

# An Ayurvedic Approach to Losing Weight



Are you tired of suffering through one diet after another without getting the results you want? Fed up with the endless yo-yo effect of losing weight again and again, only to gain it back? Perhaps you're just ready for a more holistic approach to weight loss—one that feels healthy and balanced rather than promising unrealistic results.

It doesn't matter how long you've struggled with your weight, how much you want to lose, how many times you've tried to shed those pesky extra pounds, or if you're just looking to reset after a brief period of feeling out of sync with your diet or lifestyle. The tenants of Ayurveda provide us with a simple approach to weight loss that's easy to follow, very doable, and incredibly effective. Along the way, you'll also be reclaiming a vibrant sense of health

and well-being—physically, mentally, and emotionally. So, if you're willing to give an entirely different strategy a fair try, then prepare to usher in both a new relationship with your body, and an inspiring journey toward improved overall health. Welcome to the Ayurvedic approach to weight loss. You can do this. In fact, you may find it enriching your life in ways that no other "diet" could.

## The Ayurvedic Perspective

According to Ayurveda, being overweight involves an inherent excess in *kapha* dosha. While kapha may not be the only factor at play in your struggle with excess weight, it is certainly an important player. One of the foundational principles of Ayurveda is that like increases like and that opposites balance. Kapha and excess weight share many of the same qualities; they are both heavy, slow, cool, oily, smooth, dense, soft, stable, and gross. Therefore, being overweight can provoke kapha in the body, and excess kapha in the body can lead to being overweight. Conversely, a return to balance requires an increase in opposing influences—those that are light, sharp, hot, dry, rough, liquid, mobile, and subtle.

The benefits of this approach are available to each of us, no matter how quickly (or slowly) we make the journey. What's more, Ayurveda does not focus on short-term gains, only to fail us later, so you won't need to starve yourself, or unrealistically limit the variety of foods that you can enjoy. Nor will you quickly lose a few pounds only to see them creep back on. Instead, you will be following a clear and time-tested path toward optimal health.



# Five Simple Commitments

Consider making just five simple commitments to help you achieve your ideal weight.

1. Practice fifteen minutes of *yoga* every morning.
2. Eat three satisfying meals daily.
3. Follow a [kapha-pacifying diet](#).
4. Exercise at least three days per week.
5. Establish a daily routine to support your commitments.

These commitments are simple. They are intuitive. And while it's entirely possible that you will require a bit of discipline in the beginning, it won't be long before the body's natural intelligence begins to resurface—replacing unhealthy cravings with more balanced urges. As this occurs, maintaining these commitments becomes easier and easier, until the routine becomes second nature. Below, we will explore each of the five commitments in depth—explaining what's involved and highlighting why each of them is so critical to your success.

## 1. Practice Fifteen Minutes of Yoga Every Morning

Establishing a daily yoga practice may seem a surprising first step in a comprehensive set of weight loss recommendations. But it is no coincidence that this is the first suggestion, nor that you are being asked to practice yoga first thing every morning. Yoga is an incredibly powerful practice that benefits the entire being—body, mind, and spirit. It awakens, lubricates, and cleanses the body, massages and stimulates the organs of digestion and elimination, tones the joints and muscles, increases circulation, kindles healthy internal heat, activates the digestive fire, and facilitates detoxification. But the practice of yoga also balances the mind and emotions, calms the nervous system, and activates *prana*—the vital life-force within each of us. Ultimately, starting your morning with a few minutes of yoga sets the stage for a balanced and successful day—one less influenced by unnecessary stress and unhealthy cravings, and instead guided by clarity, insight, and a natural inclination to honor one's Self and one's body.

There is certainly no harm in doing more than fifteen minutes, but you are much more likely to succeed if your commitments feel doable. And truthfully, fifteen minutes of yoga is enough to be transformative. So commit to at least fifteen minutes. Every day.

If you are new to yoga, a simple series of [Sun Salutations](#) (Surya Namaskar) is a great place to start. This practice is dynamic, rhythmic, and flowing. Sun Salutations balance the entire system, and can be modified to be more or less challenging—depending on the condition of each individual. Start with a series of four and slowly build up to ten or twelve, if that feels appropriate to you. If fifteen minutes is up after eight or ten sun salutations, it's also fine to stop there. The important thing is to work with the breath and to cultivate presence throughout the mind and body as you flow through the *asanas*. If you already have a well-established yoga practice and would like to adapt it to more actively support your weight loss efforts, please explore our resource on [Kapha-Pacifying Yoga](#).



