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# AYURVEDA IN DAILY LIFE

Ayurvedic medicine ("Ayurveda" for short) is one of the world's oldest holistic ("whole-body") healing systems. It was developed more than 3,000 years ago in India. It's based on the belief that health and wellness depend on a delicate balance between the mind, body, and spirit. Ayurveda has tons of good remedies available for common ailments. From a headache to skin problems, migraine to obesity, acid reflux to diabetes, there is a host of conditions that Ayurveda can treat. It's based on the belief that health and wellness depend on a delicate balance between the mind, body, and spirit. Its main goal is to promote good health, not fight disease. But treatments may be geared toward specific health problems. In this lesson we shall learn about the meaning of Ayurveda, its principles and the using of common medicinal plants to treat day to day health problems.



## OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson you will be able to:

- explain the Indian tradition of Ayurveda;
- list the basic principles of Ayurveda;



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- describe the importance of Ayurveda in our life;
- identify the healing properties of herbs, spices and kitchen ingredients; and
- use some common medicinal plants to treat common health problems.

## 6.1 UNDERSTANDING THE INDIAN TRADITION OF AYURVEDA

Thousands of years before modern medicine provided scientific evidence for the mind-body connection, the sages of India developed Ayurveda, which continues to be one of the world's most sophisticated and powerful mind-body health systems. It is more than a system of treating illness, Ayurveda is a science of life- Ayur = life, Veda = science or knowledge. It offers a body of wisdom designed to help people stay active and healthy while realizing their full human potential. Ayurveda also emphasizes the adage, 'prevention is better than cure'.

An Ayurvedic practitioner will create a treatment plan specifically designed for you. He'll take into account your unique physical and emotional makeup, your primary life force, and the balance between all these elements. Those who practice Ayurveda believe every person is made of five basic elements found in the universe: space, air, fire, water, and earth.

The goal of treatment is to cleanse your body of undigested food, which can stay in your body and lead to illness. The cleansing process-called "panchakarma"- is designed to reduce your symptoms and restore harmony and balance.



To achieve this, an Ayurvedic practitioner might rely on blood purification, massage, medical oils, herbs, and enemas or laxatives. It is based on the belief that health and wellness depend on a delicate balance between the mind, body, and spirit. Its main goal is to promote good health, not fight disease. But treatments may be geared toward specific health problems.

The Vedas are the main source of knowledge and information. There are two main re-organizers of Ayurveda whose works are still existing even today - Charak and Sushrut. The third major treatise is called the Ashtanga Hridaya, which is a concise version of the works of Charak and Sushrut. Thus the three main Ayurvedic texts that are still used today are called the Charak Samhita (compilation of the oldest book Atreya Samhita), Sushrut Samhita and the Ashtangha Hridaya Samhita. These books are believed to be over 1,200 years old. It is because these texts still contain the original and complete knowledge of this Ayurvedic world medicine, that Ayurveda is known today as the only complete medical system still in existence.

## **6.2 BASIC PRINCIPLES OF AYURVEDA**

### **The two main guiding principles of Ayurveda**

1. The mind and the body are inextricably connected
2. Nothing has more power to heal and transform the body than the mind

Health care is a highly individualized practice under Ayurvedic principles, which state that everyone has a specific constitution, or prakruti, that determines his or her physical, physiologic and



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mental character and disease vulnerability. Prakruti is determined by three "bodily energies" called doshas. There are three basic doshas, and though everyone has some features of each, most people have one or two that predominate.

**Pitta** energy is linked to fire, and is thought to control the digestive and endocrine systems. People with pitta energy are considered fiery in temperament, intelligent and fast-paced. When pitta energy is out of balance, ulcers, inflammation, digestive problems, anger, heartburn and arthritis can result.

**Vata** energy is associated with air and space, and is linked to bodily movement, including breathing and blood circulation. Vata energy is said to predominate in people who are lively, creative, original thinkers. When out-of-balance, vata types can endure joint pain, constipation, dry skin, anxiety and other ailments.

**Kapha** energy, linked to earth and water, is believed to control growth and strength, and is associated with the chest, torso and back. Kapha types are considered strong and solid in constitution, and generally calm in nature. But obesity, diabetes, sinus problems, insecurity and gallbladder issues can result when kapha energy is out of balance.

