

How to Perform an Abhyanga Self-Massage (Oil Massage)

Abhyanga is an Ayurvedic oil massage that soothes the two master system of the body: the nervous system and the endocrine system. Ayurveda recommends a daily morning massage to help you begin your day feeling relaxed. People who approach the day feeling calm have the best chance of staying balanced and healthy. The entire process only takes 5 to 10 minutes.

- Since this is a light massage, you will need no more than a quarter cup of oil. Vata types do best with sesame or almond oil. Pittas respond to olive or coconut, and Kaphas benefit from light or warm oils such as sunflower or safflower.
- Lay an old towel on the floor so you don't slip (use an old towel because oil can be staining). Begin by massaging your scalp, using small circular strokes as if shampooing your hair. With gentle strokes apply the oil to your forehead, cheeks, and chin, and then move to your ears. Slowly massage the back of your ears and your temples, which has a soothing effect.
- Massage a small amount of oil onto the front and back of your neck and then move to your shoulders. When massaging your arms, use circular motions at the shoulders and elbows, and long back-and-forth motions on the upper arms and forearms.
- Using large, gentle circular motions, massage your chest, stomach, and abdomen. Use an up-and-down motion over your breast bone. Applying a bit of oil to both hands, gently reach around to massage your back and spine as best you can.
- As with your arms, massage your legs with a circular motion at the ankles and knees, using a straight back-and-forth motion on the long parts. Use whatever oil remains to massage your feet, paying extra attention to your toes. Sit quietly for a few moments to soak in the oil, and then take your shower or bath.

You can shower your hair as usual, but only use soap where necessary, leaving a layer of oil on most of your skin.

If you don't have time to do a full-body massage, a short one is still much better than none at all. The head and the feet are the most important parts of the body to cover, and you can massage those in a very short time.