

Making Everything Easier!™

Ayurveda

FOR
DUMMIES®
A Wiley Brand

Learn to:

- Rebalance your mind, body and spirit using Ayurveda
- Develop a balanced diet based on your body type, or dosha
- Optimise your health by exercising to suit your body type
- Stretch your body with yoga

Angela Hope-Murray

Ayurvedic practitioner



Get More and Do More at Dummies.com®



Start with **FREE** Cheat Sheets

Cheat Sheets include

- Checklists
- Charts
- Common Instructions
- And Other Good Stuff!

To access the Cheat Sheet created specifically for this book, go to
www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/ayurvedauk

Get Smart at Dummies.com

Dummies.com makes your life easier with thousands of answers on everything from removing wallpaper to using the latest version of Windows.

Check out our

- Videos
- Illustrated Articles
- Step-by-Step Instructions

Want a weekly dose of Dummies?

Sign up for Newsletters on

- Digital Photography
- Microsoft Windows & Office
- Personal Finance & Investing
- Health & Wellness
- Computing, iPods & Mobile Phones
- eBay
- Internet
- Food, Home & Garden

Find out **“HOW”** at Dummies.com



Ayurveda

FOR

DUMMIES[®]

A Wiley Brand



by Angela Hope-Murray



Ayurveda For Dummies®

Published by:

John Wiley & Sons, Ltd

The Atrium
Southern Gate
Chichester
West Sussex
PO19 8SQ
England
www.wiley.com

© 2013 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, Chichester, West Sussex.

Registered office

John Wiley & Sons Ltd, The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 8SQ, United Kingdom

For details of our global editorial offices, for customer services and for information about how to apply for permission to reuse the copyright material in this book please see our website at www.wiley.com.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, except as permitted by the UK Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, without the prior permission of the publisher.

Wiley publishes in a variety of print and electronic formats and by print-on-demand. Some material included with standard print versions of this book may not be included in e-books or in print-on-demand. If this book refers to media such as a CD or DVD that is not included in the version you purchased, you may download this material at <http://booksupport.wiley.com>. For more information about Wiley products, visit www.wiley.com.

Designations used by companies to distinguish their products are often claimed as trademarks. All brand names and product names used in this book are trade names, service marks, trademarks or registered trademarks of their respective owners. The publisher is not associated with any product or vendor mentioned in this book.

LIMIT OF LIABILITY/DISCLAIMER OF WARRANTY: WHILE THE PUBLISHER AND AUTHOR HAVE USED THEIR BEST EFFORTS IN PREPARING THIS BOOK, THEY MAKE NO REPRESENTATIONS OR WARRANTIES WITH THE RESPECT TO THE ACCURACY OR COMPLETENESS OF THE CONTENTS OF THIS BOOK AND SPECIFICALLY DISCLAIM ANY IMPLIED WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE. IT IS SOLD ON THE UNDERSTANDING THAT THE PUBLISHER IS NOT ENGAGED IN RENDERING PROFESSIONAL SERVICES AND NEITHER THE PUBLISHER NOR THE AUTHOR SHALL BE LIABLE FOR DAMAGES ARISING HEREFROM. IF PROFESSIONAL ADVICE OR OTHER EXPERT ASSISTANCE IS REQUIRED, THE SERVICES OF A COMPETENT PROFESSIONAL SHOULD BE SOUGHT.

For general information on our other products and services, please contact our Customer Care Department within the U.S. at 877-762-2974, outside the U.S. at (001) 317-572-3993, or fax 317-572-4002.

For technical support, please visit www.wiley.com/techsupport.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-1-118-30670-3 (pbk); ISBN 978-1-118-30667-3 (ebk);
ISBN 978-1-118-30668-0 (ebk); ISBN 978-1-118-30669-7 (ebk)

