

ABHYANGA MASSAGE SELF GUIDE

GUIDE TO SELF-ABHYANGA

AYURVEDIC MASSAGE

Self-Abhyanga is about moving your lymph, increasing blood circulation, pacifying your nervous system and loving and respecting your body. The main purpose of the strokes are to soothe and stimulate the tissues gently and pacify the nervous system via the connections the skin has to all the inner organs and systems.

TIPS FOR GETTING MAXIMUM BENEFIT FROM YOUR MASSAGE

- Use gentle strokes, without being too deep or strong with your massage.
- Preferably use a medicated oil suitable to your constitution, otherwise use cold-pressed black sesame oil. If you get skin irritation from this can use cold-pressed coconut oil. As a general rule sesame oil works well in winter as it is warming, and coconut oil is good for summer as it is cooling.
- Don't do self-abhyanga when you are sick with fever or cold, or when you are menstruating.
- If you find yourself thinking "but I don't have enough time", remind yourself that the benefits of waking up a little earlier to do self-abhyanga will surpass the extra minutes of sleeping in. Even if you give yourself a short massage for 5-8min, you'll be better for it.
- You can do self-abhyanga before exercise and leave on the oil to amplify the release of toxins during your workout, just make sure you shower afterwards!
- Start with your left limbs if you're a woman, and right limbs if you're a man.
- Massage one whole arm or leg on one side before moving on to the other side.

SELF-ABHYANGA

SHORT METHOD

STEP 1: WARM THE OIL

Warm up the oil (optional). Run the bottle/jar with your oil in it under hot water from the tap, or heat up 1/4 cup of oil in a pot of water on the stove. The oil should be warm, but not hot.

STEP 2: SET UP YOUR SPACE

Do your massage in a warm room, sitting on a towel or yoga mat, in your bathroom, or in the bath.

STEP 3: LEAVE THE OIL ON YOUR SKIN & MASSAGE

Leave the oil on your skin for a minimum of 8 mins and maximum of 45 mins. Using long strokes up and down on the limbs and back, and circular motions on joints, organs and vital points in a clockwise direction, give yourself a light massage.

Massage the parts of your body in this order:
Head, face, neck, chest, stomach, back, arms, hands, thigh, calves, foot, toes.

For the full method for maximum benefit, massage your body with the method & sequence shown on the next page. If you only have a limited amount of time, do a shorter massage to just the crown of your head, ears, hands and soles of your feet.



SELF-ABHYANGA

FULL METHOD

STEP 1: THE HEAD

The head is the most important part of the massage.

First, pour a generous amount of oil on the crown of head.

If you don't want to get your hair too oily, just applying a few drops on the crown of head is ok. Massage the whole scalp from the centre and towards the ears, just like washing your hair. Be vigorous and adjust to your comfort level. During the massage give a gentle pull to the roots of the hair.

Massage with your whole hands whenever you can, or using flat finger pads (rather than tips) in smaller areas. Your strokes can be circular or straight (back and forth), or both ways.

