



YOGA & AYURVEDA SELFCARE

Vata/Kapha Balancing

Table of Contents: Vata/Kapha Balancing

3.....Ayurveda Basics
6.....Self Care for January
9.....Yoga Asana: Warrior Vinyasa
11.....Week One: Detox Soup & Foot Marmas
15.....Week Two: Breakfast Bowl & Leg Marmas
19.....Week Three: Kitchari & Sacrum Marmas
23.....Week Four: Carrot Soup & Belly Marmas
27.....Week Five: Winter Shrub & Chest Marmas

Ayurveda Basics

Ayurveda is a system of wellness deeply rooted in Nature.

It recognizes that humanity is created from, exists within, and eventually returns to Nature.

Ayurveda is a Vedic sciences that has been practiced for thousands of years for the sake of holistic wellness. The system of Ayurveda recognizes that the key to good health is balance at all levels of being. It employs mindful dietary considerations, yoga *asana* (postures), *pranayama* (breathing practices), herbs, and meditation for healing the whole being. It seeks to cleanse the body of toxins and eliminate excess inflammation.

Ayurveda Doshas

There are three doshas in Ayurveda. Doshas are bio-energetic conditions that are created out of the combined qualities of the five elements. Ayurveda views everything as comprised of the five basic elements: earth, water, fire, air and space. That includes your mind, body, and interactions.

Qualities of the Five Elements According to Ayurveda

Space / ether (*akasha*): light, fine, smooth, soft, spacious

Air (*vayu*): agile, cold, light, dry, rough, fine, erratic, mobile

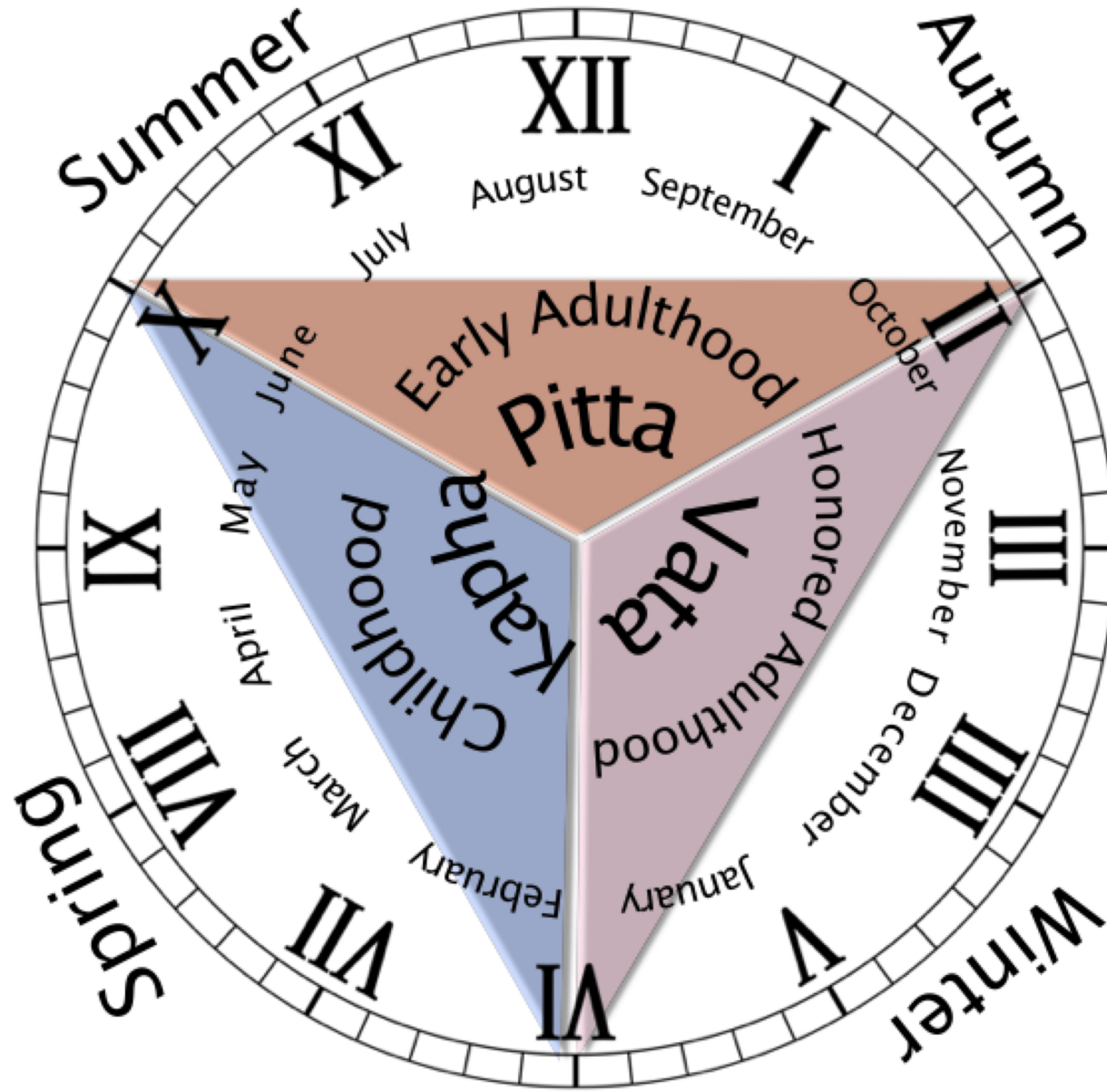
Fire (*agni*): hot, sharp, clear, fine, light, dry

