

Blissful and effective, Ayurveda is attracting more more people into its rejuvenation therapies

Ayurvedic Body Therapies

Caroline Robertson ND

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Phone/fax: 0011 61 2 9904 775
17 Orchard Road, Chatswood NSW Australia 2067
www.ayurvedaelements.com/
ayurvedaelements@gmail.com



Ayurveda, Indian natural healing, honours the body as a sacred temple- a vehicle for the divine spirit within. There's a beautiful metaphor to illustrate this. Our body with its nine orifices is likened to the nine-holed flute played upon by Lord Krishna. When the flow of breath through the flute is uneven the sound is distorted. Similarly when we are disconnected from our energetic source the flow of spirit through our bodies is impeded, manifesting as the disharmony of disease. Ayurvedic therapists are medico-musicians

able to attune their awareness to the body's vibration, decipher our beings expressive song and conduct a state shift whereby malady is transformed into melody.

Our sweet symphony of health is thus restored as the spirit flows freely through a balanced instrument of mind and body. Beautiful music resounds inside all of us as Yehudi Menuhin expressed, "deep within us is the never silent sound of our own vibrations, which we may ignore but is the musical core within us all".

Modern living fosters deafness to the sound of our inner voices. Constant external stimuli, overemphasis on mental abilities and reduced physical activity leaves us in a fragmented state.

Our mind is overactive and stressed to breaking point whilst the neglected body remains sedentary and stagnant. The relaxed and receptive state induced during body therapies reconnects us with ourselves so we can pause to hear our guiding cellular yearnings. From this heightened awareness we recognise and rectify destructive patterns, progressing towards greater self-love and wisdom.

Transference dynamics

Why is bodywork so popular? Put simply, touch touches us at the deepest level. It is the voice of feeling, expressing a language beyond words. A pat on the back can be more meaningful than a thousand reassuring words. Sometimes we need to bypass the intellect and mind, as with bodywork, to provoke deep change. Travelling through the sea of life our bodies gather barnacles of conditioning throughout diverse experiences.

These 'barnacles' are unconscious areas of tension that house our history of emotional baggage such as defences and vulnerabilities. Weighted down with emotional toxicity, our body armours itself against attacks from past 'ghosts'. A sensitive body therapist is able to read an individual's body map of aches, pains, lumps and bumps, fully aware that every touch evokes certain emotions and gently facilitating the letting go of unresolved wounds. During massage there is a subtle transference of electromagnetic energy takes place between the practitioner and the client so it is important to trust and feel "good vibes" with one's chosen therapist.

One must feel receptive and safe in order to allow the energy of the therapist to facilitate the healing process. In turn a wave of unconditional love and compassion flows through the practitioner as they respect the faith you have placed in them, an honour not taken lightly. Perhaps that's why the Ayurvedic word for oil is sneha, a term also synonymous with love, kindness and tenderness- all the feelings that should course through one during a body therapy session.

Ayurvedic Massage

If love is the panacea then an ayurvedic oil massage is a great way to get an unconditional 'love booster'. Over 5,000 years of empirical research has refined Ayurvedic massage into a sublime art. Combining skilled knowledge of the structural and subtle body, oils, music, gems and bodywork techniques, the result is a profound technique for balancing the body and mind. Massage is integral to many eastern cultures, including Indian.

From birth up to 7 years children are massaged every day, self-massage is an important daily practice and family members often massage each other. Even the temple Gods get into the act as Sri Lakshmi massages Lord Vishnu and Srimati Radharani soothes Sri Krishna with her loving touch. Many Indians enjoy an annual Ayurvedic retreat where they may receive body therapies for a month.

Just as a machine needs to be greased, the body loves to be

favourably to Ayurvedic massage. According to Ayurvedic master Vagbhata massage should be done everyday to promote positive health, overcome fatigue, strengthen the nervous system, improve eyesight, nourish the bodily tissues, increase longevity, normalise sleep, instil flexibility and sturdiness as well as to prevent and cure disease.