Everyone inherits a unique mix of the three doshas. But one is usually stronger than the others. Each one controls a different body function. It's believed that your chances of getting sick and the health issues you develop are linked to the balance of your doshas.

Life presents us with many challenges and opportunities.



Although there is much over which we have little control, we do have the power to decide about some things, such as diet and lifestyle. To maintain balance and health, it is important to pay attention to these decisions. Diet and lifestyle appropriate to one's individual constitution strengthen the body, mind and consciousness.

### **Treatment Plan**

After the assessment, the practitioner typically creates an individualized treatment plan including diet, exercise, herbs, yoga, meditation, and massage. The treatment plan generally focuses on restoring balance to one or two doshas.

- **Diet** : A specialized diet may be recommended to balance a person's doshas.
- **Cleansing and detoxification** : This may be done through fasting, enemas, diets, and body treatments.
- **Herbal medicine** : Examples of ayurvedic herbs and spices are turmeric, triphala, ashwaghandha, gotu kola, guggul, boswellia etc.
- **Yoga**
- **Meditation**
- **Exercise**
- **Massage and body treatments** : Examples include abhyanga, an Ayurvedic-style massage, and shirodhara, a treatment that involves a stream of warm herb-infused oil poured on the forehead.
- **Herbal tea** : Pitta tea, vata tea, kapha tea



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## 6.3 IMPORTANCE OF AYURVEDA IN LIFE

Ayurveda blends our modern lifestyle and health-oriented habits with the ancient wisdom of using natural substances, medicines and herbs to help us lead a healthy, happy, stress-free and disease-free life. Ayurveda was officially recognised by WHO (World Health Organization) in 1976. The primary requisites of living an Ayurveda-inspired healthy life include wholesome food, meditation and yoga. If you are undertaking these three, you can prevent a lot of diseases, lead a happy life and perform optimally every day. With the Ayurvedic way of life, we can beat stress, which is one of the underlying causes of an array of health troubles that people suffer from in this modern world. Health plays a major role in our life for anything we want to do.

Here are some ways Ayurveda can benefit your life on a daily basis.

### 1. You are encouraged to love yourself

Ayurveda encourages you to find the love in yourself instead of comparing yourself to other people. It encourages you to discover your individual needs, as well as grow, heal, and reflect on your life.

### 2. Offers a nurturing approach to being healthy

Ayurveda is all about understanding that healthy is your natural state. If you and your environment are in balance, that's considered optimum health, and the opposite goes for being unbalanced.



### **3. We learn to clear up energy**

In this day and age, we often need to recalibrate our mental and physical settings. As ever-changing beings, it's important to reflect and clear out what isn't working for you and your life.

### **4. Better health at a cellular level**

Research shows that Ayurveda can in fact help on a cellular level. It has been indicated that Ayurveda has the potential to actually regenerate cells, again showing that we have the power to begin healing ourselves of certain ailments simply by the way we treat our bodies.

### **5. Toxins in the body are reduced**

The waste-product that builds up in the digestive tract that stems from eating too much of the wrong food, if not cleared up, it will build up over time and will begin to circulate through your body, causing major feelings of imbalance.

### **6. Stronger digestion**

As you begin to eat according to your dosha, your digestive system will strengthen. Certain foods will activate your digestive system during the right times of the day, causing a decrease of toxic build up in your digestive tract.

### **7. Reduced stress and greater sense of well-being**

Food influences how you feel. If your digestive system isn't good you feel uncomfortable and tired, which can manifest into negative feelings and ultimately affect life.



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## INTEXT QUESTIONS 6.1

Fill in the blanks

1. Ayurveda believes every person is made of ----- basic elements found in the universe
2. Nothing has more power to heal and transform the body than the -----.
3. Prakruti is determined by three "bodily energies" called ----  
----- .
4. After the assessment, the practitioner typically creates an --  
----- treatment plan
5. The ----- requisites of living an Ayurveda-inspired healthy life include wholesome food, meditation and yoga.

## 6.4 HEALING PROPERTIES OF HERBS, SPICES AND KITCHEN INGREDIENTS

Ayurveda uses herbs to correct doshas and treat the body. Let us learn about some of the commonly used herbs, spices and kitchen ingredients used in Ayurveda and their healing properties.

### 1. Bael

Extract of the leaves of this very familiar tree helps cure diarrhea, dysentery, constipation.