Water (*ap*): cool, smooth, fluid, soft, liquid, oily, slimy, agile, heavy

Earth (*prithvi*): heavy, stable, dense, hard, course, rough, solid, compact, slow

1. **VATA:** The combination of space and air together form vata. Its primary characteristic is movement. Therefore, vata is regarded as the energy that governs processes in the human body which involve movement. These include nerve impulses, the circulation of blood, respiration and excretion. Vata is increased in fall and early winter, and as you age.
2. **PITTA:** The elements of fire and water form the Ayurveda bio-energy called pitta. The pitta dosha is important primarily for all digestive and heating processes in the body. This applies to the processes in the organs and tissues as well as in the cellular structure. Pitta is increased in the late spring and summer months and in adulthood.
3. **KAPHA:** Finally, the third dosha is made up of the two elements water and earth. Kapha is primarily responsible for growth and structural increase. In the Ayurveda teachings, kapha also brings about cohesion and protection. Therefore, the kapha dosha is assigned to tissue and substances in the human body that have a protective function: your organs, for example. Kapha is most prevalent in your youth, in the late winter and during the spring.

As you cycle through the time of Kālī Moons, Nature will be transitioning from winter to spring—vata season to kapha season. This guide offers considerations and practices of Self-care to balance and restore your body and mind.



Self Care for January

“Restoration” will be the Ayurvedic theme for January, as you renew yourself in a way that prepares you for the coming Spring. When you relax with courage and curiosity in the darker places, you can rest into the potentiality of seed germination...that is, you can let go completely into the possibility of a new awakening. This month, you will attend to your physical body in a nurturing, nourishing way so that you can face the deep insights within you.

January is a time of transition from the dry, windy, cold *Vata* Season into the heavy, cold, wetness of *Kapha* Season. People with ample *kapha* (earth and water) in their constitution will begin to feel sluggish and stagnant...even possibly depressed. People with more *vata* (air and space) may begin to feel depleted from the preceding months of frenetic activity and busy celebration. Even people with a strong *pitta* (fire) may begin to feel noticeably less energy.

It is important to heed this seasonal call to your body and mind: REST!

Traditional Chinese Medicine holds that January should be the most *yin* and restorative time of the year, providing opportunity to rebuild psycho-spiritual strength as well as somatic tissues.

