

Ayurveda Foundations

The Basics Every Massage
Therapist Needs

BY KRIS QUINONES, LMT, AHC, EYT₅₀₀

www.rasa-yana.com



Scope of Practice & Ethical Use

This course presents Ayurveda as a **functional assessment and educational framework**, not as a diagnostic or prescriptive medical system. Massage therapists are not trained or authorized to diagnose disease, prescribe treatment, or replace medical care. All Ayurvedic concepts taught in this course are applied ethically within the scope of massage therapy: to inform session planning, support client education, and improve therapeutic outcomes.

Students are encouraged to use observation, pattern recognition, and client communication, not diagnosis or medical claims. When appropriate, referral to licensed medical providers is emphasized. This approach ensures that Ayurveda is integrated responsibly, safely, and professionally into modern massage practice.

WHAT IS Ayurveda [ai·yr·vay·duh]



An Early Systems Biology Approach to Human Function

Ayurveda is both a traditional medical system of India and a modern-day operating manual, for how to achieve natural healing, longevity, and radiant vitality. **Ayus** (Life) + **Veda** (Wisdom) comes from ancient texts referred to as the Vedas dating back to 2200 ad.

These four texts offer guidelines and instructions for every aspect of daily life including: medical science (Atharva Veda), martial arts (Yajur Veda), architecture and sculpture (Rg Veda), music, dance and fine art (Sama Veda). The ancient physicians (*vaidyas*) and yogis used these simple guidelines and practices about the rules and rhythms of nature to not only heal the sick, but to also keep the healthy person healthy.

At its core, it is a system for understanding how the body maintains balance and how it loses it. Ayurveda looks at **systems behavior**: digestion,

WHAT IS Ayurveda [ai·yr·vay·duh]



A Functional Medicine Model Applied to Manual Therapy

metabolism, circulation, elimination, nervous system tone, sleep, inflammation, and tissue repair. These are assessed through observable signs: temperature, moisture, density, mobility, fatigue patterns, pain quality, and recovery capacity. For Western-trained therapists, this will feel less like “complementary medicine” and more like an early, low-tech model of systems biology.

Ayurveda works best when approached as a clinical framework, not a belief system. You don’t need to “believe” in Ayurveda for it to be useful—you need to test it. When applied pragmatically, it improves clinical reasoning, sharpens assessment, and increases consistency in outcomes. That’s why it has survived thousands of years—and why it integrates surprisingly well with modern massage therapy and movement science.

The Definition of Health

The definition of health according to Ayurveda, includes our ability to experience one's natural state. Called *svastha*, it is the seat of the centered self. Calm, clear, and assured – to be rooted in self – is to be undeniably and authentically your truest self. It refers to the aspect of yourself that is unquestioningly stable and pure.

From its eight limbs (psychology, pediatrics, aphrodisiacs, toxicology, internal medicine, otolaryngology, and rejuvenation / geriatrics), massage falls into the rejuvenation category.

The two systems integrate seamlessly because it speaks the same language of tissues, fluids, fascia, and regulation—just from a different angle. It does not replace orthopedic knowledge, myofascial techniques, or anatomy; it contextualizes them. Ayurveda does not ask massage therapists to abandon anatomy, biomechanics, or evidence-based reasoning. It helps explain why textbook-perfect techniques don't always produce textbook-perfect results. It bridges what you feel under your hands with what's happening systemically in the client's life.

***Samadosa samagni ca sama dhatu malakriyah /
Prasanna atma indriya manah svastha iti abhidhiyate //***
- (Sushruta, ca. 600 BCE/2006, *Sutrasthana 15:41*)

One who is established in Self, who has balanced dosas (primary life force), balanced agni (fire of digestion), properly formed dhatus (tissues), proper elimination of malas (waste products), well-functioning bodily processes, and whose mind, soul and sense are full of bliss is healthy.

Ayurvedic anatomy study often begins with the theory of **Tridosha**. These (3) three universal energies are made in unique combination from five essential elements: ether (space), air, fire, water, earth. Rather than treating symptoms in isolation, Ayurveda assesses patterns. These patterns are described through the **doshas** (Vata, Pitta, Kapha), which reflect how movement, transformation, and structure express themselves in a person's body and mind. This is not personality typing and it is not metaphysical guesswork.

