

Healthy Daily Rhythms and Family Life

By Margo Shapiro Bachman, MA

Our everyday activities have a direct influence on our health. *Dinacharya* is the Sanskrit word for “daily routine.” Dina means “day” and charya means “moving” or “following,” so the phrase translates as “following the day.” Flowing with the natural rhythms and cycles of the sun, moon, and earth, and understanding their fluctuations bring us toward our healthiest, happiest, and most natural state.

Ayurveda offers guidelines for daily rhythms to help to keep stress at bay, maximize immunity, keep digestion strong, and increase resistance to disease. What follows are general guidelines for all doshic types and there are also specific ones for each dosha (Vata, Pitta and Kapha).

General Daily Guidelines for Everyone

- Wake with the sun.
- Go to the bathroom and empty your bladder and colon.
- Scrape your tongue, brush your teeth, and gargle with salt water.
- Rinse your nostrils with a neti pot.
- Drink a glass of room temperature or warm water.
- Do self-massage and bathe.
- Perform some kind of spiritual practice (asana, pranayama, meditation, chanting, prayer) or physical exercise.
- Eat breakfast in a calm, relaxed setting.
- Work, study, or perform other responsibilities.
- Eat lunch in a calm, relaxed setting.

- Continue work or other duties from the morning.
- Perform some kind of spiritual practice (asana, pranayama, meditation, chanting, prayer) or exercise.
- Eat dinner in a calm, relaxed setting.
- Spend time with family or friends, relax, or read.
- Go to sleep before 10 p.m.

When you have children, your daily rhythms can easily fall by the wayside. If you need to wake during the night to feed your baby, sleeping in later in the morning may be essential. You may have a toddler who requires your help in the mornings, which can throw a wrench into your daybreak practices. Anyone with school-age children knows the morning busyness of preparing breakfast, school lunches, and getting the children ready for the day. The focus of those precious early hours previously devoted to self-care is replaced with caring for your family, unless you wake up quite early. But it all becomes easier once your children reach a certain age.

- **Do the best you can!** Pick and choose the practices that support you the most. Squeeze in what you can and let go of the rest. Do not berate yourself for not following all the guidelines you would like every day. Being a present, loving parent is most important.
- **Integrate your children** into your daily rhythms and encourage them to participate in their own way. This can help build a bridge between your self-care and caring for your family. When my daughter was three, she loved to do self-massage with me. I would set out a big towel on the bathroom floor along with a jar of coconut oil. We had so much fun massaging ourselves, then jumping into the bath or shower together. Children are such tactile creatures and love to play with sticky, gooey substances. I remember the first time we did this together; she could not believe we could play with creamy oil and rub it all over our bodies.
- **Subtly teach** and watch your children learn by example. When they see how you

care for yourself, they will naturally want to mirror you. While at times I prefer to practice yoga and meditation alone in a quiet space, it's not always possible. Sharing these practices has other benefits for my children and me, including the sense of closeness it creates and exposing them to these practices from a young age.

- **Set the tone.** Little things like eating in calm, relaxed settings can be difficult with busy, young children. Light a candle and say a prayer of thanks, as a family, before your meal. This can at least help encourage a peaceful mealtime.
- **Create your own** healthy rituals for yourself and children based on the support you need for wellness. This is also a fantastic way to tailor dinacharya to your particular needs.

A daily routine is not meant to be a monotonous habit or rigid restriction, but an essential and enjoyable part of your life that brings a deeper sense of health. Change a few things at a time and notice how you feel and changes in your children, and then gradually incorporate what works for you and your family into your day. If changes are adopted slowly, over time their benefits will be sustained. After a while, these activities will become second nature as you and your children move into a life of more harmony and balance. These Ayurvedic self-care rituals can encourage stability in body, mind, and spirit, especially when yoga, mantra, and meditation are emphasized.

MARGO SHAPIRO BACHMAN, MA, is a mother of two, a nationally certified Ayurvedic practitioner, and a RYT500 registered yoga teacher. She has studied and practiced Western herbal medicine, yoga, and meditation for over 20 years, and received more than a decade of extensive Ayurvedic training. Her private practice and teaching focus on women's and children's health. She is the author of *Yoga Mama Yoga Baby: Ayurveda and Yoga for a Healthy Pregnancy and Birth*. See margoshapirobachman.com.

