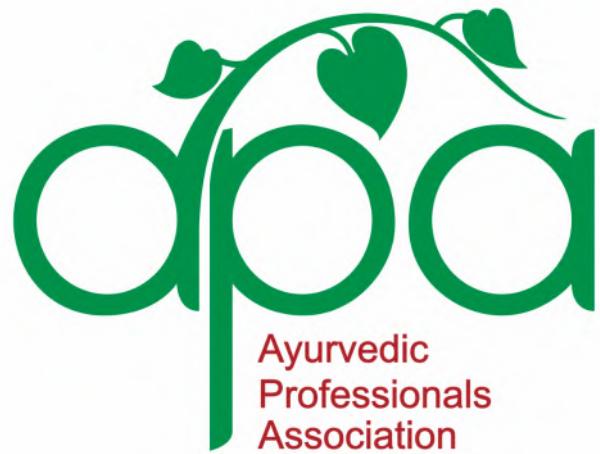


# NEWSLETTER



FEBRUARY 2024

## Contents

2	Letter from the editor
2	Red Flags and Emergencies (APA President)
3	Red Flags and Emergencies (Dr. Edward Thompson)
4	Sri Lankan Pumpkin Curry
5	APA Webinar Review (Anja Brierley Lang)
7	APA Webinar Review (Vd. P. Ramanohar)
10	What does your sleeping direction say about your quality of sleep?
13	Keshar (Crocus sativus) in Ayurveda
15	Ahara Chitkista
19	An Ancient Tapestry for Modern Life
20	Fasting, what does Ayurveda say?
27	American Journal of Clinical Nutrition
28	Credits and Contact APA

## Letter from the Editor

Welcome again to another APA Newsletter. We have another packed edition for you, with lots of interesting articles, links to events and an important up and coming CPD event.

Once again, a big thank you to all of our contributors, who really came through on this edition. If you have something you would like to share, please do try and contribute. We aim to produce at least six issues per year, so this means we need lots of submissions to keep readers interested!

If you would like to submit for the next edition of the APA Newsletter, please try and make sure it reaches us by April 15<sup>th</sup> 2024.

Andrew Mason

**Disclaimer:** The information contained in this Newsletter is for informational purposes only and is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. The views and opinions expressed here are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views or official policy of the *Ayurvedic Professionals Association*.

## RED FLAGS AND EMERGENCIES by Dr Edward Thompson

The APA would like to firstly Thank the EHTPA for allowing APA members to be part of this very special **Red Flag event on Saturday, 9th March**.

Please be aware that this is the **first Mandatory CPD event** for APA members as discussed last October when it was announced that CPD would be changing to include a mandatory aspect for all APA members.

**Dr Edward Thompson** - MB ChB, MA, MSc, MRCGP, MF Hom, MARH, FURHP, MBRCP, Dip BSLMI is excellent and extremely thorough. Everyone should be aware of the content covered so well in the recording plus Dr Edward Thompson will be available at the end for Q&A.

We do not know *if, how or when* this recording will be available again, so for those of you who may miss due to unavoidable commitments, please be aware that if the APA can negotiate another screening with the EHTPA, there could be a charge. The APA is enormously grateful to the EHTPA and in particular Dr Edward Thompson and Lloyd Gee for the immense work involved in making this vital information available for everyone.

Looking forward to seeing as many APA members as possible.

Thanks.

Sue APA President

# RED FLAGS & EMERGENCIES WITH DR. EDWARD THOMPSON

**Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> March 10 -12.15 - online via zoom**

## How confident are you in identifying an acute or chronic life-threatening or disabling illness?



The EHTPA presents the launch of this vital CPD event and learning resource for both students and practising herbalists. Dr Edward Thompson will guide you through the crucial understanding of identifying signs and symptoms that may be red flags and emergencies and where a patient needs to be referred for emergency or urgent medical investigation or treatment. Dr Edward Thompson's dynamic and engaging teaching style will take you through the body systems and ensure that participants leave with a greater awareness of red flags. This knowledge is vital as part of our duty of care to patients and for safeguarding both the patient and the practitioner. Dr Edward Thompson had many years of experience as a herbalist, homeopath and lecturer for herbal medicine before becoming a medical doctor. As well as being a GP Partner, he was a doctor in the emergency department of Leicester Royal Infirmary and became a lecturer at the University of Leicester Medical School and currently teaches at the Lancaster Medical School.

For some this CPD will be new learning and for others it will be a useful refresher. The motto that runs through the presentation is "Refer it, don't risk it."

### 10.00 Introduction by Lloyd Gee for EHTPA

Dr Edward Thompson – prerecorded presentation

### 11.40 Q&A with Dr Edward Thompson (approximately 30 minutes)

#### ACCESS BY JOINING ZOOM MEETING:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87860586754?pwd=SDgrTStQYTNMWmgxUGkyRS9PTjczUT09>

## FREE FOR MEMBERS OF EHTPA AFFILIATED PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

### Biography

Dr Edward Thompson - MB ChB, MA, MSc, MRCGP, MF Hom, MARH, FURHP, MBRCP, Dip BSLM

Dr Edward Thompson is a GP Partner in Cumbria with an expertise in Integrated Medicine. He teaches at the Leicester and Lancaster Medical Schools.

He graduated from St Andrews University with an Arts Degree (MA) in 1990 and then studied Homeopathy at the College of Homeopathy (LCH) from 1990 - 1993. He studied herbal medicine completing the East West Course in herbal medicine (EWCH) in 1994, and completed the Ayurvedic Medicine Studies Program at the Ayurvedic Institute in Albuquerque USA in 1994. He studied Chinese herbal medicine with the Renshu College of Chinese Medicine (Dip CHM) qualifying in 2000, as well as acupuncture at The Southwest College of Oriental Medicine (Dip. Ac.) from which he qualified in 1998. He also completed further herbal medicine modules at Westminster University from 1999-2002. He graduated from Leicester Medical School (MB ChB) in 2007 and completed his GP training in 2012 and gained a Diploma in Lifestyle Medicine in 2020 (Dip. BSLM). He has also completed a MSc in Medical Education.

He is a member of the Royal College of General Practitioners (MRCGP), the Faculty of Homeopathy (MF Hom), the Alliance of Registered Homeopaths (MARH), the British Register of Complementary practitioners (MBRCP), is a Fellow of the Unified Register of Herbal Practitioners (FURHP) and a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy.

# SRI LANKAN PUMPKIN CURRY (OIL FREE)

By Laura Bridge - Instagram: [@AyurvedaAdventuress](https://www.instagram.com/AyurvedaAdventuress)



- Tumeric - 1tsp
- Black mustard seeds - 2 tsp
- Cinnamon - 1 layer of a stick
- Fenugreek seeds - 1tsp
- 1 tin coconut milk - full fat
- 40g fresh coconut - chopped in A food processor to the shape of fresh breadcrumbs.
- 4 shallots - sliced
- - 7 garlic cloves - crushed
- 12 curry leaves - spine removed
- 500g Pumpkin - diced into bite sized pieces (substitute with butternut squash)
- 6 cm pandan leaf
- Optional - 1 large green chilli, - sliced in half

## First prepare the coconut mix:

In a frying pan dry roast the mustard seeds to release their aroma (but before they start to crack and turn an ash colour ) then add to a mortar and crush. Add the roughly chopped garlic and pound with the pestle.

In a pot, add the chopped pumpkin, shallot, curry leaves, cinnamon, turmeric, pandan leaf, fenugreek seeds, one tsp of salt & 100ml water. \*Add the green chili if using.

Cook for approximately 15 minutes or until soft on a high heat, (this is because the pumpkin will release a lot of water and you do not want it becoming a stew but to hold its shape.)

Once the pumpkin is al dente, add the coconut mix, stir and then reduce the heat to a very low setting for 5 minutes to allow the flavours to develop. Then add the coconut milk and cook for another 10 minutes on low heat (to prevent it from separating.)

Accompany with roti.



# APA WEBINAR REVIEW

## Teaching Yoga for the Menstrual Cycle, an Ayurvedic Approach by Anja Brierley Lange

Review by Colette Park



Anja Brierley Lange

for different stages of the menstrual cycle. Anja Brierley Lange is the author of *Teaching Yoga for the menstrual cycle - an Ayurvedic approach*, which was published in 2022. Anja is a Senior Yoga Teacher and completed a bachelor of science (BSc) and postgraduate degree (PGDip) in Ayurveda.