In the cold weather, your heart rate slows and capillaries restrict blood flow in an effort to conserve heat. Most of your blood is concentrated at your core to warm your vital organs. As a result, your thirst response is diminished, tricking your body into thinking it is hydrated when it is really not! Your breath and sweat evaporate quickly in the wind and cold leaving your skin and hair feeling brittle; your eyes and nose itchy and dry. Your kidneys are also susceptible to the cold. Hydration is an important consideration for staying healthy all winter.

Self Care Objectives for January



Hydrate from within.
Moisturize dry skin.
Increase circulation.
SLEEP!

- Begin each day with the morning ritual: oil pulling, ashwagandha, warm water.
- Practice the Warrior Vinyasa with mindful, rhythmic movement.
- Fuel up with a restorative breakfast.
- Get outside during the height of the sun.
- Make lunch your largest meal of the day.
- Eat an early dinner (before the sun goes down.)
- Enjoy an evening *abhyanga* (self massage) for moisture and circulation.
- Go to bed by 10:00 pm and wake up with the sun.



Asana

Standing and leg balancing poses are grounding and strengthening as they heat your whole body by warming up your leg muscles. Increase your body's blood circulation with methodical and mindful movements. Begin your morning with the Warrior Vinyasa.



Diet

Every body is different. What keeps you balanced will depend on your unique dosha combination of vata, kapha, and pitta. Digestion, however, is generally stronger in the winter. Experiment with hearty meals that balance both kapha and vata doshas.

Favor warm, slightly oily, well-spiced foods. Focus on pungent, bitter, and astringent tastes balanced with slightly sweet and sour flavors. Cook light grains such as brown rice, quinoa, and buckwheat. Make broth soups with bitter root vegetables such as turnips, rutabaga, or parsnips. These lighter roots are warming and they introduce your body to the natural cleanse cycle of February and March. Enjoy fermented foods and spicy sipping shrubs, as well as citrus fruits.



Abhyanga

Your skin is your largest organ and thrives on nurturing touch. We would die within hours if our skin stopped doing its job of regulation, protection, and sensation. When you nourish skin tissue you balance all the systems of your body: circulatory, nervous, reproductive, lymphatic...

Ayurveda recommends *abhyanga* (self-massage) for holistic wellness. It offers specific *marmas* (energetic points like acupressure points), and herbal oil blends for each season.



Asana for January

Warrior Vinyasa

Krishnamacharya's Warrior Vinyasa is a strengthening practice that invites courage, coordination, and stability to your body and mind.

You can find it in the work:

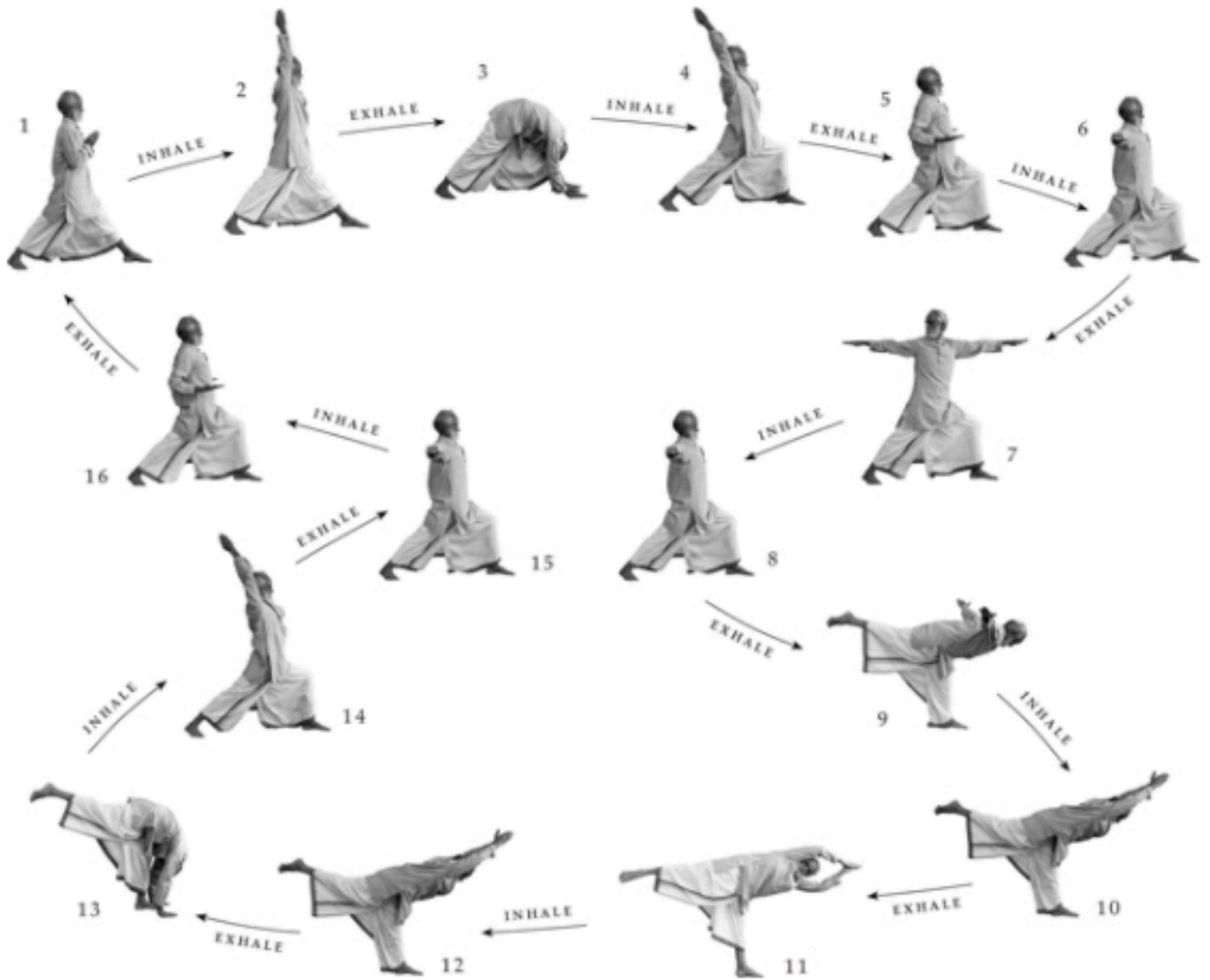
Krishnamacharya, His Life and Teachings by A.G. Mohan
on page 156

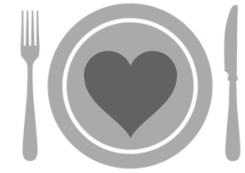
Krishnamacharya was the original yoga teacher behind
so many of the Western world's yoga practices today:
Iyengar, Ashtanga, Vinyasa...

This sequence was one of the beloved teacher's favorite practices.
It centers around the warrior pose (virabhadrasana) and its variations.

Move through this practice first thing in the morning.
Begin very slowly and gradually build to a moderate pace.
Remain mindful and breathe deeply throughout the entire practice.
Coordinate your breath with the movements.

End with a restorative seated meditation or short *savāsana* (corpse pose)





Week ONE: Detox for Restoration

I hope you had an amazing holiday season! If your holidays are anything like mine, they include foods that, although are certainly fun and flavorful, fall outside the traditional category of “health-full.” (Examples from my week: cut-out cookies, rich cheeses, and martinis!!) Mindless and excessive grazing, combined with the hustle and bustle of celebration preparation, can take a toll on your overall well-being. You may begin to feel an imbalance of vata (as anxiety or depletion), and/or kapha (as congestion and depression). Use this post holiday week to detox—hydrate, replenish essential nutrients, and refresh your taste buds.

POST-HOLIDAY DETOX SOUP

Begin with 4 cups fresh **vegetable stock**.