Printed in Great Britain by TJ International Ltd, Padstow, Cornwall



Contents at a Glance

<i>Introduction</i>	1
<i>Part I: Getting Started with Ayurveda</i>	7
Chapter 1: Introducing Ayurveda: The Science of Life	9
Chapter 2: Focusing on the Fundamental Principles	15
Chapter 3: Uncovering the Subtle Energy Systems	27
Chapter 4: Determining Your Constitution.....	39
<i>Part II: Living in Harmony with Ayurveda: Promoting Good Health</i>	47
Chapter 5: Ease and Disease: Health According to Ayurveda.....	49
Chapter 6: The Rules of the Day: Dinacharya and Staying in Balance	65
Chapter 7: Seeking Union with Yoga	83
Chapter 8: Night-time Rituals for Sound Sleep and Fertility.....	107
Chapter 9: Changing Your Diet with the Seasons	119
<i>Part III: Appetising Approaches to a Healthy Diet.....</i>	131
Chapter 10: Stimulating the Palate: A Taste of Things to Come	133
Chapter 11: Selecting the Right Diet for Your Type	147
Chapter 12: Optimising Your Diet: A Recipe For Success.....	159
<i>Part IV: Fitting Ways to Enhance Healing</i>	175
Chapter 13: Stoking the Fire: Caring For Your Digestive System.....	177
Chapter 14: The Respiratory System: Breathing Life into Your Body	189
Chapter 15: Flexible Approaches for Your Musculoskeletal System	199
Chapter 16: The Secrets of Healthy Skin and Hair	209
<i>Part V: The Part of Tens</i>	221
Chapter 17: Ten Herbs For Maintaining Health	223
Chapter 18: Ten Super Spices for Your Kitchen	233

<i>Part VI: Appendices</i>	239
Appendix A: Sanskrit Glossary	241
Appendix B: Botanical Index	245
Appendix C: Suppliers	247
<i>Index</i>	253

Table of Contents

<i>Introduction</i>	1
About This Book.....	1
Conventions Used in This Book.....	2
What You're Not to Read.....	2
Foolish Assumptions.....	2
How This Book Is Organised.....	3
Part I: Getting Started with Ayurveda.....	3
Part II: Living in Harmony with Ayurveda:	
Promoting Good Health.....	3
Part III: Appetising Approaches to a Healthy Diet.....	4
Part IV: Fitting Ways to Enhance Healing.....	4
Part V: Part of Tens.....	4
Part VI: Appendices.....	4
Icons Used in This Book.....	4
Where to Go from Here.....	5
<i>Part 1: Getting Started with Ayurveda</i>	7
Chapter 1: Introducing Ayurveda: The Science of Life	9
Living Well and Maintaining Health.....	9
Surveying the Scope of Ayurveda.....	11
Locating the Practice and the Evidence.....	13
Chapter 2: Focusing on the Fundamental Principles	15
Fixing on the Three States of Energy and the Five Elements.....	15
Ether.....	16
Air.....	17
Fire.....	17
Water.....	17
Earth.....	18
Examining the Twenty Qualities.....	19
Differentiating the Doshas.....	20
Vata.....	20
Pitta.....	21
Kapha.....	22
Navigating Your Body's Networks: The Srotas.....	22
Looking at srota states.....	22
Getting to know the srotas.....	23

Chapter 3: Uncovering the Subtle Energy Systems 27

Pinpointing Three Essential Forces	27
Outling ojas.....	28
Targeting tejas.....	28
Promoting prana	29
Navigating the Nadis: Surveying the Subtle Nervous System.....	30
Discovering the Dhatus: Building Blocks of Your Body	31
Working with the Wheels of Power: The Chakras	32
Placing the Pancha Koshas: The Invisible Coverings	35

Chapter 4: Determining Your Constitution 39

Evaluating Your Constitution Type.....	40
Checking your physical type.....	40
Looking at physiological traits.....	42
Assessing your mental state.....	44
Determining Your Dosha	45

***Part II: Living in Harmony with Ayurveda:
Promoting Good Health 47*****Chapter 5: Ease and Disease: Health According to Ayurveda 49**

Discovering Ama: Its Journey through the Body.....	50
The effect of vata dosha.....	51
The symptoms of ama accumulation	52
Tracing the Path of Disease.....	53
Accumulation: The start of discomfort.....	53
Aggravation: Things not quite right	55
Overflow: Circulation through the system	56
Relocation: Finding a new home	57
Manifestation: Symptoms brought forth.....	57
Diversification/specification: How complications set in	57
Knowing the Importance of Lifestyle for Your Health	58
Failure to acknowledge your inner wisdom	58
The effects of time	59
Sensory indiscretions.....	59
Finding Great Tips for Enhancing Your Senses	60
Nurturing your hearing.....	60
Seeing your world clearly	61
Being good to your skin	62
Keeping your nose in order.....	62
Bringing general health to your sense of taste and diet	63