Anja started her talk explaining that she will look at both the Western science and Ayurvedic aspects of the menstrual cycle, as clients use the language of Western science and come with Western diagnoses. Although we as Ayurvedic practitioners or Yoga teachers understand Yoga as a spiritual practice, the majority of those attending yoga classes view it as a form of exercise. For the purpose of this webinar, Anja said that she would speak of Yoga as a form of exercise, so that the principles of teaching for the menstrual cycle can be extended to other forms of exercise. David Frawley says that Yoga is the spiritual aspect of Ayurveda, whereas Ayurveda is the therapeutic branch of Yoga, however, she both agrees and disagrees, as Yoga is therapeutic and supporting both the physical and mental body.

Anja shared her journey with Yoga and how when she first started practising, it felt like home and it promoted a feeling of wellness within her, both mentally and physically. She then went on to study Ayurveda and realised that Ayurveda was the missing puzzle piece - it provided her

with a new language that improved the understanding of her yoga practice. She realised that the menstrual cycle was not linear, but resembled other larger cycles in the universe, such as the Seasons. She started asking herself: if women go through such major shifts during their cycle each month - where energy levels, hormones and Doshas change, how can the same daily routine, exercise and approach to work be applied? In Western science there is not really any appreciation for these cycles, but these cycles are recognised in Ayurveda. However, the menstrual cycle is not something that is spoken of or taught in during Yoga Teacher Training.

In Sports Science, a lot of research is done on male subjects rather than female subjects. In addition, if research is done on a mixed group, the women would often be post-menopausal. It was only as late as 2016 that the US National Institute for Health implemented a policy to consider the biological sex of participants as a biological variable in research. Thus up until as recently as 2016, the effect of the female menstrual cycle was not considered in Sports Science research at all. One review paper concluded that the biological sex of participants was largely not taken into account, as women are a more difficult test subject and there is a higher research cost involved, due to their fluctuating hormones. In addition, the female body is complex and there are many variables that would need to be checked. Another review paper concluded that women were greatly underrepresented across all research, with only 6% of research being conducted exclusively on women.

Anja encourages Ayurvedic practitioners and Yoga teachers to check in with their clients about where they are in their menstrual cycle, if

# APA WEBINAR REVIEW

## Teaching Yoga for the Menstrual Cycle, an Ayurvedic Approach by Anja Brierley Lange

Review by Colette Park

they take hormonal medication, and/or if they are peri- or post-menopausal. By doing this, we will start observing and appreciating that women respond differently depending on where they are in their cycle.

Anja explained the phases of menstrual cycle from a Western perspective and how she understands it from an Ayurvedic perspective, by looking at the panchamahabutas (five great elements) and three Doshas.



Some of the teachings that Anja shares with her students and clients include the benefits of doing Moon Salutations at different points of the menstrual cycle, thus honouring our inner moon. The Yoni or Shakti Mudras can be helpful, so too specific forms of Pranayama, a restorative routine and taking pauses during the day for contemplation and to check in with how you are feeling.

The phase of menstrual bleeding, known as Rajasravakala in Ayurveda, is usually the phase that women experience most difficulty with. An imbalance in the menstruation points to an imbalance elsewhere in the cycle. Menstruation falls under the purview of Apana Vata and the reproductive organs are located in the Vata Sthana. For this reason, Vata must always be considered. She also mentioned an interesting concept, that menstruation can be considered as a form of Raktamokshana or bloodletting and therefore has a cleansing effect. Anja discussed some beautiful grounding practices that can be observed during menstruation.

Anja covered the other phases of the menstrual cycle too: the Follicular phase or Rtukala, Ovulation or Beejotsarga, Luteal phase or Rtuvyatitakala, along with suitable practices for each phase.

We are grateful to Anya for sharing her wonderful knowledge and experience of teaching yoga and adjusting it to suit the cycles of the female body. It is an important subject that we hope will gain more attention in the years to come.

If you would like to purchase a recording of the webinar, please contact the APA Office at [info@apa.uk.com](mailto:info@apa.uk.com)

Or if you would like to purchase a copy of Anja's wonderful book, you can find it here: <https://yogaembodied.com/mybook/>

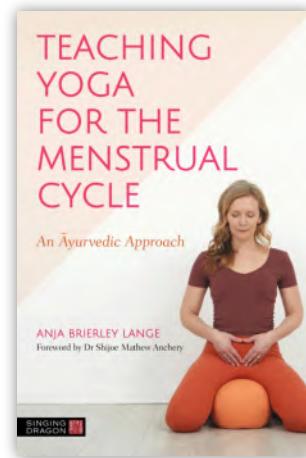
View Anja's website or follow her on social media:

<https://yogaembodied.com/>

[https://www.instagram.com/anja\\_yogini/](https://www.instagram.com/anja_yogini/)

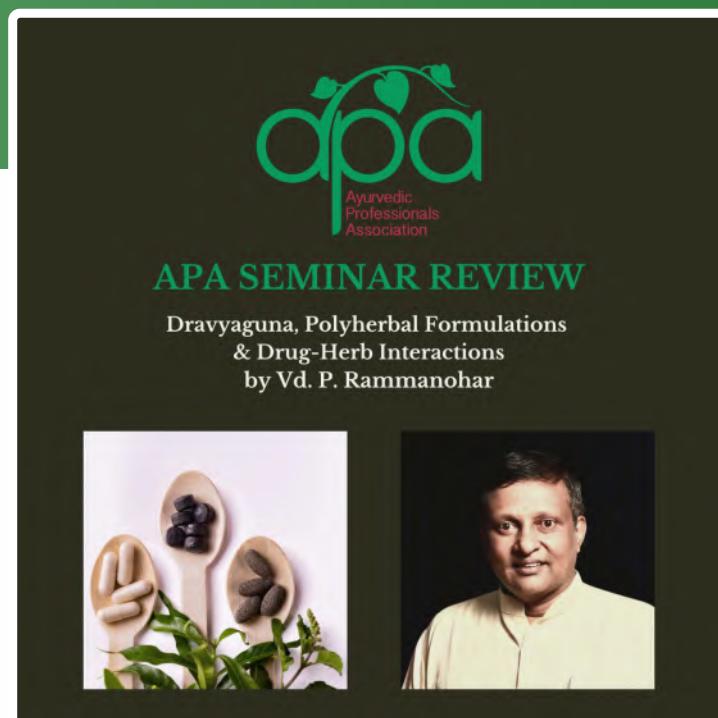
<https://www.facebook.com/yogaembodied>

<https://www.youtube.com/@anjayoga>



**Synthesising Tradition with Modernity:  
Insights from Dr. Rammanohar's Ayurvedic Seminar on 20th January 2024**

**Review of webinar by Dr. Vijay Murthy BAMS, ND, MPH, PhD, IFMCP**



In an enlightening seminar led by Dr. Rammanohar, Research Director at Amrita School of Ayurveda and facilitated by me (on the 20th of January 2024), members of the APA and other health professionals were offered a deep dive into the traditional science of Ayurveda, with a focus on Dravyaguna (Ayurvedic pharmacology), the significance of polyherbal formulations, and the complexities of drug-herb interactions.

*Dr. Rammanohar's seminar provided an extensive overview of:*

- The cultural and philosophical foundations of Ayurveda, particularly the significance of timing and context in treatment approaches, which parallels the initiation of therapeutic protocols.
- The evolution of Ayurvedic practice from classical polyherbal systems to modern-day commercial adaptations favouring single-herb formulations.
- The responsibility of practitioners in understanding and managing drug-herb interactions to prevent negative health consequences.

**Key Takeaways for Health Professionals from the webinar: Multidisciplinary Integration**

Ayurveda's integration into modern health practices requires a multidisciplinary approach that respects traditional wisdom while embracing contemporary clinical practices.

**Complexity in Formulations**

The classical Ayurvedic preference for polyherbal formulations over single herbs points to a complex understanding of synergistic effects and the mitigation of potential side effects.

