

## Boost Immunity with Ayurveda Script

### Ice Breaker

I know that it can be uncomfortable speaking up in an online class so I wanted to take a couple of minutes to get to know each other and become familiar with the platform. I'm going to break you up into small groups and I want you to introduce yourself to one another and come up with 10 immune boosting techniques that everyone in your small group has in common. Do you have any questions?

[Using Zoom's breakout rooms feature, create groups of 3-4 people. After 5 minutes, you can close the breakout rooms to become one big class again]

How did it go? Did you find that you have a lot in common or just a little?

### Introduction to Ayurveda

Ayurveda is a holistic healing system rooted in India and it has become increasingly popular here in the West thanks to what I believe is the amazing results that people have experienced. Ayurveda is a Sanskrit word that translates to "the knowledge of life."

Ayurveda recognizes one fundamental truth: the closer a person is to nature, the closer they are to good health, and the further one wanders away from nature, the more they suffer. This is because Ayurveda believes that the individual and nature are intertwined and therefore Ayurveda recommends that we align our inner nature (our Self) with our outer nature (the environment), thus living in harmony with the circadian rhythm and nourishing ourselves with locally sourced, fresh foods.

Because of this, we do not need special technology to avoid disease, but instead, we need to have the knowledge of life, the knowledge of how to live in alignment with nature. Ayurveda teaches us a lifestyle that not only prevents disease but optimizes health and well-being. It reminds us that we are self-healing creatures and that we can maintain and regain good health by making healthy lifestyle choices.

So today, you are going to learn:

- Key Ayurvedic habits that promote immunity
- Some herbal and cleansing techniques that you can start practicing at home immediately.
- How to reduce anxiety using Ayurveda.

Let's get started.

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### Lifestyle

As I said before, Ayurveda not only treats disease but it prevents disease using diet and lifestyle. As humans, our bodies have evolved over millions of years living outside in nature to become what they are today. In the grand scheme of things, we have only been able to live out of alignment with nature for a millisecond with the help of technology. But our bodies were designed to live in circadian rhythm, to be awake and active and eat while the sun is shining and to sleep at night.

But now, we are able to stay awake all night long with bright lights and screens thanks to electricity and sleep late in the day by blocking out the sun with walls and curtains. And as a consequence, our immune systems and mental health have broken down.

Now that the majority of society is on lockdown, people aren't working during the day nor taking their kids to school at a specific time, and as a result, their daily routine is even more unaligned. People are staying awake even later, sleeping in longer, and sitting on the couch watching tv. So today, I want to share with you a few Ayurvedic daily habits that promote immunity.

### Sleep

Even though we may not need to wake up to get to work on time, it's important to maintain a consistent routine. As I said before, the individual and Nature are intertwined. We share a relationship with our environment. So as the sun rises and light spreads across the sky, our minds become illuminated and our intuition awakens. Has anyone ever sat in silence and watched the sun rise?

I'm not suggesting that you stay awake until midnight and set your alarm for 5:30 am. Sacrificing sleep is the fast-track to a depleted immune system. Instead, I'm suggesting that you plan your entire day in such a way so that you are able to fall asleep by 10:00 pm, or even earlier if your body needs to catch up on sleep.

I'm curious, how many of you are in bed before 10:00 pm? And how many of you are awake at sunrise?

I know it's tempting to catch up on sleep in the morning. I know how good it can feel to wake up without an alarm, but waking up late in the morning pushes your entire day back, pushing you even further from Nature's rhythm and depleting your immune system.

[Have the participants complete questions 1-3 on the worksheet. Ask them if they need help with question #2. Try to involve the other participants by asking them if they have ideas to promote falling asleep early. If no one has any suggestions, you can give Ayurvedic remedies that promote sleep]

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### Eat

There is the saying, “You are what you eat.” In Ayurveda, they say, “You are what you digest.” This means that the food that you put into your mouth eventually becomes your skin, muscles, bones, and blood. So it’s no surprise that Ayurveda emphasizes proper digestion.