Chapter 6: The Rules of the Day: Dinacharya and Staying in Balance	65
The Right Side of the Bed: Starting the Day with Energy	66
Reflecting before you start the day	67
Putting your best foot forward.....	68
Cleansing your body.....	68
Meditation: The Way to Nirvana and the Light in the Heart	68
Moving into meditation.....	69
Using a mantra	70
Being patient with difficulties.....	70
Looking After the Senses	71
Refreshing your eyes.....	71
Caring for teeth and gums	72
Tongue and mouth maintenance.....	72
Snehana: Loving the Body with Oil Massage	75
Selecting the best oils for your body type.....	76
Oil application to the ears: Karna purna	77
Oil application for the nostrils: Nasya	78
Adorning Your Body with Clothes and Perfumes	78
Choosing clothes for comfort.....	78
Co-ordinating colours with the doshas.....	79
Putting your best foot forward with comfortable shoes	79
Perfumes and oils	80
Time to Step Outside.....	81
Chapter 7: Seeking Union with Yoga	83
Understanding Yoga.....	84
Going with the Flow – Understanding Body Energy or Prana.....	84
Introducing a Simple Yoga Posture for Each Constitution.....	87
Trikonasana: A vata-pacifying posture	87
Ardha matsyendra: Posture for pitta management	89
Ardha matsyasana for the kapha constitution.....	90
Easing Disease with Yoga	92
Alleviating arthritis pain with natraj asana	92
Dealing with digestive problems with vatayanasana	93
Beating obesity with bhujangasana.....	94
Looking at yoga for your eyes	95
Roaring through the lion pose to destroy disease	97
Practising Simple Routines for Every Constitution.....	99
Saluting the sun.....	99
Moving with the moon: Chandra namaskar	102
Easing into Relaxation with Corpse and Waterfall Postures.....	104
Lying down for the corpse pose	104
Becoming a waterfall	106



Chapter 8: Night-time Rituals for Sound Sleep and Fertility 107

Explaining the Different Types of Sleep..... 108
Considering Causes of – and Cures for – Insomnia..... 109
 Getting acquainted with the Ayurvedic types of insomnia 110
 Finding ways to get a good night’s sleep..... 110
Connecting Eating and Sleeping 114
Creating Beautiful Babies instead of Sleeping 115
 Selecting foods for good reproductive tissue 116
 Evaluating the uses of alcohol 118

Chapter 9: Changing Your Diet with the Seasons 119

The Smooth Rhythms of the Body 119
Staying in Tune with the Seasons..... 120
 Introducing the two parts of the year: Adana and Visarga 121
 Matching your physical condition to the seasons 122
Adjusting Your Digestion in Autumn 123
 Looking at the conditions 123
 Eating the right foods 124
Warming Winter Foods 125
Cleansing Spring Foods..... 127
Cooling Summer Foods 128

Part III: Appetising Approaches to a Healthy Diet 131

Chapter 10: Stimulating the Palate: A Taste of Things to Come . . . 133

Rasa: Discovering the Six Essential Flavours..... 133
 Selecting sweet (madhura)..... 134
 Savouring sour (amla)..... 136
 Securing salt (lavana)..... 137
 Broaching bitter (tikta)..... 138
 Promoting pungent (katu) 139
 Appreciating astringent (kashaya) 140
Looking at the Six Stages of Digestion 141
The Second Course: When Food Leaves the Mouth 142
 Effect during digestion: Releasing energy with virya..... 142
 Effect after digestion: Vipaka..... 143
 Prabhava 144
Introducing Agni: The Fuel for Life..... 144
Examining Your Digestion 145

Chapter 11: Selecting the Right Diet for Your Type 147

The Effect of Flavour on Your Emotions 147
Food and the Three States of Energy..... 149
Eating to Enhance Your Digestion..... 151
Identifying Incompatible Food Combinations..... 152

Matching Diet to Dosha	154
Eating for kapha	154
Preparing foods for pitta.....	156
Choosing wisely if you're vata	157