STEP 2: THE FACE

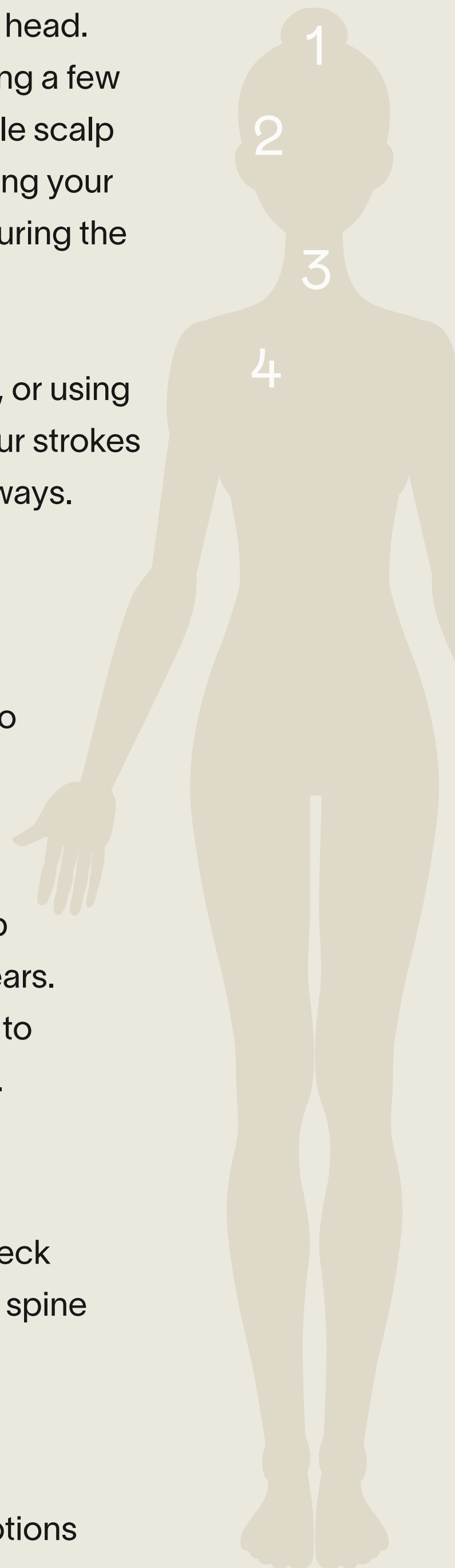
Lightly massage your third eye (between your eyebrows), clockwise if someone was facing you (so if you look at it 'through your body', it will look anticlockwise). Massage your forehead sideways with whole hand. With palm of hands, massage cheeks and temples in circles and up and down. Dip one finger of each hand in oil and stick inside your ears. Massage your ear lobes and behind ears, the home to essential marma (energy) points and nerve endings.

STEP 3: THE NECK

Massage in an upward direction on all surfaces of neck and throat. With finger pads, massage your cervical spine up and down.

STEP 4: THE UPPER CHEST AREA

Use circular motions on the chest. Using circular motions around the sternum (heart space), and then massage your whole chest sideways with your palm. Massage the solar plexus in clockwise circles.



STEP 5: THE ABDOMEN

Pour/insert massage oil directly into belly button. With your fingers, gently massage the area clockwise. Then using your palms make the circles slowly bigger until you have massaged the entire abdominal area . Then reverse the whole process (maintaining a clockwise direction) back to belly. Gently push your relaxed abdomen in with your hands.

STEP 6: THE BACK

Massage up and down your spine as best as you can and as far as you can reach without straining. Use circular motions to massage your lower back and hips with both your palms. Also massage the shoulders and the upper back as much as you can reach comfortably.

STEP 7: THE ARMS AND HANDS

(Left arm first for ladies, right arm first for men).

SHOULDERS: Massage your shoulder joint in circular motions. Then massage in and around arm pit (a key lymphatic site).

ARMS: Use long strokes to massage up & down your upper arm, with stronger pressure on the downward strokes. Massage in circles around your elbow joint, long strokes up & down your forearm with stronger pressure on the downward strokes, and then circles on your wrist joint (with thumb and index/middle finger).

HANDS: Massage in circles on your palms and the back of your hands with your thumb. Massage inside your finger webs and down in between the top of your hand bones (metacarpals). Finish with gently pulling your fingers (from base to tip), and repeat the sequence for the other arm and hand.



STEP 8: THE LEGS AND FEET

(Left leg first for ladies, right leg first for men).

HIPS: Massage around your hip joint and groin with both hands.

THIGHS: Use long strokes up and down the thigh, again with stronger pressure on downward strokes. Use circles to massage around the whole kneecap.

KNEES: Use firm strokes with your finger pads around the circumference of the knee joint. Gently massage behind the knee joint.

CALVES: Use long strokes up & down on lower leg (calf) with emphasis on the downward strokes.

ANKLES: Massage with circular motions on the ankle joint with both palms and fingertips.

FEET: Massage in-between your toe bones (metatarsals) on top of the foot. Massage the sole of foot with more pressure, making sure to reach the heel, sides of the foot, ball of the foot, under the toes, and in between the webs of the toes. Pull each toe from base to tip. Repeat the sequence for the other leg and foot. And then you're done!

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| 1. HEAD | 7. ARM |
| 2. FACE | 8. HAND |
| 3. NECK | 9. THIGH |
| 4. CHEST | 10. CALF |
| 5. STOMACH | 11. FOOT |
| 6. BACK | 12. TOES |