Whatever practice is right for you, attending a yoga class on occasion (or even regularly) can provide an important sense of community, as well as the added depth of being guided by a qualified instructor. Yoga classes can also inspire a more engaged home practice and support you in maintaining this important commitment.

## 2. Eat Three Satisfying Meals Daily

Any routine that is tortuous to sustain is destined to fail. Eating three satisfying meals each day will support you in being able to maintain a healthy diet. But this recommendation also makes sense physiologically. In the Ayurvedic tradition, the concepts of fire, transformation, and digestion are intricately linked. There is an art to starting and tending a fire, and the same is true for the digestive fire.

Imagine for a moment trying to start a fire by holding a small match up to a sizable log. Hopeless, right? Even once a fire is burning, it's entirely possible to smother the flames by adding too much fuel all at once, or by adding little bits of fuel too frequently. Now imagine how absurd it would be to expect any fire to go on burning without the addition of any fuel.

In much the same way, maintaining a healthy metabolism requires appropriate kindling, and a regular and reliable source of fuel—with appropriate spacing in between. If we stop eating entirely, the digestive fire will inevitably die down. In other words, eating too little can actually further slow a sluggish metabolism. Effectively stoking the digestive capacity requires eating appropriately sized meals at suitable intervals so that the body is neither overwhelmed with the quantity of food to be digested, nor the frequency at which it is coming in. Eating three healthy, digestible meals each day without snacking in between strikes an important balance. It ensures that the digestive fire is adequately stimulated and actually encourages it to grow stronger.

What you eat will matter; that's where your next commitment comes in. But when and how you eat is equally important. The following guidelines will help to maximize your progress.

### Avoid Snacking Between Meals

While this is often a challenging adjustment to make, eliminating snacks is powerfully supportive of weight loss. The digestive fire is strongest and most efficient when it can fully digest one meal before being asked to digest anything else. Therefore, it is best to separate meals by at least four hours. Interestingly, fat metabolism is kicked into high gear during this natural break between meals; without it, the body does not tend to use accumulated fat as energy.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, avoiding snacks is a fantastic way to invite your body to burn through the accumulated excess. If the desire to snack arises, have a cup of hot water with 1 teaspoon of honey and a squeeze of fresh lime juice instead.<sup>2</sup> Or, if you must have something to eat, try a few raisins or some carrot or celery sticks.<sup>3</sup>

### Make Lunch Your Main Meal

Digestive strength is strongest at mid-day, so eating your main meal at lunchtime (ideally between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m.) capitalizes on your body's naturally increased digestive capacity at this time.



## Make Dinner as Light as Possible

Eating a light dinner (ideally eaten by 5 or 6 p.m.) allows your stomach to empty itself before you go to sleep and supports the natural detoxification processes that occur overnight. Even if it's not possible to eat this early, you will be more successful if you avoid eating anything after 7 p.m.

## Offer Your Full Presence to Each Meal

Eating is a sacred act, an act of love. It is therefore best to eat in a calm, peaceful environment, free of emotional upset, intense conversation, television, or multi-tasking of any kind. Be present with the gift of nourishment that your body is receiving. And listen for the subtle signs within that you are satisfied—ideally, completing your meal *before* you feel full. These practices allow your body to fully register the tastes and textures of your food, reduce the likelihood of overeating, encourage an experience of satisfaction, and help to prevent the occurrence of unhelpful cravings between meals.

## Optional: Stoke the Digestive Fire Before Meals

If you feel inspired to go even further, you can stoke the digestive fire about thirty minutes before lunch and dinner by chewing a slice of fresh ginger (about the size of a nickel) with a pinch of sea salt, a few drops of lime juice, and about ¼ teaspoon honey.

## 3. Eat a Kapha-Pacifying Diet

As we have seen, excess kapha is inherently involved in being overweight, but it can also cause attachment, greed, resistance to change, lethargy, excessive sleep, heaviness in the mind and body, congestion, depression, a sluggish metabolism, and water retention (among other things). Eating a [kapha-pacifying diet](#) helps to clear excess kapha from the system and can affect change in all of these areas—supporting the body in achieving a more balanced weight while improving overall health.

