

Ayurveda, the comprehensive science of wellbeing.

What is Ayurveda? Directly translated means 'The Science of Life' It's one of the oldest forms of healing the world has known with its origins dating back seven thousand years, yet is still relatively unknown in the UK. Ayurveda is a system of medicine and a philosophy for living in harmony with nature. It is one of India's most profound health practices and is as important today here in the UK as it is in its country of origin. In fact there are many critical elements that make Ayurveda more relevant to Western society at this point in time than ever before.

Why? In this technological age we see increasing evidence of downsizing and restructuring in industry, rising stress levels on workers who take on the jobs of three people, the speed of today's society seems to have increased whilst our transport systems have slowed down, national health waiting list create anxiety in the sick - the list goes on and on. These stresses and distractions have made us loose touch with the most important aspects of life. In the steady acceleration of our ways of living we have forgotten how to be aware, how to respond with intuition to our surroundings and how to take care of ourselves. We have lost touch with the natural rhythms and cycles of nature and with the creative act of living in harmony with these elements.

Even our cities, crowded and polluted as they are, have, through their own natural surroundings, systems for cleansing and spiritual renewal. Rivers, sea and wind continually refresh our urban environments. This concept of balancing factors, of the potential for renewal informs Ayurvedic teachings in a profound way.

How does Ayurveda help us to achieve health? Ayurveda is a science of preventative health and healing and a philosophy for living. Ayurveda cures not by treating the symptoms but by removing the cause of disease and by balancing the physical and spiritual elements of our lives. The principle is one of balance as an individual, as one whose emotional life, whose intake of food, whose output of energy and whose attention to the daily act of living is also extended to take in the wider concept of a balanced universe.

What is it like to live an Ayurvedic lifestyle? Ayurveda traces the roots of our illness to our responses to encounters in our lives. Achieving physical and spiritual health are prime goals for which Ayurveda provides specific Sadhanas – sacred everyday practices that develop our awareness and capacity for living in harmony with Self and Nature.

So how do we go about developing this awareness? We can begin by working on our senses of touch, hearing, sight, taste and smell and upon our sense of spirituality. We can first of all notice the silences that we usually ignore. We might have to work hard on this, but they are there; we can listen to the crackle and rustle of food as we work with it; we can look at its colour and texture; we can stop and smell the spices and herbs that we use; we can slow down the way we receive and eat our food and savour every bite; we can notice when we get goose-bumps at the sound of certain music; we can ensure that enough hugs are given, especially to ourselves; we can see, smell and touch the petals and leaves; we can pay attention to natural elements, sight and colours; we can touch our partners, children, pets and ourselves with greater care and awareness; we can ensure that we see more of the natural world.

What does this really mean to me? It means identifying your metabolic type (dosha) and then living in accord with your needs. Within Ayurveda there are three main dosha (metabolic types) and they are Vata, Pitta and Kapha. Once we understand more about our dosha, we can pay more attention to those things that actually benefit us on a daily basis. We begin by recognising where our discomforts come from. Most of us become imbalanced as a result of factors in our lifestyle. Everything from diet, breath, exercise and environmental factors can create balance or imbalance within our dosha. We use Ayurveda to correct these imbalances and to bring back the elements that are critical to our wellbeing. Nutrition plays an important part in regaining our health and well being, understanding and becoming aware of the types of food, herbs and spices that are most beneficial to our body types is one of the first steps in Ayurvedic teachings.

Are there simple daily practices that I could follow? When we learn about ourselves and understand our body types we become aware of how important we are and simple key daily practices become caring activities that bring us pleasure and well being. These practices help to develop a growing sense of self worth which improve relationships with all around us

- Practicing nutritional knowledge will improve our skin, balance weight problems, and improve energy levels.
- Breath work will create balance, calmness and vitality.
- A daily Ayurvedic cleansing routine will increase awareness through all the senses helping us to feel more alert.
- Movement will help stamina and suppleness and the ancient knowledge of sound helps to express ourselves in positive and meaningful ways.
- Learning the art of meditation can reduce stress levels significantly.
- Being mindful throughout the day enables us to pay attention to our bodies requirements.
- Paying attention to the times of day and the seasons of the year help us to understand our physical and emotion changes.
- Being mindful of our self includes the kind of music we might listen to, the fabrics we choose to wear, the fragrances that help to balance our moods and all of the things that bring real pleasure.

Ayurveda draws our attention to all aspects of daily living, helping us to live a more balanced and stress free life.

How do I learn more about Ayurveda? Linda Bretherton, a powerful and charismatic teacher and healer leads Wise Earth Ayurveda programmes at the Wise Earth School UK in Cheshire. She offers introductory workshops and longer programmes including Practitioner training. Supported by Jim Whitham, her business partner, she offers the opportunity for talks, seminars and discussions that help develop health awareness for individuals, groups and organizations. These can lead to detailed daily programmes for participants to follow

Typical cost of workshops

For groups and organizations we offer the following prices:

One day workshop – 10 – 4 pm @ £ 350

Half day workshop – 1 – 4 pm @ £ 200

Hourly rate - @ £75 per hour