

Straight to the (MARMA) POINT

Giving yourself a facial massage can release tension throughout your mind and body. Ayurvedic expert **Mira Manek** shows us just how easy it is...

WE HOLD A LOT of tension in our jaws because we often clench them when anxious or scared or stressed; sometimes a misalignment in our bodies can start in the jaw. Gently massaging the jaw can release some of this tension. It may not be practical to do this every day, so I suggest two or three times a week. I use a gentle Ayurvedic face oil but coconut, almond or any other oil is also suitable. Use just a small amount and wipe your face with a hot towel afterwards.

- Place your fingers on your forehead and use your thumbs to massage your jaw gently, starting at the top of your jaw by your ears, then moving downwards towards the chin. You could also use your knuckles to do this, going back and forth from ear to chin, massaging the entire jaw.
- Gently massage around your eyes, then pinch the brows between your index finger and thumb, and move across from the inner to the outer edges, squeezing each part of the brow. Apply as much pressure as feels right in each area.
- Make this a regular evening habit while you stretch your back, roll the shoulders and rotate the neck, so that you're always relaxing the face along with your stretching routine before you sleep. Be very gentle if you have acne because massage can be painful –

you might want to avoid face massage altogether because touching the face can spread bacteria.

In Ayurveda, there are certain marma [energy] points in the face, which correspond to different parts of the body and their functions (see below). While the points in the feet and hands are much more effective to help rectify problems and ease certain issues in the body (reflexology), getting into the habit of massaging points on the face can be a relaxing and rejuvenating practice for daily life.

Marma points to try:

- 1 Hanu:** in the middle of the chin, to improve circulation to the face and connect with inner feelings.
- 2 Gandu:** halfway up the nose on either side, to clear the sinuses and brighten the eyes.
- 3 Apanga:** in the outer corner of each eye; press away from the eye to help relieve eye strain.
- 4 Ashru Madhya:** below the inner edges of the eyebrows in the inner corner of the eye socket. Gently press away from the eye towards the top of the head to help ease eye strain and headaches.
- 5 Mantha:** on the side of the neck, 4 finger-widths below the earlobes, for circulation and to stimulate the lymph.
- 6 Karnamula:** behind the ear lobe, where the ear meets the jaw; good for ear congestion, jaw tension and anxiety.

What are marma points?

Marma comes from the Sanskrit word 'mru', to kill. Years ago, warriors had knowledge of these points in order to kill their enemies, but this knowledge was also utilised by physicians for healing the wounded. The focus of marma-point massage is to manipulate the prana [energy] and on a physical level, to alleviate stiff muscles and boost circulation. There are said to be 107 marma points on the body, with the mind as the 108th. Massage of these points, called marma therapy, removes blockages and opens up the energy channels in the body.

I first did marma therapy in an Ayurvedic resort in Kerala and felt an intense relief throughout the process. The therapy was strong and quite painful, but the good kind of pain. Afterwards I had a feeling of utter lightness, a new sense of freedom and movement. Choose a practitioner carefully – there aren't many proper marma practitioners around and you really need someone who knows what they're doing.



Extracted from Mira Manek's new book **Prajna: Ayurvedic Rituals for Happiness** (Headline Home, £12.99)