



MAHARISHI AYURVEDA

HEALTH CENTRE BAD EMS

Since 1992



From the records of ancient cultures, we know that the positive effects of oil treatments have been known and appreciated since thousands of years. Physicians of Ayurveda have traditionally utilized the beneficial effects of treatments with medicinal herbal oils to prevent and cure a variety of health disorders and diseases.

Abhyanga in particular is a valuable addition to every modern person's body care for physical and mental hygiene. Abhyanga means "anointing with oil" and is described as a very gentle, pleasant, and systematic whole-body oil treatment using stroking movements. We prefer the term Abhyanga, to clearly distinguish these holistic oil treatments from contemporary massage, which has completely different qualities.

In this article, we describe how to give yourself an Abhyanga at home.

Daily Self-Abhyanga

It is recommended to do a self-Abhyanga every day, to simultaneously cleanse the body and relax the mind. More in detail, Abhyanga:



- stimulates the circulation;
- strengthens and improves the central nervous system;
- improves sleep;
- balances the entire hormonal system;
- softens and strengthens muscles, tissues, and joints;
- makes the skin smoother, more radiant, and younger;
- strengthens digestive power;
- removes toxins;
- prevents diseases;
- energizes the entire physiology;
- brings equilibrium to emotions and opens the heart;
- rejuvenates and increases life span.



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Self-Abhyanga – Easy oil treatment you can do at home

Upon regular application, Abhyanga improves health on all levels. First of all, you may “just” notice that you are feeling more alive, walk with more of a bounce, or that your muscles feel stronger. You may also experience less fatigue than before.

If you do Abhyanga daily, you’ll probably find that you don’t catch colds as often, that your hay fever is gradually getting better, that your complexion is healthier, and that your hands and feet are warmer from better circulation. At the same time, you’ll also notice that something is changing regarding your mood and emotional well-being. This is because when metabolic waste products are reduced, the inner intelligence is better able to permeate the human physiology.

Experience it first-hand

The best time for Abhyanga is early in the morning, right after bladder and bowels are emptied.

The oil should be warm, to better enter the skin. How warm exactly, that depends on your Dosha type, with an average of about 40 °C. The easiest way to heat it up is to fill the amount you need for the day in a small container, then put that on the radiator or in a bowl with hot water.

This table gives some general recommendations; more details below.

	VATA	PITTA	KAPHA
Type of oil	pure, ripened sesame oil; alternative: almond oil	pure, ripened sesame oil; alternative: coconut oil	pure, ripened sesame oil
Oil temperature	very warm	not too warm	very warm
Room temperature	cozily warm	comfortable	warm
Amount of oil	plenty; make it slick	average	sparingly
Stroking	very calm and slow, caressing, with flowing, movements, keeping your hands on the skin	briskly, with medium speed, keeping your hands on the skin	quick but even-paced, keeping your hands on the skin
Pressure	gentle, with little pressure	average	firm and strong but pleasant

* The sesame oil should be ripened and preferably it should be organic.

Ripened oil is absorbed by the skin more easily. It is available e.g. from: [Maharishi Ayurveda Europe](http://MaharishiAyurvedaEurope.com). You can also buy unripened oil and ripen it yourself, by shortly heating it to 110 °C. Leave it to cool down before you fill it into the bottle again.



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A basic point of Abhyanga is that we should use the entire surface of the hand as much as possible, whichever part of the body we are treating, to distribute the pressure.

HEAD

Dip your fingertips into the warm oil and gently go over your scalp, under the hairs. Oil the entire scalp, face, and the ears. Stroke back and forth over the scalp several times, then thoroughly massage the ears, which have a particularly large number of reflex points. You'll feel which areas of the face need special attention.

NECK

Use straight strokes up and down. Be gentle on the throat, give more pressure to the back of the neck.

ARMS

Do the arms moving from the shoulder to the wrist. You can move in circles on the shoulder joint, the elbow and the wrist; the upper and lower arms are treated with long strokes back and forth. Women start with the left arm, men with the right arm.

HANDS

Circular motions on the back of the hand and the palm are very pleasant. Do the fingers with longitudinal strokes. Movements outward from the hand, like you do when you wash your hands thoroughly, are also very good.

BREAST & BELLY

You can move back and forth over the rib cage with even strokes or circular motions. The belly should always be done in large clockwise circles, following the motion of the bowels: Begin just under the rib cage, stroking from right to left, then move down and com-

plete the circle. Repeat several times. Doing this supports the natural movement of the bowels.

BACK

The best way to treat the back is with longitudinal strokes; any other movements are usually uncomfortable when you do a self-massage, and therefore do not lead to the desired and beneficial relaxation. Many people find it pleasant to move in small circles on the lower spine and in large circles on the buttocks.

LEGS

You can treat the legs in symmetry with both hands. Start with the hip joints and give them a little more attention, also the knees and ankles.

FEET

Your feet carry the full load of the body. Therefore, they should be pampered extensively. Again, remember to use flat, stroking movements – whether circular or straight – with your full hand contacting large areas wherever possible, to treat them very evenly. Also the toes and the spaces between them deserve your attention: your feet are rich in sensitive reflex zones that can invigorate all the body's organs.





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Duration of the treatment

As a timeframe for the actual oil treatment, usually 5 to 10 minutes are recommended, because the oil takes time to penetrate the epidermis. Only after 2 to 3 minutes, the oil travels towards deeper skin layers and reaches them after about 10 minutes. Then it starts to bind to fat-soluble metabolic residues (Ama). Therefore it's best to leave the oil on the skin for at least 10 minutes, in order that the bound fat-soluble toxins can be transported away in the direction of the blood vessels or return to the surface of the skin.

While the oil is being absorbed, you can e.g. brush your teeth or boil some water. If necessary, wipe your palms on a paper towel to perform small tasks. After 20 minutes total, you can rinse off the oil with a warm

bath or shower. If you don't use soap or shower lotion, you don't need to apply cream afterward. A protective oil film covers the skin but without sticking to your clothing.

Wash your hair with shampoo, once or twice depending on how much hair you have.

In any case, and for all Dosha types:

Listen to your inner intelligence. After each Abhyanga, you should have a good feeling. Your individual experience tells you how much pressure to use, how much oil, which stroke movements, and what the temperature should be of the oil and the room.

So give yourself a treat and try your hand(s) at Abhyanga!

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