



BEGINNER'S GUIDE

Shatkarma

The six classical yogic cleansing techniques — what they are, why yogis have practiced them for centuries, and how to begin safely at home.

"Reclaim your breath. Reclaim your life."

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WELCOME

What Is Shatkarma?

"Shatkarma" (also spelled Shatkriya) means "six actions" — a set of classical purification techniques from the Hatha Yoga tradition, first systematically described in texts like the Hatha Yoga Pradipika. Long before yoga became known for postures, it was understood as a science of cleansing and preparing the body for deeper breathwork and meditation.

The Six Classical Kriyas

1. Neti

Nasal cleansing — clearing the nasal passages with water or a soft thread.

2. Dhauti

Cleansing of the digestive tract, from the mouth down through the stomach.

3. Nauli

Abdominal massaging and churning of the core muscles and organs.

4. Basti

A yogic cleanse of the lower colon, traditionally done with water.

5. Kapalabhati

"Skull-shining breath" — forceful, rhythmic exhalations that clear the lungs and sinuses.

6. Trataka

Concentrated gazing, usually at a candle flame, to steady and cleanse the mind.

Why practice Shatkarma? Each kriya targets a physical system — sinuses, digestive tract, core, colon, lungs, or eyes/mind — clearing out what the tradition calls accumulated waste (ama) so that breath and energy can move more freely. Many practitioners also report clearer breathing, better digestion, more energy, and a calmer mind.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

General Guidelines & Precautions

Shatkarma techniques are gentle when practiced correctly, but they interact directly with sensitive systems — the sinuses, digestion, and pressure in the head and chest. A little preparation goes a long way.

Good Practice Habits

- ✓ Practice on an **empty stomach** — first thing in the morning is ideal.
- ✓ Use **lukewarm, clean water** for any water-based kriya — never cold or hot.
- ✓ Start with the **gentlest version** of each technique and progress slowly over weeks.
- ✓ Learn advanced kriyas (Dhauti, Nauli, Basti) **in person from a qualified teacher** before attempting them alone.
- ✓ Stop immediately if you feel **pain, dizziness, or panic** — ease is the goal, not force.

Who Should Be Cautious

Speak with a doctor before starting Shatkarma if you are pregnant, have high or low blood pressure, epilepsy, a hernia, recent abdominal surgery, active sinus infections, ear conditions, glaucoma, or any heart condition. These techniques are a complement to medical care, never a replacement for it.

This guide is educational, not medical advice.

If you have any health condition, consult a physician before beginning a Shatkarma practice.

KRIYA 01

Neti — Nasal Cleansing

Neti clears the nasal passages of dust, allergens, and excess mucus, supporting the kind of easy nasal breathing your whole nervous system relies on. The beginner-friendly version is **Jala Neti**, using a neti pot and warm saline water.

Best time	Morning, before breakfast, or before pranayama practice
You'll need	A neti pot, non-iodized salt, and lukewarm filtered or boiled-then-cooled water
Benefits	Clearer sinuses, reduced congestion and allergy symptoms, easier nasal breathing

How To Practice Jala Neti

- 1 Dissolve about **¼ teaspoon of non-iodized salt** into one cup of lukewarm water — it should taste like tears, not the sea.
- 2 Lean over a sink and **tilt your head sideways**, keeping your mouth open and breathing through your mouth.
- 3 Place the spout of the neti pot gently in your **upper nostril** and let the water flow in and drain out of the lower nostril.
- 4 Use half the water on one side, then **switch nostrils** and repeat.
- 5 Afterward, gently exhale through both nostrils several times to **clear remaining water**. Never blow forcefully.

Beginner tip: Water should never trickle down the back of your throat. If it does, adjust the tilt of your head slightly forward and to the side.

Kapalabhati — Skull-Shining Breath

Kapalabhati uses short, forceful exhales through the nose, powered by the lower belly, followed by passive inhales. It energizes the body, clears the lungs and sinuses, and builds heat.

Best time	Morning, on an empty stomach, seated comfortably with a tall spine
Duration	Beginners: 1–3 rounds of 20 breaths, resting between rounds
Benefits	Clears airways, energizes, strengthens the diaphragm and core, sharpens focus

How To Practice

- 1 Sit tall in a comfortable cross-legged position. Take a **relaxed breath in** to begin.
- 2 **Sharply contract your lower belly**, pushing air out through the nose in a short, active burst.
- 3 Let the **inhale happen passively** as your belly relaxes — don't force it.
- 4 Repeat at a steady rhythm for **15–20 breaths**, then release and breathe normally for a few rounds.
- 5 Rest, then repeat for **1–2 more rounds** as comfortable.