Studies conducted by Dr Hari Sharma of the Ohio State University College of Medicine showed that after three months of Ayurvedic treatment and massage patients blood showed a significant decrease in the free radical lipid peroxide and an improved immune response. Modern research has proven the beneficial effect massage has on all areas of the body-specifically the neuromuscular, circulatory, lymphatic, skeletal and gastrointestinal systems. Various studies recognise its therapeutic action in skin diseases, neurasthenia, asthma, high blood pressure, arthritis, mental disorders, headaches and

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lubricated and have it's largest organ, the skin, smoothed. The Vata body-type aggravated Vata conditions (cold, tense, dry and rigid) respond particularly

insomnia.

It's also been shown to improve the stress response, relax and tone muscles, stimulate glands under

the skin to produce hormones, promote lymphatic drainage as well as partially repair harmful exposure to UV and electromagnetic radiation. An additional benefit of Ayurvedic massage is the potency of the herbalised oils. These enhance the process of purification

before commencing therapy; hence a preliminary consultation is advisable. After investigating the state of your tissues, 5 elements, body systems, past conditions and mental disposition, the ideal body therapy is tailored to your needs. Specific oils, gems, music, guided

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and regeneration. Shown to completely permeate the dermis in 5 minutes and all seven layers of skin in 8-10 minutes, the unique herbalised oils used can be infused with up to 75 different herbs, increasing the therapeutic effect immeasurably. The oils have been scientifically proven to possess anti carcinogenic and antioxidant properties (Dr. Hari Sharma). This effect is further increased through the Ayurvedic heating process according to recent research. This in effect reduces free radical activity in the body -a key-contributing factor to heart disease, cancer and cellular aging.

Charaka Samhita, an Ayurvedic treatise adds, "Ayurvedic oils strengthen the metabolic fires, purify the intestines, remove toxins from the tissues, rejuvenate the body, prevent aging and bestow the user with a lifespan of 100 years."

A qualified Ayurvedic practitioner assesses the state of your body

visualisations and affirmations are also formulated to enhance the therapeutic impact. Ayurvedic massage is performed with an acute awareness of the marmas and chakras.

Marmas are vital points similar to acupuncture points. Manipulated correctly they revitalise the whole body and can also be used in self-defence, as Xena knows, to mortally wound an enemy. Though marmas are innumerable, there are 107 major ones located at the junction where flesh, veins, arteries, tendons, bones and joints meet as well as being the secondary seats of subtle energy (Prana or Qi) It is at these areas that pains and weaknesses tend to concentrate.

Marmas are also the points where the elemental life forces of ether, air, fire, water and earth converge and therefore where the body's organising intelligence is most concentrated. The seven great marmas are the same as the main

chakras. These seven chakras are whirling vortexes of energy located over the main endocrine glands- the gonads, ovaries, pancreas, adrenals, thymus, thyroid, pituitary and pineal. Each chakra nourishes particular organs and controls various psycho-physiological aspects of our being. When they are blocked, physical disease ensues. Ayurvedic massage opens and cleanses these energy channels so the current can flow freely and our latent vitality is released.

Most Ayurvedic body therapies begin with a preliminary massage and may then proceed to a more specialised technique. The massage strokes vary from deep to superficial and follow the flow of energy channels, nerve pathways and hair growth. There are three types of movements-active (strong pressure), passive (delicate stroking) and persuasive (pinching or kneading the small muscles with the thumb and forefinger.) Before the massage the practitioner focuses their energy with a brief centering meditation and may recite

interconnection. Like a sculptor flowing with the body's mould they create a very relaxing yet enlivening mood. The whole body (except the genital region) is tended to in order to bring about a sense of whole body integration and alignment.

The session sometimes ends with a body scrub using bean or grain flours known as ubtans. These facilitate exfoliation, reduce cellulite, promote oil removal and stimulate circulation as well as producing a glowing complexion. A steam bath may also be given to further warm the body and enhance the oil absorption.