## **2. Tulsi (Basil)**

Once a common sight at the courtyard of every Indian household, tulsi or basil leaves can cure cough, cold, bronchitis and loss of appetite.

## **3. Peppermint or pudina**

The plant's leaves are popular mainly due to their taste. Its medicinal values includes curing indigestion and healing bruises .

## **4. Henna or Mehndi**

Mehndi helps cool the fire/heat in the body and helps cure burns

## **5. Neem**

Ayurveds have documented this plant as one of the most valuable herb. The extract of its leaves work as a sedative and analgesic and cure epilepsy, hypertension

## **6. Cinnamon**

Another popular expectorant, dalchini or cinnamon helps cure pulmonary problems such as bronchitis, asthma, and even cardiac disorder and fever.

## **7. Lavender**

The flower is widely appreciated for its smell. However, it also eases pain, and when applied to cuts and bruises, it functions as an antiseptic



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## 8. Marigold

Popularly known as gaenda in Hindi, marigold extract is good for sunburns, acne, and blemishes. This medicinal herb also soothes ulcers and helps cure digestive problems

## 9. Garlic

Garlic is used for lowering cholesterol and blood pressure. It has antimicrobial effects.

## 10. Aloe Vera

The Aloe plant has an abundance of medicinal properties and has been used for centuries for this reason. It is used for Burns, Psoriasis, Diabetes, Colitis, Anti-inflammatory, Skin toner and as a wound healer.

## 11. Calendula

The herb is found in many gardens all over the world is used as a Anti-fungal, Anti-inflammatory, Wound Healer, Antimicrobial and Blood Cleanser.

## 12. Clove

Now let's take a look and see what some of the key medicinal properties of clove is and how we can use this herb. The key medicinal uses are Analgesic, Stimulant, Antiseptic, Antioxidant and Antimicrobial

## 13. Neem

The properties of neem are spoken of in some of the ancient

Sanskrit and the Sanskrit word for neem (nimba) actually means "good health". It is used for skin treatment for eczema, scabies, head lice, and psoriasis.

#### **14. Turmeric**

Turmeric has a long standing tradition in Hinduism and is associated with purity and cleansing. Key medicinal uses - Protects the liver, Antioxidant and Anti-inflammatory.

#### **15. Fenugreek**

Methi or fenugreek is a wonder amongst other medicinal plants, and all because of its properties. Some of the benefits of fenugreek. It controls cholesterol levels, curbs hair loss, increases appetite, purifies blood, lowers blood pressure and beneficial for joint pains and diabetes

#### **16. Fennel**

Fennel or saunf is a flavorful and aromatic plant which is useful for a wide variety of health problems. The many benefits of fennel seeds include treats cough, controls cholesterol, improves eyesight, cure acidity and prevents bad breath

#### **17. Coriander**

Coriander or dhania is an important ingredient of an Indian kitchen. Its leaves, seeds and powder of the seeds, everything is beneficial for your health. Coriander keeps you healthy as it is rich in antioxidants, cures urine retention, improves digestion, regulates y menstrual cycles and treats acne



**Notes**



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**18. Ginger**

Its benefits overall health as it helps to treats indigestion, eases headaches, controls blood pressure, treats cold, cough, flu and asthma.

**19. Ajvain**

It is used for treating piles, painful menses, Urticaria (Skin allergy), abdominal pain and flatulence (gas)

**20. Amla**

Common name: Amalaki. Regular use of Amla provides nutrition and boosts good health. It is used to cure hyper acidity, peptic ulcer, constipation. stress and diabetes.

**21. Dalchini**

This commonly used spice is a good digestive and its pleasant flavour has soothing effect on mind. It is used to cure indigestion, loss of appetite and vomiting

**22. Elaichi**

It is used in Hiccup, vomiting , bad breath and diarrhoea

**23. Hing**

Use of hing in daily diet is good for digestion and disorders related to it. It helps relieve abdominal pain and loss of appetite.

**24. Jayphal**

It is helpful in diarrhoea, irritability, black pigmentation and abdominal pain.

## 25. Jeera

It is beneficial in indigestion, diarrhea, dysentery, hyper-acidity and skin disease.



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## 6.5 TREATING COMMON HEALTH PROBLEMS WITH MEDICINAL PLANTS

For most of the common ailments or pain that we may encounter in our daily lives Ayurveda recommends the use these for overall well-being.

