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# Ayurveda

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## **Learn to:**

- Rebalance your mind, body and spirit using Ayurveda
- Develop a balanced diet based on your body type, or dosha
- Optimise your health by exercising to suit your body type
- Stretch your body with yoga

**Angela Hope-Murray**

*Ayurvedic practitioner*





**by Angela Hope-Murray**

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## **Ayurveda For Dummies®**

Published by:

**John Wiley & Sons, Ltd**

The Atrium

Southern Gate

Chichester

West Sussex

PO19 8SQ

England

[www.wiley.com](http://www.wiley.com)

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*Registered office*

John Wiley & Sons Ltd, The Atrium, Southern Gate,  
Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 8SQ, United Kingdom

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A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-1-118-30670-3 (pbk); ISBN 978-1-118-30667-3 (ebk); ISBN 978-1-118-30668-0 (ebk); ISBN 978-1-118-30669-7 (ebk)

Printed in Great Britain by TJ International Ltd, Padstow, Cornwall

# Ayurveda For Dummies®

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# Introduction

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My search for a medical system that truly encompassed the whole being began when I was 19 years old and studying the biomechanics of the lower limb at podiatry school. A sense of deep unease was growing within me because I realised that a problem in the knee, for example, may be related to the whole of the skeletal structure and not just to the part of the body we were allowed to take care of. Alongside this was the realisation that a disease entity can present a very different picture in people with differing constitutions.

Help arrived for me in 1986 when a doctor came to the hospital to give a talk on Ayurveda, called the mother of all healing systems. Dawn broke for me and shone a light on a system of healing that is so elegant yet so simple in its formation.

Coming from at least 5,000 years of human experience, Ayurveda really is the 'prima materia' (first matter) of all medical modalities. Ayurveda is a system in which the healers have a responsibility to keep themselves well, along with their patients. Encompassing wellness of body, mind and spirit, Ayurveda encourages vitalisation that extends into your every cell.

I hope this book fuels in you the enthusiasm to try Ayurveda for yourself and incorporate it into your daily life, which will benefit and be enhanced by it.

## ***About This Book***

*Ayurveda For Dummies* gives you the tools to comprehend the basic building blocks of Ayurveda. Use it as a basis to progress on the journey to well-being using

simple instructions and interventions, which you can implement immediately into your daily routine. I give you tools for recognising problems as early as possible and treating them with both diet and herbs. I provide a lot of general information for maintaining your well-being. Everyone deserves better health.

## ***Conventions Used in This Book***

To help you get the most from this book, I follow a few conventions:

- ✓ *Italic* is used for emphasis and to highlight new words or terms that I define.
- ✓ Web addresses may split over two lines – if so, ignore the hyphen that links them when you’re typing the address into a search engine. If you’re reading this on an enabled device, the web addresses are hyperlinked and will take you straight to the site in question.
- ✓ **Bold** shows the action part of numbered steps.

## ***What You’re Not to Read***

Of course, I hope that you’ll read the entire book, but in some cases I offer information that you may find interesting but that’s not essential to your understanding. Sidebars (shaded boxes of text) are an example of this kind of text and may include anecdotes, history or other titbits that I find juicy but you may not! And when I go deeper into the principles or science of Ayurveda, I use the Technical Stuff icon to let you know you’re perfectly welcome to skip that paragraph.

# ***Foolish Assumptions***

To generate this book, I made a few assumptions about you:

- ✓ You're keen to learn more about Ayurveda but don't know exactly what it is and how to practise it.
- ✓ You're very busy and you want a simple, clear understanding of the fundamentals of Ayurveda.
- ✓ You've already delved into other types of complimentary therapies and would like to expand your knowledge.
- ✓ You're interested in optimising your health and are ready to try a few Ayurvedic suggestions.

## ***How This Book Is Organised***

I've organised *Ayurveda For Dummies* into six parts. Each part contains a variety of chapters to instruct you further on various aspects of Ayurveda.

### ***Part I: Getting Started with Ayurveda***

In this part I explain the belief system and philosophy behind Ayurveda, which can appear quite esoteric at times. Getting to grips with the basics won't take you long and the rewards will be worth it.

You probably want to get cracking straight away with learning your constitution according to Ayurveda from the questionnaire in [Chapter 4](#). This enables you to put the interventions that I list into practise. Armed with this information you can better navigate the rest of the book.