Chapter 12: Optimising Your Diet: A Recipe for Success 159

Highlighting High-Energy Foods to Include in Your Day	159
Basmati rice.....	160
Almond milk.....	160
Honey	161
Bee pollen	161
Improving Your Digestion with Lassi.....	162
Vata lassi.....	163
Pitta lassi.....	163
Kapha lassi.....	163
Fasting for General Health.....	164
Understanding the benefits of fasting	164
Knowing which fast is right for you.....	165
Lightening your diet with kicheree.....	166
Introducing Ghee, the Cream of the Milk	167
Discovering ghee's benefits.....	167
Making delicious ghee.....	168
Making special ghees.....	169
Bread of Heaven: Wheat-free Recipes for an Excellent Loaf	170
Crafting Super Spice Mixes for Everyday Use.....	171
Adding Herbs to Your Diet	172
Quenching Thirst with Pure Water	173

Part IV: Fitting Ways to Enhance Healing 175

Chapter 13: Stoking the Fire: Caring for Your Digestive System . . . 177

Cool Approaches to Hyperacidity.....	178
Eating to reduce acidity.....	178
Applying cooling herbs	179
Looking at hot emotions	179
Fit to Burst: Relief from Flatulence and Bloating.....	180
Preventing gas.....	180
Relieving wind with herbs	180
Moving Things Along: Coping with Constipation	181
Strategies for lightening the load.....	181
Introducing triphala.....	182
Taking the Weight off Your Feet: Digestive Tips to Fight the Flab.....	182
Understanding the set point.....	183
Lightening your diet	183
Herbal help to encourage weight loss.....	186
Gut Reaction: Taking Care of Your Bowels	186
Caring for the colon and alimentary canal	187
Improving intestinal health with friendly bacteria.....	187

Chapter 14: The Respiratory System: Breathing Life into Your Body	189
Introducing Pranayama and the Benefits of Breathing.....	190
Energising your digestion with agni sara breathing.....	190
Breathing through alternate nostrils.....	191
Creating cool sounds with sitkari.....	193
Shining your skull with kapilabharti breath.....	194
Cleansing Your Nose with a Neti Pot	195
Caring for Your Lungs.....	196
Defending yourself with chyavanprash	196
Taking tulsi	197
Snuffing out a cold with spices	197
Strengthening with pippali milk.....	198
Chapter 15: Flexible Approaches for Your Musculoskeletal System	199
Maintaining Mobility with Simple Stretches	199
Coping with Cramp.....	201
Addressing Osteoarthritis and Rheumatoid Arthritis	202
Looking at dietary principles and arthritis.....	203
Healing herbs.....	205
Using oils, inside and out.....	205
Introducing castor oil.....	206
Regaining Stability: Strategies for Chronic Fatigue Syndrome	207
Diagnosing CFS	207
Coping with CFS: Herbal remedies	208
Chapter 16: The Secrets of Healthy Skin and Hair	209
Saving Your Skin with a Simple Massage Routine	210
Identifying Foods Your Skin Will Love	212
Balancing the Scales: Helpful Ways to Settle Psoriasis and Eczema	214
Stepping Out with Chicken Soup for the Soles	216
Simple solutions for corns.....	216
Coping with a callus	216
Fixtures for fissures	217
Managing ingrown toenails.....	217
Reducing the pain of heel spurs	217
Heading in the Right Direction with Scalp Massage.....	218

***Part V: The Part of Tens* 221**

Chapter 17: Ten Herbs for Maintaining Health223

Ashwaghandha (Withania somnifera) Winter Cherry.....	224
Bala (Sida cordifolia) Country Mallow.....	225
Vacha (Calamus) Sweet Flag.....	225
Pippali (Piper longum) Long Pepper.....	226
Haritaki (Chebulic myrobalan) Indian Gall Nut.....	227
Amalaki (Emblic myrobalan) Indian Gooseberry.....	228
Guduchi (Tinospora cordifolia) Moonseed.....	228
Shatavari (Asparagus racemosus) Wild Asparagus.....	229
Brahmi (Hydrocotyl asiatica/Bacopa monnieri) Indian Pennywort.....	230
Kumari (Aloe vera indica) Indian Aloe.....	230

Chapter 18: Ten Super Spices for Your Kitchen 233

Turmeric.....	233
Cinnamon.....	234
Black Pepper.....	234
Mustard Seed.....	235
Ginger.....	235
Cumin.....	236
Coriander.....	236
Cardamom.....	237
Clove.....	237
Nutmeg.....	238

***Part VI: Appendices* 239**

Appendix A: Sanskrit Glossary241

Appendix B: Botanical Index245

Appendix C: Suppliers247

Suppliers of Herbs.....	247
Suppliers of Spices.....	247
Ayurvedic Education.....	247
Journals.....	248
Yoga and Meditation.....	248
Organisations.....	248

***Index* 253**

Introduction

My search for a medical system that truly encompassed the whole being began when I was 19 years old and studying the biomechanics of the lower limb at podiatry school. A sense of deep unease was growing within me because I realised that a problem in the knee, for example, may be related to the whole of the skeletal structure and not just to the part of the body we were allowed to take care of. Alongside this was the realisation that a disease entity can present a very different picture in people with differing constitutions.

