

The Upanishads state 'from earth sprang herbs, from herbs food, from food seed, from seed man'. Spices are the source of us as human beings. They balance out our doshas and alter the nature of foods to make them more digestible. Think for a minute of pepper. This hot and pungent spice decreases kapha and vata, counters pitta and is sprinkled on cold foods like cucumbers to counter their coldness. Similarly, milk is heated with turmeric to make it lighter and lentils always have a sprinkling of the magical spice turmeric to prevent them from making our blood impure.

Jois household tip:

I asked my wife for help in compiling a list of spice blends with specific medicinal properties. Here are some commonly found spices that will give your local chemist stiff competition.

1. *Allergies and coughs:* Trikatu – long pepper, ginger and pepper – makes a wonderful medicine that is used to treat coughs, colds and fevers.
2. *Constipation:* Spices improve digestion so much that one can see why they are used before meals (pink salt and ginger), while cooking (asafoetida and nutmeg) and after (fennel). Triphala made with amalaki, bibhitaki and haritaki helps to internally cleanse your system by aiding

- bowel movements. Nutmeg, another spice used generously in our kitchens, is medicinally used in times of indigestion. When added to foods it can improve cognitive function. Use this zesty spice in desserts, cakes or tea as a supplement for sugar.
3. *Daily detox:* Ginger is 'the universal remedy' and balances and controls all three doshas. A mixture of fresh ginger juice, lemon juice, black pepper and turmeric added to warm water and had every morning can help restore digestive juices and cleanse your system of toxins. Keep extracted ginger juice in your refrigerator; this amazing SOS heals a host of problems. Ginger juice fights headaches, nausea and even normalizes cholesterol. Add a teaspoon to your juices, teas or morning cup of turmeric and lemon warm water, or take half a teaspoon with honey at night.
 4. *Antioxidant tea:* Cardamom is a diuretic and promotes heart and lung health. It helps promote the passage of food through the intestines, and cures indigestion and gas. Clove is an anti-inflammatory and cinnamon, anti-microbial. Add a few pods of cardamom, a few peppercorns, a stick of cinnamon, a few slices of ginger to water and boil. Add honey for taste. Don't boil honey. You can even have cardamom as is, if feeling nauseous.

5. *Injuries*: Apply turmeric and ghee to scrapes and cuts. Or simply sprinkle powdered turmeric and watch your scrape, scratch or even punctured skin heal immediately. Just remember to clean all injuries thoroughly before applying any medicine.
6. *Fatigue*: Another powerful healing root is sarsaparilla, that can help everything from fatigue, indigestion to liver and immunity disorders that show on the skin like psoriasis and eczema. It is also excellent against migraines. Add a small pinch to soda or milk, or find it as homoeopathy drops or Ayurvedic tablets. Please consult an Ayurvedic doctor before taking these as medicine.
7. *Acid reflux*: Boil water with fenugreek, mint, cumin and fennel for an SOS cure against acid reflux or soak overnight and drink in the morning for a general healing of the digestive system. Fenugreek also helps diabetics control their blood sugar levels.

Yogis don't eat onions and garlic

Both my grandfather and his brother (a priest) were very spiritual men who never ate garlic or onions. Ancient Hindu tradition dictates that Brahmins avoid spices like onions and garlic as they contain rajasic

and tamasic properties that excite the mind and slow down your path to enlightenment.

Personally, I have never liked garlic in my food, as I find its flavour too strong and its powerful smell affects my practice. When you chant you need to concentrate, and your pronunciation is very important, and at certain times your tongue can twist if you eat garlic.

Sanskrit texts have called garlic 'The Disgusting' or Rahu's Residue, as it sprang from Rahu's blood when he was beheaded. It is an elixir for the body, but can also increase *tamas* in the mind, making a person intolerant and overstimulated.

On the contrary Ayurveda loves garlic and onions for its potential to kill harmful bacteria and reduce cholesterol. So, eat both onion and garlic in small portions or use them for medicinal purposes only. Onions cooked with your food, or consumed in juice form or raw, stimulate the heart, promote bile production and reduce blood sugar.

Jois household tip:

- To cure an earache or infection crush two pods of garlic in a little bit of mustard oil and heat. Once cooled pour this oil inside your ear. This analgesic helps fight infection.
- A mixture of honey and ginger juice, about one teaspoon, can cure fevers and colds.