### HEADACHE

- Take a ripe apple, remove the upper rind and have the inner hard portion adding a pinch of salt every morning on an empty stomach for a week.
- Mix together 8 to 10 basil leaves, half-a-inch piece ginger, 7 black pepper corns, all powdered coarsely, with a large cup of water. Boil for 2 minutes and remove from heat. Cover and keep for 2 to 3 minutes. Strain, add boiled milk, sugar and drink warm.

### FLATULENCE

- Grind 2 teaspoons each of carom seeds and dried ginger into a fine powder. Add a little black salt. Take a teaspoon of this mixture with a cup of warm water frequently.
- Just chew a piece of fresh ginger after meals regularly to prevent gas formation.



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## SORE THROAT

- Gargle with lukewarm water, to which salt is added, at least twice a day. But, ensure that you do not make gargling sounds, as this may aggravate soreness.
- Drink tea boiled with ginger and a few basil leaves twice or thrice a day.

## COLD AND COUGH

- Boil a tablespoon of pepper powder in a cup of milk, along with a pinch of turmeric, and take once daily.
- For bad cold, juice of two lemons in about 2 and a half cups of boiling water can be sweetened with honey, and taken at bed time.

## INSOMNIA

- Drink a cup of warm milk sweetened with honey at bed time daily.
- Fry cumin seeds in a little ghee and powder it. Add a teaspoon of this powder with the pulp of a ripe banana and take at night regularly.

## ANAEMIA

- Have lemon juice drenched in beetroot pieces the first thing in the morning, as it is the ideal way to improve blood in the body.
- Have at least 125gm of spinach daily for two to three weeks.



## **MENSTRUAL PAIN**

- Boil a teaspoon of saffron in half a cup of water, and reduce it to become one tablespoon. Divide this decoction into three portions and take it with equal quantities of water, thrice a day for a couple of days.
- Mix the juice of two to three lemons in cold water and have it daily for relief.

## **MOUTH ULCERS**

- Chew one or two tender leaves of fig and leaf buds frequently and gargle with warm water.
- Make a paste of ripe banana with honey and apply on affected area for instant relief.
- Gargle frequently with freshly extracted coconut milk from a ripe coconut.

## **DIABETES:**

- Take fresh fruits and vegetables in the diet, a healthy lifestyle and quitting caffeine.
- Consumption of herbs such as turmeric can greatly help to keep the blood sugar at the optimum level.

## **ACID REFLUX**

- Drinking a glass of aloe vera juice regularly can give instant relief from chronic acid reflux.
- Basil leaves are another way to treat this condition.



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## OBESITY

- A juice of lemon with honey in lukewarm water to be consumed daily.

## DANDRUFF

- Use of fenugreek seeds and lime to get rid of this condition.



## INTEXT QUESTIONS 6.2

State whether true or false

1. Consumption of herbs such as turmeric can greatly help to keep the blood sugar at the optimum level.
2. For Insomnia have lemon juice drenched in beetroot pieces the first thing in the morning.
3. Just chew a piece of fresh ginger after meals regularly to prevent gas formation.
4. The key medicinal uses are Analgesic, Stimulant, Antiseptic, Antioxidant and Antimicrobial
5. Hing is used in Hiccup, vomiting , bad breath and diarrhoea



## WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT

- Indian tradition of Ayurveda;
- Basic principles of Ayurveda;
- The importance of Ayurveda in our life;



- The healing properties of herbs, spices and kitchen ingredients;
- Treatment of common health problems with medicinal plants.



**Notes**



## **TERMINAL QUESTIONS**

1. What do you understand by the word Ayurveda?
2. Briefly describe the basic principles of Ayurveda.
3. What do mean by Doshas? Briefly explain the doshas.
4. What is the role of Ayurvedain our daily life?
5. What are the following herbs used to cure:
  - i. Turmeric
  - ii. Ginger
  - iii. Cinnamon
  - iv. Tulsi
  - v. Aloe Vera
6. Suggest herbal treatment for the following ailments:
  - i. Cough
  - ii. Dandruff
  - iii. Diabetes
  - iv. Insomnia
  - v. Aneamia



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## ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS

### 6.1.

1. five
2. mind
3. doshas
4. individualized
5. primary

### 6.2.

1. True
2. False
3. True
4. True
5. False