Help arrived for me in 1986 when a doctor came to the hospital to give a talk on Ayurveda, called the mother of all healing systems. Dawn broke for me and shone a light on a system of healing that is so elegant yet so simple in its formation.

Coming from at least 5,000 years of human experience, Ayurveda really is the 'prima materia' (first matter) of all medical modalities. Ayurveda is a system in which the healers have a responsibility to keep themselves well, along with their patients. Encompassing wellness of body, mind and spirit, Ayurveda encourages vitalisation that extends into your every cell.

I hope this book fuels in you the enthusiasm to try Ayurveda for yourself and incorporate it into your daily life, which will benefit and be enhanced by it.

About This Book

Ayurveda For Dummies gives you the tools to comprehend the basic building blocks of Ayurveda. Use it as a basis to progress on the journey to well-being using simple instructions and interventions, which you can implement immediately into your daily routine. I give you tools for recognising problems as early as possible and treating them with both diet and herbs. I provide a lot of general information for maintaining your well-being. Everyone deserves better health.

Conventions Used in This Book

To help you get the most from this book, I follow a few conventions:

- ✓ *Italic* is used for emphasis and to highlight new words or terms that I define.
- ✓ Web addresses may split over two lines – if so, ignore the hyphen that links them when you're typing the address into a search engine. If you're reading this on an enabled device, the web addresses are hyperlinked and will take you straight to the site in question.
- ✓ **Bold** shows the action part of numbered steps.

What You're Not to Read

Of course, I hope that you'll read the entire book, but in some cases I offer information that you may find interesting but that's not essential to your understanding. Sidebars (shaded boxes of text) are an example of this kind of text and may include anecdotes, history or other tidbits that I find juicy but you may not! And when I go deeper into the principles or science of Ayurveda, I use the Technical Stuff icon to let you know you're perfectly welcome to skip that paragraph.

Foolish Assumptions

To generate this book, I made a few assumptions about you:

- ✓ You're keen to learn more about Ayurveda but don't know exactly what it is and how to practise it.
- ✓ You're very busy and you want a simple, clear understanding of the fundamentals of Ayurveda.
- ✓ You've already delved into other types of complimentary therapies and would like to expand your knowledge.
- ✓ You're interested in optimising your health and are ready to try a few Ayurvedic suggestions.

How This Book Is Organised

I've organised *Ayurveda For Dummies* into six parts. Each part contains a variety of chapters to instruct you further on various aspects of Ayurveda.

Part I: Getting Started with Ayurveda

In this part I explain the belief system and philosophy behind Ayurveda, which can appear quite esoteric at times. Getting to grips with the basics won't take you long and the rewards will be worth it.

You probably want to get cracking straight away with learning your constitution according to Ayurveda from the questionnaire in Chapter 4. This enables you to put the interventions that I list into practise. Armed with this information you can better navigate the rest of the book.

Part II: Living in Harmony with Ayurveda: Promoting Good Health

In this section I take you on a journey to learn how disease develops in your system according to Ayurveda. Completing the questionnaire in this part can determine how healthy your system is. You also look at the health of the senses and how time affects your well-being.

This is the core of the book where ways you can promote good health are clearly laid out. I cover the daily routine, seasonal routines and evening procedures. There is a great chapter on yoga postures for individual constitutions as well as yoga as medicine for problems you may have. I include breathing exercises from which you can gain immediate benefit if you try them for as little as ten minutes a day. You're sure to find advice in this part to suit your lifestyle needs.

Part III: Appetising Approaches to a Healthy Diet

Diet is of utmost importance to your health. In this part I share my enthusiasm for the Ayurvedic approach to diet and I provide you with ways to improve your digestion using food. I give dietary advice for different doshas (constitutions), because we all have different dietary needs. In Chapter 12, I share ways to optimise your diet and make it more nutritious. *Bon appétit!*

Part IV: Fitting Ways to Enhance Healing

In this section I present you with Ayurvedic suggestions to improve common health problems such as digestive disorders, respiratory problems, musculoskeletal ailments and skin and hair issues. If you're experiencing difficulties in any of these areas, I provide helpful prevention advice you can put into practice.