Skip this practice if: you are pregnant, have high blood pressure, a hernia, or recent abdominal surgery.

Trataka — Candle Gazing

Trataka is a meditative gazing practice, traditionally done on a candle flame. It steadies wandering attention, strengthens the eyes, and is often used to prepare the mind for deeper meditation.

Best time	Evening, in a dim, draft-free room
You'll need	A candle, placed at eye level about an arm's length away
Benefits	Improved focus and concentration, reduced mental chatter, eye strengthening

How To Practice

- 1 Sit comfortably with the candle flame at **eye level**, roughly an arm's length away.
- 2 Gaze softly at the **tip of the flame** without straining, blinking as needed at first.
- 3 As you settle, try to **reduce blinking** and let your gaze rest fully on the flame for 30–60 seconds.
- 4 **Close your eyes** and visualize the afterimage of the flame between your eyebrows.
- 5 When the image fades, **open your eyes and repeat** for 3–5 rounds total.

Beginner tip: If your eyes water, that's normal and part of the cleansing effect. Never strain — soft, steady attention works better than intense staring.

The Advanced Kriyas: Dhauti, Nauli & Basti

These three techniques work directly and physically with the digestive tract, core organs, and colon. They're powerful — and best learned face-to-face with an experienced teacher rather than from a guide alone. Here's what to know before you seek instruction.

Dhauti — Digestive Tract Cleansing

Dhauti covers several techniques for cleansing the mouth, throat, and stomach — from tongue cleaning (a gentle version anyone can do daily) to more advanced practices like Vamana Dhauti, which involves drinking water and gently expelling it. Beginners can safely adopt daily tongue scraping; the deeper stomach-cleansing variations should only be learned in person.

Nauli — Abdominal Churning

Nauli involves isolating and rolling the abdominal muscles to massage the digestive organs. It requires a strong foundation in Kapalabhati and Uddiyana Bandha (abdominal lock) before attempting it, and is almost always taught hands-on so a teacher can check your technique.

Basti — Yogic Colon Cleanse

Basti is a traditional internal cleansing technique for the lower colon, historically performed using water drawn in through the rectum while seated in water, using core muscle control. It requires expert supervision and is not a do-it-yourself home practice.

Our recommendation: Build a steady foundation with Neti, Kapalabhati, and Trataka first. When you're ready for Dhauti, Nauli, or Basti, join a live YogFit Wellness Academy session so we can guide you safely, one-on-one.

GETTING STARTED

Your First 4 Weeks

Shatkarma rewards patience. This gentle on-ramp introduces one beginner-friendly kriya at a time so your body can adjust.

Week 1 — Neti

Practice Jala Neti each morning. Focus purely on comfort and technique — there's no rush.

Week 2 — Neti + Trataka

Keep your morning Neti practice going, and add a short Trataka session (3 rounds) in the evening.

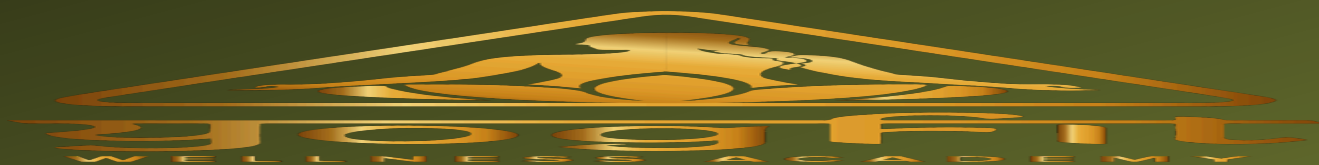
Week 3 — Add Kapalabhati

Introduce 1 round of 15–20 Kapalabhati breaths after Neti, once you're breathing easily through both nostrils.

Week 4 — Full Beginner Routine

Morning: Neti, then 2 rounds of Kapalabhati. Evening: 5 rounds of Trataka. Notice how your breath, focus, and energy have shifted.

After week 4: If this practice feels good in your body, you're ready to explore a live class with YogFit Wellness Academy — including safe, guided introductions to Dhauti, Nauli, and Basti.



About YogFit Wellness Academy

YogFit Wellness Academy teaches classical yogic practices — breathwork, cleansing techniques, and meditation — in a clear, modern, and safe way. This guide is just the beginning of what's possible when you reconnect with your breath.

"Reclaim your breath. Reclaim your life."

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