Vata – ‘That Which moves’, Pitta - ‘that which transforms’, and Kapha - ‘that which protects’

It is a clinical lens for observing tissue quality, nervous system tone, digestive strength, inflammation, hydration, recovery capacity, and stress adaptation. When a massage therapist understands Ayurveda, their hands become more intelligent: pressure choices are clearer, session pacing improves, oil and heat make more sense, and clients feel met rather than “worked on.”



Key Dosha Concepts

Vata [VAH-tah] | AIR + SPACE

1. Made from Air and Space elements, it is the only dosha with mobility, responsible for movement and balances of all forces, fluids, food, and mental activities in the body. Think of it as the body's currents.

Although located anatomically throughout the body, Vata has an affinity for and naturally concentrates in the colon, low back, thighs, pelvis, diaphragm, belly button, head (sinus & ears), and throat.

Its qualities are: mobile, light, cold, dry, rough, clear, and subtle. Ayurveda's oiling effect on the body creates a grounding and calming effect on the nervous system and Vata's variable tension and pain patterns. Its sub-types are: Prana, Udana, Samana, Viyana, Apana; each responsible for governing intelligence in sensory info, nerve impulses, and communication between other bodily systems .

Warmed, sesame oil is the most commonly used oil to work with for Vata-dominant presentations as it generally supports relaxation and circulation. Favor slower tempos & firm pressure.

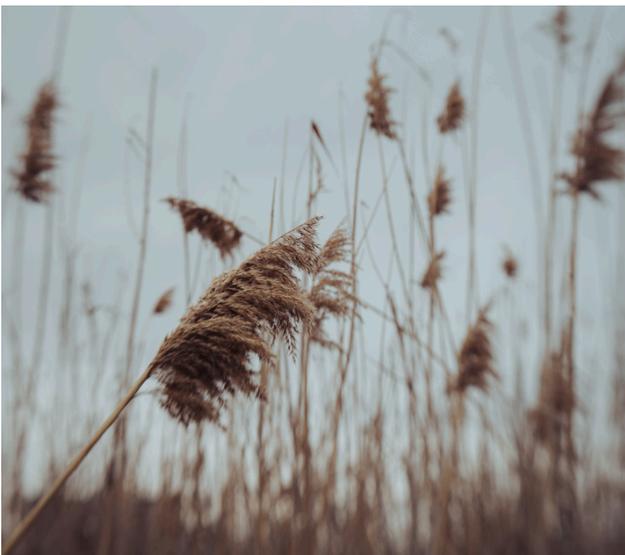


What Vata Looks Like

Naturally dominant in late Fall/Winter, between the hours of 2-6 am/pm, and over 60 years of age.

IN BALANCE

- Good circulation
- Regular elimination
- Flexible and creative nature
- Expansive Ideas and Inspiring



OUT OF BALANCE

- Bloating, gas, constipation
- Dry or cracked skin, nails
- Sleep interruptions
- Anxiety and PAIN, often variable
- Clicking or stiff joints

PITTA [PIT-ah] | FIRE + WATER

2. Made from Fire and Water elements, this dosha is responsible for digestion, body temperature, and eyesight. Also meaning austerity and concentration, its qualities are: hot, sharp, oil, light, fluid, liquid, and foul-smelling.

Although located anatomically throughout the body, Pitta's primary location is the stomach and small intestine, in the form of digestive enzymes like hydrochloric acid and pepsin.

Its transformative power allows us luster and glow. It converts our food into fuel allowing taste and flavor. It cooks our experiences into wisdom. Its sub-types are: Pachaka, Ranjaka, Sadhaka, Alochaka, and Bhrajaka, governing other aspects of cognition, concentration, insight, and a sense of purpose.

A room-temp or gently warmed neutral or cooling substance like almond or coconut oil are most commonly to work with for Pitta-dominant presentations. Favor a moderate tempo and firm pressure. Avoid jostling, minimize heat and trigger point work. There's enough intensity. Bring more soft and cool energies.



What Pitta Looks Like

Naturally dominant in Summer, between the hours of 10-2 am/pm, and from puberty to age 60+.

IN BALANCE

- Sharper muscle tone
- Strong digestion
- Strong cognition and intuition
- Skin luster, olive skin tone



OUT OF BALANCE

- Loose stools, ulcers
- Acid indigestion, GERD
- Skin irritations, hot/red skin
- Anger or jealousy
- Burning sensations, sharp pain

KAPHA [KUP-ah] | EARTH + WATER

3. Made from Earth and Water elements, this dosha is responsible for our stability and the body's ability to protect.

Although located anatomically throughout the body, Kapha's primary locations are in the chest, lungs, muscles, bones, sheaths, and protective mucus or fluids in the body like synovial joint, lymphatic or cerebrospinal fluid.