Dr. Ram Manohar in his webinar highlighted the importance of this complexity in formulations by stating:

*"We have come to the conclusion that Ayurvedic formulations are based on synergistic effects of multiple herbs. If you look at a single herb, can you say how many chemicals are there in a herb? couple hundred. Yes, it may even go to thousands and all of them may not be pharmacologically active but many of them may be doing some supportive action. We still have no idea and even one plant is not fully understood today."*

# Synthesising Tradition with Modernity: Insights from Dr. Rammanohar's Ayurvedic Seminar on 20th January 2024

Review of webinar by Dr. Vijay Murthy BAMS, ND, MPH, PhD, IFMCP



Zoom screen-shot of the seminar

Dr. Manohar provided a clear example of this complex interplay within Ayurvedic formulations when he referred to the use of turmeric and pepper:

*"One of the things that Ayurveda has advised since centuries is that to combine turmeric with pepper. In all our classical diets, turmeric pepper was the spice that we used. Now the studies have indicated that if you add pepper to turmeric, the bioavailability of curcumin increases 2000 times."*

This illustration of the combination of turmeric and pepper exemplifies the Ayurvedic wisdom in using the synergistic properties of herbs to amplify their beneficial effects and diminish any potential adverse reactions.

Moreover, Dr. Manohar addressed the traditional caution exercised in Ayurveda when combining multiple plants:

*"But modern science has not reached a point where they can study interactions between complex chemical systems. What we are studying now is interaction between chemicals."*

He also acknowledged the limitation of modern approaches that often overlook the complexity of plant interactions:

*"So, you know, have you heard of an ISO hologram? This is a kind of a framework in which we are able to understand when chemicals combine together what happens. This is where modern medicine is. See in Ayurveda, we are looking at what will happen when plants are combined together."*

These discussions underscore the nuanced appreciation Ayurveda has for the intricate relationships between different herbs, a complexity that modern pharmacology is still striving to understand fully. The classical approach, as expounded by Dr. Manohar, emphasises a holistic understanding that each herb brings a multitude of phytochemicals into a formulation, each contributing to the overall therapeutic effect, either directly or indirectly. This holistic approach is a cornerstone of Ayurvedic medicine, guiding the use of complex polyherbal formulations that are tailored to the individual's unique health needs.

## Therapeutic Context

Ayurvedic treatments are highly context-specific, demanding personalised approaches that consider the individual's condition and the stage of illness. Recognising and managing drug-herb interactions is a fundamental responsibility in Ayurvedic practice,

**Synthesising Tradition with Modernity:  
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emphasising the need for comprehensive education in this area.

Recognising and managing drug-herb interactions is indeed a crucial aspect of Ayurvedic practice. As Dr. Ram Manohar emphasised during the webinar, the classical Ayurvedic approach deeply understands the need for comprehensive education on the potential interactions between herbs and other drugs. He underscored the importance of this knowledge by stating:

*"Now you say that drugs given in combination may produce effects that are greater than or less than the effect predicted from their individual potentials. This kind of approach is already happening in modern medicine, modern science."*

Dr. Manohar used the example of combining different plants to illustrate the complexity inherent in Ayurvedic formulations and their interactions:

*"If I add Haritaki and Amalaki together, now what will happen in addition to what would have happened if I gave only Haritaki, now I am going to add Vibhitaki also, now there are three plants, so this is not equivalent to the Ayurvedic way of computation because Ayurveda is looking at what I said is complex chemical systems, one plant itself is hundreds of chemicals, it's going to interact with another plant which has hundreds of chemicals."*

This example highlights the vital need for practitioners to be well-versed in the multifaceted interactions that occur within polyherbal formulations, as well as between these formulations and conventional medications. Ayurvedic practice is not just about identifying beneficial combinations but

also about predicting and avoiding potentially harmful interactions. Therefore, a thorough education in the pharmacodynamics and pharmacokinetics of both Ayurvedic herbs and modern pharmaceuticals is essential for safe and effective Ayurvedic treatment. This complexity underscores the responsibility on the part of Ayurvedic practitioners to deeply understand the substances they work with, to ensure they can predict and manage any interactions for the welfare of their patients.

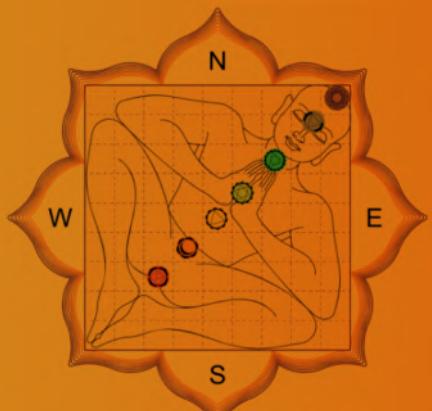
**Recommendations for Future Practice:**

- Encourage the utilisation of local herbs and resources, applying Ayurvedic principles to discover contextually relevant treatments.
- Foster a deeper understanding of classical texts and traditional knowledge to avoid the oversimplification of Ayurvedic practices.
- Advocate for the judicious use of Ayurvedic herbs, avoiding the pitfalls of commercial pressures that may lead to inappropriate application and potential adverse effects.
- In conclusion, recognising and managing drug-herb interactions is a fundamental responsibility in Ayurvedic practice, emphasising the need for comprehensive education in this area.



# What does your sleeping direction say about your quality of sleep!

By Dr. Akanksha Bhardwaj BAMS, MBA



*Is it possible to get a better night's sleep by sleeping in the correct direction?*

*How would you rate the quality of your sleep, on a scale of one to ten?*

Do you feel rejuvenated when you wake up? Maybe your dreams are active and agitating, causing you to toss and turn all night? It could be your sleeping direction, though you can put the blame on the late afternoon coffee, the glass of wine, or the stress at work.

One of the most important pillars of health as per Ayurveda is sleep or Nidra. Since so much importance is given to restful sleep, Ayurveda and Vastu has a lot of recommendations about how to get a good night's sleep!

Vastu shastra, another sister science of Ayurveda, is a Vedic science of architecture, environmental harmony, and well-being. It deals with directions. Using the Panchamahabhutas (the five great elements of Ether, Air, Fire, Water, and Earth), directions, and energy fields, Vastu aims to create a congenial environment for living and working that promotes better health, wealth, prosperity, and happiness.

Let's discuss the human body's cardinal points. According to the Indian yogi Paramhansa

Yogananda: "the North point of the human body is located around the top of the head and South at the base of the spine. East is located in point between the eyebrows and West at the back of the head, around the medulla oblongata".

Furthermore, where on Earth is the North? You must be thinking that's in the North Pole, Yes, that is correct! However, it is only true for those who reside in the Northern Hemisphere! Because of the inversion of polarity, the magnetic North of anyone residing in the Southern Hemisphere points towards the South Pole.

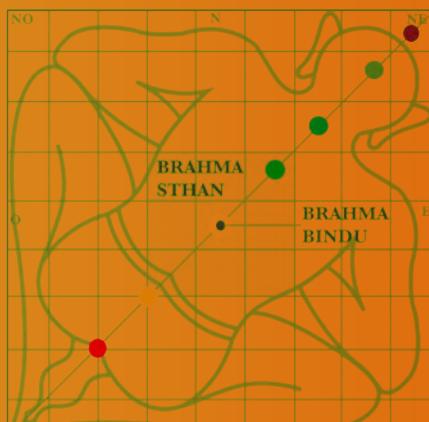
## Mythological anecdote

Legend has it that Goddess Parvathi went for a holy bath and asked her son, Lord Ganesh, to stand guard. When Lord Shiva, her husband, and Lord Ganesh's father, asked to enter the space where his Mother was bathing, Lord Ganesh refused to let him in. Incensed, Lord Shiva chopped off his head. Goddess Parvathi emerged, took in the scene, and threatened to end all of creation. She acquiesced with two conditions: one, that her Son be brought back to life, and two, that he be forever revered before all the other gods in prayer.

Shiva, having cooled down by this point, agreed to Parvati's conditions. He sent his devotees out with orders to bring back the head of the first

# What does your sleeping direction say about your quality of sleep!

By Dr. Akanksha Bhardwaj BAMS, MBA



creature that lay with its head facing the North (the belief is that the soul departs from the North to find union with Brahman or Consciousness). They soon returned with the head of a strong and powerful elephant named Gajasura, which Brahma placed atop the boy's body. Breathing new life into him, he was declared as the Gajana and offered him the status of being the foremost among the gods in prayer, and the title of the leader of all the Ganas (classes of beings), Ganapati.

## Best sleeping direction in the Northern Hemisphere

First and foremost, it's critical to understand how electromagnetic energies and magnetic fields affect human health. The magnetic poles of the Earth and the human body are similar. The magnetic poles of our planet are located in the North and South, respectively, and run from North to South. Sleeping with one's head facing North can cause the two positive poles to repel one another due to the Earth's magnetic pull.

The optimal direction for sleeping, according to Vastu principles, is East or South, with the head facing East or South and the legs pointing North or West. The scientific method of sleeping is also this. If sleeping with your face either East or South is not feasible, you can opt to sleep with your head turned North East or West. Steer clear of sleeping with your head facing North.