Part V: The Part of Tens

No *For Dummies* book is complete without the legendary Part of Tens. In this part I present bite-size chunks of information about herbs and spices, including their amazing healing properties.

Head to www.dummies.com/extras/ayurvedauk for a bonus Part of Tens chapter: 'Ten Wonderful Ways To Enhance Your Health with Ayurveda'.

Part VI: Appendices

Last but not least are three short appendices: a glossary of Sanskrit terms (Sanskrit being the language of Ayurveda), a botanical index, and a list of suppliers of all things Ayurveda.

Icons Used in This Book

Sprinkled throughout the book you'll see various icons to guide you on your way. Icons are a *For Dummies* way of drawing your attention to important stuff, interesting stuff, and stuff you really need to know how to do.



This icon highlights important concepts in Ayurveda or concerning health in general.



I love science, but maybe you don't. That's okay – you don't need much of it to understand how Ayurveda can help you. When I delve into specialised info, I use this icon to let you know that the material is esoteric and skippable.



When I provide a way for you to do something more quickly or easily, I use this icon.



This dangerous-looking symbol lets you know when trouble may befall you, as when an ingredient I discuss is known to cause allergies. You won't find many of these icons, but please do heed their messages.

Where to Go from Here

I've written this book so that you can dip in and out of it as you please. However, if you're new to Ayurveda, starting at the beginning is most helpful. For the rest of you, take a look at the Table of Contents and see what takes your fancy.

Head online for special bonus content at www.dummies.com/extras/ayurvedauk, and visit www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/ayurvedauk for the cheat sheet created specifically for this book.

I wish you a happy excursion into the world of Ayurveda, which has enough breadth and depth to satisfy those of you who are hungry for knowledge to help you improve and sustain the well-being of your body, mind and spirit.

Part I

getting started
with

Ayurveda



For Dummies can help you get started with a huge range of subjects. Visit www.dummies.com to learn more and do more with *For Dummies*.

In this part . . .

- ✔ Discover the incredible 5,000-year history of Ayurveda.
- ✔ Identify your constitution – your type of skin, hair and body shape – so you can tailor the advice in this book for you.
- ✔ Get familiar with the amazing energy systems in your body.
- ✔ Meet the centres of awareness that are your chakra system.
- ✔ Go to www.dummies.com/extras/ayurvedauk for online bonus content, including an extra Part of Tens chapter: 'Ten Wonderful Ways to Enhance Your Health with Ayurveda'.

Chapter 1

Introducing Ayurveda: The Science of Life

In This Chapter

- ▶ Discovering the history of the Vedas
 - ▶ Accessing the aims of Ayurveda
 - ▶ Learning about the Sanskrit language
 - ▶ Surveying the scope of Ayurveda
 - ▶ Mentioning the main texts and where to find the evidence
-

Welcome to the world of Ayurveda – a vast treasure house of knowledge of natural healthcare given to us by holy men called *rishis*. Literally meaning ‘science of life’, Ayurveda encompasses all aspects of your well-being, from breathing to digestion.

In this chapter, I introduce you to the ancient art of Ayurveda.

Living Well and Maintaining Health

Ayurveda is a truly holistic health system which supports you from the cradle to the end of your life. The Ayurvedic mode of living aims to maximise your lifespan by optimising your health through interventions that care for your body, mind, spirit and environment. Ayurveda places a great emphasis on the prevention of disease and on health promotion, as well as on a comprehensive approach to treatment.



Looking into Ayurveda's origins

The genealogy of Ayurveda traces back to about 5,000 years ago in the Indus valley, where the *Vedas*, or oldest Ayurvedic scriptures, originated. Legend has it that the knowledge within the Vedas was downloaded, so to speak, to a number of sages in deep meditation. This was experienced as an act of divine love to help us manage and maximise our lives on earth. For centuries, this knowledge was passed down from one generation to the next in the form of memorised chants known as *sutras*.