Add seasonal veggies (sautéd to release flavor): **1 cup chopped green beans, 1 cup diced yellow squash, 1/2 cup diced onion, 1/4 cup minced celery, 1/4 cup chopped leeks, 1/2 cup diced sweet potato.**

...and spices: **2 Tbsp finely chopped parsley, 2 tsp. turmeric, 1tsp. cardamom, 1 tsp. coriander, 1/4 tsp. cumin, 1 Tbsp. lemon juice, black pepper** and (very little) **sea salt**, to taste.

Cover and stew for 30-40 minutes.





Week ONE: Foot Abhyanga

Reflexology points in your feet connect to nerves throughout your body. Foot massage increases circulation and provides stimulation to your entire energy system.

OIL RECIPE

Shea butter, neem oil, essential oils of lavender, juniper, & lemon

Shea butter is tri-doshic, deeply moisturizing and rich in vitamins A and E. Neem oil and the essential oils are used for their anti-fungal properties and balancing scent.

MARMA POINTS

1. *Kurchashira*: This point, just above your heel, releases tension in your feet, legs, knees, pelvis, and back.
2. *Talahridaya* (the heart of the foot): With your thumb, massage the center point in the arch of your foot. This point is good for your heart and circulatory system. It balances vata.
3. *Kshipra* ("the quick"): Rub the web between your big toe and second toe. This point relieves tension and stress.

Deeply massage the joints of each toe and gently pull them from the base to the tips. Each toe corresponds to a major organ.





Week TWO: Breakfast

Fuel up with a satisfying breakfast every day this week.

6:00-10:00 a.m. is kapha time meaning you may feel heavier and more sluggish at this in the morning...especially during kapha season which will begin as the outdoor scene becomes soggy. January straddles vata and kapha seasons, making eggs a good breakfast choice for the month. Egg whites provide bio-accessible protein to energize kapha and the yolk balances vata. Try this warming breakfast to support both a sense of grounded comfort and energy for the day.

BREAKFAST PROTEIN BOWL (Serves 2)

Thoroughly soak and cook **1/4 cup black beans**.

Sauté **1/8 cup white onion**, and **2 Tbs minced green chilies** (or according to preference) with a **dash of cumin, sea salt, and black pepper**

Mix everything above with **1 cup steamed quinoa**..

Top with:

a soft-boiled egg,

chopped avocado

1/8 cup chopped cilantro

and a dollop of **plain yogurt**



Week TWO: Leg Abhyanga



The calf has been called the secondary heart, because active leg muscles help pump blood back up to your heart. Exercise and leg abhyanga help to improve circulation for your entire body. Examples of essential oils that may assist in circulatory stimulation: ginger, cypress, black pepper, rosemary, wintergreen, coriander, frankincense, and geranium.

OIL RECIPE

Geranium, cypress, and black pepper essential oils in warmed Jojoba oil. Jojoba oil comes from a hearty evergreen shrub that can survive the harshest conditions. It is tri-doshic and anti-inflammatory; and because it is similar in structure to our body's natural oils, it is a deeply moisturizing choice for vata/kapha season.

Wrap your hands around your ankle joint, massaging in a clockwise motion. Using both hands, massage each leg, up and down, from ankle to knee. Knead your calf muscles.

MARMA POINTS

1. *Jānu* (knee joint): With your palms, massage clockwise around your *patella* (knee-cap) and gently massage behind your knee joint, using a circular motion.
2. *Ani* ("the point of a needle"): This marma point is located about 2 inches (or three finger widths) above the *jānu* and slightly lateral of the midline. It is a tender point at your quadriceps. Gently massage this point to reduce inflammation and increase circulation.
3. *Urvi* (the middle thigh): Rub the area just medial to the center line of your middle thigh. Use a strong circular motion to increase circulation and eliminates excess fluid retention.



3

2

1

Week THREE: Lunch



Focus on making lunch the largest meal of your day.

10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. is pitta time when fiery energies are at their peak. Get outside midday to enjoy connection with nature and to get some gentle exercise (an important key to staying balanced in the winter). Follow your activity with a nourishing lunch. Drink water 30 minutes before and after meals (avoid drinking while you eat) to maintain a healthy digestive fire.