Its stable nature and water content allow immune strength with biochemical reactions in the body, transporting nutrients and waste via lymph and plasma. Its sub-types are: Avalambaka, Kledaka, Bodhaka, Tarpaka, and Slesaka - impacting the nourishment of all tissues, doshas, and overall immunity.

A warmed, lighter substance like almond oil or 1:1 ratio of sesame mixed with almond, are most commonly used to work with for Kapha-dominant presentations. Favor a brisk tempo, jostling, a lighter application of oil. You want more friction, movement and heat to circulate its heavy, slow, dull nature.



What Kapha Looks Like

Naturally dominant in Spring, between the hours of 6-10 am/pm, and up to puberty.

IN BALANCE

- Contentedness
- Smooth skin
- Strong memories
- Emotional stability + stamina



OUT OF BALANCE

- Weight gain
- Edema
- Cold, clammy skin
- Depression, lethargy
- Lipomas, cysts, fibrosis

Touch is not a luxury or an indulgence; it is a primary language through which the nervous system learns safety, connection, and regulation.

Touch as the First Sense

Touch is the earliest sense to develop and remains one of the primary ways the nervous system evaluates safety throughout life. Before language or conscious thought, tactile input shapes how the body organizes itself in response to the world. This early primacy explains why touch can influence regulation, stress response, and emotional state without requiring cognitive understanding.

From an Ayurvedic perspective, touch is the first way prana is received and organized in the body. It establishes the nervous system's baseline relationship to safety, nourishment, and connection. For massage therapists, this means touch communicates directly with the body's regulatory intelligence, often bypassing mental narratives and working at the level where habits and patterns are formed.

Skin as an Intelligent Organ

The skin is not merely a surface to be manipulated; it is an intelligent organ deeply connected to the nervous, endocrine, and immune systems. Its vast network of sensory receptors continuously gathers information about pressure, temperature, and movement, shaping muscle tone, posture, and physiological state.

The quality of contact influences how prana moves and how nourishment is received. This invites therapists to consider not only where they touch, but how.

In Ayurveda, the skin is a site of exchange between the internal environment and external world. The quality of contact influences how prana moves and how nourishment is received. This invites therapists to consider not only where they touch, but **how**. The skin responds to clarity, warmth, and continuity, all of which support regulation at deeper levels.

Two Pathways of Touch

Touch is processed through different neurological pathways, each carrying distinct information. Fast-conducting A-beta fibers transmit signals related to pressure, vibration, and location, supporting proprioception and structural awareness. This pathway is often engaged through compression, broad pressure, and movement-based techniques.

Slower C-tactile fibers respond to gentle, warm, rhythmic touch and project to regions of the brain associated with emotion and interoception. This pathway resonates with the Ayurvedic understanding of *sneha* is not simply oil, but the quality of unhurried, nourishing contact. A common translation of the Sanskrit term is **love**. Slow, rhythmic touch communicates safety in a language the nervous system recognizes as supportive rather than corrective.

Therapeutic touch requires pacing, responsiveness, and respect for the body's timing in order to foster genuine regulation rather than forced relaxation.

Autonomic Regulation

Touch is one of the most direct, non-verbal ways to influence the autonomic nervous system. Skillful contact can support a shift out of sympathetic dominance and into parasympathetic regulation, influencing breath, digestion, muscle tone, and recovery. *These changes create the internal conditions necessary for healing rather than attempting to impose change from the outside.*

From an Ayurvedic lens, this shift reflects the settling of Vata dosha and the restoration of rhythmic function. However, touch does not automatically calm the system. For clients with chronic stress or long-standing imbalance, touch may initially increase activation.

This activation is not a failure of treatment but valuable information about the nervous system's current state. *Therapeutic touch requires pacing, responsiveness, and respect for the body's timing in order to foster genuine regulation rather than forced relaxation.*

The body responds to cues of safety, rhythm, and coherence more readily than to pressure or technique. In this way, touch functions as a conversation rather than an intervention.

Ojas is not built through intensity, but through consistency, safety, and appropriate care.

Ayurveda recognizes this as the intelligent movement of prana responding to appropriate stimulus. When touch is clear and attuned, the body reorganizes from within. The therapist's role is not to override the system, but to offer conditions that allow intrinsic regulation to emerge.