In essence, a kapha-pacifying diet seeks to neutralize excess kapha by emphasizing foods that are light, warm, dry, rough, and very digestible. In general, choose whole foods that are freshly prepared and seasonally appropriate over processed foods, or cold, stale foods. Beyond that, there are a number of additional practices that can effectively reduce excess kapha. We've created two resources to support you in balancing kapha with your diet. Please click on the links below to learn more.

- [Kapha-Pacifying Diet](#): a comprehensive overview.
- [Kapha-Pacifying Foods](#): a list of foods to favor and avoid.

Proper food combinations can also be tremendously helpful in supporting improved digestion. In our fast-paced modern culture, this ancient understanding of which foods should and should not be eaten together is quite foreign to many of us. That being the case, it is best to embrace proper food combining slowly, by first simply becoming aware of improper combinations that occur regularly in your diet. As you are ready, make slow, manageable changes—one at a time. Click here for more information about [proper food combining](#).



It is also important to remember that an Ayurvedic diet does not require us to give up everything we've come to love. Simply finding moderation in our choices can be a great first step in restoring balance. Because cravings for detrimental foods will subside as our health improves, our bodies become better and better able to recognize wholesome, life-affirming foods, and increasingly reject dietary choices that compromise our well-being. This process takes time, but it's important to be both patient and persistent. Ultimately each step along the way will support our overall progress.



#### 4. Exercise at Least Three Days Each Week

Aerobic exercise is an important component of any weight loss strategy. This commitment is in addition to your daily yoga practice. Focus on activities that are invigorating, doable, and fun for you. For those of us with busy schedules, committing to a shorter exercise program can significantly reduce our sense of overwhelm and encourage success. The great news is that workouts as short as fifteen to twenty minutes can be tremendously beneficial. Of course, if your preferred exercise routine is longer, that's fine too.

How and when you exercise can also have an impact on the efficacy of your exercise program. Ayurveda teaches us that certain times of day are more conducive to exercise than others. These are the kapha times of day (approximately 6–10 a.m./p.m.), when atmospheric conditions lend a little extra strength and stamina to the system. For the best results, plan your activities within this window in either the morning or the evening. Obviously, if those times will not work for you, find one that will; exercise at any time will be better than none at all. Ayurveda also recommends that we exercise at fifty to seventy percent of our capacity—ideally, breathing through our nostrils the entire time. This prevents physiological stress, and allows the body to benefit more deeply from our efforts. You can apply this approach to walking, hiking, running, cycling, yoga, swimming, as well as cardio workouts at the gym.

Another method is to alternate between short, intense bursts of physical activity and carefully interspersed recovery periods. This technique allows the body to rest between periods of intense activity, and is thought to



more accurately mimic our evolutionary activities as hunter gatherers.<sup>4</sup> In recent years, a method of exercise known as High-Intensity Interval Training (HIIT) has emerged around this concept. Because workouts typically range from eight to thirty minutes, HIIT may be particularly useful for those of us with less time to devote to exercise. A HIIT routine usually involves a short warm-up period, a series of three to ten short sprints (twenty to sixty seconds each) interspersed with short recovery periods in between (ten to sixty seconds each), and a cool-down period.<sup>5</sup> Interestingly, there is a growing body of evidence suggesting that HIIT may actually boost metabolic function, reduce insulin resistance, burn fat, and support weight loss more effectively than traditional cardio workouts.<sup>6</sup>

Regardless of your preferred activity, the most important thing is to make your exercise regimen an inspiring and energizing part of your week so that you are motivated to keep at it. Please check with your doctor before starting a new exercise program.

## 5. Establish a Daily Routine

In the context of our busy modern lives, establishing a daily routine can actually be the key to success with this approach. Not only does it ensure that our commitments become a natural part of each day, and that we develop helpful, supportive new habits; a sense of routine also has a soothing effect on the nervous system, supports a calmer, more centered state of being, and helps to reduce stress. On an intuitive level, it makes sense that reducing stress would support weight loss, but there are compelling physiological reasons that this holds true. While those specifics are beyond the scope of this article, the take home message is that where stress is concerned, establishing a daily routine may be the single most important commitment you make.