There are four Vedas, the oldest of which is the Rig Veda, which refers to three great beings governing the universe, in the form of Agni, Soma and Indra, which are personifications of the sun, moon and wind. These in turn become what are known as the *doshas*, which govern all activities in your body and are called *pitta*, *kapha* and *vata* respectively. (You can become acquainted with your own unique balance of these forces by referring to Chapter 4.)

Known as the fourth veda, the Atharvaveda (meaning 'no vibration', or how to make

the mind stable), contains the knowledge of Ayurveda. Two systems of medicine are described. The first is a compilation of drugs used on an empirical, rational basis, while the other describes a type of magical spiritual medicine.

Yet another version of the origins of Ayurveda is given by Sushruta, considered the founder of surgical medicine. Sushruta and other sages approached Dhanvantari, the god of Ayurveda. Dhanvantari imparted to them the wisdom of Ayurveda for the betterment of mankind and to help rid it of the suffering of disease.

These legends aren't so far away from the divine origins of the healing arts in contemporary cultures closer to home in the West that Apollo gave us from Greece and Thoth from Egypt.

If you want to delve deeper into the origins of Ayurveda, the three very important texts that all scholars of Ayurveda can't manage without are: the Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, and Ashtanga Hridayam by Vagbhata.



Unlike some other systems of medicine, Ayurveda is not just concerned with the absence of disease. As Sushruta, a physician in the sixth century BC informs us, you are only considered healthy when your appetite is strong, your tissues (*dhatu*s) are functioning normally, your humours (the *doshas*: vata, pitta and kapha) are in balance, bodily wastes are eliminated well, and your mind and senses experience joy. If these Sanskrit terms pique your interest, head to Chapter 3 for an explanation of the dhatus and Chapter 2 for the basics about the doshas.

An extensive body of knowledge describes the therapeutic use of minerals and plants in Ayurveda. Throughout this book, I recommend different herbal remedies for different ailments or as rejuvenating tonics. If you can't find the particular herbs or spices in your grocers, you can find suppliers in Appendix C.

Ayurveda places great emphasis on the effects of the different seasons and your diet on the equilibrium of the body. Different doshas, or attributes, are prevalent at different times of the day, and during the seasons these cause physiological changes in your body. Ayurveda understands that moving with the times and climate is a mainstay of good health because you are a microcosm of what's going on in your environment. I discuss these cadences of time and what you can do to ensure optimum health throughout the seasons in Chapter 9.

Talking of the environment, Ayurveda recognises the importance of the environment to your health: in Ayurveda, everything is part of the same consciousness. How can we be truly healthy when the environment is being brutalised by development, forests are being cleared on a massive scale and farming practices are employed that disrespect the lives of sentient beings?

The food that we eat has often been packaged, chilled and reheated until it contains very little vital force. Your immune system operates at top capacity when your fuel is so poor. Immunity, known as *vyadhishamatva*, or 'disease forgiveness', is the starting point for good health, and Chapter 12 addresses eating the best food to improve your immune system.



Health is described by the word *swastha* in Sanskrit, which means 'to be established in the self'. Health is really moment-to-moment awareness, and this can be obtained through meditation. Details on how you can put this life-changing practice into action are provided in Chapter 6.

Surveying the Scope of Ayurveda

Within the practice of Ayurveda are specialities – just like in Western systems.

Here are the eight primary Ayurvedic specialities (I don't cover all of these in this book – certainly not surgery, you'll be relieved to know!):

- ✓ Toxicology (*agada tantra*)
- ✓ Childhood diseases or paediatrics (*bala tantra*)
- ✓ General surgery (*shalya tantra*)
- ✓ Internal medicine (*kaya chikitsa*)
- ✓ Psychiatry and mental disorders (*bhuta vidya*)
- ✓ Management of diseases of the head and the neck (*salakya tantra*)
- ✓ Fertility treatment (*vajikarana*)
- ✓ Rejuvenation and the treatment of geriatrics (*rasayana*)

Speaking of Sanskrit

Ayurveda cannot be separated from the Sanskrit language. Sanskrit is a sister of Greek and Latin and one of the Indo-European group of languages. It's an extraordinary and very precise medium of expression. More epics, sagas and scriptures are written in Sanskrit than in any other language, including English.

The word *Sanskrit* means 'perfected', or 'perfectly formed'. (In fact, Sanskrit is so rigorous and precise, and hence so unambiguous, that it's used in computer-processing projects in the domain of artificial intelligence.)