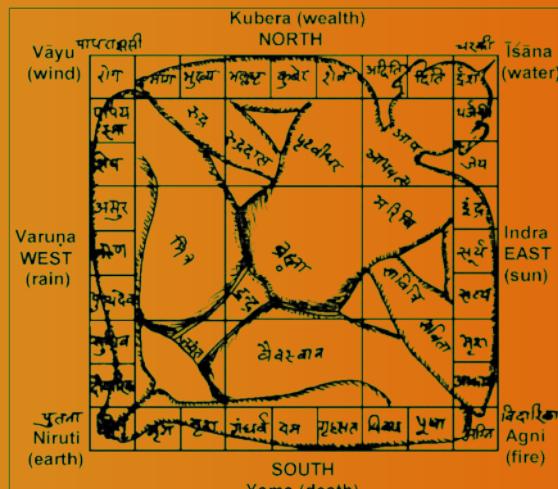
A study was conducted in 2009 in the Department of Physiology at the Himalayan Institute of Medical Sciences in India to investigate the potential effects of sleeping with the head turned in a particular direction on blood pressure, heart rate, and serum cortisol levels during supine rest. It was discovered that individuals who were told to sleep with their heads facing South had the lowest levels of heart rate, serum cortisol, diastolic blood pressure, and systolic blood pressure (SBP, DBP, and HR). These results were statistically significant, but it was suggested that additional research be done in other groups.

## Best sleeping direction in the Southern Hemisphere

According to Vastu Shastra, the direction in which you should sleep depends on which hemisphere you reside in. One can sleep with the head pointing towards any direction except the South direction. Because of the inversion of polarity, the magnetic North of anyone residing in the Southern Hemisphere points towards the South Pole, thus, North and East are the recommended sleeping directions for the Southern Hemisphere according to Vastu Shastra.

# What does your sleeping direction say about your quality of sleep!

By Dr. Akanksha Bhardwaj BAMS, MBA



Finding our true North, the North star has long been used for navigation—is beneficial both spiritually and practically, but sleeping with face towards the North is not advised at all since it can lead to problems with blood circulation, elevated stress, psychological problems, physical problems, and sleep disorders like insomnia. (The only exception is for yoga practitioners who wish to engage in astral projection and lucid dreaming).

To quote Dr. Vasant Lad, “Only dead people sleep pointing North.” It is Hindu custom to arrange a corpse so that the head of the deceased is pointing North until cremation. According to Hindu belief, the soul leaves the body by travelling North!

## East: Why East is the best sleeping direction in Vastu?

The rising sun's direction, known as the East, is thought to be beneficial for spiritual pursuits like meditation. It enhances concentration and memory. Thus, sound sleep is ensured by sleeping with the head pointing East and the feet pointing West. The kids' room's bed should be oriented toward the East to encourage healthy growth. According to Ayurveda, sleeping with your face towards the East balances your vata, pitta, and kapha doshas.

It is advised that academics, educators, and individuals seeking new job prospects or promotions consider East. It is believed that this type of sleep gives one a strong, energising feeling. Furthermore, this is the recommended position for those who want to overcome any health-related challenges.

## West

West to East sleeping is not recommended. Some claim that it causes restlessness and an increase in Rajas, or ambition, but there are more effective ways to achieve that. Some people even think of it as a neutral sleeping position. But according to Vastu, sleeping with one's head to the West can cause nightmares, restless and disturbed sleep, and a violent inclination.

## South

The Hindu god Yama rules the South, so if you want to experience the deep and heavy sleep of death, sleep in the South. Referring back to the magnetic pole theory, a harmonious exchange is created by a mutual attraction (head positive, South negative) that draws energy into the body rather than out, as in the case of North. This path encourages prosperity, happiness, and good health. It's all about aligning your inner compass with the Earth's magnetic field. Try moving your bed around and observe the results.

# Keshar (*Crocus sativus*) in Ayurveda

By Andrew Mason



Harvesting saffron

## Introduction

The medicinal use of this plant has a long history. Keshar has various names such as Kumkum, Rakta, Kashmiraj, Pitaka, Rudhir, among others. In the English language, we refer to this plant as saffron or *Crocus sativus* Linn. The term saffron is derived from the Persian word Zafran.

In today's market, 500g of saffron costs approximately 3500 GBP, making it very expensive when compared to its weight. This amount is about 1/5 of the cost of gold, highlighting the significant value of saffron. Like gold, saffron is associated with the Sun, representing qualities such as longevity, youth, and beauty.

The small shrub has its origins in Asia, but nowadays, Iran is the dominant producer as it has the lowest labour costs. Turkey and Kashmir are also significant producers. Spain, France, the Netherlands, and Italy are among the countries that have also started investing in saffron production. Although India now imports most of its saffron, the highest quality is believed to come from Srinagar, specifically in Kashmir.

Cultivation usually starts in late summer, with pre-cultivated bulbs being transplanted into

growing beds. The harvesting period begins in late October to December, or with the emergence of its colourful purple flower. The plant's stigmas are delicately harvested by hand with backbreaking effort, and with only three stigmas per plant, it takes over 150,000 flowers to collect 30g of saffron, hence the high cost of growing, selecting, separating and processing. Due to this plant's sensitivity to the Sun, and humidity, its stigma is best collected just after dawn and before the heat of the day.

## Grades A-B-C

Generally, the harvest is separated into grades, this firstly removes the finest quality stigma. Grade A has the best taste, strongest aroma and contains the high level of dye, inherent to the plant. This grade is also known as *Kashmiri Keshar*, appearing orangey-red like the rising Sun, long, thin and with an aroma, similar to lotus. It has a strongly bitter taste.

*Balhikaj*, grade B is whitish, thin and of a lesser quality. Grade C known as *Parasdeshaj*, is thicker, whitish, and smells a bit like honey. The latter grade, destined to be powdered, is lightly beaten and placed into a winnowing basket to remove unwanted debris. What remains is then ground and powdered and sold as powdered saffron. To add to its bulk, this grade can be adulterated with other herbs such as safflower and/or marigold.

## Genuine grade

When genuine saffron is floated upon water, its stigma swells and becomes enveloped by its dye, but does not disperse into the water. Lesser quality saffron similarly will leach its dye, but it will also disperse quickly in water. When placed into ethanol, genuine stigma similarly give up

# Keshar (*Crocus sativus*) in Ayurveda

By Andrew Mason



Saffron - *Crocus sativus*



High quality stigma

their dye but do not discolour, whereas adulterated materials give up their dye, but quickly start to bleach their colour.

## Chemical Constituents

Chemical components of saffron include: Picrocrocin, that which gives the plant its bitter taste. Crocin, that which gives the plant its vibrancy, and Safranal, that which gives saffron its olfactory strength. You might think of these three as just colour, taste and smell. In small doses, saffron is an excellent culinary enhancer, in larger doses, it has narcotic properties, in very large doses, over 5g, it becomes toxic and leads to poisoning. Doses of 10g or more can be fatal.

To be truly medicinal, saffron should be fully dried. This is best done by indirect heating. The preferred method is to put dried stigma onto a flat metal plate, a heated metal cover is then placed 'upturned' over the saffron and left until cool. The saffron can then be collected and stored in an amber coloured jar. This method is considered fully dried and highly medicinal. Saffron dried and stored in this way has an excellent shelf life.

## Ayurvedic substitutes for Saffron

While there are no real substitutes, there are similar plants that also have great curative properties and in some sense can be likened to saffron in their effect. One commonly used substitute is *Nagkeshar*. Here, the vibrant

yellow/orange buds and stamens of *Mesua ferrea* will sometimes be substituted in formula. *Nagkeshar* is much more abundant and produces a larger crop, and so, is sometimes favoured in formula. In addition, some Ayurvedic physicians are of the opinion that nutmeg is an acceptable substitute for saffron, as they both have similar energetics and effects.

## Uses in Ayurveda

In Ayurveda, Saffron is considered one of the best bitters, as well as a reliever of pain (it is considered an excellent nerve tonic), its energetic is especially useful for diseases of the head (headaches) and eye disorders, indeed, a few drops of saffron in rosewater are considered an excellent eye tonic. Saffron has an affinity with mutra (urine) and the urinary system / Kidneys, as well as menstrual disorders. It is also useful when desiring weight loss, diseases of the liver and blood, it improves complexion, and is an excellent-wound healer when pasted and applied externally, for fast healing and good anti-microbial / antiseptic properties. Other common uses include, heart conditions, gynaecological problems and autoimmune disorders, there is also some research to show it has possible anti-cancer properties.

