



Fall is the time of gales and sudden snows; a season of wind, movement and change. The leaves on the deciduous trees dry up and blow away and the weather becomes colder, with clear frosty air and hardening of the soil. All these qualities of nature evoke the airy humor, the vata dosha, as this combination of the elements of Space and Air is known in Ayurveda. Just like the autumn, vata is mobile, changeable, dry, cold, clear, hard and rough.

Known as the vata season, fall is a time when aches and pains, restlessness, dry skin, chapped lips, chills and insomnia tend to flare up. Fall is also the season which sets the tone for our winter health. If we take care of ourselves in fall, we can look forward to a healthy winter, whereas self-neglect or poor lifestyle habits in fall can lead to winter problems such as depression, arthritis, colds and flu.

Self-care has two facets, the 'Do's' and the 'Don'ts'. Although the 'Don'ts' may seem restrictive or negative, they constitute the easy way out in self-care. The 'Do's' take time, they require us, literally to do something. The 'Don'ts' are great ways to protect our health while spending less time and money than we were devoting to our unwholesome habits.

In fall we are well advised to cut back on foods and lifestyle choices that are mobile, changeable, dry, cold, and so on. For example, most of us are less attracted to cold sodas in fall than in summer. Fall is a great time to reduce our travel, especially by air and to stay put and nurture ourselves. Cut back on cell phone chatter and computer games and curl up with a good book instead.

Smoking dries out and irritates our respiratory system as well as setting us up for winter bronchitis. To create a healthier winter, cut back or, ideally, quit smoking. Coffee is another vata provoking substance, so fall is a great time to get off coffee and on to a nurturing, warming drink such as Tulsi-ginger tea, available from most natural foods markets.

Just at the qualities that are the same as vata will exacerbate the problematic aspect of fall, qualities opposite to those of vata will help you enjoy the fall season at its best. The 'Do's' of fall invoke properties such as warm, moist, oily, heavy, smooth and stable. Instead of ice cold drinks, enjoy warm teas like ginger tea, a great remedy for vata complaints like gas, bloating and aches and pains. Start your day with a bowl of hot oatmeal with cardamom and cinnamon,



rather than Cornflakes and cold milk. In place of rice cakes, popcorn, salad and other dry, cold foods, look to the fall harvest for the ideal foods for the season--winter squash soup, baked yam, root vegetables like carrots and beets. Apples are dry, cold and windy, just like vata, yet when stewed with cinnamon, cloves, nutmeg and some raw sugar they make an ideal fall dish, helping to overcome vata constipation. Sesame seeds are excellent for vata, so sesame candies with raw sugar are a good treat for this time of year.

External oiling is also helpful at this season. The ideal oil for vata is sesame oil. Massage yourself with sesame oil before a hot shower and allow the hot water to drive the oil to deeper layers of your skin. However, if you are the type of person who dislikes heat and easily develops rashes and skin reactions, your body type may be pitta, the fiery humor. In that case sunflower oil is a wiser choice for your self-massage than sesame oil. If aches and pains trouble you, use castor oil for self-massage and follow this with a bath with one third cup dry ginger powder and one third cup baking soda in the tub. The anti-inflammatory properties of both castor oil and ginger will bring you relief.

Fall is a critical time for self-care, as the way you nurture yourself in fall will determine how you fare in flu season and throughout the winter. The older you are, the more important a good fall self-care plan is. Traditionally, fall is an ideal time to do pancha karma, an Ayurvedic cleanse involving, oiling, sweating and herbal colon therapy. This year, resolve to get in tune with the seasons and give your body a good fall!