Supportive input to the senses is emphasised during therapies as they are the gateways to our biological and mental processes. The sense of touch is already being employed but how can the sense of smell, sight and hearing be recruited into the healing process? Next we'll take a brief look at the use of essential oils, music and visualisations in Ayurvedic body therapies.

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a prayer to magnify the healing potency. Like a hypnotic dance the masseuse or masseur synchronize their breath with the receiver in order to maintain a deep

Smell the roses

Upon waking, the ladies of India's palaces bathed in a pool filled with the petals of 1,000 roses, their

bodies and hair were then cleansed and beautified with herbal oils of jasmine, sandalwood and henna. The blend of essential oils created an air of sensual delight that would intoxicate anyone entering the palace grounds.

scents, to one person rose essential oil conjures up happy feelings of their childhood garden, another may be repulsed by its association with a tragic funeral service. It is of utmost importance that the smell induces a positive state in the inhaler.

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At the site of the ancient Indus Valley excavation site an aromatherapy ceramic distillation apparatus was found, proving that aromatherapy was practiced thousands of year ago in India. Attars (perfume, smoke, wind, odours and essences) are used in ayurvedic aromatherapy to coax our 10 million sense detecting cells into an effortless state of harmony. In relation to body therapies they may be added to base oil, put in a diffuser, used as a poultice, lit as incense or used in a vaporiser or steam chamber. Smell is the only sense with a direct link to the limbic or emotional centre of the brain.

This gives aromas the power to evoke vivid impressions, conjure up memories, boost our immune system, trigger emotions and drive the stress response. Smells are also used to literally 'clear the air' of negative influences or energies. How do you choose the right aroma? Everyone has a particular neuro-association linked to certain

The essential oil should also counteract one's elemental imbalances. For example a hot, angry, restless person with skin inflammation would experience aggravation from cinnamon essential oil in a mustard seed oil base. Yet this combination would be great for a cold, plump, lethargic person suffering from bronchitis. The former 'hot' person would experience relief from jasmine or sandalwood essential oil in a coconut oil base whereas the bronchitis sufferer could feel worse from this. As with most Ayurvedic therapies the valuable information is the person's current elemental balance-Vata, Pitta or Kapha. This can be ascertained in just minutes by doing a questionnaire from an Ayurvedic book or seeking the advise of an Ayurvedic physician. Some popular bases and blends are featured below.

Lend me your ears

"Music gives soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, charm to sadness, gaiety and life to everything" - Plato

Vata- to warm and ground use a base of sesame oil and a mix of patchouli, sandalwood & cardamom essential oils

Pitta- to cool and calm use a base of coconut oil and a blend of jasmine, vetivert, henna & rose essential oils

Kapha- to elevate mood & stimulate the system use a base of mustard oil & sesame oil combined with bergamot, lavender & basil

Music is a very uplifting and meditative adjunct to any body therapy session. Transcending the intellect, music touches our deepest spiritual essence which is why the Sanskrit term for note (swara) means expression of the soul. Transporting us to a realm of etheric vibrations, music activates the right brain which nurtures creativity, intuition, receptivity,

All states conducive to healing on the mental and physical platforms. Sound is simply a vibration eliciting change in the forms it flows through, our atoms literally 'dancing' to the beat of the music. Known to shatter glass, move the objects stimulate rain and move us to tears or laughter- the power of sound vibration is phenomenal. Ayurvedic music therapy understands how to use the energetics of sound therapeutically.

An expert Ayurvedist can prescribe a suitable melody to reduce pain, induce sleep, coax one out of depression and subdue anger amongst many things. For thousands of years Ayurvedic music therapists have utilised the Ragas (72 major melodies) in order to dispel imbalances. These melodies were developed through the recognition of cosmic vibrations emitting from natural forces. Reflecting a particular mood and physical reality the listener's biorhythms start to resonate with the musical vibration, creating a harmony that removes obstacles to health. Some Ragas commonly used include Raga Bhairavi for

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softness, stillness, silence, dreams, relaxation, imagination and regeneration.

arthritis, Raga Hindol for backache, Raga Pooriya for hypertension, Raga Bhageswari for insomnia and Raga Jaijivanti for general pain.

