sugar junk foods, hormone and pesticide laden meats, and refined and processed foods. Exposure to external toxins in the environment such as pesticides, plastics, chlorine and fluoride in water, heavy metals, cleaning detergents, air pollution, EMF's, also contribute to excess ama.

So how does all this relate? When we ignore our inner wisdom which acts as an internal guidance system, we tend to allow five things to happen. Our toxicity or ama increases in body and mind, our agni or fire of digestion or power of transformation decreases, our prana or intelligent life energy weakens and becomes blocked, our ojas or immunity and inner strength decreases and finally our buddhi or our natural universal life intelligence within becomes blocked by the excess of ama, poor agni, weak prana and low ojas.

THE 2ND CAUSE OF DISEASE:

Ayurveda says the other “original cause of all disease” begins in the digestive tract.

Our digestive system turns out to be similar to the roots of a tree. Imagine a tree with a damaged or toxic root system. Most likely its branches, leaves and fruits will be compromised. This occurs in the our body also. All of digestion focuses on breaking our food down enough so that the little roots located in the small intestine can absorb nutrients. Once absorbed, all the various tissues of the body can be fed and developed. When the roots of the body become clogged and dysfunctional due excess ama (toxicity), to poor diet, stress, or inherited weakness, the early stages of disease begins.

CLEANSING TO THE RESCUE!

Cleansing gives the body (and the roots of our body), mind and senses a break from constant challenges, which gives us the chance to eliminate excess ama. Doing so gives the roots of our inner tree the opportunity to heal and regenerate. So often we

unknowingly cause ourselves distress in body, mind and soul. When we regularly challenge our body and mind with toxic substances and foods, our immune system perceives these toxins as little emergencies that have to be handled before it can create inner balance and handle potentially more serious immune challenges. In other words, toxicity can become a chronic distraction to the immune system.

When we remove the burden on the digestive tract, nervous system, and mind and senses, our system has the chance to heal and restore itself. As ama decreases, our prana, agni and ojas increase. As this healing occurs, we feel more like ourselves which supports us in remaining connected to our inner wisdom or buddhi.

AYURVEDIC CLEANSING APPROACH:

Ayurveda has a very balanced approach to cleansing. It generally does not recommend severe cleanses unless one is very ill. Generally, a gradual steady approach over a number of days, weeks or even months is most appropriate. It doesn't really work to say "hurry up and cleanse" so you can be immediately healthy and balanced. That is kind of like saying "hurry up and meditate."

According to ayurveda, cleansing should be gradual and incremental. Otherwise one is bound to experience severe detox reactions which can cause too much stress on the body. Sometimes in overly aggressive cleansing, benefits gained physically or mentally are quickly lost.

While the goal of cleansing can be eliminating symptoms of illness or disease, it is also about improving the long term quality and vitality of our lives.

During a cleanse it is of paramount importance to lightly exercise, meditate, and look within. Strengthening and balancing the nervous system is essential to successful cleansing. Pranayama or full breathing exercises help to increase prana and decrease ama, which helps to clear energy blocks to buddhi and gives us the energy to make important changes in our lives. Wonderful deep realizations, healings and understandings often occur during a cleanse. How we come off the cleanse is also vitally important. It should be gradual so that we do not cause any shock to the body.

HOW TO CLEANSE?

Spring, early summer, and fall are the best times to cleanse according to ayurveda and Chinese medicine. To do a deep cleanse on your own often requires support of a health practitioner or group. However, any thing we do to relieve the burden on our body, mind, senses and soul will often bring immediate relief, substantial results, and is always a great preparation for a deeper cleanse. So this spring and summer you can begin your cleansing process by decreasing or eliminating high ama or toxic foods and substances such as refined sugar, refined grains, heavy meats such as beef or pork, and of course going organic as much as possible. Drink plenty of filtered or spring water. Since spring and early summer is the season most related to the liver, it is a great time to focus on cleansing and rejuvenating this very important organ. Eat lots (70% or more) of leafy green veggies with each meal. It is a great time to add a green phytonutrient drink a couple times a day in water or as a smoothie.

Adding extra vitamin C and sipping dandelion and milk thistle tea benefits the liver and blood. For your mind and senses, try a media fast for a few days or even a week or two! This gives your nervous system and mind a chance to process, digest, and eliminate so much of what we have taken into our consciousness over past months. For your body, mind and soul, get massage, do pranayama (yoga breathing), dance, pray, chant, meditate, do yoga, and go for walks while consciously breathing.

This is a great season for starting anew. Nature itself is expressing its hopefulness. A little cleansing goes a long way in assisting us to align with our wisdom and with the positive, uplifting energies of spring and summer.

Remember, when we heal, the world heals.

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