AYU DOULA AMSTERDAM · A SEASONAL GIFT

Late Summer into Autumn

An Ayurvedic reset for women — whether you are pregnant, newly a mother, or simply feeling the season turn.

A short guide to the food, rhythm, warmth and rest that steady a woman's body as the air changes. Nothing here needs to be bought. Most of it takes minutes.

Why this season asks something of you

You may already have noticed it. Sleep becomes lighter. Skin and lips go dry. Digestion turns unpredictable. The mind gets busier in the evening than it was in July, and it is harder to settle.

In Ayurveda this is the rise of *vata* — the quality of air and movement. Autumn is dry, cool, light, mobile and irregular, and those qualities do not stay outside in the weather. They enter the body. This is why the same woman who felt expansive in August can feel scattered, cold and oddly anxious by late October, without anything in her life having actually changed.

The remedy in Ayurveda is never complicated. It is simply the opposite. Where the season is dry, we add moisture. Where it is cold, we add warmth. Where it is erratic, we add rhythm.

That is the whole of this guide. Warm, moist, grounded, regular.

> **If you remember only one thing**
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> Warm cooked food, oil on the skin, and going to bed at the same time each night will do more for you this season than any supplement. Regularity is the medicine. The body relaxes when it can predict what comes next.

A daily rhythm that holds you

You do not need all of this. Choose two anchors and keep them for a fortnight — the same two, at the same times. Consistency matters far more than completeness.

On waking	A cup of warm water, before anything else. It wakes digestion gently and rehydrates tissue that has dried overnight.
Before dressing	Warm oil on the skin — even three minutes on feet, hands and belly. See the practice on the next page.
Morning	Eat something warm and cooked. Porridge, stewed fruit, soup. Cold cereal in autumn is a small daily act of self-neglect.
Midday	Make lunch the largest meal. Digestion is strongest when the sun is highest, and it fades with the light.
Late afternoon	The vata hour, roughly 2–6pm. If anxiety or restlessness arrives, this is usually when. Something warm to drink helps more than pushing through.
Evening	A light, soupy, early dinner. Screens off sooner than feels necessary. Warmth on the feet.
Night	Bed before 10pm where life allows. The hour before ten is worth two after it in autumn.

Eating for the turn of the season

Nothing restrictive, and nothing you cannot find at your local Albert Heijn or the Ten Katemarkt. This is a shift in temperature and texture more than in ingredients.

More of

- Soups, stews, dals, porridges — anything wet and warm
- Root vegetables: carrot, beetroot, pumpkin, sweet potato
- Good fats: ghee, olive oil, sesame oil, almonds soaked overnight
- Stewed apples and pears with cinnamon
- Warming spices: ginger, cinnamon, cardamom, cumin, fennel
- Sweet, sour and salty tastes — these settle vata

Less of

- Raw salads and smoothies, especially cold from the fridge
- Iced drinks and ice cream
- Dry, crumbly food: crackers, rice cakes, granola, toast alone
- Beans and cabbage family, unless well cooked and spiced
- Caffeine after midday
- Eating standing up, walking, or in front of a screen

How you eat matters as much as what. Sit. Let it be warm. Let it take fifteen minutes. A hurried bowl of soup is digested more poorly than an unhurried one — Ayurveda has said so for centuries, and the vagus nerve agrees.

Abhyanga: the oil practice

If you take one thing from this guide, take this. Warm oil on the skin is the single most effective answer to dryness, restlessness and poor sleep — and for many women it is also the only touch in the day that asks nothing of them.

How

- Use sesame oil for warmth, or coconut if you run hot. Unscented, cold-pressed.
- Warm it — stand the bottle in a mug of hot water for a few minutes.
- Long strokes along the limbs, circles at the joints, circles on the belly and chest.
- Give the feet more time than feels reasonable. Then the ears, then the crown of the head if you have time to wash it.
- Leave it on for ten to twenty minutes if you can, then a warm shower. Don't scrub it all off.

Short on time: feet only, at night, socks on afterwards. Three minutes. Do it for a week and tell me about your sleep.

A breath for the restless hour

When the late afternoon turns thin and anxious, do not reach first for coffee or the phone. Try this instead, for two minutes.

Sit with both feet on the floor. Breathe in through the nose for a count of four. Breathe out, slowly, through the nose, for a count of six or eight. Only that — a longer exhale than inhale. Ten rounds.

Lengthening the out-breath shifts the nervous system toward rest. It is the fastest, cheapest tool any of us has, and it is available in a supermarket queue.

Wherever you are standing right now

The season is the same for all of us. What it asks is a little different depending on where you are.

If you are pregnant

Warmth, moisture and rhythm are exactly right for you — pregnancy is already a vata-increasing time, and autumn compounds it. Keep meals warm and regular; low blood sugar and cold food will make anxiety worse than it needs to be.

Oil the legs, feet and shoulders freely. Keep the belly to gentle, superficial stroking only — no deep pressure — and skip abdominal work altogether if you have any bleeding, pain, or a pregnancy being closely monitored. Avoid hot baths and saunas. Please mention any new practice, and any herbs at all, to your midwife first.

If you have recently given birth

This is the most vata-vulnerable time in a woman's whole life, and it lands in the coldest, driest season. Nothing you feel is disproportionate.

Warm, wet, soupy, spiced food. Warmth on the body and the feet, always. Rest lying down rather than sitting up. Oil is deeply nourishing now — begin with feet, hands and shoulders once bleeding has settled, and let someone else do it for you if there is anyone who can. Ask your midwife or kraamverzorgende before oiling the belly, and especially if you had a caesarean or any tearing that is still healing.

If you are in perimenopause

This transition is itself a vata passage — the dryness, the broken sleep at three in the morning, the sudden loss of tolerance for noise and hurry. Regularity is your strongest medicine: the same bedtime, the same mealtimes, oil every day without exception. If you run hot and flushed, use coconut oil rather than sesame, keep spices gentle, and favour cooling sweet foods over pungent ones.

A word of care. This guide offers food, warmth, rest and touch — the everyday foundations of Ayurveda, and safe for most women. It is not medical advice and does not replace your midwife, GP or specialist. I have deliberately included no herbs or supplements, because those genuinely need to be matched to you as an individual, and several common Ayurvedic herbs are not appropriate in pregnancy or while breastfeeding. If you are pregnant, postpartum, taking medication, or managing a health condition, speak with your care provider before changing anything.

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Made with care for the women on my list. Please pass it to a friend who needs it.