There is a concept in Ayurveda called agni. Agni is the fire that cooks the food inside the body. Agni is our digestive fire. You may feel it as hunger. Agni is hot, sharp, and light. It shares the same qualities as the sun and it is connected to the sun. Agni, our digestive fire, is strongest in the middle of the day when the sun is high in the sky and our digestive fire winds down as the sun begins to set.

For this reason, Ayurveda stresses that we eat our largest meal at lunch, when our digestive fire is strongest, to optimize digestion. Ayurveda also emphasizes that we eat something easy to digest for dinner before the sun sets to optimize sleep.

As a culture, we work during the day and use dinner as a way to connect with family at night. Unfortunately, this habit of eating a heavy meal late at night does not align with our body’s natural biorhythm, and as a result, the food that we eat does not digest properly and our sleep is affected. So we want to eat your largest meal at lunch, when the sun is high in the sky, and to eat something light and easy to digest before the sun sets.

[Have the participants complete questions 4-6 on the worksheet. Encourage the other participants to offer suggestions for question #5]

As I said before, Ayurveda emphasizes proper digestion for good health, so there are a couple other things that you can do to support agni, your digestive fire.

Eat foods rich in *prana*. Prana is a Sanskrit term that means “life force” or “energy.” Traditional Chinese Medicine calls it “qi.” For those of you with a background in yoga, you may already be familiar with this concept. Just as we have life force that circulates through our bodies, so does the food that we eat. When we eat foods rich in prana, we have more prana. We have more life force, more energy.

Foods that are rich in prana are those that were once living: fruits, vegetables, legumes, fish and meat. And the more that food has been processed, the less prana the food has. Therefore canned food, frozen food, and dehydrated food from a box will give us less life force than food that has been recently harvested. I know right now people are stocking up on canned and frozen goods in preparation for the worst, but in order to boost our immune system, we need to only consume those products as a last resort.

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Another great and easy way that we can consume prana and diversify our micronutrients is to eat more spices. Choose your favorite spices and add them to every meal. You can sprinkle them onto the food while cooking or even use spices as a condiment. Warming spices increase agni, your digestive fire, which will also aid in digestion.

What are some spices that you cook with every day? [Try to get the group to inspire each other with easy ways to add spices to their every day meals. Call on them by name if no one is speaking up.]

Some ideas for breakfast are:

- Add cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves, and ginger to your smoothies, cereal, oatmeal, fruit, etc.

Some ideas for lunch and dinner:

- Add pungent spices like black pepper and chili to heavy foods that are slower to digest.
- If you find a recipe that you love, make a batch of spice mix to quickly add to any meal.
- Garnish your foods with herbs, like cilantro, parsley, basil, mint, etc., and top them off with some lemon or lime juice.

[Have the participants complete questions 7-8 on the worksheet]

Something that I suggest to my coaching clients is to put systems in place to support healthy eating habits.

- Create a meal plan once or twice a week. If you wait until you're hungry to start cooking, you're more likely to eat foods lacking prana, to quickly heat up something frozen or canned.
- To eliminate snacking when you're bored, make a list of snacks that you're going to eat throughout the day. Otherwise, and take it from someone who has been working from home for a while now, you'll find yourself opening up the refrigerator and kitchen cabinets every hour or so and pulling out the first thing you see.
- When you're finished eating, clean up and brush your teeth. Just as the kitchens at restaurants close after dinner service, making it impossible to order more, you can close your kitchen too.

### Nasya

Another Ayurvedic technique that you can do to boost your immune system is nasya. Nasya is the application of oil drops in the nose. It lubricates and protects the nasal passages from airborne irritants and germs. It also helps relieve sinus congestion, dryness, tension in the head and neck, and helps balance vata, pitta, and kapha (the three energies that make up the body).

Earlier I said that prana is a life force that exists in us and our food. It is also our breath, carried within the oxygen we breathe. Because of this, Ayurveda believes that the nose is the direct route to the brain and the doorway to consciousness. So Ayurveda suggests nasya not only to boost immunity but also to ensure proper flow of prana throughout the body.

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To practice nasya, all you need is some oil and a dropper. You can buy premade nasya oils online but all you really need to get started is some sesame or coconut oil.