Energetically, due to its high dyeing quality or redness, it works largely on rakta dhatus (building blood tissue), helping to purify the blood, removing blemishes from the skin,

# Keshar (*Crocus sativus*) in Ayurveda

By Andrew Mason



Nagkeshar - *Mesua ferrea*



High quality stigma

improving complexion, nourishing the nervous system, and improving fertility. Saffron is tridosha but, if anything, works to slightly reduce Kapha, but to its bitterness. According to Ayurveda, saffron is light, pungent, slightly oily, heating and bitter. It is considered tridosha but, if anything, works to slightly reduce Vata and Kapha, but to its warmth and bitterness. Due to its affinity to the blood, it stimulates blood flow and so is a contraindicated herb during pregnancy.

## Ayurvedic Formulation

One of the best ways to enjoy saffron is in warm milk, here it is best to heat milk, and allow cooling, before adding saffron. A little sugar can be added, as required.

**Ksheerpak:** This well-known remedy is advised to be consumed regularly during winter, at a dosage of half a teaspoon, taken twice a day.

To make this preparation, milk is simmered until it reaches a semi-solid consistency, and then the finely ground powders of saffron, nutmeg, macuna (*Mucuna pruriens*), salep (*Orchis latifolia*), long pepper, elephant creeper (*Argyreia speciosa*) and akarakara (*Anacyclus pyrethrum*) are added.

**Habb-e-Mudir:** This Unani formulation is widely used for treating menstrual disorders, it contains ferrous sulphate and saffron, these are then mixed with Aloe barbadensis gel. The iron content is an alchemical preparation which requires speciality pre-preparation at high temperatures.

## Ahara Chikitsa

By Sarah Williams and Penny Spur ([www.ayurvedatc.com](http://www.ayurvedatc.com))

Ahara Chikitsa or Ayurvedic nutrition is a totally different concept to any other form of nutrition. It is personalised nutrition at its best and not a 'one diet fits all' that we see in western nutrition. It is also the only form of medicine or nutrition that works on the spiritual, mental/emotional and physical aspects by using Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. By working with Ayurveda we can formulate a very individual food plan that is truly holistic.

Often in Ayurveda we start by identifying our Dosha - am I Vata, Pitta or Kapha? In relating this to food we then focus on Rasa or Taste. Vata is encouraged to eat more sweet, sour and salty tastes; Pitta to eat more of the sweet, bitter and astringent tastes; and Kapha to eat more of the pungent, bitter and astringent tastes. Simple in theory, but how do we put this into practice? We still need to include all six tastes into our daily

# AHARA CHIKITSA

By Sarah Williams and Penny Spur ([www.ayurvedatc.com](http://www.ayurvedatc.com))



diet and for all of us the sweet neutral taste of the sweet fruits, vegetables as well as proteins, fats/oils and grains will make up the major component of our diet. Sour is the next major food group in our western diet, which includes fermented and yeasted foods like bread, hard cheese, yoghurt and alcohol as well as sour fruits. Our ancestors relied on preserving food such as fermentation to use in the winter months when there was less fresh food available. A question we might also ask is how much of the pungent taste should Kapha have? In the UK we are more comfortable eating the milder pungent flavours found in onions, garlic and the culinary herbs of rosemary, thyme, sage and parsley. We can easily add these ingredients to our cooking to enhance the flavour of our food and our digestion without it being overpowering.

The Gunas or qualities are equally important. We learn that Vata can be described using the qualities of dry, light, cold and rough; Pitta as slightly oily, hot and light and Kapha as oily, cool and heavy. Using the golden rule of "Like

increases like, and opposites reduce" we want to balance the Doshas by eating more foods with their opposite qualities. This explains why Vata Dosha benefit from eating more unctuous warming foods and less light cold salads, and Pitta benefit from eating more cool or mildly warm foods rather than foods that identify as hot.

This is underpinned by the simple logic of the Pancha Maha Bhutas – the five great elements of Akasha (ether), Vayu (air/wind), Agni (fire), Jala (water) and Prthivi (earth). The Doshas are each made from two of these elements. Vata has a predominance of ether and air, Pitta of fire and water and Kapha of water and earth. The tastes are also made of these same elements: sweet is mainly earth and water, sour is mainly earth and fire, and salt is mainly water and fire, pungent from fire and water, bitter from air and either and astringent from earth and air. The Gunas can also be used to describe the Pancha Maha Bhutas; ether is cold, dry and light; air/wind is dry and light and fire is hot, dry and light whilst water is cool, wet and light and earth is heavy.

## AHARA CHIKITSA

By Sarah Williams and Penny Spur ([www.ayurvedatc.com](http://www.ayurvedatc.com))

Each of the Doshas relates to a different season, in the United Kingdom Vata is the season of autumn and early winter, Pitta is late spring and summer and Kapha is late winter and early spring. We see this in the foods that are harvested in these different seasons with the cooling berries of summer and the grain harvest in early autumn. Living in towns and cities and shopping in supermarkets often disconnects us from the natural world around us and the cycle of the seasons. We are encouraged to eat seasonally when our Doshas are in balance although we may need to temper this to suit our individual Dosha. Even in summer Vata Dosha does better with slightly warming foods rather than gorging on cold, dry rough salad ingredients.

However, when one of our Dosha is unbalanced (Vikriti), we are encouraged to focus on eating to bring that Dosha back into balance; this is normally our predominant Dosha but in today's stressful world it is often Vata Dosha that needs addressing first. Ayurveda also gives us wonderful wisdom for addressing digestive issues. Ayurveda upholds that all disease starts in the gut and we are encouraged to address these issues before Ama forms in the gut, which if left unchecked can cause untold damage to our health. It is truly shocking to see the prevalence of constipation and hyper-acidity that are just suppressed with pharmaceutical remedies without addressing the root cause. There are many ways in which we can support our digestion including the use of culinary herbs, ginger tea, a light seasonal fast, eating simpler foods and ensuring that the quality of our foods is as good as we can afford.

We are encouraged to be more mindful of not just what we eat but also how we eat. How do you feel when you get up from the dining table?

The Sanskrit term "*prajnapradha*" means crimes against wisdom which means that we ignore our inner knowing and common sense. Comfort eating and eating too many processed foods are examples of this. With busy lives and tight budgets, the pleasure of cooking and eating is often ignored. It does not have to be fancy and it does not have to be Indian cuisine. India is the home of Ayurveda but we have to learn to adapt and modify this wisdom to our own 'Satmya' or heritage. Rice is the grain staple of India and China but not of the UK, whereas wheat, barley and oats are grown locally. Many of us are unable to digest large amounts of rice and are better using a wider variety of grains. The same goes for legumes; kidney beans, chick peas, mung beans and adzuki beans, these are the staples for many cuisines across the world, but we in Britain stopped eating them in the Middle Ages in favour of meat and dairy produce. Their astringent drying qualities can make them hard to digest, especially for Vata Dosha, resulting in gas and constipation. Mung and Aduki beans are the easiest to digest, but if you find them difficult to digest then do not force the issue. You could also make them easier to digest by adding spices when you cook them.

Ayurveda has some wonderful advice on how to eat and support our health, including to eat more mindfully and chew our food well. This allows us to taste and enjoy our food, supports digestion and allows us to hear the "I'm full" message coming from the brain. We are encouraged to sit at the dining table and enjoy our meals taking the opportunity to let go of what is going on around us and nourish our bodies. It is suggested that we should not eat when we are stressed or anxious.

## AHARA CHIKITSA

By Sarah Williams and Penny Spur ([www.ayurvedatc.com](http://www.ayurvedatc.com))

Like many Ayurveda practitioners we have both struggled to really take a theoretical understanding of Ahara Chikitsa – Food as Medicine as something that we fully embrace on a practical level. Penny has a background as a chef and spent her early career as a hospital catering manager and Sarah has specialised as a Medical Herbalist as well as having taught Ayurveda for the last ten years. We came together to try and really understand how to use the wisdom of Ayurveda food and nutrition to formulate an Ayurvedic personal food plan for Westerners. After four years of research and debating the classical texts of Caraka Samhita

and Astanga Hridayam alongside modern teachings and exploring the textures and tastes of food we have designed a course to share this exciting wisdom that is suitable for both other Ayurveda practitioners and also our clients who wish to learn more about this fascinating aspect of Ayurveda. Our teacher Atreya always said that you can cure just about anything using just food it just takes a little longer.

