

Guide to Self Abhyanga

Ayurvedic Massage

GENERAL PRINCIPLES:

Self-Abhyanga is about moving your lymph, increasing blood circulation, pacifying your nervous system and loving and respecting your body.

The main purpose of the strokes are to soothe and stimulate the tissues gently and pacify Vata Dosha throughout the body via the connections the skin has to all the inner organs and systems.

So be gentle, not to deep or strong.

Oils used: Medicated oil suitable to your constitution. Next best is cold-pressed black sesame oil. If your skin becomes irritated, use cold-pressed coconut oil. Ideally, oils should be warm.

PREPARATION:

1. Warm up the oil (optional) -

Approx. 1/4 cup in an oil warmer, or place the cup of oil in a bowl/larger cup of hot water, or heat in pot on stove.

Oil should be warm but not too hot.

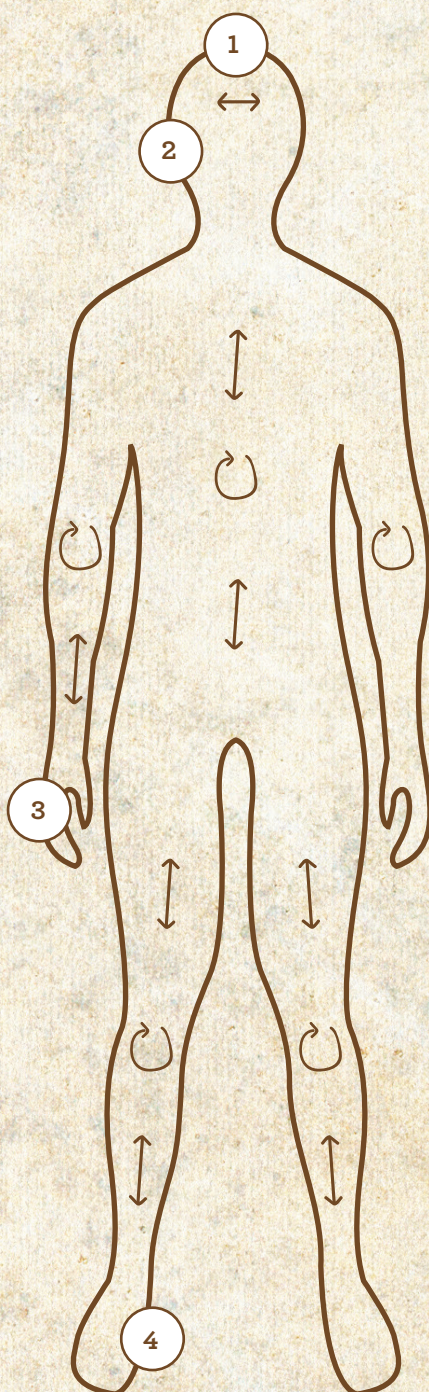
2. Be in a warm room. Sit on a towel and/or yoga mat. You can also do in bathroom or bath.

LEAVE OIL ON:

- Minimum leave oil on for 8 mins.
- Maximum leave oil on for 45 mins (this time is ideal).
- It is important to wash or wipe off the oil afterwards so that the toxins that have been pulled out are not reabsorbed.

CONTRAINDICATIONS:

Do not do self-abhyanga when you are sick with fever or cold, or when you (woman) are menstruating.



Short method

SELF-ABHYANGA:

“But I don’t have enough time”

Firstly, get your priorities straight. The benefits of waking up a little earlier to do self-abhyanga will surpass the extra minutes of sleeping in.

1. CROWN OF HEAD

- Dip first two fingers in oil and rub on crown of head in clockwise motions.
- If you have more time, do full head massage.

2. EARS

3. HANDS

4. SOLES OF FEET

STROKES SUMMARY:

- Long strokes up and down on the limbs and back.
- Circular motions on joints, organs and vital points (mostly always clockwise direction).

