

## EMBRACING THE COLD LATE WINTER KAPHA SEASON



Freezing and sluggish? East Coast USA winter season is the season we all wish we could hide away, dive underneath a warm soft blanket alongside a fire, sleep and will-away the cold. It is only natural. However, culturally we are still running around and our immune systems suffer as we weather the cold.

Many people think of India is always hot. Many city houses are made more for warmer weather; with tile floors and less insulation, it can still feel quite cold. In northern villages, many houses are still made of cow dung. And in the far norther himalayas, snow

falls. Ayurveda describes six seasons in the classical texts.

The East Coast USA boasts four seasons. Autumn and early winter make vāta season, consisting of cool, dry, and mobile space and air elements while later winter brings the cycles of wet precipitation, freezing and then melting, creating soggy earth and a predominance of kapha qualities. The *gunas* or qualities of later winter season are that of the elements earth and water, namely: heavy, dull, slow, smooth, dense, soft, sticky, and stable. The cold air makes our muscles tense and dense. slow smooth mucous forms to protect from dry air, and we desire the stability of hibernation in the longer nighttime hours. The body works to keep internal vital and digestive organs warm with blood-flow, so while our limbs feel cold, our digestive organs are powered with fire and appetites increase. Many people put on weight in winter time; not only people, but animals too bulk up in the winter season due to greater appetite and less mobility. Naturally kapha dosha exists in our bodies in the form of bulk, i.e. bones, muscles, fat, and mucous membranes; and in this season there can be a building of these heavy sticky tissues.

After all, we, human beings, are more porous than we like to admit. Modern man likes to think that he is invisible and separate from the nature. Advertisements show that we can just pop a few decongestants and go running off to work (while the organs struggle to keep up). However, without drugs, we quickly learn that we are not only affected by nature; *we are the nature*. What's outside is inside and what's inside is outside. When the immune system is taxed, these qualities of Kapha season begin to manifest *in excess* in some common ways:

- Cold, Cough, Congestion
- Weight gain and slow metabolism
- Oozing type of Psoriasis
- Stones, Cysts, and Growths
- Depression
- Sluggishness and Fatigue
- Lymphatic Congestion

- Edema



Think of a thick claylike substance, a combination of earth and water; This could be likened to the sticky stuck feeling in the sinuses during a mucous-filled cold. It is the feeling of a dull weight in the chest during depression. It is the slow immovable sluggish feeling of fatigue. When kapha dosha accumulates in the body/mind, it expresses in different tissues.

The way to liquify that cold, hard mud, is to melt it. Warmer potency herbs and spices are used to liquify congestion in winter through teas, soups, and sauces cooked with

warming oils. Warm potency herbs like eucalyptus and camphor are also used externally in balms, pastes, and massage oils. Just ask elderly people of most cultures and you will find that they or their loved ones used home remedies to liquify the sticky slimy substances of the body. I remember my grandmother used to put Vicks Vapor Rub in a pot of hot water, put my face over the pot and a towel over my head to trap the heat and have me breathe in the steam. Vicks contained active ingredients of a synthetic camphor, eucalyptus oil, and menthol, herbs used for millennia in ayurveda. What home remedies did your elders use to counteract discomfort?

The best practice is *awareness* of your body and to avoid harsh manifestation of disease by thinking preemptively. The opposite of Kapha Dosha qualities are light, sharp, mobile, rough, liquid, dry, hard and subtle. Opposites heal. Look for these qualities in foods and lifestyle practices and apply these remedies generously and preventatively.

Here are some recommendations for winter, Kapha Season:

#### RECIPE GIVEAWAY SPICED GREEN BEANS

Heat oil

Add cumin seed, mustard seed, and ginger/ garlic paste to taste. Cook for few seconds until aromatic.

Add 1-2 cups green beans and mix together. Add hing powder, turmeric, garam masala, coriander powder, salt, and cook for 10-15 minutes or until beans are ready.

Add a garnish of ground peanut powder

#### FOOD:

- Light, warm, slightly spicy meals in smaller quantity.

- Use spices like ginger, black pepper, pipali (piper longum), cumin, cinnamon, clove

- A tip from my teacher, Dr. Rajesh Kalvadia: Eat vegetables like pumpkin, spinach, cabbage, cauliflower, carrot, and onion. Grains like wheat, maize, black gram. And cook rice in excess water and

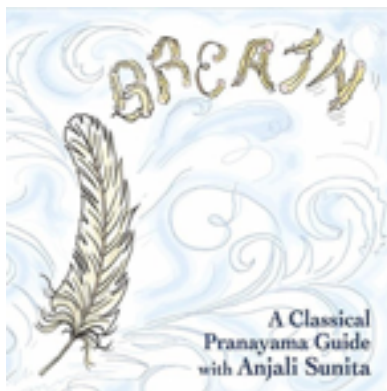
drain a few times to reduce starch intake.

- Teas like tulsi-ginger tea
- Avoid eating fruits within half an hour of mealtime or naps just after meals
- Enjoy all six tastes as always but avoid excess sweet, sour, and salty foods as they are building. Pungent, bitter, and astringent foods are more reductive.

**YOGA:** Find poses guided here: <http://www.cdbaby.com/cd/anjalisunita>



- More Sun Salutations and heating practices
- Heating standing poses like Virabhadrasana 1,2,3 series
- Chest openers for the lungs like most back-bending asanas, such as *Dhanurasana*, *Bhujangasana*, *Salabhasana*, *Matsyasana*.
- Overall, a more vigorous practice to induce mobile quality in the body, move stagnation of lymphatic system, and sweat.



**PRANAYAMA:** Full guided pranayama practice found here: <http://www.cdbaby.com/cd/anjalisunita2>

- Kappalabhati
- Bhastrika
- Ujjayi
- Surya Bedha
- Kriyas like Agni Sara

#### **BATHTIME:**

- Try a salt scrub. 1/2 cup oil mixed with 1/2 cup coarse salt. Rub all over the body for exfoliation and movement of lymph. Then take a hot shower without soap.
- Self Abhyanga: 10-15 minutes vigorous oil massage followed by hot shower with oils like sunflower, mustard, or flax.
- 1/2 cup ginger powder and baking soda bath

*Snuggle up and keep warm... Be kind to yourself. Nature intended us some rest.*