Modern music therapy supports ancient assertions with research findings that music slows the neuronal dropout rate in Alzheimers, improves mental faculties of autistic children and reduces pain and mental stress.

Harrison described them as " a mystical energy encased in a sound structure, each mantra containing within its vibrations a unique power". They may be used to invoke particular healing energies or to clear specific blockages from the chakras.

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It also helps to establish new mental pathways, which suggests scope for rerouting negative mental processes and establishing a positive 'groove' in their place. Music also induces an alpha brain wave state, which is very conducive for visualisation and affirmation. Although the music used during Ayurvedic body therapy is generally classical Indian Ragas if a patient prefers Gregorian chants, Baroque music, Gospel spirituals, Jazz, Western Classical, ambient music or anything that pushes their bliss button then it can be used just as effectively. As with aromas the important distinction is how the unique patient responds to the vibration.

The use of mantras is sometimes involved during a session but these are usually chanted silently in the therapist's mind. Mantras are concentrated, specific sound vibrations, which cleanse subtle impurities from the nerves, mind and energy channels. George

A simple example is the mantra "Om Dhanwantaraye namah" which invokes the Ayurvedic God of healing's blessings for a successful treatment. A more specific mantra can be chanted to bring a therapy to an auspicious completion such as- "Sarve bhavantu sukhinah, sarve shantu niraamayaah, sarve bhadraani pashyant, maa kaschit dukha bhaahg bhavet- May all be happy, may all be healthy, may all experience positivity and let on one suffer".

Dreams are the seedlings of reality

A very powerful partner to bodywork, visualisations trigger the right brain's capacity for renewal and change. Since the mind is exceptionally impressionable and receptive during body therapy, due to the alpha brain wave state induced, it is the perfect time to clear out weed-negative beliefs and plant-positive seed beliefs with

conscious intentions. Visualisations are a way of taking advantage of the old adage that anything we conceive and sincerely believe we can achieve. Far from just a fleeting new-age concept, the uses of affirmations and visualisations have been used in Ayurveda and Yoga for thousands of years under the guise of samkalpas.

The vast range of imagery you can use with bodywork is only limited by one's imagination. People who find it hard to switch off stressful thoughts sabotage the relaxing effects of a massage. To initially relax a patient you can ask them to visualise their whole body softening, tensions melting away like wax in the sun. They can then focus on the breath, releasing any sensations with each exhalation. Guiding them to a beautiful place such as a tropical beach, a still lake, a bubbling brook amidst a fragrant flower-filled meadow or a scene that holds happy impressions from the past can evoke a responsive mind set.

In order to prevent them from drifting too far from body-consciousness ask them to be aware of any sensations in the body, travelling to the core of that feeling and experiencing the underlying emotion embedded there, easing it with each exhalation. If the therapist wants to stimulate blocked energy, the spine is often a good place to start.

Guiding the client to visualise the colours of the chakras while holding the respective area and repeating the associated affirmation strengthens their psych-physiological integrity and function. This commences from the base chakra through to the crown chakra. (See the chakra chart in the next page). A simpler method is to use your fingernails to gently comb long strokes up the spine from the lower back to the shoulders and arms. "Imagine a fountain of white energy is flowing up your spine, removing any blockages to your optimal health and showering every smiling cell with renewed vitality".

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Saying, " You're in a timeless moment, there's nowhere to go, nothing to do and no-one to be. Enjoy the magic of the present," coaxes the patient to unwind, releasing past and future concerns.

Stretches during a session are an effective time for visualisations as patients are being extended beyond their self-imposed limitations and boundaries. Two stretches can be easily incorporated into a bodywork

session. With the patient on their back, stand at their feet and grasp the backs of their ankles, gently pulling the legs horizontally away from the body, like a stretching rack. The feet can be seen as the roots of a strong tree, tapping into the earth's core and absorbing

sea for water, the sky for air and movement for ether. The practitioner's intuition and the expertise will assess which practice is appropriate and the most effective time to apply it. Completing the session one can affirm the patients perfect essence-

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golden, nourishing sap into the body which rejuvenates and heals every organ and system. Still on their backs, standing at the top of the head, stretch the arms above the heads "just like an angel ready to take flight, reaching for the stars towards the realm of boundless possibilities."