Hormonal and Emotional Effects

Therapeutic touch influences neurochemistry in ways that support both physical and emotional resilience. Attuned touch is associated with reduced stress hormones and increased neurochemicals related to bonding, mood, and repair. These shifts help explain why massage therapy can affect sleep, digestion, immunity, and emotional stability alongside pain relief.

In Ayurvedic terms, these effects reflect the nourishment of ojas, the body's reserve of vitality and resilience. *Ojas is not built through intensity, but through consistency, safety, and appropriate care.* Touch that is regulated and relational supports this deep level of nourishment.

Ayurveda views this internal awareness as a return to embodied intelligence. When clients can sense themselves clearly, they are better able to discern what supports balance and what depletes it. Touch becomes a way of restoring dialogue between sensation and self-awareness.

Touch becomes more than technique; it becomes a catalyst for restoring coherence across systems.

Touch as a Catalyst for Change

Over time, consistent, safe, and responsive touch can contribute to lasting changes in nervous system patterning. It can soften chronic guarding, recalibrate pain responses, and shift deeply held beliefs about the body's capacity to heal. These changes reflect neuroplastic adaptation rather than temporary symptom relief.

In Ayurvedic language, this is the gradual re-patterning of imbalance through repeated experiences of safety and nourishment. Touch becomes more than technique; it becomes a catalyst for restoring coherence across systems. When applied with skill and integrity, touch supports not only relief, but a renewed relationship with the body itself.

NOTES



STAYING IN YOUR SCOPE

Shamana vs. Shodhana Therapies

There are two major classifications of Ayurvedic bodywork where treatments are given to pacify the accumulation, aggravation, and dissemination of excess dosha. These are instances where tissue function or structure has been compromised or altered.

Pain conditions are more easily treated by Shamana therapies because the mind-body imbalances present are in the early, non-clinical stages of pathology, where tissue function is altered, but its structure is intact. Ayurveda's oil massages and heat therapies are the primary methods of Shamana therapies.

Oleation methods in traditional Ayurveda therapies may be external or internal.



Typical indications you'll encounter for shamana therapies share signs/symptoms of Vata and Pitta imbalances.

- DRY SKIN/BOWELS
- STIFF JOINTS
- HARD, DAILY EXERCISE
- PAIN
- INSOMNIA
- HEADACHES
- SLEEP DISORDERS

AYURVEDA'S 3-Fold Assessment

Trividha Pariksha, the 3-fold assessment is a way for you to gather information about the state of a client's doshas, digestive capacity to handle the treatment, toxicity level, immune strength, and psychological profile

1. Inspection (darsana)

2. Palpation (sparsana)

3. Questioning (prasna)

PULSE READING

Nadi Pariksha

The term 'nadi' refers to a channel or passageway through which something flows. According to Ayurveda the nature of the arterial pulse offers information on the state of the doshas. Its rate, rhythm, texture, and temperature are assessed – in the right wrist for men and in the left wrist for women.

VATA PULSE

- Moves like a snake
- Quick
- Subtle
- Irregular / Squiggly
- Cold



PITTA PULSE

- Moves like a frog
- Sharp / Strong
- Dynamic
- Warm
- Jumping

KAPHA PULSE

- Moves like a swan
- Slow
- Stable
- Cool / Smooth
- Floating

Pulse Log

Track the Ayurvedic pulse and doshic dance for insight into natural correction. Best taken in the AM on an empty stomach, but you can use it as a tool before/after treatment protocols, meals, before an important decision, or as part of a night hygiene and self-study practice.

Date & Time	Reading Prakrti/Vikrti	Notes

MIXED CONSTITUTIONS & ADAPTIVE DESIGNS

With such great emphasis placed on palpation (Sparshana) as one of the three primary diagnostic tools in Ayurveda, its massage uses a wide range of pressure to detect tissue dysfunction ranging from temperature to texture to elasticity.

As an experienced practitioner in manual therapy, one must have developed the patience and skill to detect muscle tension and fibrosis; identify swelling and inflammation; and locate tenderness and sensitivity.

Generally speaking, *abhyanga* in the United States is delivered as a loving and gentle lymphatic massage using light pressure and gliding strokes. Yet when I was traveling in India receiving *abhyanga* from several loving technicians, it was anything but gentle.