Full Method

SELF-ABHYANGA:

- | | |
|------------|----------|
| 1. HEAD | 7. ARM |
| 2. FACE | 8. HAND |
| 3. NECK | 9. THIGH |
| 4. CHEST | 10. CALF |
| 5. STOMACH | 11. FOOT |
| 6. BACK | 12. TOES |



STEP 1 - THE HEAD

Head is the most important.

Pour a generous amount of oil on the **crown of head**.

For those who don't want to get their hair so oily, just applying a few drops on the crown of head is ok to occasionally do.

Massage the whole scalp from the centre and towards the ears.

Like washing hair, be vigorous and adjust to your comfort level.

During the massage give a gentle pull to the roots of the hair.

Massaging with whole hands whenever you can, or using flat finger pads (rather than tips) in smaller areas. Your strokes can be circular or straight (back and forth), or both ways— Whichever you prefer.

STEP 2 - THE FACE

- Lightly massage **third eye**, clockwise if someone was facing & doing to you. (so if you look at it 'through your body', it will look anticlockwise).

- Massage forehead sideways with whole hand.

- With palm of hands, massage cheeks and temples in circles and up and down.

- **Ears**

- Dip one finger of each hand in oil and stick inside your ears.

- Massage ear lobes and behind ears - home to essential *marma* (energy) points and nerve endings.

STEP 3 - THE NECK

Massage in upward direction on all surfaces of neck and throat.

With finger pads, massage cervical spine up and down.

STEP 4 - THE UPPER CHEST AREA

Circular motions on the chest, especially at:

- **Sternum** - heart, fourth chakra. Circular motions on the heart, then can massage whole chest sideways with palm.

- **Solar plexus** - third chakra. Clockwise massage.

STEP 5 - THE ABDOMEN

- **Abdomen** - *NABHI* (second chakra). Pour/insert massage oil directly into belly button. With the fingers, gently massage the area clockwise.

- **Whole Abdomen** - Then using the palms make the circles slowly bigger until you have massaged the entire abdominal area then reverse the whole process (maintaining clockwise direction) back to belly.

- With your hands, gently push your relaxed abdomen in.

STEP 6 - THE BACK

- **Spine** - Do as much as you can without straining. Massage up and down the spine as far as you can reach.

- **Lower Back** - Circular motions on lower back and hips with both your palms.

- Also massage the shoulders and the upper back as much as you can reach.

STEP 7 - THE ARMS AND HANDS

(left side first for ladies, right side first for men)

1. Circles on **shoulder joint**.

2. Massage in and around **arm pit** (a key lymphatic site).

3. Long strokes up & down **upper arm**. Stronger pressure on downward strokes.

4. Circles on **elbow joint**

5. Long strokes up & down **forearm**. Stronger pressure on downward strokes.

6. Circles on **wrist joint** (with thumb and index/middle finger)

7. Circles on palms (with thumb) and back of **hands**.

8. Massage **finger webs** and down in between the "top of hand bones" (metacarpals).

9. Gently **pull fingers** (from base to tip).

Then repeat sequence for other arm and hand.

STEP 8 - THE LOWER LIMBS

(left leg first for ladies, right leg first for men), similar to arms.

1. Massage around **hip joint and groin** with both hands.

2. Long strokes up and down the **thigh**. Stronger pressure on downward strokes.

3. Circles around the whole **kneecap**. Firm strokes with finger pads around the circumference of the knee joint. Gently massage behind the knee joint.

4. Long strokes up & down on **lower leg (calf)**. Emphasis on downward strokes.

5. Massage circular motions on **ankle joint** with both palms and finger pads.

6. **Foot**: Massage in-between toe bones (metatarsals) on top of foot.

7. Massage the sole of foot with more pressure - Heel, sides of foot, ball of foot, under toes.

8. Massage in-between **webs of toes**.

9. **Toes**: Pull each toe from base to tip.

Then repeat sequence for other leg and foot. - Finish with this.