Holding their wrists and stretching them horizontally with each exhalation they can imagine their fingers are antennae, gathering all the pure, positive energy in the universe. Streaming into their bodies and flooding their cells with fresh life it envelops the body in a white protective aura. Negative and destructive influences are repelled by this effulgence whereas supportive and strengthening input is drawn into it, reinforcing empowering qualities.

At times the elements can be balanced with the aid of visualisations. Connecting with the soil for earth, the sun for fire, the

requesting them to repeat in their mind- "I am experiencing real love, real health, real happiness. My body is perfectly relaxed, aligned and integrated." At this point the therapy is finished but the patient can lie on the table for a few minutes more as they envisage the ideal developments in their life throughout the coming year. Covering most life important aspects including health, relationships, service, environment, abundance, travel, leisure, creativity and spiritual evolution, they should get a sense of the compelling future that awaits them as a renewed sense of excitement and purpose is injected into their life.

Next we'll investigate four of the specialty oil therapy techniques- the forehead shower, crown bath, eye cleanse and creamy rice massage.

1. Forehead shower (Shirodhara)

WHAT IS IT? One of the most relaxing therapies available 'shiro'

means head and 'dhara' is a stream thus, shirodhara denotes continuous pouring of herbal liquids over the head and scalp. Imagine you're lying on an ancient wooden treatment table, ready to surrender all your tension and sacrifice stubborn imbalances. The previous massage has reduced your body to jelly, soothing music and fragrant aromas caress your senses. All your mental demons-stress, fear, anxiety, mood swings, anger and irritability are about to dissolve into an ocean of calm. Laying on your back your body is cocooned in warm towels. As warm herbalised oil flows in a continuous rhythmic stream across your forehead, your mind is lulled into a state of serenity and expanded consciousness.

Oil stroking the third eye has a reflex balancing effect on the deepest recesses of the brain. Profoundly relaxing, the nervous system unwinds, the master endocrine organs the pituitary and pineal glands are balanced and pleasure neurotransmitters such as serotonin flood your grateful cells. In completion the attendant rubs a pinch of warming powder into the

day with a peacefully clear head and refreshed body.

WHO IS IT GOOD FOR? This treatment is especially effective for Vata predominant disorders. In Vata imbalances clients typically suffering from insecurity, fear, nervous system strain and ungroundedness respond very well to shirodhara. Pittas with their overactive mind hot headed nature and irritability can experience a cooling, calming benefit from a session. Shirodhara has been used successfully over thousands of years to treat conditions such as ear/ nose and throat disturbances. Endocrine gland imbalances such as menopausal upsets, psychiatric disorders including schizophrenia, skin diseases like psoriasis, headaches and pains, cranial burning sensation, scalp ulcers, chronic colds, sinusitis, epileptic fits, hair loss and memory loss are also successfully treated by this.

Medical studies have shown that it induces a calm alpha brain wave state which increases mental clarity and memory as well as improved stress and immune response.

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crown of your head to assist the process and protect you from exposure to cold. After resting for some time you are ready to face the

Shirodhara also helps to strengthen ojas- the essence of fertility, virility, vitality and longevity.

HOW IS IT DONE? The oil and duration of treatment varies according to the individual. Vata patients tend to receive herbalised oil, Pitta types herbalised milk, ghee or coconut oil and Kaphas

the digestive system a rest and enables one to direct awareness and energy towards the treatment. A variation of this is Deha Dhara, the full body oil waterfall. A lovely experience, wherein two to four

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may receive buttermilk. Ancient texts prescribe 53 mins for Vatas, 43 mins for pitta types and Kaphas enjoy it for 31 minutes, during which they often fall asleep!