## ***Part II: Living in Harmony with Ayurveda: Promoting Good Health***

In this section I take you on a journey to learn how disease develops in your system according to Ayurveda. Completing the questionnaire in this part can determine how healthy your system is. You also look at the health of the senses and how time affects your well-being.

This is the core of the book where ways you can promote good health are clearly laid out. I cover the daily routine, seasonal routines and evening procedures. There is a great chapter on yoga postures for individual constitutions as well as yoga as medicine for problems you may have. I include breathing exercises from which you can gain immediate benefit if you try them for as little as ten minutes a day. You're sure to find advice in this part to suit your lifestyle needs.

## ***Part III: Appetising Approaches to a Healthy Diet***

Diet is of utmost importance to your health. In this part I share my enthusiasm for the Ayurvedic approach to diet and I provide you with ways to improve your digestion using food. I give dietary advice for different doshas (constitutions), because we all have different dietary needs. In [Chapter 12](#), I share ways to optimise your diet and make it more nutritious. *Bon appétit!*

## ***Part IV: Fitting Ways to Enhance Healing***

In this section I present you with Ayurvedic suggestions to improve common health problems such as digestive disorders, respiratory problems, musculoskeletal ailments and skin and hair issues. If you're experiencing

difficulties in any of these areas, I provide helpful prevention advice you can put into practice.

## ***Part V: The Part of Tens***

No *For Dummies* book is complete without the legendary Part of Tens. In this part I present bite-size chunks of information about herbs and spices, including their amazing healing properties.

Head to [www.dummies.com/extras/ayurvedauk](http://www.dummies.com/extras/ayurvedauk) for a bonus Part of Tens chapter: 'Ten Wonderful Ways To Enhance Your Health with Ayurveda'.

## ***Part VI: Appendices***

Last but not least are three short appendices: a glossary of Sanskrit terms (Sanskrit being the language of Ayurveda), a botanical index, and a list of suppliers of all things Ayurveda.

# ***Icons Used in This Book***

Sprinkled throughout the book you'll see various icons to guide you on your way. Icons are a *For Dummies* way of drawing your attention to important stuff, interesting stuff, and stuff you really need to know how to do.



This icon highlights important concepts in Ayurveda or concerning health in general.



I love science, but maybe you don't. That's okay – you don't need much of it to understand how Ayurveda can help you. When I delve into specialised info, I use this icon to let you know that the material is esoteric and skippable.



When I provide a way for you to do something more quickly or easily, I use this icon.



This dangerous-looking symbol lets you know when trouble may befall you, as when an ingredient I discuss is known to cause allergies. You won't find many of these icons, but please do heed their messages.

