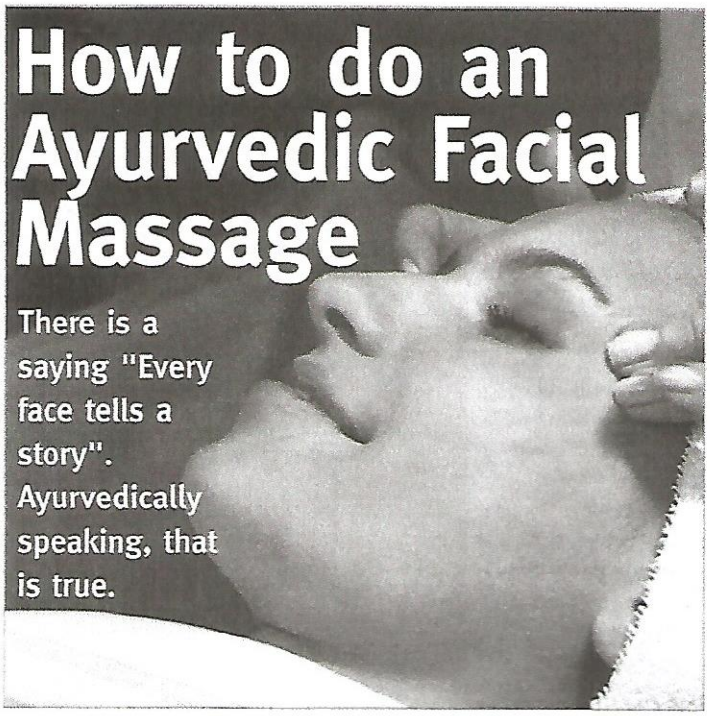
How to do an Ayurvedic Facial Massage



There is a saying "Every face tells a story". Ayurvedically speaking, that is true.

As well as being the head office for the five senses the face also stores several marma or vital points. Marma points are the meeting place of muscle, bones, tendons, arteries, veins and joints. Marma points are similar to pressure points used in reflexology and acupressure. It is the marma system that is the origin of these systems and acupuncture. In Ayurvedic facial massage we emphasise certain marma points which relate either to treating specific dosha imbalances or treat, calm or stimulate specific organs or systems in the body. This massage can be done on oneself or on someone else.

We use two main strokes in an Ayurvedic Facial Massage - a smooth stroke to release subtle tensions underneath the skin and the pressure point strokes to touch the deeper tissues.

The Ayurveda Institute of Europe has seen this year an unprecedented number of Therapists in the UK who want to learn this massage technique for their clients.

Step one

Cover your palms with light, warm oil, using smooth strokes. Start from the midline of the chin and with hands towards the temples. Oils such as Skinele, a Sesame-based oil, which has Vata, Pitta, and Kapha balanced herbs, are used as they penetrate the outer layers of the skin.

Step two

Place fingers under jaw and chin area; start pressing up and releasing gently. This area attracts a lot of holds onto his or her feelings. The jaw muscle is the strongest muscle of the body and it stores a lot of body energy. This step helps release emotions and release jaw tension.

Step three

Apply pressure to the top and underside of jawbone and then stroke up the jaw line to the ears and then the temples (the Shankar marma). Make light clockwise circles at the temple. Clockwise circular movement is used as it is found to be more effective in relieving tension than any other movement. This step helps relieve tension in the jaw and tension headaches, helps reduce hyperactivity, pressure around the eyeball and helps improve memory.

Step four

Stroke firmly along the upper ridge of the jaw up to the lower corners of the mouth. Make small circles again. Then stroke up along the jaw to the midpoint of the muscles that open and close the jaw. Make small circles again. Stroke up the cheeks to the temples and make small circles here. This step increases circulation to the face, relieves jaw tension and softens wrinkles by improving muscle tone.

Step five

Put the tips of the index fingers midway between the nose and the middle of the upper lip (the Usta marma). Press gently. Stroke from here to just over the corners of the mouth, under the cheek bones, to the top of the ear, over the ear, following the crease where the ear is attached to the head and behind the ear lobe following the bony bump. This increases circulation to the brain, improves alertness and is a useful way of relieving dizziness or nausea or from the feeling of fainting. It also soothes wrinkles or helps prevent them by improving muscle tone at the corners of the mouth and brings a health glow to cheeks.

Step six

Cover left side of top of the head with the left hand. Have your right index finger just above the flare of the right nostril (Nasa marma). Massage small circles here. Then stroke under the cheekbone up to the temple, over the ear and along the bony bump behind the ear lobes. This helps in asthma and bronchial congestion.

Step seven

Place the tips of the index fingers on either side of the nose half way between the corner of the eyes and the tip of the nostrils on the nasal bones (the Ganda marma). Do small circular massage movements at a point right of the nose. Then stroke over the cheekbone. Continue over the ear following the bony bump behind the ear lobes. Do this procedure on the left side. This step relieves sinus congestion and sinusitis, relieves eyestrain and relieves congestion that causes bags to form under the eyes.

Step eight

Place right index finger just below inner corner of right eye near to the nose. Have your left hand over the left side of the head. Apply gentle pressure, stroke along lower bony surface of eye socket, apply pressure all the way along. End at the outer corner of the eye between the orbit and the eyeball. Press in gently at this point (the Apanga marma). Repeat on the other side using the other hand. This step helps in relieving tired eyes and helps in improving eyesight, skin tone around eye, and relieving bags and darkness around the eyes.

Step nine

Place tips of both index fingers at tip of nose. Stroke up the midline of the nose all the way to the top and branch out to either side to the point just below where the eyebrows begin on the upper bony surface that forms the eye socket (the Kaninika marma). Continue along upper ridge of the orbit, applying pressure throughout. End about half inch from outer corner of eye. This step increase energy to eye socket, nose and centre part of the face, helps detoxify the effect on the liver, relieves headache due to eyestrain.

Step ten

Start at inner (medial) end of eyebrow. Pinch along eyebrow to its outer edge with your index finger. Use your thumb and index finger to work in a rolling movement - index finger over the thumb and then the thumb over the index finger. This step releases tension throughout the body especially in the upper ridge of eye, helps the eyes and helps nourish and relax the nervous system.

Step eleven

Stroke tip of nose to the third eye (the Ajna marma- above midpoint between eyebrows) in a gentle clockwise manner for 60 seconds. This helps headaches over eyes, relieves emotional tension, balances subtle energies of the body.

Step twelve

Have your head supported with one hand. With the opposite hand made into a claw-like shape, zig zag from left side to right side of the forehead and vice versa. Doing this increases warmth and relaxation to forehead muscles, helps build muscle tone to prevent lines and wrinkles and improve power of concentration.

Step thirteen

As in step eleven, repeat the stroking procedure from the nose to the forehead up to the midline of the forehead to the hairline. Massage in small circular motions to the right and left of the hairline, over the ears and to the back of the head until the fingers meet at the base of the skull. Massage up the back of the head both sides of the midline with the same circular movements upwards and outwards. Carry on over the top of the head to the front hairline. Massaging over the marmas on the midline helps stimulate deep centres of the brain and helps balance the body physically, emotionally and mentally. This helps relieve headaches, relaxes and invigorates the forehead muscles and stimulates energy spots in the head. TT

Ravi Bhanot is a Director of The Ayurveda Institute of Europe. The Institute runs regular workshops in Ayurvedic Facial Massage and other Ayurvedic massages and Ayurvedic Therapies. Please visit www.ayurvedainstitute.org or phone 0208 270 0533 for more information