



PRESS RELEASE | Schwaz, February 2019

GENTLE FASTING AND HOLISTIC DETOX WITH AN AYURVEDIC CLEANSE

Fountain of youth and source of vital energy

The healing philosophy of Ayurveda has been practised for over 5,000 years – that's five millennia of holistic medicine. The teachings' many healing methods include fasting, and the holistic approach undertaken during an Ayurvedic cleanse is varied and profound. European Ayurveda®, initiated and developed by the Ayurveda Resort Sonnhof, has adapted the Indian approach to healing – and fasting – to suit western requirements.

The elements in balance – mind, body and spirit in harmony

Ayurveda is a Sanskrit word meaning 'science of life'. The essentials are easily summarised thus: human beings are made up of five elements – the building blocks of life. Each of these elements affects body, mind and spirit. An imbalance in the relationship between air, earth, water, fire and ether results in disturbance and illness – on both physical and psychological levels. Therefore, Ayurveda aims to restore the balance of the elements to harmonise body, mind and spirit. It is a holistic approach that deploys medicine, complementary healing methods, food (especially herbs and spices), Yoga and spirituality. Ayurveda's universal methodology also applies to fasting. 'When you undergo a fast, the body is rested so that it can purify itself, detoxify and reenergise,' explains Christina Mauracher, the mastermind behind European Ayurveda®. 'The energy that is usually expended on digesting and on the metabolism is made available for cleansing and regeneration. You gain time, which can be used for meditation, so your fast will have a spiritual benefit too,' says the Ayurveda specialist. In today's fast-paced society, our spirituality is something we all too often neglect, which is why European Ayurveda® gives mental and emotional wellbeing high priority. In developing their Ayurvedic concept, the Mauracher family worked closely with Indian Ayurveda specialists as well as Western doctors and therapists to find solutions that would meet European requirements.

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Traditional ceremony and everyday ritual

‘In Ayurveda – and in Indian culture – fasting is considered a method of physical, mental and spiritual cleansing and is practised against a highly spiritual background. Fasting is a purifying practice performed in part as a ritual, but also as an exercise of regular health maintenance. Ceremonial fasting, for example, provides preparation for spiritual observances. Fasting for health tends to be a regular practice – for example on the lunar calendar’s Ekdashi days when neither grains nor water are consumed,’ explains Christina Mauracher.

Gentle fasting with European Ayurveda®

‘Fasting in the Ayurvedic sense doesn’t mean starving yourself – it just means cutting calories and quantities for a reduced, needs-based diet. Ayurvedic fasting is a limited fast that doesn’t result in rapid weight loss, but gently detoxifies the body,’ explains Gaurav Sharma (Indian Bachelor of Ayurveda, Medicine & Surgery, BAMS), one of the Ayurvedic physicians at the European Ayurveda Resort Sonnhof. ‘This gentle way of fasting is an effective alternative for people who are not comfortable with total food abstinence. Ayurvedic fasting gives the practitioner breathing space and frees the mind from disturbances. The results often include enhanced physical performance and radiant skin,’ says Sharma.

Everything in moderation with European Ayurveda cuisine

A major advantage of Ayurvedic fasting is its understanding of the benefits of herbs and spices which, in Ayurveda, are used therapeutically as well as to flavour food. ‘Herbs and spices are used in Ayurvedic soups and vegetable curries to kindle the digestive fire (Agni) and stimulate the metabolism. This is how food becomes curative and cooks in the Ayurvedic tradition are also known as ‘alchemists of vital energy’,’ says Ayurvedic doctor Gaurav Sharma. European Ayurveda® ensures that fasting is gentle and works for western digestions, lifestyles and requirements with specially devised vegetarian recipes: ‘All food grown in Europe contains active ingredients that suit European living conditions. To ensure that Ayurvedic nutrition is gently and easily processed by our bodies, European Ayurveda® has developed its own recipes based on local foods and herbs,’ says Christina Mauracher. ‘We source most of these from our own European Ayurveda farm, the Lindhof. It’s an old farm in Thiersee where we grow heritage fruit and vegetable varieties using traditional methods.’

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Hot water – the Ayurvedic wonder drug

Drinking hot water regularly is very important in Ayurveda. It washes through the entire system and so has a strong detoxifying effect. The water should be boiled for 15 minutes as this increases the detoxifying effect. In addition, regular drinking of hot water stills hunger pangs between meals and prevents the possible side effects of fasting such as nausea, headaches, irritability and fatigue. Sipping the water also has a calming and emotionally stabilising effect. It soothes intestinal disorders such as wind, bloating and constipation and can alleviate pain. Dr Sharma recommends a detoxifying morning drink of hot water, the juice of half a lemon and a teaspoon of forest honey. But wait until the water is cool enough to drink before adding the honey.

Fasting with European Ayurveda® – an Ayurvedic guide to detoxing

Elisabeth Mauracher, Mental Detox coach and the Sonnhof's General Manager, explains the principles of Ayurvedic fasting.

When is the best time for an Ayurvedic fast?

From an Ayurvedic point of view, the transition periods, i.e. spring and autumn are ideal for fasting or detoxing to purify the body and harmonise the Doshas – our vital forces – that shape our physical, mental and spiritual characteristics. When used therapeutically there is no specific time limit or rule.

Who most benefits from Ayurvedic fasting?