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MIXED CONSTITUTIONS & ADAPTIVE DESIGNS

Light to moderate taps, claps, or slaps were used to stimulate blood and lymph flow. My legs and arms were jostled akimbo by the technicians on each side. Deep circular or trans fiber friction at neuromuscular junctions - or at intersections of connective tissue - enhanced nerve conduction and proprioception. I noticed parallels with how abhyanga is traditionally performed in India and how therapeutic massage is performed in the U.S.

Ayurvedic Technique	Western Massage Parallel
Gliding and wringing	Effluerage and Petrissage, Myofascial release
Marma therapy	Neuromuscular, Trigger Point Therapy
Tapping, Slapping, Chopping, Jostling	Tapotement, Thera Gun, Sports massage

Ayurvedic Strokes & Western Parallels

Traditionally abhyanga is done in tandem with two therapists – one on each side of the client’s body – mirroring strokes. There is a decided “leader” and “follower” between the technicians though it should not be discernable in their strokes.

Indications/Benefits of Abhyanga

1. Feelings of calm and safety, relieving anxiety
2. Stiff achy joints become more pliable
3. Restorative sleep improves
4. Stimulation of antibody production, strengthening the immune system
5. Improved mental acuity and concentration
6. Improved skin conditions (psoriasis, eczema)
7. Increased stamina
8. Reduction in wrinkles and cellulite

Except for contraindications, an abhyanga treatment would be considered incomplete without the svedana portion. Modern heat/sauna therapies include steam rooms, dry saunas, and infrared. I use a steam canopy designed to fit over a massage table. It’s easy to clean and store.

Lightweight for travel and a low fire hazard regarding electricity demand. It works well. I prefer it over the seated, box-shaped versions of personal steam saunas because the client is laying down, offering more even circulation of lymph and reducing dizziness. Plus, the client doesn’t need to get up and move off the massage table. Classic Vedic texts describe several other approaches of heat/fomentation therapies.

Sankara refers to a bolus of hot pastes made from mixed herbs. Sometimes it is wrapped in cloth and sometimes it is applied directly to the treatment site. **Prastara** uses the heat produced from stones covered with pulses, porridge, or thick gruel and wrapped with banana leaves. The client lays on top of the stones and is then covered with more silk, wool, or leaves until they begin to sweat. **Nadi** is an ancient application that is perhaps a bit recognizable in modern times a la esthetician work. In this technique otherwise known as “kettle” fomentation, only a limited part of the body is treated with steam through a tube attached to a kettle boiling an herbal decoction.

Parisheka uses the pouring of various herbal formulas down onto the client’s body as a type of hot shower. It may come from a vessel with several holes poked in it or from a wad of cloth the technician repeatedly dunks into hot decoction then squeezes out over onto the client. Another traditional Ayurvedic bodywork rejuvenation treatment known as shirodhara, is an example of parisheka.

Avgahana is a form of svedana where the client is immersed in a bathtub of very warm milk, oil, ghee, or water. The **Jentaka** method reminds me of a Mayan temazcal I visited in 2007, where a special chamber/room is created and heated by the burning of an “oven”. In my case, it was a brick-domed hut with a pile of stones pulled from a large ceremonial fire in the center.

Ashmaghana brushes away the hot ashes from burning medicinal plants on a flat stone. Then the client is wrapped in linen and lays on the stone. **Karsha and Kupa** are applications where a trench dug in the ground is warmed from burning medicinal plants or cow dung.

The client lays down on a woven bed over the trench passing heat through the holes and is covered on top. **Kumbhi** is reminiscent of a modern-day yoni steam set up, with the client seated in a woven chair positioned over warm vapors.

These components to Ayurvedic bodywork therapies are not to be considered spa treatments or strictly for relaxation. While that is often a benefit, it is not the objective of these treatments. The objective is redirecting the overflow of dosha to where they belong in the GI tract and regulating the nervous system for elimination.

On occasion, I have had clients try to negotiate the svedana portion out of their sessions based on personal climate preferences or fear of enclosed spaces. Take time to modify where you can, but it is important to get them sweating for even a short period of time.

Non-thermal heat applications include exercise, layered clothing, sunbathing, and fasting among others. These are natural ways to sweat through the pores too.

Svedana is extremely beneficial in vata and kapha imbalances and aggravation.