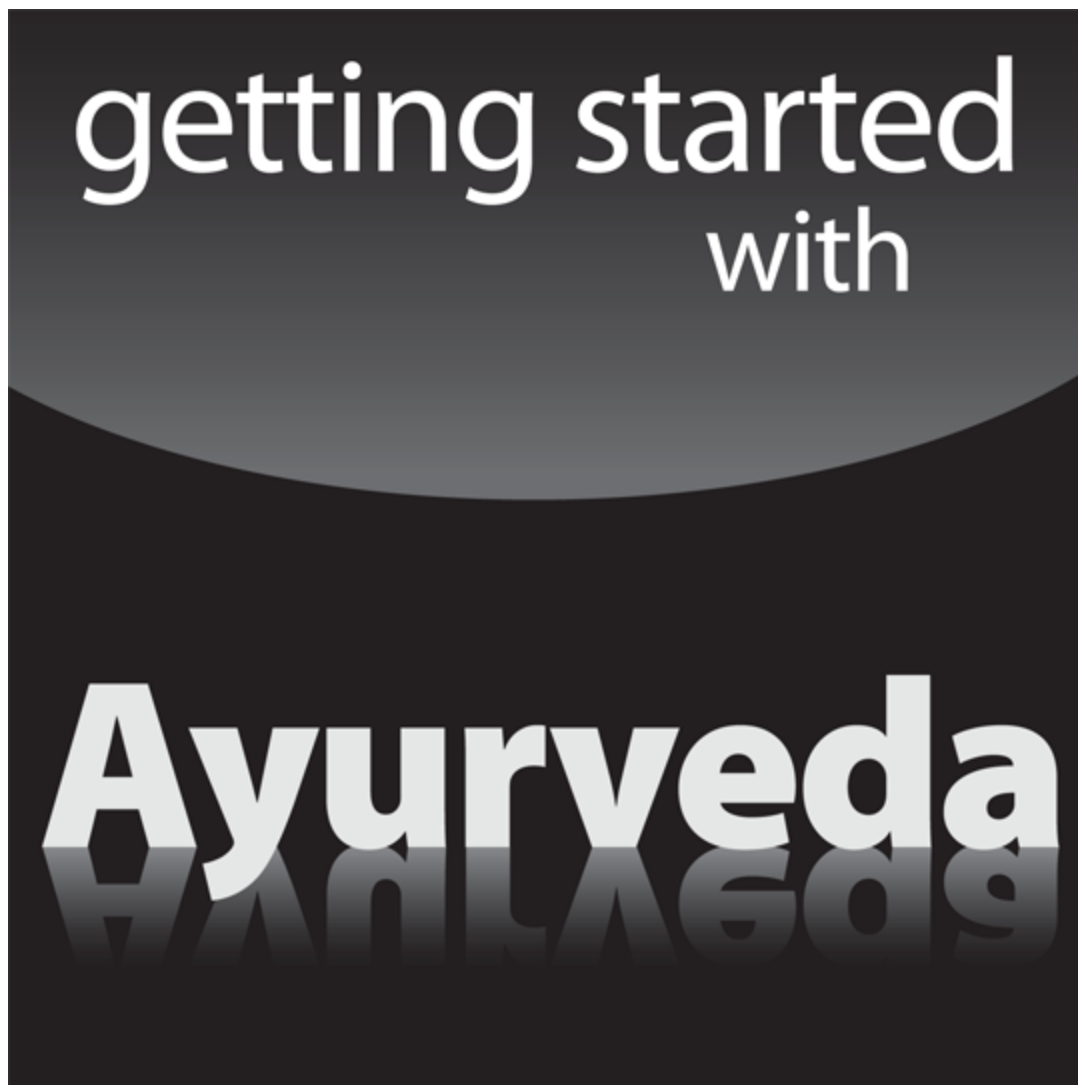
## ***Where to Go from Here***

I've written this book so that you can dip in and out of it as you please. However, if you're new to Ayurveda, starting at the beginning is most helpful. For the rest of you, take a look at the Table of Contents and see what takes your fancy.

Head online for special bonus content at [www.dummies.com/extras/ayurvedauk](http://www.dummies.com/extras/ayurvedauk), and visit [www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/ayurvedauk](http://www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/ayurvedauk) for the cheat sheet created specifically for this book.

I wish you a happy excursion into the world of Ayurveda, which has enough breadth and depth to satisfy those of you who are hungry for knowledge to help you improve and sustain the well-being of your body, mind and spirit.

Part I  
**Getting Started with  
Ayurveda**



For Dummies can help you get started with a huge range of subjects. Visit [www.dummies.com](http://www.dummies.com) to learn more



and do more with For Dummies.

## *In this part . . .*

- ✓ Discover the incredible 5,000-year history of Ayurveda.
- ✓ Identify your constitution – your type of skin, hair and body shape – so you can tailor the advice in this book for you.
- ✓ Get familiar with the amazing energy systems in your body.
- ✓ Meet the centres of awareness that are your chakra system.
- ✓ Go to [www.dummies.com/extras/ayurvedauk](http://www.dummies.com/extras/ayurvedauk) for online bonus content, including an extra Part of Tens chapter: 'Ten Wonderful Ways to Enhance Your Health with Ayurveda'.

# Chapter 1

## Introducing Ayurveda: The Science of Life

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### ***In This Chapter***

- ▶ Discovering the history of the Vedas
  - ▶ Accessing the aims of Ayurveda
  - ▶ Learning about the Sanskrit language
  - ▶ Surveying the scope of Ayurveda
  - ▶ Mentioning the main texts and where to find the evidence
- 

Welcome to the world of Ayurveda – a vast treasure house of knowledge of natural healthcare given to us by holy men called *rishis*. Literally meaning ‘science of life’, Ayurveda encompasses all aspects of your well-being, from breathing to digestion.

In this chapter, I introduce you to the ancient art of Ayurveda.

## ***Living Well and Maintaining Health***

Ayurveda is a truly holistic health system which supports you from the cradle to the end of your life. The Ayurvedic mode of living aims to maximise your lifespan by optimising your health through interventions that care for your body, mind, spirit and environment. Ayurveda

places a great emphasis on the prevention of disease and on health promotion, as well as on a comprehensive approach to treatment.