### Have you struggled to fully understand Ahara Chikitsa or Ayurvedic nutrition?

The Ayurveda Training Company offers an easy to understand course consisting of eight x 45 minute webinars and a manual of over 130 pages.

Especially formulated for a western audience

[www.ayurvedatc.com/course-ahara-chikitsa](http://www.ayurvedatc.com/course-ahara-chikitsa)



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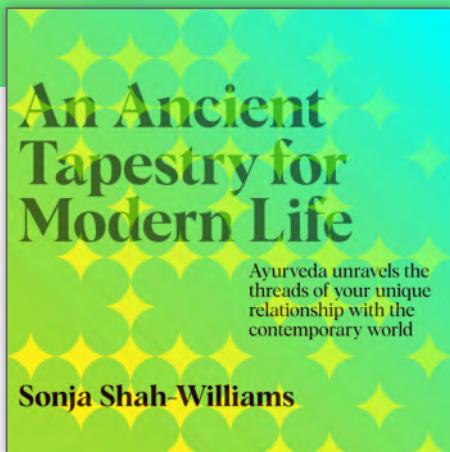


Find out more: [ayurvedatc@gmail.com](mailto:ayurvedatc@gmail.com)

## ADVERTISEMENT

# AN ANCIENT TAPESTRY FOR MODERN LIFE

Written and Narrated by Sonja Shah-Williams BSc (Hons) MAPA



## *Ayurveda Unravels The Threads Of Your Unique Relationship With The Contemporary World*

My audio book has now been published on [Spotify](#), and will also shortly be available on Apple Books, Google Books, and Audiobooks.com.

I have been passionately helping people to find more holistic balance in their lives, for over a decade. I unravel the deeper layers and universal truths of Ayurveda's philosophy, and stay away from the frequently offered text book style deliveries, which do little to help people to evolve, and become the very best version of themselves. My desire to offer the refreshingly illuminating, profound wisdom of Ayurveda to a larger audience, led me to write my latest book. Many people have become tired of, and disillusioned by, both the pharmaceutical, and wellness industries. These industries profit hugely from the elusive search for 'complete health' but offer little in the way of effective guidance on how to know ourselves, and have agency over our lives.

Modern day ideas around health have become heavily focused on fixing imbalances, both physical and emotional, rather than allowing people to use their innate wisdom to understand their unique response to food consumption, movement, lifestyle, relationship with self and others, the time of day, the seasons, and stage of life. I am convinced that even many of the offerings of Ayurveda are becoming too curative, and paternalistic, blinding people with science,

and removing autonomy from their lives. Consequently, people have become so used to others leading them, and as a result, they have become disassociated from themselves. The deep insight Ayurveda offers, can be linguistically and culturally confusing for many Westerners, and indeed for many humans in today's frantic world. We have moved further away from our place in Nature, and thus, we have forgotten how we fit into the world. [An Ancient Tapestry For Modern Life](#) delivers Ayurveda's transformative philosophy in a simple, universally understood language, accessible to everyone.

The themes in the book are underpinned by the main principles of Ayurveda, thus offering effective, ancient guidance on how to navigate the contemporary world. I no longer wish to see people lost without a map in the wilderness of modern life, devoid of joy, and unable to realise their full potential. My book will show people how to get to know themselves so well, that they make considered, measured choices that ultimately benefit them, and equally allow them to contribute to a better society. Ayurveda helps all humans, regardless of age, sex, gender, culture, religion, or beliefs. The more people who can benefit from this amazing philosophy and science of life, the happier I will be.

I would love you to listen to the book, share it with others, and would welcome your feedback.

Sonja x

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## ADVERTISEMENT

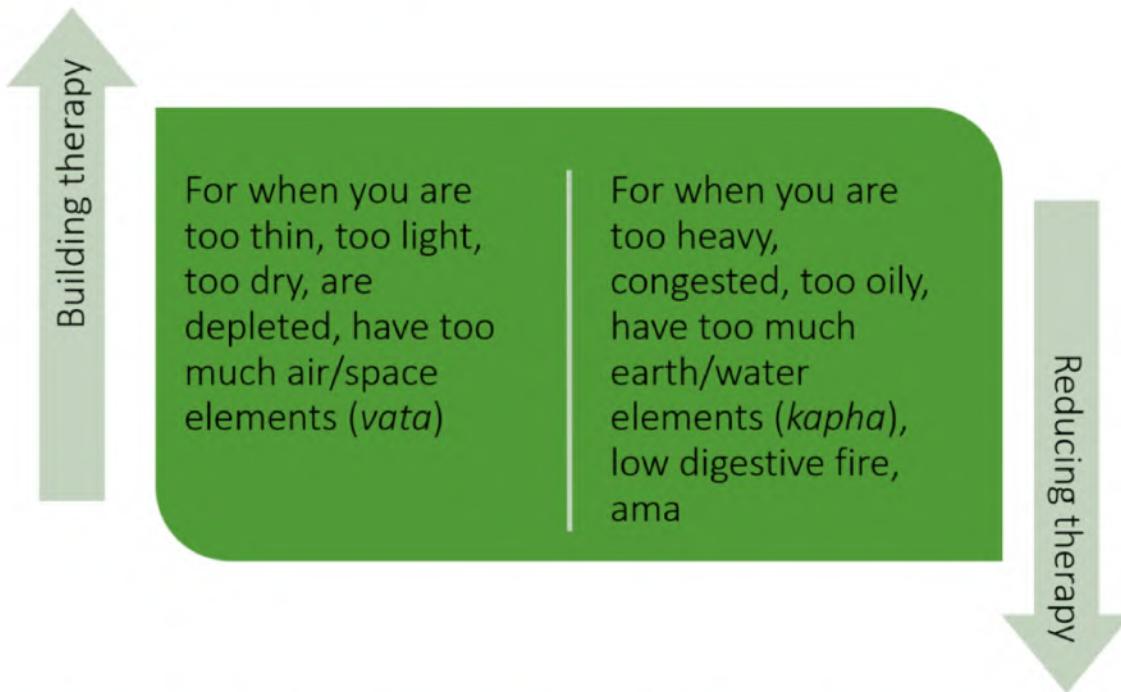
# Fasting – what does Ayurveda say?

Everyone is talking about fasting. There is so much (sometimes conflicting) information out there about fasting, what does Ayurveda have to say about it? And how can fasting be personalised to our individual constitutions?

Find all the answers to these questions here.

## Ayurveda has a LOT to say about fasting – it's a big part of Ayurvedic treatment

There are two main arms to Ayurvedic treatment, building someone up (*brmhana*) and reducing someone down (*langhana*).



Reducing treatment is needed when the body gets too heavy, too congested, has too much of the earth or water elements (e.g. *kapha* or sometimes *pitta dosha*) or has low digestive fire and *ama* (the sticky toxins lurking in the body which it cannot expel or use). *Dosha* in balance do not negatively affect health but when increased, can cause disease, as does *ama*.

Modern life produces a huge need for reducing therapy and one of the most effective and easy methods is fasting (*upavasa*). Through fasting, we lighten the load on the

## FASTING - WHAT DOES AYURVEDA SAY?

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digestive system and allow *āma* (sticky toxins) and excess *dosha* to be digested and various systems of the body to rest and repair.

*Digestive fire cooks (digests) the food, in the absence of food, it cooks (digests) the dosha.*<sup>[1]</sup>

A modern correlate to *dosha* can be senescent cells, those cells that produce inflammatory toxins. Yoshinori Ohsumi won the Nobel prize in 2016 for discovering the mechanism for the autophagy, the breakdown of such cells, and discovered that fasting encouraged this process. The more we can stimulate this process when needed by using methods such as fasting, the healthier we can be.

**However**, the above quote from Vaghbata in Astanga Hrdayam goes on to say:

*When the dosha become decreased, the fire cooks the tissues and when the tissues become depleted, it cuts short the life itself.*

Fasting is therefore a fabulous 'reducing' tool when needed but when overused, it can deplete us. **We use it wisely.**

## Types of fasting in Ayurveda

There are degrees of fasting, some which may be more suitable for you than others. We can categorise fasting into three types: BARE MINIMUM, GENTLE and STRONGER. Let's discover what is best for you.