Kitchari is the Ayurvedic “go-to” for promoting healthy digestion which leads to the elimination of excess *ama* (toxins). ie: more detoxification! The combination of rice and beans makes a complete protein and provides enough nutrients to sustain an easy-going and restorative winter afternoon. The spices are anti-inflammatory and help lead to healthy *agni* (digestive fire). For a powerful Ayurvedic cleanse, enjoy kitchari (along with ginger tea) at every meal for several days.

WINTER KITCHARI WITH CILANTRO

Serves 4

Rinse and Soak **1 cup basmati rice** and **1 cup split mung beans** (these are easy to digest).

Boil in 6 cups water, then reduce heat and simmer until cooked (about 20 min.). Mix in **1/2 Tbsp fresh grated ginger, 1 tsp. turmeric, 1 tsp. cumin, 1/2 tsp coriander, 1/2 tsp cloves, 1/4 tsp. cinnamon, 1/2 tsp. black pepper. 1/2 tsp Himalayan pink salt.** Add **vegetable stock** as needed to maintain moisture.

Serve with ***cilantro lime yogurt**

For cilantro lime yogurt, mix 1/4 c. plain Greek yogurt, with 2 Tbsp. diced cilantro, and a large squeeze of fresh lime juice.



Week THREE: Sacrum Massage



Massaging your sacrum helps to balance vata and kapha. Apply deep, circular strokes, using your fingertips, fists, or palms. Use sesame oil if you are feeling more anxious (vata provoked) or almond oil if you have been feeling sluggish (kapha imbalanced). The following essential oils will increase the abhyanga benefits to your circulatory and lymphatic systems preventing fluid stagnancy.

OIL RECIPE

In 1 oz. warmed sesame or almond oil:

10 drops rosemary e.o.

