

THE FIVE ELEMENTS & Influence on the Senses

The five main elements are directly related to the five main senses of man, our senses are a vital part of our mind and body and our senses are how we experience the world. It is through our senses that we experience, the joy of seeing a child play, the sadness of hearing a piece of music that reminds us of a poignant time, the comfort of eating a heart-warming meal and the gentle touch of a loved one's hand.

Our senses allow us to feel and experience our emotions, if we are willing to 'get to know' ourselves through our senses we can enrich our lives enormously.

Ether/Space, Air, Fire, Water and Earth are the five elements. According to Ayurveda the five elements are present in all matter, in various proportions and these five elements compose everything in the universe including humans. In a healthy body all the elements are working in harmony however in an imbalanced state any one element will disturb all others. Sound, Touch, Sight, Taste and Smell are the Five Senses. Ether/Space element manifests as sound.

Relates to mouth, nostrils, abdomen, thorax, respiratory tract and cells.

Ayurveda puts great emphasis on the sense of hearing and we are able to experience sound through mantra and chanting. We can hear the sound through the preparation of our foods, the pounding and sound of grinding spices, the crisp sharp sound of cutting vegetables. We can experience the sounds of nature, running water, rustling trees, bird song and the calming balancing effects of nature. The sound of silence can be found in meditation and stillness.

Air element is manifested as touch. Is connected to the muscles, lung action and intestines, movement.

Experience the pleasures of touch in everyday food preparation use your hands to mix ingredients and feel the shiny beans run through your fingers. Ayurveda says that we should touch our bodies and become aware of its sensitivities and bring about a sense of well-being.

Touch the textures in your home and the different textures of nature, the bark of a tree, the texture of a running stream. Notice how the different objects feel in your hand. Expand your awareness of touch.

Fire is manifested as sight. Fire fuels enzyme functions, intelligence, digestive system and the metabolism. Everything that we see effects us in some way, it is important to our senses to become aware of what we see. Most of the time we take for granted our sight, take the time to look at things differently. When preparing food notice the colours and textures of spices and fresh fruit and vegetables. Look around your home and see things from a different viewpoint. Do you prefer cool or hot colours? When you leave your home what do you see, how often do you stop to really view your surroundings. Sit in nature and see how many colors of green are in a field of grass.

Earth element is manifested as smell. The earth element is found in the bones, nails, teeth, muscles, cartilage, tendons, skin and hair. Ayurveda uses many herbs and spices during cooking and the sense of smell is heightened and wakens the memory of the universe and the gifts it offers through this sense. Smell is a powerful sense that affects the limbic system having a direct influence on our moods, Ayurveda understand this and uses food and essential oils and potions in its treatments. We can experience also the many smells of nature, flowers, leaves, walking through the woods or by the sea all evoke memories of Mother earth. Enhance your living environment with fresh clean smelling cotton bed linen, fresh flowers and the wonderful aroma of Ayurveda cooking.

Water element is manifested as taste. Water governs plasma, the blood, saliva, digestive juices and mucous membranes. The earth element is found in the bones, nails, teeth, muscles, cartilage, tendons, skin and hair. Taste is a crucial element in Ayurveda and the teachings explain that there are six tastes that should be included in all meals. They are sweet, sour, salty, pungent, bitter astringent. These six tastes provide the body with the balancing and healing benefits which are the foundation of Ayurveda nourishment. The balancing of theses tastes in cooking not only provide enormous healing qualities but also create delicious meals not found in other cooking modes. Ayurveda promotes the attention to eating and advises that we eat food in silence and through mindfulness to reap the full benefits of the foods healing qualities.

Daily Cleansing & Strengthening of the Sense Organs

In cleansing the senses we are able to keep our sensory organs alert and control the reins of the senses. You may begin your practice with the seven procedures in the order they are presented in this manual for daily cleansing of sense organs.

Daily Cleansing of the Sense Organs:

Brushing Teeth

Use a natural bristle brush and a natural tooth powder or paste (available at health food stores).

Scraping Tongue

Keep a daily check on your condition. (Tongue scrapers are also available at Indian grocery stores or at health food stores.)

- Dryish, greyish coating on tongue indicates a Vata imbalance.
- Yellowish, sour coating on tongue indicates a Pitta imbalance.
- Thick white coating on tongue indicates a Kapha imbalance.

Cleansing Mouth and Throat

Gargle to balance the Kapha in the body and to keep your personal sound alive. Fill your mouth to capacity and retain solution for 30 seconds. (Retention helps to stimulate and satiate the senses.) Then tilt head backwards and make gargling sounds in the throat for 15 seconds.

Gargling solution:

- 1/2 tsp triphala (available at Indian grocery stores or Ayurvedic herbal suppliers)
- 1/2 cup warm water



Eye wash solution:

1 pinch of triphala in cool water

Eye Wash Procedure:

You will need an eye cup (available at most pharmacies).

For each eye:

- Fill eye cup with solution.
- Cup the eye and wash.
- You may rinse afterward with cool water.

Cleansing the Channels of Breath

Neti-Cleanse

The neti pot has been used in India since Vedic times. Ayurvedic sages recognized the importance of keeping the channels of breath clean and clear of any obstacles. The neti process cleanses the channels of breath and helps strengthen the life force, while maintaining your harmonic breath with lunar and solar cycles of the day.

The following conditions may be improved by Neti-Cleanse:

Conditions: anorexia, asthma, cough, sinusitis, burning of the eyes, ears, nose or throat, migraines, headaches, dryness of lips, loss of stamina, loss of memory or mental clarity, constipation, stomatitis, vitiation of breast milk, vitiation of seminal fluid

Contra-indications:

- Do not use every day (use on alternate days)
- Do not use: During menstrual cycles
- During colds, fevers or sinus infections
- Directly after sexual intercourse
- Directly after childbirth

Directions:

Fill the neti pot with lukewarm water and a three-finger pinch of sea salt. Tilt the head sideways over a sink or large bowl and keep the mouth slightly open. Insert

the spout of neti pot into the nostril that is facing upward. Adjust the head position to allow easy flow of saline fluid through the open nostril. Empty half the contents of neti pot into one nostril before tilting the head in the opposite direction and inserting the spout in the other nostril to cleanse the other channel of breath. Blow the excess saline out the nostrils, then wipe face and take a deep breath.

Oiling of the Nostrils

Dip your little finger into sesame oil and apply in each nostril. (Keep your fingernails neatly clipped and clean.) You may administer this procedure directly after your neti-cleanse.

Oiling of the Ears

Dip your little finger into sesame oil and apply a few drops in each ear. (Keep your fingernails clipped and clean.)