Seasonal colds or cough

Asthma

Paralysis

Hemi/Para-plegia or altered sensation

Constipation or difficulty passing urine

Abdominal bloating

Stiff or painful joints

Anxiety

Svedana Guidelines & Cautions

Svedana (heat therapy) provides:

- 1.Expansion of the tissues and channels to provide improved flow
- 2.Liquification of stagnant mucus and lymph
- 3.Deeper penetration of botanical substances (and oil) into the tissues
- 4.Decreases Vata and Kapha imbalance
- 5.Detoxification via sweat glands

Usually, no complications or reactions occur from Svedana (heat) therapy, provided considerations were given to the nature of the imbalance and age, strength and constitution of the client. However, things can go wrong and svedana should always be done with supervision. Immediately after svedana, client should avoid extended exposure to air, sun and cold conditions. On the day of, they should take a simple and light diet, avoiding cold beverages and exercise.

Heat therapy may be done for the whole body except for the heart, eyes and reproductive organs. Avoid local direct steaming of these areas and provide coverings or local ice packs in these regions instead. Traditionally, an experienced Ayurvedic clinician may choose to administer mild fomentation to these regions when necessary - and only after covering them with cloth, towel, or paste of wheat flour or lotus leaves.

Fomentation is not recommended for children below four years of age.

Svedana

Svedana is not good for clients who:

1. Have aggravation of pitta dosha or uncontrolled high blood pressure
2. Eat excessively spicy, oily, or fried foods
3. Are thirsty, hungry, or angry
4. Have gout or cataracts
5. Suffer from diarrhea or diabetes mellitus

Signs of Adequate Fomentation

The main sign to judge whether the svedana is proper or not is the appearance of sweating. The symptoms of cold and pain will disappear. The client will recover from stiffness and heaviness of the body. The body becomes flexible, light and tender. If there's no sweating, it was inadequate fomentation.

Signs of Over Fomentation

Excess svedana creates an imbalance in pitta dosha creating thirst, burning sensation in whole body, excessive sweating, weakness or fainting. If such complications arise, follow the regimens of summer season, take a cool shower, drink coconut water, moon bathe.

NOTES



General Stroke Guidelines

Generally, the delivery of strokes used to support Vata imbalances can be described as using light or gentle pressure with a slower tempo as compared to its dosha counterparts. Using a 1:1 rhythm, where the stroke duration equals the duration of the drag back, works best to create a soothing energy. Your ability to relax your hand when going over bony prominences or body types produces a smooth quality to balance the rough and dry qualities of space and air elements.



The delivery of strokes generally used to support Pitta imbalances can be described as firm, with a “middle-of-the-road” tempo. The pressure of these strokes is necessary to ground down some of the lightness of the fire element. If strokes are performed too slowly or gently, it can agitate pitta imbalances with further lightness like a breeze kicking up a flame. The squeezing and wringing of tissues in petrissage are favored here.

Similar to pitta, kapha imbalances also benefit from strokes that favor firm, wringing and squeezing to move the static quality of the earth element. With kapha’s sticky quality, you’ll generally be able to utilize tapotement with taps, claps, and slaps delivered at quick tempo. But keep your hand relaxed so the slap doesn’t injure. Kapha imbalances also benefit from strokes using varied rhythms. Just be sure to mirror the same rhythm between left and right sides of the body. Too much variety can make the basic sequence feel disjointed or erratic.

Stroke Rhythms

1. 1:1 (stroke:drag back are equal)
2. 1, 2 (one hand initiates stroke, immediately followed by the hand)
3. 1:2 (single count stroke:double count drag-back)
4. 2:1 (double count of stroke:single count drag-back)



Ayurvedic Classification of Massage Oils

(+) increases dosha; (-) decreases dosha; (=) balances dosha

Sesame oil: V-P+K+ The oil of choice according to ancient ayurvedic books. This thick oil softens all skin types and is used in cases of rheumatism, arthritis, and as a tanning aid.

Sunflower oil: VPK= This light textured oil is easily absorbed and useful for all skin types. It can be used to treat leg ulcers and skin diseases, bruise, diaper rash and cradle cap.

Olive oil: V-PK+ This is a very heavy-duty, strong-smelling oil that is stable. Indicated in conditions such as acute rheumatic pain, sprains, bruises, hair and nail care, and cosmetics.

Coconut oil: V-P-K+ Refined coconut oil, sometimes referred to as fractionated coconut oil, is extremely compatible to human subcutaneous fat, making the absorption of essential oils delivered via this medium, superior to others. Because of its light nature, it does not clog pores or go rancid.

Ayurvedic Classification of Massage Oils (cont.)