To administer the oil, tilt your head back until your nostrils face towards the sky. Place 3-5 drops of oil in each nostril. Then, sniff through your nose to allow the oil penetrate the nasal passages.

If you don't have a dropper or you aren't into the idea of dripping oil in your nose, you can place a drop of oil on one of your fingers and gently massage the inner walls of the nasal passage.

### Move

We wake up each morning with a stiff body, low oxygen levels, and stagnant blood flow and therefore it is critical that we exercise everyday to maintain optimal health. Just as stagnant water becomes a breeding ground for bacteria and parasites, a stagnant body can block the flow of prana and create disease.

I insist that my clients exercise for a minimum of twenty minutes every day, whether it is doing ten sun salutations upon waking, choosing to walk to work instead of drive, or doing a full-blown workout, it's imperative for their health to move every day.

I know that a lot of people aren't legally able to leave the house to go for a walk or maybe it isn't even possible if they have kids at home that they need to watch, but it's important that you find some sort of activity that moves the body for a minimum of twenty minutes. This can be yoga, pilates, dancing, hula-hooping, walking in circles around your living room or backyard, anything. There are loads of free 10-minute at home fitness videos on YouTube and Instagram and I believe you can find some live group classes at Yoga Veda Institute's online Satsang.

I'm curious, how many of you exercise every day? And how many of you have managed to continue to exercise during this epidemic?

I think a lot of people don't exercise at all because their idea of "exercise" is an hour activity that makes them sweat. If that is you, I invite you to reframe your idea of exercising to simply shake off the stagnation in your body so that prana can flow freely in your body.

Some ideas are:

- Yoga
- Pilates
- Dance
- Jumping jacks
- Burpees

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- Hula-hooping
- Walking
- Jogging
- Stretching

Do any of you have a favorite fitness YouTube video that you can share with the group? [If someone says yes, encourage them to post it in the chat box after the workshop]

[Have the participants complete questions 9-10 on the worksheet]

### Anxiety

So far we've learned that we need to:

- Maintain a routine
- Be in bed before 10:00 pm and wake up before sunrise
- Eat our largest meal of the day at lunch (between the hours of 10:00 am and 2:00 pm) and eat something easy to digest for dinner before the sun sets
- Eat locally sourced foods rich in prana
- Eat more spices
- Add nasya to our daily routine
- Exercise for a minimum of 20 minutes every single day

Because Ayurveda is a holistic science, just practicing these things will have a positive effect on our body and mind, but I understand that people are experiencing more anxiety than usual. According to Ayurveda, anxiety is a vata disorder. Vata is mobile and light, and when we have excess vata in the mind and nervous system, it expresses itself as fear, anxiety, contraction, loneliness, and a sense of ungroundedness. Does that sound familiar?

People with anxiety know that activities like yoga, meditation, and taking walks out in nature are healing, and they are, but I also want to give some additional Ayurvedic recommendations for reducing vata and therefore reducing anxiety during this time.

One of the best medicines for calming vata is having a daily routine. According to Ayurveda, like increases like, and vata is erratic. An irregular routine disturbs vata, creating chaos not only in the mind, but in the body. Ayurveda also believes that opposites balance, and therefore having a steady daily routine creates stability and calms vata.

Vata is cold and dry so applying warm oil to the skin before getting in the shower each day will lubricate the skin and nourish both the mind and body. Next to having a routine, oil is one of the best medicines for calming vata. Sesame, avocado, and almond oil are amazing for vata, and if you're feeling fancy, you can add a couple of drops of your favorite essential oil to make

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application of oil on the body an experience for the senses. I don't know about you but I love the experience of being in a spa just as much as I love the massage. It nourishes all five senses.

Eat grounding food cooked in warming spices. Grounding food are roasted root veggies, stews, bone broth, and one pot meals. Vata is cold, light and dry so dishes like cold leafy green salads and undercooked cabbage aggravates vata. Not only is it difficult to digest, but the cold, light, and dry attributes of vata get absorbed into the body.

What are some examples of grounding lunches?

**Close**

Do you have any questions?