
HELP YOUR BACK PAIN – AYURVEDA WAY

- By Renuka Srinivasan

If you are reading this article, chances are, you have back pain, or have had it in the past. Don't be alarmed! Data indicates 80% of all Americans will have some form of back pain during their lifetime.

Back pain is not a conventional disease – by that I mean, it's not caused by some bacteria or virus. So it cannot be easily cured by medication. Drugs can certainly take away the pain, but it cannot kill the reason of the pain. Let's examine the common causes of back pain. Broadly, back pain can be of 2 types: Simple back pain that can be addressed by you and complex back pain that will need an expert's attention.

Complex back pain is those that are caused by injury to the muscles and ligaments of the back, injury to the spinal cord, pregnancy and post natal back pain, arthritis, and the pain that is caused due to problems in other parts of the body. Simple back pain is caused by factors like a bad posture (sitting at a desk or in a car for long hours), wearing high heels, using gym equipment without a trainer's supervision, bad digestion, dehydration and even every day stress. I know I am categorizing this as simple, though the pain is acute. The good news is that there are simple exercises (yoga) and remedies (ayurveda) that can help alleviate and completely rid you of this pain.

For most kinds of back pain it is recommended that you do not do strenuous workouts, lift anything heavy, play games that may cause one to make sudden movements, etc. In fact, most doctors will recommend little physical activity, at all. Here is where yoga is most effective and it is a fact that some yoga asanas (not all) are most effective in relieving common back aches. I will not get into which asanas are best suited to help a person with back pain. Instead I suggest you consult a yoga therapist who can guide you based on your area of pain and comfort level with yogasanas.

Back pain is also effectively cured by ayurveda. Ayurveda is a form of holistic medicine that originated in India, that is based on the presumption that a body begins in perfect balance. There is only one aspect then, that can impair the balance of the body – what goes into and what goes out of the body. Even modern science recognizes that every day the body replaces millions of cells. This process is sometimes interrupted by our habits, diet, and other lifestyle choices we make, as discussed earlier. This results in toxins being retained in our bodies. These toxins solidify and crystallize and accumulate in joints, muscles and bones, the digestive tract, arteries and the like.

Natural Oils have the property of penetrating the body tissue and releasing the toxins deposited in the body. A good analogy would be to view the human body like a mechanical robot. In time, dust will deposit on the robot, it will rust and the moving parts will at first, start to creak, and eventually stop moving altogether. If a little bit of oil or

grease is applied to the affected areas, and the parts are gently stirred, the parts start to move well again. The natural oils used in ayurveda, perform a similar kind of function.

Those suffering from back pain can either have an abhyanga massage or a kati basti treatment. An abhyanga massage is administered on the full body with deep rhythmic strokes that help soothe and revitalize the mind and body. A steam bath after an abhyanga massage is recommended.

Kati Basti is another treatment that is used exclusively for back pain. In Kati basti, which means “(oil) retained on the back”, warm oil is applied only to the painful area of the back, by sealing it off using dough. As the oil cools, it is replaced with fresh warm oil, for 15-20 minutes. This allows the oils to penetrate deep into the affected area and its healing properties release the pain causing toxins. Ayurveda suggests that the oil so applied, draws energy from the navel area and distributes it in the back. A few kati basti treatments should alleviate most kinds of back pain. I myself have benefitted from this treatment. Here is what one of my customers had to say about “I had been having lower back pain for about five months. I tried standard massage therapy, even saw a chiropractor 3 times a week for a month. No help. My massage therapist recommended I try Pranaa's Kati Basti - after the 1st session, I was about 25% better. Now after 4, no lower back pain at all. It definitely was a miracle worker for me.”

Once you have managed to rid yourself of your back pain, take care to not fall back into bad habits again. If you have a desk job, ensure your chair supports your back and waist well. Every once in a while, get up and stretch the back. Likewise, sleep on a hard mattress and small soft pillow. Have your ayurveda consultant prescribe a diet for you. Watch your weight. Avoid rigorous exercises and weight training. Do yoga exercises instead. All these will surely help your back.

Pranaa Ayurveda Spa and Yoga, offers Abhyanga massage, steam swedana and kati basti treatments administered by qualified therapists. Ayurveda Consultants can also discuss your body type and recommend oils and diet.

Pranaa conducts a weekly yoga session, that help with back pain. Additionally, qualified yoga practitioners can discuss problems specific to you in pre booked private classes.