A daily routine is a central element of an Ayurvedic lifestyle—one that is recommended for everyone—and there are a wide variety of traditional practices to choose from. That said, it is very important not to overcommit. Start with the basics. You can add to your routine as you become accustomed to the new rhythm and are inspired to expand your practices. Below are a number of daily routine elements that can be particularly supportive of weight loss.

### Establish Routine Sleep and Wake Times

Ayurveda has some valuable insights to offer about the timing of our sleep. The evening time (from about 6-10 p.m.) is a kapha time of day, and is especially heavy, slow and dull—an ideal time to let our systems settle down and prepare for sleep. Many people actually feel a natural lull in energy during these evening hours. However, pitta's fiery influence takes the reins after about 10 p.m., so if we are not already headed to bed (or asleep) by 10 p.m., we may feel reinvigorated and it can be extremely difficult to wind down and go to sleep until much later. In the interest of aligning with the cycles of nature and getting good rest, an earlier bedtime is undoubtedly more supportive. Kapha time reoccurs in the early morning, from about 6-10 a.m. This time of day lends extra strength and stamina to morning workouts, but if we are not fully awake ahead of its arrival, it has the potential to leave us feeling sluggish and groggy. Therefore, we recommend that you wake up by 6 a.m. Not only will you feel more alert and awake, your body's metabolic capacity will be better supported as well.



Getting enough rest is critical to your health. Sleep and wake times should not be established independent of one another, but should be considered in tandem to ensure that you get the sleep that you need. For example, if 5:30 a.m. is your ideal wake time and you know that you need at least seven hours of sleep in order to feel your best, then you should be in bed no later than 10:30 p.m. If on the other hand, you need eight hours of sleep in order to thrive, then your bedtime should be 9:30 p.m. If any of this will require you to significantly change your current sleep habits, consider adjusting your sleep and wake times by about fifteen minutes at a time, working with each new time for several days before adjusting by another fifteen minutes.

There are three important things to consider when establishing your sleep and wake times.

1. You need to get enough rest.
2. It is best to wake by (or even well before) 6 a.m.
3. You are likely to rest better if you retire by or before 10 p.m.

Many people find that the success of their daily routine depends largely on when they go to bed. This is because our bedtimes can either support the flow of the next day, or sabotage our ability to follow through on good intentions. Consistency and discipline around sleep and wake times can truly be an invaluable catalyst for positive change.

## Set Aside a Time to Practice Your Fifteen Minutes of Morning Yoga

It's only fifteen minutes, but it's incredibly important to carve out a specific time each day for your yoga practice; otherwise, it may fall by the wayside. It is best to practice in the early morning before breakfast, but if that simply won't work for you, find another time of day when you can practice on an empty stomach.

## Eat Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner at About the Same Time Each Day

Eating your meals at consistent times from one day to the next ensures that there is adequate space between meals and reinforces the predictability of a routine—both for your metabolism and for your nervous system. Classic Ayurvedic meal times are roughly 8 a.m. for breakfast, 12 p.m. for lunch, and 6 p.m. for dinner. This exact timing may not work with your schedule, and it's important that your meal times are compatible with your daily routine. That said, your body will benefit from eating lunch (your biggest meal) between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m., when the digestive fire is strongest. Similarly, eating a light, early dinner will be the most supportive of your weight loss efforts.

## Create an Exercise Schedule

The primary objective behind creating a schedule here is to make sure that your three days of exercise happen, but creating predictability with your new habits will have its own benefits. It may require some experimentation to determine what works best for you, but once you find a rhythm, stick with it and be persistent. Being consistently active will help you immensely.



## Optional: Quiet Time for Pranayama, Meditation, or Prayer

Ayurveda recognizes the power of a number of subtle therapies. In many cases, attributing excess weight to improper diet and inadequate exercise alone is a gross oversimplification—ignoring important emotional, psychological, and even physical patterns underlying the imbalance. Emotional unrest is often a significant factor in poor eating habits, lethargy, depression, and anxiety. Undigested, unprocessed emotions quickly interfere with our physical health and our mental ability to authentically care for ourselves each day. A mindfulness practice can begin to neutralize the powerful hold that these patterns often have on our behavior.

We also know that long-term stress can lead to weight gain by overtaxing the endocrine system, and ultimately, by compromising our metabolism (think adrenals, thyroid, and pancreas). Spiritual practice can help to reset the nervous and endocrine systems—supporting improved metabolic function, and beginning to unwind the cycle of chronic stress that is frequently behind excess weight. In short, if stress, anxiety, and feeling overextended have become an integral part of your life, consider making a sixth commitment to some sort of daily mindfulness practice.

