



The Ayurvedic Daily Routine: Dinacharya

Ayurveda stresses a daily routine as the first thing to address when making changes. According to Dr. Vasant Lad of the Ayurvedic Institute, a daily routine is *“absolutely necessary to bring radical change in the body, mind & consciousness. Routine helps to establish balance in one’s constitution. It also regularizes a person’s biological clock, aids digestion, absorption & assimilation, & generates self-esteem, discipline, peace, happiness & longevity.”*

Vata is the first dosha that goes out of balance with lack of routine. Vata also happens to be a culprit for ~70% of dis-eases. Incorporating a daily routine balances vata, which is a powerful force for movement. Some of its initial imbalances include constipation, anxiety, fear, insecurity, a feeling of being ungrounded, & restlessness. If not addressed, these can lead to further problems. Vata is important for everyone to address, not just those who are vata predominant. No matter what dosha or constitution is predominant in you, feelings of fear, anxiety, stress or being rushed will also cause vata to become imbalanced. A regular routine is also an important way to stay healthy by maintaining our immune system. This way, we can become resilient to the ebbs and flows of everyday life.

The most important part of the daily routine is in the morning routine because what you do in the morning sets the tone for the entire day. For example, if you sleep in late, are rushed, don’t eat breakfast, eat on the run etc, it can aggravate vata and affect the entire body’s system throughout the day. Doing this each day can have a cumulative effect of imbalance. This daily routine is not one you create yourself, but Ayurveda has created a specific routine to bring “radical change to the body, mind & consciousness.” Here it is:

- Wake up by ~6AM (or earlier, between 5-6AM is ideal). This may vary slightly depending on the season and where you live on the planet. The reason is that this is vata time. It is easier to wake up when the energy of the universe is lighter, which creates lightness in the mind. Kapha time is from ~6am-11am, making the mind heavier and harder to arise. By waking this early, you must plan to be in bed early, by 10PM.
- Sit up in bed, say a prayer or make a positive intention for the day.
- Go to the bathroom.
 - Empty your bladder
 - Rinse your face & eyes with water (warm in the winter, cool in the summer)
 - Clean your mouth by brushing your teeth and scrape your tongue (at least 7 strokes) - ideally with a copper tongue scraper. Swish your mouth with oil (sesame or coconut) & massage your gums. Spit (in garbage, not in sink) and rinse mouth.
 - If desired, use sesame oil to rub in your nose or ears (or use nasya oil/ear oil drops)
- Go to the kitchen and boil some purified water. Let it cool and drink 8-10oz. You can add ½ tsp of lemon or lime juice if you want. This is to stimulate digestion and reduce ama (toxins) in the digestive system.
- Ideally, this is the time you will have a bowel movement. Ayurveda suggests having a morning BM before eating or doing any kind of exercise, yoga or meditation. If no urge is felt, you may train yourself to have a morning BM by sitting on the toilet for 5 minutes after drinking your hot

water. Do some abdominal massage if you like but do not strain. If no BM happens, it's ok. Be calm and go about your morning routine. Eventually following this daily routine, you will train your body.

- Morning is the best time to exercise and practice yoga. Kaphas need vigorous exercise, pittas need moderate exercise and vatas need mild or gentle exercise. You can exercise first and then practice yoga or vice versa, or just yoga depending on how you feel. If you are on your cycle, you may skip this for at least the first couple of days or do some gentle yin yoga.
- Meditation should be done after your exercise/yoga practice. Take the time to sit for a few minutes or up to 30 minutes. This can be done however you want - with a mantra, music, breath awareness, etc. Meditation has a multitude of benefits including managing stress and having a calm life.
- Bathing is next but can also be done before yoga/meditation. Ayurvedic self massage (abhyanga) should be incorporated as often as you are able. Avoid if you are pregnant, on your cycle, or have high ama. Do not wash the oil off with soap.
- Finally, have your breakfast according to your constitution. For example, vata and pitta should have a nourishing, warm breakfast of hot whole grain cereal with a warm beverage. Kaphas may not be hungry in the morning, so they may choose to skip breakfast or just have a light breakfast of fresh fruit and warm tea in the summer or warm, stewed fruit with hot tea in the winter. Eat in a calm environment, not distracted by work, social media, television or other technology. Be sitting. Be thankful for your food. Begin your day. Be finished with breakfast by 8 or 8:30.

Lunch should be eaten ideally between 11-1. This is pitta time of day when the sun is highest - also when your body's pitta is highest and has the best capability for digestion. Because of this, lunch should be the heaviest meal of the day. Avoid salads alone, cold meats, raw vegetables and favor warm soup or other warm, nourishing & healthy food. Salads may be eaten with a warm lunch when in season during the spring and salad, but is not recommended to be eaten year round.

Snacking in Ayurveda is typically not recommended as it can dampen the digestive fire if eaten too soon after the previous meal has been digested. However a high pitta individual may be hungry after a couple hours and for that person a light snack may be eaten. For example, around 10am a piece of fruit such as an apple or pear would be ideal. In the afternoon, a cup of tea with a healthy cookie or crackers with goat cheese could be eaten. Vata's snacks should be healthy and grounding. Avoid smoothies and energy bars as these are vata aggravating. Instead choose warm, stewed fruit or a cup of hot herbal tea with a healthy muffin mid morning and some nuts for a mid afternoon snack. Kaphas should always avoid snacks.

Dinner should be eaten & finished before 6-7pm and should be a lighter meal than lunch. A warm, light soup would be ideal.

Bedtime routines are also important. They aren't as specific as the morning routine, but creating a calming ritual prior to bed will help with sleep. Turn off devices 1-2 hours before going to bed. You can massage your feet with oil (optionally add an essential oil like lavender) to promote excellent sleep. It is important to go to bed by 10pm because Kapha time ends around this time and it is best to fall asleep while the kapha energy is high, which creates heaviness in the body. You should go to bed with an empty stomach but if you are very hungry before bed, it is ok to have warm milk (almost until boiling, then cooled) with spices, which also helps promote sleep due to its kapha qualities. Vatas can add a pinch of cinnamon, cardamom, nutmeg &/or ginger. Pitta's may be nutmeg, cardamom &/or turmeric. Kaphas can add cinnamon, cloves, nutmeg &/or turmeric. Instead of milk, you may also have a cup of chamomile tea with honey.