### BARE MINIMUM: Fasting until there is hunger

The bare minimum of fasting recommended for everyone apart from those who are severely depleted is to **fast between meals until we experience proper hunger**; that sensation of an empty stomach, a lightness to the body, clear burps and maybe a first rumble. This gives us a good length of time between meals for full digestion and assimilation and to maintain a well-functioning digestive fire.

The norm of eating in Ayurveda is 2 meals a day, the eating of which is recommended to be within a 6-hour window, one meal in the late morning/midday and one meal in the late afternoon/early evening. **This means that for many of us there is a recommended 18 hour fasting window overnight.** This can vary though; if you have a strong digestive fire and tend to stay at a lower weight, you will find your fasting

window will be shorter than this. The important thing is that only **YOUR BODY KNOWS**, no-one else. If you follow your hunger, you will find your best rhythm.

## GENTLE: Connecting with hunger AND eating lighter

Whilst sticking to the BARE MINIMUM fasting of only eating when properly hungry, we can make a stronger fast by eating lighter. Eating light can be eating **lighter foods or less food** or both. Favoured light and reducing foods are **mung dal/soup, most other pulses, cooked green vegetables, buttermilk and spices**. To make this an effective fasting method, spend a length of time only eating these light foods at the exclusion of all others, remembering to still only eat when hungry.

## STRONGER: Longer stretches – fasting beyond hunger

This is taking fasting a step further, to not eating even when there is hunger. This is recommended when there is a clear need for reducing therapy (*langhana*) as discussed above (heaviness, congestion, too much earth/water/*kapha*, low digestive fire, presence of *āma*). Some of the specific conditions for fasting beyond hunger are obesity, fever, diarrhoea, nausea, vomiting, type 2 diabetes, and other *kapha/pitta* diseases.

**You should NOT fast beyond hunger if you are emaciated, weak, have excess *vata*, are pregnant, are a child, are elderly or are in the grip of great fear, grief or anger.**

This fast is kept until you have lightness in the body, signs of which are [2]:

Proper excretion of waste products	Feeling of lightness of the body	Re-emergence of taste for food	Contentment
Feeling of purity in the heart, throat and mouth	No drowsiness, no sense of exertion	Appearance of sweat	High hunger and thirst

We can suppress hunger up and until these signs of reducing therapy completion but if we take it beyond that, we start to cause problems. We need to be vigilant; more isn't always better! Signs you've gone too far are:

## FASTING - WHAT DOES AYURVEDA SAY?

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Poor digestive ability, loss of appetite, loss of taste	Frequent bloating, burping, constipation, abdominal pain etc	Giddiness	Cracking of skin
Dry mouth, thirst	Impairment of memory, sight and hearing	Non-specific body pains	Emaciation, loss of strength

**Fast beyond hunger if you need to do reducing therapy on yourself but stop when you feel the positive indications of successful reducing therapy and don't reach the point of experiencing symptoms of overdoing it.**

### Using ghee to prolong the fast

When we fast for about 12 hours, our bodies move from sugar burning mode a fat burning mode (ketosis). We need to have regular access to both these modes as they have different benefits and disadvantages. By overriding hunger, we can prolong the time in fat burning mode. Another way to do this is to give the body only fats to digest when in this state so that our hunger dies down for a while, but we can continue to be in fat burning mode.

There is a treatment in Ayurveda which does just this, called *snehapana* [3] (literally 'fat-drinking'). For this, when (and only when) hunger occurs in the morning, drink a volume of ghee (or sesame oil) and wait for hunger to return before eating food. Usually, the most we can stomach is 15-30ml (1 – 2 tbsp). Depending on your digestive capacity, this could give you 1 – 4 hours more time in fat-burning mode. If this suits you, you can do it again in the afternoon when you feel hungry. This *snehapana* practice is said to dispel all *dosha*, is particularly beneficial for those with skin diseases, gout, joint pain, obesity and high blood pressure and works at its best if you have taken digestive herbs for a few days beforehand.

Do not mix the oil with food but do have it with a drink such as warm water. If you find it unpalatable, a tip is to blend it thoroughly with a decaffeinated coffee[4], which makes it taste quite nice. Don't eat to excess after digesting the oil and don't exercise, have sex or sleep during the day that day.

There are three specifically named fasting lengths mentioned in the classical texts: 24 hour (mentioned in treatment for *vata* dominant fever), 48 hour (for *pitta* dominant fever) and 84 hour (for *kapha* dominant fever).

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### 24 hour fast (1 day and 1 night)

An example of a 24 hour fast would be eating lunch one day and then nothing until eating lunch the next day. Charaka, one of the fathers of Ayurveda, says that eating only once in 24 hours is the best way to bring about happiness in your life [5]. If you are prone to *ama* or *kapha* accumulation or have low digestive fire, you could consider doing this weekly, being sure to enter and exit the fast with the right foods (see below). This is the longest someone with a *vata* constitution or imbalance should fast, and then only they are showing signs of needing reducing therapy (above).

### 32 hour fast (2 days and 1 night)

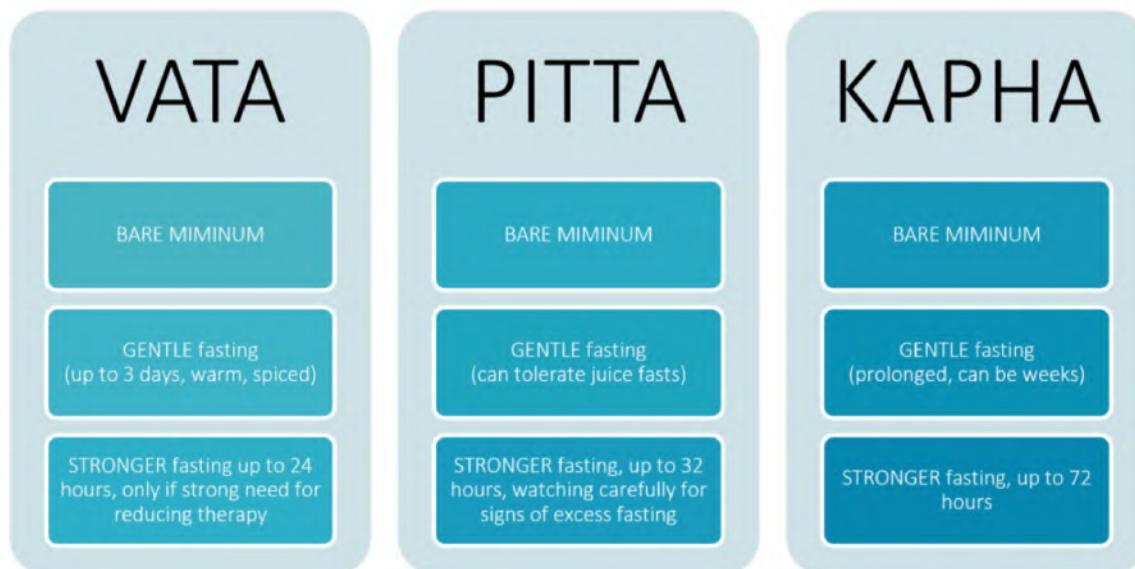
A 32 hour fast is when you fast after breakfast one day until the evening meal the next day. This is the longest someone with a *pitta* constitution or imbalance should fast.

### 72 hour fast (3 days and 3 nights)

This final type of fast is where you eat a meal and then nothing again until the same time in 3 days. For example, breakfast on Monday then just non-nutritive liquids until breakfast on Thursday. This is quite an extreme fast and great care needs to be taken to watch for signs of completion (above).