This does not have to be a lengthy endeavor. Even ten to fifteen minutes can have a profound impact on your state of mind. If you don't have an existing practice, consider one of the following:

**Pranayama.** Working with the breath through the practice of *pranayama* is a powerful way to access and reset longstanding patterns in the energetic body. While there are several pranayamas suitable for weight loss, such as **Kapalabhati** (Skull Shining Breath) and **Bhastrika** (Bellows Breath), those that are soothing, slow, grounding, and calming, like **Nadi Shodhana** (Alternate Nostril Breathing) will be best for clearing stress, anxiety, and other unresolved emotions. If you prefer a guided practice, Dr. Claudia Welch's **Prana CD** consists of four tracks—each working with the *prana maya kosha* (energetic body) in a different way. The final track is a beautiful, hands-free version of *Nadi Shodhana*, which is a particularly powerful tool for balancing hormones, supporting the endocrine system, and mitigating stress.

**Meditation.** Meditation can help us to re-pattern the brain on a very profound level—supporting our health in a myriad of ways. If you do not have an existing practice, Dr. Lad's **Empty Bowl Meditation** is a simple yet powerful technique, suitable for anyone.



# Herbal Support

In addition to the above commitments, consider supplementing with herbs and formulas that will support your efforts. The following herbs are particularly supportive of a robust digestive system and proper metabolic function overall.

**Triphala** is a traditional Ayurvedic formula comprised of three fruits that is balancing for *vata*, *pitta*, and *kapha*. It is revered for its unique ability to gently cleanse and detoxify the digestive tract while replenishing, nourishing, and rejuvenating the tissues. About half an hour before bed, take two **Triphala tablets** with a glass of warm water. If you prefer, steep ½ teaspoon **Triphala powder** in a cup of freshly boiled water for ten minutes; cool and drink. Or try 30 drops of **Triphala liquid extract** in warm water before bed instead.

**Trim Support tablets** gently detoxify the body, supporting proper nutrition and metabolic function. Improperly digested food can create toxins that coat the digestive tract, inhibiting absorption and leading to the accumulation of fat in the tissues. Trim Support gently scrapes these toxins from the system while kindling the digestive fire, allowing for proper digestion, absorption, and assimilation.

Lastly, consider one of Banyan's digestive formulas—**Vata Digest**, **Pitta Digest**, or **Kapha Digest** tablets. Each one helps to support optimal functioning throughout the digestive tract by balancing a specific set of digestive tendencies. The descriptions below are meant to help you determine which one would best serve you.

**Kapha Digest.** This is the tablet form of a classical Ayurvedic formula known as **Trikatu**. It contains the herbs **pippali**, **ginger**, and black pepper. This powerful combination is traditionally used to enkindle the digestive fire and to burn fat and natural toxins. **Kapha Digest tablets** support a healthy metabolism, allowing nutrients to be properly digested and assimilated, aid in weight management, and rejuvenate *kapha*, supporting healthy lungs and clear breathing. If you prefer a powder, use **Trikatu powder**. In either form, this formula is quite heating and is therefore not the best choice for those who have excess heat in the digestive tract (acid reflux, heartburn, loose stools), or high *pitta* in general.

**Pitta Digest.** This formula is a dynamic combination of herbs formulated to strengthen digestion without aggravating *pitta*. Excess *pitta* causes increased heat, sharpness, and oiliness in the digestive tract, which can aggravate and inflame the digestive fire, and cause discomfort. **Pitta Digest tablets** cool and soothe the digestive fire and the tissues of the GI tract, help to maintain healthy digestive acid levels and a healthy stomach lining, support a comfortable post-meal experience, and simultaneously support healthy, balanced digestion overall. If you prefer a powdered formula, **Avipattikar powder** is a classical Ayurvedic formula with similar indications and benefits.