Grapeseed oil: VPK= Excellent on all skin types, this light, odorless, penetrating oil has no allergic pathogens known. It is slightly astringent, tightens and tones the skin and does not aggravate acne. This is the carrier of choice for massage therapists who cannot afford fractionated coconut oil as a base.

Aloe Vera: VPK= Considered a medicinal oil, fresh aloe vera is the first choice of applications for burns, scalds, skin irritations,

abrasions. Generally used only for local applications.

Castor oil: V-P-K- Part of a naturopathic arsenal for time immemorial. This oil, when applied with heat, dissolves cysts, growths, warts, and cellulite. It helps soften corns and calluses. Often recommended as an abdominal pack. Also used to massage the body and feet to draw out excess heat and support eyesight.

Flax seed oil: V-P+K- When applied topically, is useful for oily skin, acne, psoriasis, and eczema. The high vitamin E content makes it useful to prevent scars or stretch marks. When taken orally, it is an estrogen precursor and is said to reduce cholesterol. This oil goes rancid very quickly and needs refrigeration.

Jojoba oil: V-P-K- Technically a liquid ester versus an 'oil', this substance is very similar to human sebum and its high penetration rate is very nourishing for the skin. Good for inflamed skin, psoriasis, eczema and any sort of dermatitis. Excess human sebum dissolves in jojoba so it can also help to control acne and oily skin or scalp. It also contains myristic acid, an anti-inflammatory.



Ayurvedic-Informed SOAP Note for MTs

A simple, scope-appropriate way for MTs to begin thinking in Ayurvedic terms without diagnosing. For bodywork assessment only.

S - Subjective (Client Report)

Have the client describe:

- Current discomfort, pain, tension
- Energy level (low, normal, wired, scattered)
- Sleep quality (restless? heavy? unrefreshing?)
- Stress level + emotional tone
- Sensations: hot, cold, dry, heavy, restless, swollen, tight

Ayurvedic prompts (optional):

- “Are you feeling more dry, oily, or normal?”
- “Do you feel more cold or warm than usual?”
- “Has your digestion felt slow, sharp, or unpredictable?”

These map gently to Vata
(irregularity/dryness),

Pitta (heat/sharpness),

Kapha
(heaviness/slowness)

O - Objective (Therapist Observations)

Observe tissue qualities using the Gunas (qualities):

- Temperature: warm / cool / variable
- Texture: rough / smooth
- Tone: tight / loose / boggy
- Moisture: dry / oily
- Movement: restricted / hypermobile / sluggish
- Rhythm: erratic / sharp / slow

Also note:

- Postural patterns
- Breath quality
- Joint mobility restrictions
- Facial tension, jaw holding, abdominal guarding

Ayurvedic lens:

- Vata tendencies → cold, dry, irregular, tight
- Pitta tendencies → warm, sharp, focused tension
- Kapha tendencies → heavy, cool, dense, sluggish

A – Assessment (Within MT Scope Only)

NOT a dosha diagnosis — simply patterns observed.

Examples:

- “Tissues present with dryness, coolness, and irregular tone → use warming oil + slow strokes.”
- “Heat + sharp tension around traps → use neutral oil + avoid added heat.”
- “Heaviness + stagnation in legs → medium tempo + directional strokes.”

P – Plan (Ayurvedic-Informed Bodywork Choices)

Choose:

- Oil (warming/cooling/neutral)
- Temperature (mild warmth, no heat, avoid heat)
- Tempo (slow, rhythmic, grounding vs. neutral)
- Stroke type (long warming strokes vs. gentle compression vs. spreading strokes)
- Areas of focus
- Aftercare suggestions (hydration, warmth, grounding practices, rest)

This allows MTs to begin integrating Ayurveda safely and ethically before deeper training.

Which Ayurvedic Adjustment Should I Use?

START HERE → What are the tissues telling you?
Do the tissues feel COLD or COOL?

Yes: Use Warm Oil, Slow down tempo, Add gentle compression, Avoid high-detail work early in the session. Coolness is common in Vata presentations

No: Do the tissues feel HOT or IRRITATED?

Yes: Use a neutral or cooling oil, Avoid heat or hot towels, Maintain medium tempo. Common in Pitta-type imbalances

No: Do the tissues feel HEAVY, DENSE, or SLUGGISH?

Yes:

- Use neutral oil
- Increase tempo slightly
- Use directional strokes toward lymphatic return
- Consider light friction techniques
- Common in Kapha tendencies

No: Do the tissues feel DRY or ROUGH?