The complexity of Sanskrit in its level of sophistication and scientific accuracy is only mirrored by mathematics. The process of perfecting the language has taken thousands of years. In the past, Sanskrit was the language used by all the sciences, which were all orientated towards the study of the self in all its aspects.

The use of the language itself is an instrument for healing. Its beautiful resonances, which you can experience without even having to understand the meaning, can reach the very core of your being. All languages vibrate the being, but Sanskrit somehow enables you to keep currents of energy flowing so that you can enter into and maintain an inner harmony. I've used the Sanskrit terms for this reason throughout the book.

The bible tells us in St John's Gospel that 'In the beginning was the word, and the word was God.' The Vedas concur with this view and say that the whole of creation was *sphota*, or spoken into existence.

In some places in India, medicines are still produced using Sanskrit mantras, because it's believed this makes them really potent and much more deep-acting than ordinary preparations.

The forte of the approach of mainstream medicine is in diagnosis and acute medical conditions such as trauma. If a bus knocks you down, you need to be in the accident and emergency room at your local hospital.

However, in the management of deep-seated chronic ailments, mainstream medicine sometimes lacks the sophistication of Ayurveda, which always takes the underlying causes of pathology into consideration. Ayurvedic interventions can deeply purify your body and eliminate toxins from your system.



Iatrogenic diseases – those that are unintentionally caused by medical treatment – are on the increase and were estimated as being the third-largest cause of death in a study by Starfield in 2000 in the United States. Ayurveda's more subtle and individualised approach to treatment shows no such ill effects. However, I'm not suggesting you ditch your doctor for Ayurveda – far from it. But as long as your doctor is happy for you to follow the remedies in this book, Ayurvedic treatment can be very effective.

Primary healthcare is considered as very important in Ayurveda. This book gives you the tools to stay well throughout your life. In Chapter 6, I give you very simple lifestyle recommendations called *dinacharya*, which keep your diet, digestion and sleep – considered the pillars of your health – in good order.

Locating the Practice and the Evidence

Ayurveda has been the only system of medicine in some rural parts of India for thousands of years. Under the rule of the British, Ayurveda was undermined in the belief that the more mechanistic Western medicine was more efficacious. Thankfully for us, the poor continued to use the tried-and-tested native treatments for their ailments, and Ayurveda survived underground until 1947. This is when India became a free nation and Ayurveda received full recognition as a medical system.

In the past 20 years, Ayurveda has undergone a resurgence. It's now practised all over the world and often works in harmony with a more modern approach. Qualified Ayurvedic physicians are medical practitioners, and many hospitals treat patients using solely Ayurvedic tenets, without causing any of the adverse reactions of modern treatment.

To find a qualified Ayurvedic practitioner near you, see Appendix C.

A wellspring of research is available for those of you who are interested in the science and efficacy of Ayurveda. Over and over again, studies have validated the efficacy of this system using the stringency of Western approaches to research and statistical analysis. To get you started, visit:

✔ www.hindawi.com/journals/ecam

✔ www.oxfordjournals.org (search for 'Ayurveda')

For the countless systemic reviews of Ayurveda, try:

✔ www.systematicreviewinayurveda.org

To begin following the tenets of Ayurveda is to enter a realm that can be truly life-enhancing. Here's to your personal journey.



You're a star: Being at one with the universe

The philosophical system of Samkhya was originated by Kapila around the ninth century BC and laid the foundation for Ayurveda.

Samkhya philosophy is the backbone of Ayurveda and gives you a clear schema for how all things come into being. The word *Samkhya* literally means 'number', and is so-called for reckoning up the 25 entities (*tattwas*) that make up the universe. According to this understanding of reality, there's a continual flow into 'becoming' in all life, from the finest essence to the corporeal world.

This idea was mirrored in the West by the Greek philosophers in the phrase *panta re*, which means 'all things flow'. The early sages had the same notion, using the term *samsara* to mean the 'world of becoming'.

Charaka, an Ayurvedic physician and one of the main commentators of Ayurveda, tells us that 'Each individual is the unique expression of a recognisable finely tuned cosmic process occurring in space and time.'

Putting it in modern terms, Newton, in his first law of thermodynamics, states that the sum total of energy in the universe does not diminish or increase, but continuously transforms itself from one state or level of vibration to another as the flow of life manifests itself into many forms.

Because you are formed of the same substance as the creation, you are truly a microcosm of the universe.