**Vata Digest.** This is the tablet form of the classical Ayurvedic formula known as **Hingvastak**. The vata-pacifying combination of herbs supports the entire digestive process, from appetite to elimination. In excess, *vata*'s cold, light, and dry qualities tend to inhibit proper digestive functioning and can cause gas, bloating, or constipation. **Vata Digest tablets** contain herbs that are heating, grounding, and oily, effectively countering excess *vata*. This formula also kindles the digestive fire, stimulates a healthy appetite, calms excess movement of air, lubricates the intestines, helps to ensure that nutrients are properly absorbed and



assimilated, and supports regular, thorough, and healthy elimination. If you prefer a powder, use [Hingvastak](#). In either form, this formula is somewhat heating and is therefore not the best choice for those who have excess heat in the digestive tract (acid reflux, heartburn, loose stools), or who have high pitta in general.

## Optional Additions to Accelerate Your Progress

The following additions may offer powerful support, but taking on too much too fast will surely backfire. These additions are meant to give you room to grow, and to provide a few additional tools for those of you who may have some of the above recommendations in place already. For best results, add more only as your initial commitments become relatively effortless to maintain. And even then, prioritize the additions that truly inspire you—introducing them one at a time.

### Consider a Cleanse

A dietary cleanse can offer a profound reset to the digestive system in much the same way that restarting a computer eradicates glitches and idiosyncrasies that can interfere with routine functioning. The basic premise of a cleanse is that our bodies are inherently intelligent. When we provide a break from the barrage of potentially harmful inputs, they immediately allocate the extra energy to repairing and rejuvenating the system for optimal performance. Cleanses can be as simple as a half or full day fast, a short juice cleanse, or a longer monodiet of something like kitchari. Ayurveda offers a number of effective cleansing techniques. If you are intrigued, please visit our [Cleansing Department](#) to see instructions for several different cleanses.

### Expanded Morning Routine

If you read the classic texts of Ayurveda, you'll notice that most of the practices in a traditional daily routine are done upon waking, and are completed before breakfast. This is an especially powerful time to engage in loving self-care, reflective practice, and the intention to heal or re-pattern the physiology for improved overall health—and it sets the tone for the entire day. An expanded morning routine may be especially beneficial when stress and busyness are at the root of your struggle with excess weight. If you are drawn to the idea of an Ayurvedic daily routine, please visit our [Daily Routine Department](#), which explores this concept in depth, and offers personalized daily routine recommendations for different constitutions and imbalances. The following aspects of an Ayurvedic daily routine are particularly supportive of metabolic balance and weight loss.

**Wake Between 3 a.m. and 6 a.m.** The classics of Ayurveda recommend that we rise during the “ambrosial hours” of the morning, sometime between 3–6 a.m.<sup>7</sup> This is a vata time of day. The atmosphere is infused with lightness and clarity, which helps us to awaken more easily, but it is also easier to connect with our deepest inner nature and consciousness at this time.<sup>8</sup> Waking early helps to shake kapha’s characteristic heaviness from the mind and body, infuses us with the clarifying energy of dawn, and supports a healthy metabolic capacity.



**Cleanse the Tongue.** Tongue cleaning is considered an important element of daily oral hygiene, removing bacteria and toxins that have accumulated on the tongue overnight. Because this practice serves to stimulate and cleanse the digestive tract and the vital organs, it also supports the natural detoxification of the system at large, and can bolster digestive and metabolic function. Beyond that, scraping the tongue each morning allows us to take notice of the coating on our tongues and to begin to see how our dietary choices and lifestyle habits influence our overall health from one day to the next.<sup>9</sup> Banyan's stainless steel [Tongue Cleaner](#) is balancing for all three doshas.

**Splash Cold Water on the Face and in the Eyes.** Splashing cold water on the face and in the eyes helps to eradicate any residual heaviness, sluggishness, or lethargy that is present upon waking—whether mental or physical—and can help us to feel more vibrantly awake and motivated. The cold water also supports firm skin, and cools, soothes, and relaxes the eyes, which work very hard throughout the day and tend to accumulate a lot of heat.

**Drink Warm Water.** Drinking a glass of warm water cleanses and awakens the digestive tract, hydrates the tissues, and promotes peristalsis—which can encourage a bowel movement even when there is a tendency toward sluggishness or constipation. It is best to drink water only after the mouth and the tongue have been cleansed so as not to swallow the bacteria and toxins that have accumulated there overnight.<sup>10</sup>

**Eliminate.** Ayurveda views morning elimination as a natural element of daily hygiene and health. Proper elimination is especially important when trying to lose weight. If you do not typically have a bowel movement first thing in the morning, some of the above practices (like cleaning the tongue and drinking warm water) may help you regulate this function in your body. Or consider taking [Triphala](#) to support healthy and regular elimination.