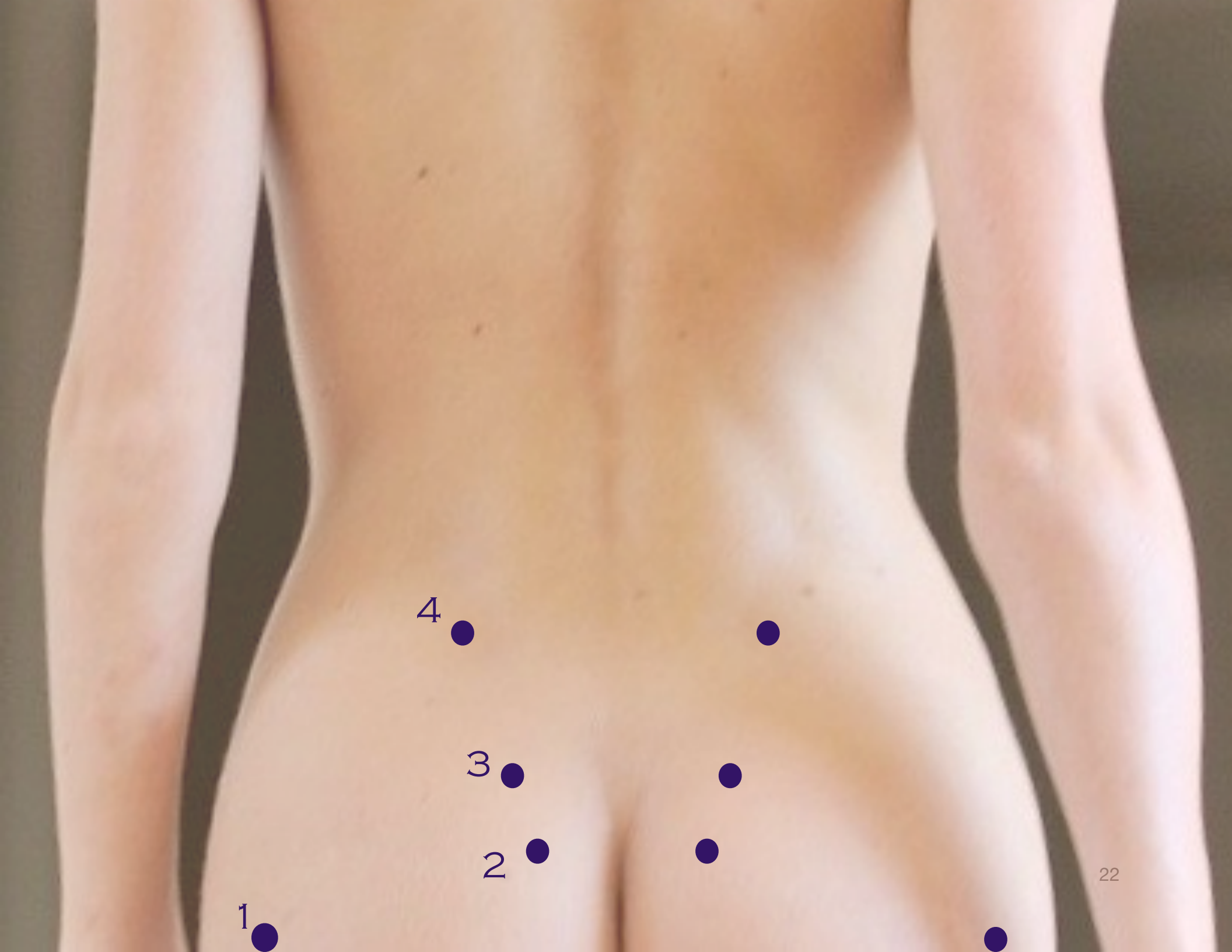
5 drops peppermint

5 drops lemon

MARMA POINTS

1. *Katikataruna* (what rises from the hip): is often a tender point between the greater trochanter (prominent hip bone) and the ischial tuberosity (sitz bone). Massage in a wide, circular motion with your knuckles or the palm of your hand. This relieves excess vata and moves fluids.
2. *Nitamba*: When massaged, this point helps to increase blood flow throughout your body.
3. *Kukundara*: This point helps with lymphatic drainage and balances kapha dosha.
4. *Parshwa Sandhi*: Another stimulant for the lymphatic system, massage this point to improve immunity.

Enjoy this abhyanga for three to five minutes at each point to activate your systems and stimulate movement.



1

2

3

4

22



Week FOUR: Dinner

Establish a habit of eating a much lighter dinner before the sun goes down. This will help to ensure complete digestion and restful sleep. I HEART soups in the winter. The Post-Holiday Detox Soup from Week One is a good evening option. Another to try:

CARROT SOUP WITH SPICY CHICK PEAS

Heat oven to 425F and roast **1 1/2 lb. chopped carrots** with **1 large, diced, yellow onion, 2 minced cloves of garlic, 1 Tbs. grated fresh ginger, 1/2 tsp. turmeric, 1/4 tsp. nutmeg, 1/4 tsp cayenne, 1 tsp. sea salt,** in **6 cups vegetable broth** until soft (about 40 mins). Puree together in a high speed blender and then place on low heat to gently simmer.

Toss **1 cup cooked chickpeas** (garbanzo beans) with **1 Tbs. ghee, 1/4 tsp. sea salt, 1/4 tsp. cumin, 1/8 tsp. cayenne, 1/4 teas. garlic powder** and roast for 20-35 minutes at 350° (stirring occasionally until the chickpeas are lightly brown and crispy).

Garnish the soup with the crispy chickpeas (I can't get enough of these), a tiny squeeze of fresh lemon, and a swirl of plain yogurt.



Week FOUR: Belly Massage



Abdominal massage is beneficial for increasing circulation and improving digestion, and toning your abdomen. It is warming in the morning and calming in the evening. If you do not reserve time for both morning and evening abhyanga, allow your dosha balance to decide which time to practice self-massage. If you have been feeling the effects of Vata's wind and space as anxiety and "busy-ness," use abhyanga to relax you before bed. If, however, you are beginning to feel the weight of Kapha's muddy lull, you may want to use a vigorous massage to wake you up in the morning.