It should be performed by 2 well-trained and disciplined attendants with clockwork precision, consistency and pace. If the flow is too speedy anxiety and nervousness will occur. If the oil is too hot, anger and heat will result. Oil falling from too far away can cause headaches, fever and agitation. The best time to conduct it is between 7-10am for up to 21 consecutive days, depending on the client.

Before treatment the client should avoid heavy meals for 2 hours preceding the therapy. They should have sufficient rest after exertion such as a long drive or exercise before commencing the treatment. Throughout the period of treatment, clients take light, warm and simple nutrition. Overeating, oversleeping, sleeping during the day and late nights are not advised. This gives

therapists pour a continuous flow of oil over the body for up to one hour.

The vessel (dhara) is made of clay, wood or metal. The table (droni) is made from a therapeutic wood such as neem or nux vomica and is designed to catch the oil for recycling on the same patient.

2. Cranial Bath (Shirovasti)

WHAT IS IT? Shirovasti is a truly magical experience with deep therapeutic applications. Made up to look like a sufi dervish you'll sport a tall open hat sealed with mung dal paste and filled with warm herbalised oil. Ideally the recipient has a shaved head or short hair to facilitate the hats stability but it is still successfully performed on 'hairy' people. Up to two litres of oil is steadily poured onto the head as it is retained comfortably by the seated patient for approximately 30 minutes. Tipping the head forward the oil effortlessly empties into a receiving vessel and the hat is removed. At this point it is advised to rest for 10 minutes and keep the

head covered and warm for the following hour.

WHO IS IT GOOD FOR? Extensive modern clinical trials has confirmed the effectiveness of shirovasti for a wide range of disorders as also recommended by ancient Ayurvedic texts.

It can give specific relief to all ailments connected with Vata in the head such as anxiety, fear, light headedness, poor concentration, epilepsy and tinnitus in particular. It is also indicated in cataracts, earache, deafness, dry mouth or nose, numbness of the head, mental stress, ailments of the cranial nerves, migraines, facial paralysis, heart disease, cranial tumours, insomnia, numbness, urinary disorders, mental and physical exhaustion, hemicrania, burning sensation of head, excessive sweating, blood disorders, mucus, hay fever and

prescribe the best oils and duration according to the circumstances. An average series is 30 minutes for either 3, 5 or 7 days. During the treatment physical exertion must be kept to a minimum and daily meditation along with light nutrition supports the benefits.

3. Eye Cleanse (Netra vasti)

WHAT IS IT? One of the most overused and neglected areas of our body would have to be the eyes. Just think how important they are to our everyday quality of life. We tend to take for granted the capacity to indulge in the many visual delights of life such as capturing a sunset, gazing into loved one's eyes or escaping into movie magic. Considering that the eyes are one of the first areas to deteriorate with age, protecting and fortifying them against degeneration is an important priority in Ayurvedic tradition.

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shingles. Ancient ayurvedic authority Vagbhata claims it rejuvenates the whole body, relieves exhaustion, restores lustre to the skin, balances the elements and increases immunity.

HOW IS IT DONE? The ideal time for receiving shirovasti is afternoon. An Ayurvedic physician will

Netra vasti is a visionary approach to achieving this. Initially the client's eyes are bathed in a herbal eyewash then they lie down in preparation for the 'eye-opening' experience. A relaxing oil-free head massage is given to desensitise and soften the facial muscles. The therapist proceeds to form two

doughnut-like dams around the patient's eyes. Up to 50 ml of lukewarm medicated ghee is then poured gently into each eye dam. The eyes may be kept closed and gently opened if it feels comfortable. The patient must move their eyes around in all directions and then rest the eyes. After about 30 minutes the herbal ghee is soaked up by cotton and the eyes washed with warm water. One must avoid exposure to wind and sunlight by wearing protective sunglasses when outside on the day of treatment. About 5 hours after the procedure herbal eye drops are put into each eye and Ayurvedic

perception it purifies all parts of the eyes and is particularly helpful for tired and irritated eyes. Helpful for eye disorders such as glaucoma, ulcerated cornea, inflamed lesions surrounding the eyes. Ancient text Ashtanga Hridayam sings its praises claiming it "improves eyesight, heals stiffness, pain, dryness and roughness around the eyes. Strengthens eyes, and protects and restores sight them from UV damage, increases mental clarity and memory, releases painful memories from the subconscious realm, heals eye injuries, reduces eye pain, heals dark discolouration of skin around

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eyeliner can be applied to the inner eyelid if necessary. A totally painless and soothing therapy the indications that it is successful include clarity of vision, sharp focus, lightness and a lustrous shine to the eyes.