## Looking into Ayurveda's origins

The genealogy of Ayurveda traces back to about 5,000 years ago in the Indus valley, where the *Vedas*, or oldest Ayurvedic scriptures, originated. Legend has it that the knowledge within the Vedas was downloaded, so to speak, to a number of sages in deep meditation. This was experienced as an act of divine love to help us manage and maximise our lives on earth. For centuries, this knowledge was passed down from one generation to the next in the form of memorised chants known as *sutras*.

There are four Vedas, the oldest of which is the Rig Veda, which refers to three great beings governing the universe, in the form of Agni, Soma and Indra, which are personifications of the sun, moon and wind. These in turn become what are known as the *doshas*, which govern all activities in your body and are called *pitta*, *kapha* and *vata* respectively. (You can become acquainted with your own unique balance of these forces by referring to [Chapter 4](#).)

Known as the fourth veda, the Atharvaveda (meaning 'no vibration', or how to make the mind stable), contains the knowledge of Ayurveda. Two systems of medicine are described. The first is a compilation of drugs used on an empirical, rational basis, while the other describes a type of magical spiritual medicine.

Yet another version of the origins of Ayurveda is given by Sushruta, considered the founder of surgical medicine. Sushruta and other sages approached Dhanvantari, the god of Ayurveda. Dhanvantari imparted to them the wisdom of Ayurveda for the betterment of mankind and to help rid it of the suffering of disease.

These legends aren't so far away from the divine origins of the healing arts in contemporary cultures closer to home in the West that Apollo gave us from Greece and Thoth from Egypt.

If you want to delve deeper into the origins of Ayurveda, the three very important texts that all scholars of Ayurveda can't manage without are: the Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, and Ashtanga Hridayam by Vagbhata.



Unlike some other systems of medicine, Ayurveda is not just concerned with the absence of disease. As Sushruta, a physician in the sixth century BC informs us, you are only considered healthy when your appetite is strong, your tissues (*dhatus*) are functioning normally, your humours (the *doshas*: vata, pitta and kapha) are in balance, bodily wastes are eliminated well, and your mind and senses experience joy. If these Sanskrit terms pique your interest, head to [Chapter 3](#) for an explanation of the dhatus and [Chapter 2](#) for the basics about the doshas.

An extensive body of knowledge describes the therapeutic use of minerals and plants in Ayurveda. Throughout this book, I recommend different herbal remedies for different ailments or as rejuvenating tonics. If you can't find the particular herbs or spices in your grocers, you can find suppliers in [Appendix C](#).

Ayurveda places great emphasis on the effects of the different seasons and your diet on the equilibrium of the body. Different doshas, or attributes, are prevalent at different times of the day, and during the seasons these cause physiological changes in your body. Ayurveda understands that moving with the times and climate is a mainstay of good health because you are a microcosm of what's going on in your environment. I discuss these cadences of time and what you can do to ensure optimum health throughout the seasons in [Chapter 9](#).

Talking of the environment, Ayurveda recognises the importance of the environment to your health: in Ayurveda, everything is part of the same consciousness. How can we be truly healthy when the environment is

being brutalised by development, forests are being cleared on a massive scale and farming practices are employed that disrespect the lives of sentient beings?

The food that we eat has often been packaged, chilled and reheated until it contains very little vital force. Your immune system operates at top capacity when your fuel is so poor. Immunity, known as *vyadhishamatva*, or ‘disease forgiveness’, is the starting point for good health, and [Chapter 12](#) addresses eating the best food to improve your immune system.



Health is described by the word *swastha* in Sanskrit, which means ‘to be established in the self’. Health is really moment-to-moment awareness, and this can be obtained through meditation. Details on how you can put this life-changing practice into action are provided in [Chapter 6](#).

## ***Surveying the Scope of Ayurveda***

Within the practice of Ayurveda are specialities – just like in Western systems.

Here are the eight primary Ayurvedic specialities (I don’t cover all of these in this book – certainly not surgery, you’ll be relieved to know!):

- ✓ Toxicology (*agada tantra*)
- ✓ Childhood diseases or paediatrics (*bala tantra*)
- ✓ General surgery (*shalya tantra*)
- ✓ Internal medicine (*kaya chikitsa*)