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This asana helps cure flatulence because of the pressure your heels apply on your organs in and around the stomach region. The posture is also used for dhyana, meditation and pranayama. Sitting in Padmasana and forward bending will activate your jathra agni, as well as your respiratory organs. This asana can even cure insomnia caused by irregular breathing patterns.

Method:

- Sit on the floor and try to take your right foot on top of your left thigh and your left foot on to your right thigh.
- If you cannot attempt a full Padmasana, do one leg at a time.
- Straighten your spine, tuck your tailbone in and breathe. Keep your spine straight and breath. This opens your chest and lungs, thereby increasing oxygen intake.
- Initially you may find it hard to practice Padmasana, but daily practice will help you increase the time you can hold your posture. When you bend forward both heels should be pressing into your lower abdomen and thighs.

Highlighted below are the problems and the asanas that cure them:

1. Backaches – lower and upper back pain:

- Utthita Trikonasana builds strength in the legs and back, while increasing flexibility. Stretches hamstrings and strengthens the abdomen.
- Pachimattasana stretches the spine, and creates the desired gaps between your vertebrae.
- Upavistha Konasana stretches the hamstrings and strengthens the abdomen and makes the spine stronger. Can help sciatica pain.
- Supta Padangusthasana for the lower back.
- Utthita Hasta Padangusthasana strengthens the back.
- Utkatasana builds strength.

2. Flatulence and indigestion

- Utthita Trikonasana relieves stomach pain from indigestion.
- Upavistha Konasana stimulates the abdominal organs and the kidney for detox.
- Pavanmuktasana almost immediately relieves discomfort from flatulence.
- Pachimattasana improves digestion.
- Padmasana relieves gas and bloating.

3. Headaches

- Pachimattasana can reduce migraine pain.
- Padmasana helps you meditate to reduce headaches.
- Adho Mukha Svanasana helps circulate blood in the head and back of the neck area.

4. Respiratory problems

- Virabhadrasana 1 and 2 are upward stretches that expand lungs to aid breathing.
- Urdhva Dhanurasana is an intense expansion of the lungs to aid breathing.

5. Erratic or painful periods and menopause

- Utthita Trikonasana stimulates the ovaries, stretches the abdominal muscles, and helps relieve menopause symptoms.
- Pachimattasana stimulates the ovaries, and helps alleviate menopause pains.
- Baddha Konasana reduces menstrual pain.

6. Anxiety and insomnia

- Pachimattasana reduces stress, anxiety and even panic attacks.
- Upavistha Konasana is very calming.
- Baddha Konasana eases fatigue.

- Urdhva Dhanurasana opens your heart to the universe.
- Padmasana is great for meditation.

7. High and low blood pressure

- Pachimattasana is a stress reliever and normalizes blood pressure.
- Baddha Konasana improves blood circulation and reduces hypertension.

8. Prostate problems

- Baddha Konasana stimulates the abdominal organs, improving prostate health.

9. Hamstrings and calves

- Supta Padangusthasana opens up the lower back and stretches the hamstrings without injuring the back.
- Utthita Trikonasana is an intense side stretch.
- Upavistha Konasana is an intense stretch for the groin, inner thighs, all the way down to the ankles.
- Utthita Hasta Padangusthasana helps stretch and balance from within.
- Utkatasana strengthens calves.

10. Overall strength

- Utkatasana is a strong squat.
- Upavistha Konasana builds up calves and thigh muscles.
- Utthita Hasta Padangusthasana creates a core strong enough to stand and stretch and improves balance.
- Virabhadrasana 1 and 2 builds warrior-like body strength.
- Urdhva Dhanurasana strengthens the thighs and lower back for a deeper lift.



- Warm up, strengthen and stretch your body with the Surya Namaskara routine.
- Baddha Konasana is a powerful healer for men and women.
- Keep your breathing strong and steady throughout your practice, as vinyasa brings a healing heat to your body.
- Sitting in Padmasana is not just meditative, but by activating your Jathra Agni it also cures digestive problems.

Deeper Breaths Result in a Longer Life

In his book, *Autobiography of a Yogi*, Paramahansa Yogananda reveals an interesting bit of information. He says that those species that breathe slowly, live the longest.

Turtles take four to five breaths a minute and live for hundreds of years.

Cats and dogs who breathe many more times a second than us, live a decade or two.

Humanbeings inhale and exhale 21,600 times a day, in a resting state, so we fall inbetween these two species.

This may sound like a tenuous argument, but hear me out.