Yes:

- Use nourishing warm oil
- Add repetition + slow rhythm
- (Supports grounding & lubrication)

No: Do the tissues feel TIGHT, ERRATIC, or GUARDING?

Yes:

- Slow tempo
- Even, predictable rhythm
- Avoid rapid transitions
- Use a grounding presence

No: You're safe to choose oil and pacing guided by session goals.

If you want to learn the full Ayurvedic sequence + traditional warm-oil work, see *Abhyanga for Chronic Pain, Level 1 (APC1)*.

Business Skills for Ayurvedic Massage

This course does not ask you to exaggerate claims, promise outcomes, or step outside your scope of practice. Ethical business skills are about honest representation and sustainable pricing, not hype. Your work has value. This module helps you communicate that value without distortion or pressure.

Before discussing services, pricing, or specialization, practitioners must first be able to answer:

- What is my role?
- What am I responsible for?
- What is outside my scope?
- How do I communicate this clearly?

Most of you are not yet trained in full abhyanga protocols. Your credibility comes from:

- Presence
- Safety
- Communication
- Ethical boundaries

Distinguish between:

- Educator vs. clinician
- Supportive care vs. medical treatment
- Observation vs. diagnosis

Journal Prompt

- What helps me feel regulated and grounded as a practitioner?
- What tends to dysregulate or overextend me?
- What boundaries support my longevity in this work?

Translating Ayurveda into Western Clinics

How comfortable are you translating Ayurvedic concepts into language that is clinically appropriate, ethically sound, and accessible within Western healthcare and wellness settings? The goal is not to dilute Ayurveda, but to express it in ways that build trust, clarity, and professional credibility across disciplines.

Ayurveda is a complete medical system with its own language, logic, and worldview. In Western clinics, however, communication often prioritizes physiology, function, and outcomes. Effective integration requires fluency in both frameworks.

Key distinctions:

- Ayurveda explains why imbalance develops
- Western models often describe how dysfunction presents
- Translation bridges meaning without losing integrity

Examples of translation:

Vata imbalance → nervous system dysregulation

Agni → metabolic capacity and digestive efficiency

Sneha → regulated, nourishing contact

Ojas → resilience, recovery capacity, vitality

When practitioners understand the function behind the language, they can communicate clearly without over-explaining or apologizing for Ayurveda.



Discussion Prompts

- Where do you currently feel confident using Ayurvedic language?
- Where do you hold back or self-censor?
- In what settings does Ayurvedic language feel supportive, and where does it feel limiting?
- How do you assess whether a client wants conceptual language or functional explanation?



Discuss the difference between:

- Educating vs. impressing
- Translating vs. justifying
- Sharing wisdom vs. oversharing philosophy

NOTES: _____

*Professional credibility is built
through clarity, not complexity.*

Writing Exercise (Individual or Small Group)

Step 1:

Choose one Ayurvedic concept you use frequently in sessions (e.g., vata, agni, grounding, lubrication, rhythm).

Step 2:

Write two short explanations (3–5 sentences each):

- Version A: How you would explain this to an Ayurvedic student
- Version B: How you would explain this to a Western client or healthcare provider

Step 3:

Underline words or phrases in Version B that:

- Emphasize function
- Reference physiology or lived experience
- Avoid spiritual or cultural assumptions

Reflection Questions:

What stayed the same between versions?

What shifted?

What felt clearer or more honest?



Conclusion

The Foundations training offers an entry point into Ayurvedic bodywork through foundational theory, nervous-system literacy, and early perceptual practices such as pulse awareness. Pulse awareness is introduced as a perceptual practice to support observation and learning, rather than diagnostic assessment.

The work here is not about mastering technique, but about stabilizing your role as a practitioner. Giving you the internal clarity, ethical grounding, and nervous system awareness required for deeper clinical application.



In *Abhyanga for Chronic Pain, Level 1 (APC 1)*, these foundations will be translated into structured, hands-on abhyanga protocols, sequencing, and therapeutic decision-making.

👉 [Join the APC 1 Waitlist](#)

Be notified when enrollment opens for Advanced Ayurvedic Bodywork Training (APC 1), including classical abhyanga protocols and clinical application.

🏢 **Staff Training Inquiries**

Custom Ayurvedic bodywork trainings designed to support clinical quality, staff confidence, and service consistency.