**Cleanse or Lubricate the Nasal Passages.** Excess kapha is especially prone to accumulating in the respiratory passages, and often causes excess mucus, congestion, or blockage—which can hinder us physically, and dampen our mental clarity. The practices of [Nasya](#) and [Nasal Rinse](#) support both the nasal passages and the mind. These therapies have very different energies and are best practiced separately. It may be that one of the two appeals more to you. Or if you find that you like them both, you can alternate by day, by season, or by symptom, according to what works best for your body.

- *Nasya*  
Nasya is the practice of applying an herbalized oil to the nasal passages to soothe these delicate tissues, promote unobstructed breathing, relieve accumulated stress, and support mental clarity. This practice is also said to improve the quality of the voice and to strengthen vision. Nasya should not be performed by pregnant women or during menstruation. If this practice is new to you, please watch our short instructional video on [How To Do Nasya](#).
- *Nasal Rinse*  
Nasal Rinse, or *Neti*, is the practice of pouring warm salt water through the nasal passages. It moistens the mucus membranes and cleanses the nasal passages of dust, dirt, pollen, and excess mucus. If you find that your nasal passages feel dry afterwards, you can use your pinky finger to lubricate the nostrils with a bit of [Sesame Oil](#) or [Ghee](#) when you're finished, or at another time of day. If this practice is new to you, please watch our short instructional video on [Using a Nasal Rinse Cup](#).



**Do Abhyanga (Ayurvedic Self-Massage).** This ancient practice of self-massage with oil can be life-changing when we are feeling especially stressed, busy, scattered or overextended. It is no coincidence that the Sanskrit word for oil, *sneha*, also means love. *Abhyanga* benefits both the physical body and the more subtle realms of consciousness. It calms the nervous system, lubricates and rejuvenates the tissues, promotes healthy circulation throughout the body, and creates an insulating and protective barrier around the Self—shielding us from the onslaught of disruptive energies that we inevitably encounter every day. In the morning, before a shower or bath, massage about ¼ cup of warm [Kapha Massage Oil](#) or [Organic Sesame Oil](#) into the skin. You may also use [Trim Balm](#) on specific areas of the body. For more detailed instructions and a helpful video explaining how to practice abhyanga, please explore our resource on [Ayurvedic Self-Massage](#). Pay careful attention to the section outlining kapha-pacifying abhyanga.

**Practice Udvartana.** This practice of massaging the body with a powder (like chickpea flour), stimulates and moves the lymph, balances kapha, further encourages circulation, liquefies fat, and helps to remove excess oil from the skin following abhyanga.<sup>11</sup> A powder can be used instead of, or in conjunction with, traditional oil massage. Try chickpea flour, rice flour, or [calamus powder](#).

The above practices can be done daily, or just occasionally. Either way, they will support both weight loss and overall wellness.

## By Way of Encouragement

Keep in mind that this program is a general introduction to the Ayurvedic approach to weight loss. Any specific health concerns should be taken into consideration and discussed with your health care provider as you implement these recommendations. Regardless of your circumstances, achieving your ideal weight may require some commitment, discipline, and time. But don't lose sight of what the journey itself has to offer. Ayurveda is a Sanskrit word that literally means “knowledge of life,” and the Ayurvedic tradition is about improving overall wellness and vitality—reclaiming optimal health by making sustainable changes that support our entire lives. Each step along the way is a step toward a richer, more vibrant experience of being. So while Ayurveda can certainly support us in achieving reasonable weight loss goals, it also has the capacity to dramatically improve the trajectory of our lives moving forward. Relish in that potential. If you find yourself overly focused on your destination, take a step back and ask yourself what positive outcomes have emerged already? Stop, breathe, and enjoy the ride. Here's wishing you an immensely rewarding journey on the path of Ayurveda.



## References

- <sup>1</sup> John Douillard, *Ayurvedic Weight Balancing eBook*, (Boulder: LifeSpa Products, LLC, 2011), 9, <http://lifespacorp.com/ayurvedic-weight-loss-ebook/>.
- <sup>2</sup> Vasant Lad, *The Complete Book of Ayurvedic Home Remedies* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1998), 238.
- <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*
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- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*
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