

Daily Self-Massage

Did you know that the word Ayurveda uses for oil (snehana) is the same as the word for love? Ayurveda is all about the oil, and the love.

Combine the two with daily self-massage (abhyanga), a great way to love your body, and quite literally, the skin you're in.

This simple practice is nourishing as well as cleansing. It balances and relaxes the nervous system, supports lymphatic and circulatory flow, and restores a sense of peace and harmony.

Instructions:

Choose an oil to love yourself with. Sesame oil, cold-pressed and then refined, is prized for its anti-fungal and anti-viral properties as well as for its ability to balance Vata dosha. This is the oil most commonly recommended for abhyanga. Other oils can be used as well. Even olive oil can be used - especially if you run out of your regular massage oil - you can raid your pantry!

Big Love

Ideally, warm your oil by placing the bottle in some hot water; the bathroom sink is easy. Make sure your bathroom is warm and comfortable. It's nice to have a place to sit, like the edge of the tub, a little bench in the shower or even the toilet. Start by massaging your head, with oil is wonderful but dry is fine if you prefer.

Move on to your body, remembering that you are communicating love to your whole body through your strokes. There is no way to go wrong here, in general use circular strokes on your joints and long strokes on the bones, stroking towards the heart. Massage slow clockwise circles on your abdomen to facilitate digestion and elimination. Massage around your breasts encourages the flow of lymph here. Spend extra time on your hands and feet. Spend as much time as you can massaging, and loving, your body.

Draw a comfortably warm bath or start the shower. The heat and steam from the bath or shower will help to open your pores and make the most of the healing qualities of the oil. Wash your hair, but don't use soap on your body, instead allow the thin film of oil that will remain to insulate and protect your body throughout the rest of the day. Pat dry.

Daily Love

Of course you may have time for big love and a long massage every day, but if not you can get many of the benefits through an abbreviated version. While you are in the shower, simply massage your whole body with oil. Use the same kind of strokes - circles on the joints and long strokes on the bones, and attention to the abdomen and torso as well as the feet. This doesn't need to take much time at all, but take as much as you can.

Practical Notes

Keep your shower or bath free of oil residue by cleaning regularly with plain baking soda. This works the best and best of all - no toxic chemicals to breath or leave behind residue! Occasionally follow with a little white vinegar down the drain to keep it running clear.

Keep your towels fresh by using a little extra soap and washing and rinsing with warm water. Borax, Arm & Hammer washing powder, OxyClean or even dishwasher detergent (the best!) can be added to really cut any oil build up.