OIL RECIPE

In 1 oz. castor oil (warmed)

10 drops cypress

10 drops grapefruit

10 drops lemon

MARMA POINTS

1. *Nabhi* (navel): Pour the massage oil directly onto your belly button, then gently massage your nabhi in a clockwise circle. Use all four fingers with gentle, but firm, pressure. Then use your palm to widen your massage area with slow concentric circles, until you have massaged your entire abdomen in a clockwise motion. Use slightly more pressure at your diaphragm, or the space nestled beneath your ribcage. Use slightly less pressure at the sensitive area above your pubic bone. Then slowly make the circles smaller until you are back to the point of your navel. Repeat this several times to activate movement and increase circulation. Use plenty of warm oil, then place a very warm towel over your abdomen. Relax and breathe. Allow your belly to rise and fall with each breath to receive an internal massage.



Week FIVE: Drink!



While hot teas (especially boiled fresh ginger with a dollop of honey) are my go-to drinks in the winter months, I occasionally want to drink something cooler...something fresh and festive like a cocktail. Alcoholic drinks are considered depressants, meaning they lower neurotransmission levels and reduce functional activity. Some people find the sedating effect of a glass of wine or beer, for instance, to be useful at the end of the day—to help relax and unwind. The depressive effects of alcohol, however, are not ultimately helpful during kapha season, when there is already an increased tendency toward lethargy and depression (for a statement regarding the correlation between alcohol and depression see [WEB MD](#)).

Since my partner and I stopped using alcohol, we have realized the **many** benefits of letting that habit go... and we have become slightly obsessed with making shrubs, an alternative “addiction” that is both fun and healthy. There will be more shrub recipes in the late spring and early summer (apple cider vinegar is Pitta balancing!) This particular shrub is great for Kapha season because it uses Kapha-pacifying persimmons, the heating properties of jalepeños and honey in organic rice vinegar, which boosts both energy and digestion.

WINTER SHRUB

Over medium/low heat, warm **2 cups rice vinegar** with **1/2 cup honey**.

Add the fruit of **6 persimmons** (chopped) and **1 Tbs. diced jalepeños**. Simmer on low for about an hour.

Store in the refrigerator for at least 2 days to develop the flavor.

To serve, use a cocktail shaker to strain your shrub. Sip it warm, or dilute your shrub with sparkling water for a festive toast.



Week FIVE: Chest Rub



The marma points in your chest correspond to the third, fourth, and fifth chakras, which we have been exploring as the gates to our emotions, expression, and communication. Marma massage helps to release stagnant emotional energy. If, while during abhyanga, you feel strong emotions well up; honor your feelings. Stay with it. Breathe. This, too, shall pass.

OIL RECIPE

In 1 oz. warm sesame and mustard oil (warmed)

10 drops palo santo

10 drops eucalyptus

5 drops lemon

MARMA POINTS

1. *Agrapata*: Find this marma at the level of your solar plexus, four to five inches above your nabhi. Using a moderately deep touch, massage this point in a clockwise direction.
2. *Apastambha*: Find this point just slightly lower than the nipple line of your chest, where your ribs meet your sternum. Massage this area to reduce kapha as mucus congestion.
3. *Hridaya (heart)*: Rest your palm on your heart, slightly left to the center of your chest. Use your palm to gently massage this marma in a broad, clockwise motion.
4. *Apalapa (unguarded)*: This point can be found at the hollow point nestled between your pectoralis minor and anterior deltoid, just beneath your clavicle. Use gentle pressure to massage this tender point.
5. *Neela*: Find the notch at the top of your sternum. Gently massage this point gently, but liberally, with your middle finger.

Breathe deeply, relaxing your belly and jaw, throughout your entire self massage treatment.



● 5

● 4

○ 3

● 2

● 1