It's best for people with the discernment and will to change their lives and improve their health. Fasting is very helpful in remedying digestive and metabolic disorders. It can also address excess weight. When emotional distress leads to the formation of a 'protective armour' which causes a person to become overweight, fasting should be accompanied by talk therapy. Therapeutic detoxification can help with almost all complaints caused by digestive toxins in the blood and tissues. A detox is also recommended alongside many Ayurvedic therapies, but an Ayurvedic detox is no substitute for a curative treatment. If you have a serious health problem, you should definitely consult a doctor or naturopath!

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Preparing for your Ayurvedic treatment programme

For best results, start your fast by thoroughly emptying your digestive system. We recommend an enema or colonic irrigation. Also, choose a quiet time when you can be sure of having little or no work, so that physical and mental stress can be kept to a minimum. It is also helpful to approach your fast with a positive mindset, looking forward to its beneficial results rather than seeing it as problematic or a chore. Fasting gives us an opportunity to take a good look at our life and habits, and to set a new course for a happier, healthier future!

Follow-up

To maintain the beneficial effects of fasting for as long as possible, it is worthwhile during the fast to think about unhelpful behaviours and habits – and about making changes. The wonderful feeling you get after fasting is a great motivational booster – don't waste it!

Why and how often should we fast?

Nowadays, most people are under enormous physical and mental pressure, so fasting is a great way to give body and mind a break – before any health problems arise! Whether you choose a long, annual fast, several shorter fasts or regular fasting days is up to your own, personal circumstances.

Tip: Combining physical fasting with a spiritual practice, e.g. Yoga and meditation, is highly recommended.

Note: Before any fast you should consult a doctor and have your general state of health checked!

EUROPEAN AYURVEDA®

European Ayurveda® was developed at the European Ayurveda Resort Sonnhof in Thiersee, Tyrol. Everyday life in Europe is not like everyday life in India. Diets and readily available, natural foods are quite different. The Sonnhof's European Ayurveda® experts have gained a huge amount of experience in the way Ayurvedic treatments and nutrition work within a European cultural setting. This has helped them develop new methods and formulations, as well as combinations with other healing and therapeutic methods. All are tailored to suit the needs, constitution and problems of western society – Tyrol meets India! The best of two worlds is combined in the Sonnhof's three pillars of: Ayurvedic Nutrition; Yoga, Mind Detox & Meditation; and Diagnosis & Treatment. Their comprehensive selection of treatment programmes ranges from the AyurDetox short detox treatment and the Fountain of Youth rejuvenation weeks to Rasayana and Panchakarma treatments – all of which are adjusted to suit individual requirements.

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We recommend: Panchakarma – the queen of Ayurvedic treatments. This treatment helps to balance the Doshas and eliminate toxins from the body. It boosts the immune system, cleanses the body, supports digestion and metabolic function, and helps bring about healthy, restful sleep. In addition, emotional wellbeing increases, as do mental clarity and vitality. It helps us let go of the past and find our centre.

Panchakarma 'Classic' includes: Consultation, pulse diagnosis & concluding consultation | Nutrition & lifestyle coaching | Therapeutic supervision | Snehana – administration of ghee to loosen waste products | Virechana – day of purification | Treatments tailored to suit your personal medical history, e.g. 4 Abhyanga – Ayurvedic full body oil massage with two therapists | Vishesh – energy massage with two therapists | Udvartana – herbal powder massage with two therapists | Jambira Pinda Sveda – bag massage with two therapists or Garshan – silk glove massage with two therapists | Pizzichilli (Sekka) – full-body oil treatment with two therapists | Udanavata© – abdominal massage | Nasya or Akshi Tarpana – nasal or eye treatment | 2 Shirodhara – flowing oil treatments | 3 Basti – gentle enemas | Upana – Alpine salt & oil scrub to release stressful energy and strengthen the immune system | Shiromardana – head & face massage | Stimularium® cell regeneration lounge treatment with deep meditation and crystal light Chakra therapy | Swedana – heat therapy | Hot water & ginger drinking treatment | Herbs for the duration of your stay | Weekly programme of Yoga & meditation | Use of the AyurvedaCentre | Full Panchakarma board. **Price:** 9 treatment days €2,489 per person plus accommodation (from €143 pp/pn in a double room); Good Karma! €5 of every Panchakarma programme goes to a school project in Africa.

About the Ayurveda Resort Sonnhof

Guests at the Ayurveda Resort Sonnhof in Hinterthiersee are offered a holistic medical Ayurveda break based on European Ayurveda® and the three pillars of health: Nutrition, Yoga, and Treatment. Rather than treat symptoms superficially, they are dealt with at root level by restoring the balance of Doshas by means of targeted therapies and remedies. The comprehensive programme ranges from the AyurDetox short detox treatments and Fountain of Youth Rejuvenation Weeks to the Rasayana and Panchakarma treatments. Ayurvedic beauty treatments and new forms of therapy, e.g. crystal light therapy and the Stimularium®, supplement the spectrum of services available at the AyurvedaCentre. At all times during their stay, guests are given advice and encouragement by the Sonnhof team of experts, which includes Ayurveda specialist Gaurav Sharma from India and Dr (med) Alaettin Sinop, a conventional GP and specialist in naturopathic medicine. A fully supervised Yoga and meditation programme forms a daily part of any treatment option at the Sonnhof. The Ayurveda Resort's own culinary brand, European Ayurvedic Cuisine®, forms another fundamental component of the Sonnhof which takes into account the nutritional principles of Ayurveda and appeals to European tastes by utilising first-class products sourced from the Resort's own organic farm as well as the region's markets and food producers.

www.sonnhof-ayurveda.at | Download photos: <http://bit.ly/1zuKPPH>

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