WHO IS IT GOOD FOR? Primarily netra vasti relieves tensions that are trapped in the eye socket that can result in eyestrain, poor eyesight, allergies, pain, fatigue and that sunken, sallow or dark circles look. It nourishes the optic nerves directly which strengthens the eyesight. Bringing a rich lustre to the eyes, softening wrinkles, enhancing colour and depth

eyes, balances loss of lachrymal secretion or excess lachrymal secretion, and heals eye haemorrhaging, glaucoma, ulcerated cornea, eye inflammation, squints, trachomatus parus, night blindness, conjunctivitis and corneal ulcer." Psychologically it is said to releases visual traumas, tapping into one's visual memory banks in order to releasing past impressions.

HOW IS IT DONE? Generally netra vasti is performed in the morning or late afternoon in a calm, quiet, protected environment with expert care and support. Therapy is undergone for 7-14 days starting

from 30 mins and increasing by 5 minute for the first half of the duration, then reducing by 5 mins.

4. Creamy Rice Massage (Navara Kizhi)

WHAT IS IT? The smooth, warm herbalised rice milk is massaged over the body strengthening nerves and gently realigning weary bones. Don't worry about the fact that you'll look like a giant chocolate mousse, this creamy treatment is a dreamy treat.

Prior to treatment the patient is massaged with the appropriate oil. A bolus the size of a large orange filled with a strengthening rice (shashtika) and dipped in herbalised unhomogenised milk is used to firmly massage the body by two masseurs in rhythmic synchronicity. The most common herb to use for this is Bala (Sida rhombifolia). Different substances such as urad dal, fenugreek, dill or mustard may be substituted for rice if indicated. When the body has melted into a relaxed state from the euphoric warmth flowing through the channels, fresh medicinal

This allows the rejuvenating herbs to enter the body through the open pores. Finishing off with a warm shower and herbal body-scrub one patient described the experience: "I felt like I was sliding through a primal womb emerging with a new soft, glowing body."

WHO IS IT GOOD FOR? Creamy rice massage balances all the doshas but is especially effective in Vata derangements. As it raises the internal heat it is not always recommended for Pitta body-types.

Since the massage is done according to the neural pathways it is helpful in neuromuscular conditions such as twitches, weak muscles, facial paralysis, paraplegia, polio myelitis, osteoarthritis, scoliosis, lordosis, kyphosis, sciatica, osteoporosis, facial palsy, hemiplegia, multiple sclerosis and muscular atrophy.

It is also prescribed for arthritis, emaciation, dry skin, memory loss, insomnia, mental stress, stiffness of the joints, headaches, rheumatoid arthritis, anaemia, obesity, water retention, anorexia and chronic fatigue.

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leaves or cloth are used to wipe the cream from the body.

The whole process is famous in South Indian Ayurveda for removing

stiffness, improving the circulation, supporting flexibility, reducing joint swelling, curing diseases of high vata, giving a glowing complexion, enhancing muscle tone, expelling gas, promoting digestion, increasing energy, balancing sleep, reducing high blood pressure and reducing signs of aging.

HOW IS IT DONE? This is most effective when done mid- morning for 7-14 consecutive or alternate days.

Ayurveda Elements | Training, Tours, Treatments, Resorts, Hospitals
Phone/fax: 0011 61 2 9904 775 • 17 Orchard Road, Chatswood NSW Australia 2067
www.ayurvedaelements.com • ayurvedaelements@gmail.com
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