## Personalised fasting for your constitution

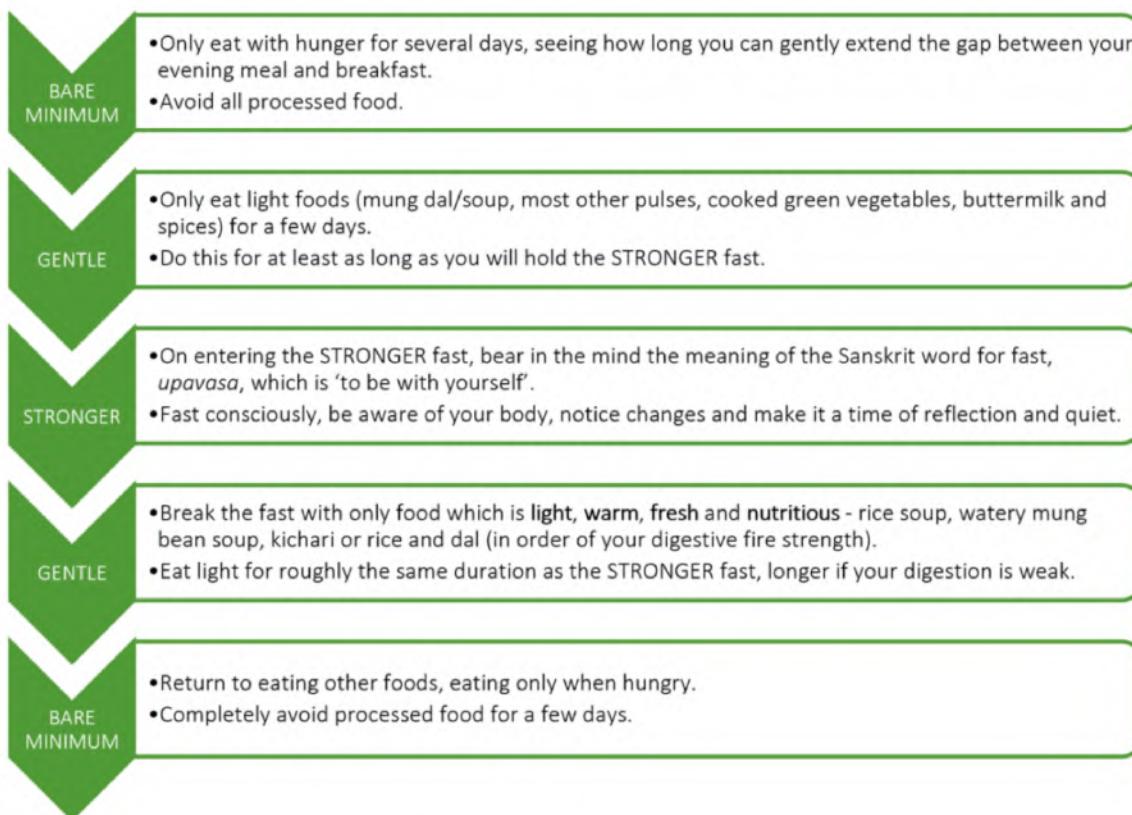
As you have already seen, the type and length of fast you chose depends on what situation your body is in – it is not one size fits all.



# How to start and end a fast

Ayurveda always takes the gentlest approach on the mind and body; it is not a system that advocates sudden changes as this provokes *vata*, a troublemaker. I would recommend entering and exiting a fast by going through each stage of fasting.

It is important to protect our digestive fire when fasting. You can imagine your digestive fire like a wood-fire. To get a good flame you need a delicate balance of enough fuel but not overloaded, enough air but not too much. When we fast, we stop adding more fuel which then gives the fire a chance to burn the fuel that is already there without being overloaded. The longer this continues, however, the lack of fuel starts to cause a lowering of the flame. In this way, the digestive fire after fasting can be delicate and we need to feed it properly when we start to eat again.



# Fasting during your menstrual cycle

The menstrual cycle is divided into three stages dominated by the three *dosha*. *Vata* dominates during menstruation, *kapha* in the pre-ovulation proliferative phase and *pitta* in the post-ovulation secretory phase. Modern research on the effect of fasting on the hormones shows that stronger fasting is beneficial when oestrogen is low and needs producing but less beneficial when oestrogen is high, or

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progesterone production is needed. Modern proponents of fasts such as Dr Mindy Pelz [6], suggest stronger fasts for the first 10 days of the cycle and again just after ovulation for around 4 days and not at other times.

I judge the **best time of the cycle to do STRONGER fasts (fasting beyond hunger) from an Ayurvedic perspective is during the *kapha* phase.** Combining the ancient and modern wisdom on this suggests that a perfect time for STRONGER fasts is in the **beginning of the *kapha* phase, directly after menstruation up until day 10.** For example, if your menstruation lasts for 3 days, then you would be good to fast from day 4 – 10. If you bleed for 7 days, then it would be days 8-10. It is advised to eat lightly during menstruation itself so it would work well to do GENTLE fasting during menstruation and then STRONGER fasting straight afterwards. It is important to bear this in mind to enable good hormonal regulation.

## Important takeaways (no, not that kind, even if you are now feeling peckish)

Keep an eye on how your body is feeling, when you start to feel heavy, sluggish, lacking in energy, weak in digestion and then pick a fast that suits you.

Seek help from a health professional if you are considering major changes to your diet and lifestyle, such as fasting.

If you are interested in learning more about Ayurveda, come and join one of our courses at The Ayurveda Academy. There are three levels of course, an introduction, a deeper dive and a professional conversion course. Find out more at [theayurvedaacademy.com](https://theayurvedaacademy.com)

[1] Vaghbata's Astanga Hrdayam Chikitsa Sthana 10/91

[2] Charaka Samhita Sutra Sthana 22/34-37

[3] *Shamana snehapana* – Astanga Hrdayam Sutra Sthana 16/19

[4] Only use coffee decaffeinated using the Carbon Dioxide or Swiss Water method

[5] Charaka Samhita Sutra Sthana 25/40

[6] Fast like a Girl, Dr Mindy Pelz

**SPECIAL THANKS TO THE EHTPA FOR PASSING THIS ALONG,  
FOR FURTHER READING CLICK THIS LINK:**

<https://ajcn.nutrition.org/action/showpdf?pii=S0002-9165%2824%2900019-4>

## **ABSTRACT**

### **Background**

Licorice, through the effects of glycyrrhizic acid (GA), raises blood pressure (BP). The World Health Organization has suggested that 100 mg GA/d would be unlikely to cause adverse effects, but of 13 previously published studies none have been randomized and controlled and independently quantified the GA content.

### **Objective**

Our aim was to analyze the effects on home BP of a daily licorice intake containing 100 mg GA.

### **Methods**

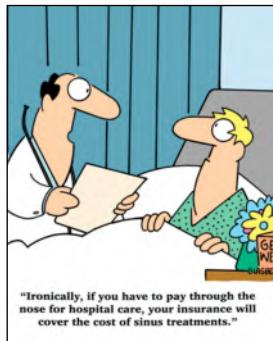
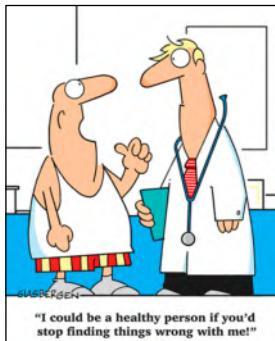
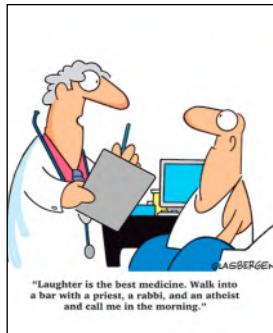
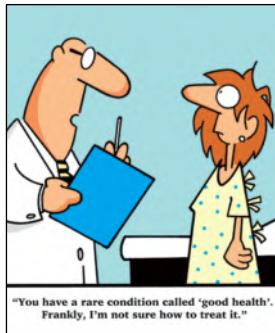
Healthy volunteers were randomly assigned to start with either licorice or a control product in a nonblinded, 2 × 2 crossover study. Home BP was measured daily, and blood samples were collected at the end of each 2-wk period.

### **Results**

There were 28 participants and no dropouts. The median age was 24.0 y (interquartile range 22.8–27.0 y). During the licorice compared with control intake period, the systolic home BP increased [mean difference: 3.1 mm Hg (95% confidence interval [CI]: 0.8, 5.4 mm Hg) compared with −0.3 mm Hg (95% CI: −1.8, 1.3 mm Hg);  $P = 0.018$ ] and renin and aldosterone were suppressed [mean change: −30.0% (95% CI: −56.7%, −3.3%) compared with 15.8% (95% CI: −12.8%, 44.4%);  $P = 0.003$ ; and −45.1% (95% CI: −61.5%, −28.7%) compared with 8.2% (95% CI: −14.7%, 31.1%);  $P < 0.001$ , respectively]. In the quartile of participants with the most pronounced suppression of renin and aldosterone, N-terminal prohormone of brain natriuretic peptide concentration increased during the licorice compared with control period [mean change: 204.1% (95% CI: −11.6%, 419.7%) compared with 72.4% (95% CI: −52.2%, 197.1%);  $P = 0.016$ ].

### **Conclusions**

We found licorice to be more potent than previously known, with significant increases in BP, after a daily intake of only 100 mg GA. Thus, the safe limit of intake of this substance might need to be reconsidered.



## PHOTO CREDITS

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