

## 17. Application of medicated oils: Selection, heating, and benefits

### Medicated Oils in Kalari Uzhichil

#### Principles of Selection · Heating · Therapeutic Benefits

##### 1. Why Oil Is Central to Kalari Healing

Kalari Uzhichil is performed “on a river of oil.” Warm, herb-infused lipids **reduce friction, dissolve fat-soluble phyto-actives**, and act as a *vāhana* (vehicle) that drives medicinal molecules through the skin’s sebaceous ducts into deeper tissues. Properly chosen oil moderates **doṣa imbalances**, improves fascial glide, and preserves joint cartilage—key demands for both martial training and rehabilitation.

##### 2. Selection Logic — Matching Oil to Body, Season, and Condition

###### 1. Base Lipid

- **Sesame (tila)** — light, penetrative, warming; default base for Vāta and Kapha disorders.
- **Coconut** — cooling, emollient; pacifies Pitta and summer heat.
- **Castor (eranda)** — heavy, smooth; excellent for Kapha stiffness but used sparingly due to viscosity.

###### 2. Herbal Payload

- **Anti-inflammatory** – *Murivenna, Dhanvantaram* (dashamūla + bala) for sprains, post-sparring micro-tears.
- **Warming & Circulatory** – *Kottamchukkādi* (ginger-containing) for Kapha sluggish limbs and cold Vāta cramps.
- **Nerve-soothing** – *Sahacharādi, Bala-Āśvagandhā* for sciatica, paresthesia, postural tremors.
- **Cooling & Pitta-balancing** – *Pinda taila* (manjistha + sariva) for tendinitis with redness or heat.

###### 3. Client & Context Filters

- **Doṣa dominance** — Vāta clients crave warmth and viscosity; Pitta needs cooling and moderate depth; Kapha requires light oil or even dry brushing before oil application.
- **Age & Tissue State** — Children and elderly absorb oil faster but tolerate less depth; choose mildly medicated, medium-warm blends.
- **Training Phase** — Pre-fight oils emphasise heat and quick absorption (*Kottamchukkādi*); post-fight formulations shift to anti-inflammatory (*Murivenna*).
- **Season** — Monsoon sessions adopt *Karkidaka kizhi* oil blends that counter dampness; peak summer favours coconut-based coolants.

##### 3. Heating Protocols — Safety and Efficacy

###### 1. Indirect Water-Bath (Baine-Marie)

Pour oil into a steel beaker placed in a pot of simmering water. Target 38–42 °C (just above skin temperature). This avoids lipid scorching and preserves volatile aromatics.

###### 2. Earthen Pot on Low Flame

Traditional *kavu* practice; heat disperses evenly but requires constant stirring. Discontinue the moment tiny bubbles appear.

###### 3. Electric Oil-Warmer with Thermostat

Modern clinics employ 1 °C increments for batch consistency and medico-legal safety.

#### Key Rules

- Never microwave—creates hot pockets and degrades sesamol antioxidants.
- Test on therapist’s wrist before skin contact.



- Re-heat a single batch only once; dispose after 24 h to prevent rancidity.

#### 4. Application Technique

1. **Priming Swipe** – One thin coat rubbed briskly to open follicles.
2. **Therapeutic Layer** – Pooled oil (20–40 ml limb / 60 ml back) massaged with chosen tool (palm → forearm → thumb) in sequenced strokes.
3. **Reservoir Top-Up** – Add warm oil every 5–7 min to maintain film; temperature drop below 34 °C signals need for re-warm.
4. **Seal & Rest** – Light towel drape, 5-min stillness; encourages trans-follicular absorption and nervous-system integration.
5. **Optional Sudation (Sveda)** – Herbal steam or warm towel wrap mobilises deeper toxins, especially useful for Kapha oedema.

#### 5. Therapeutic Pay-offs

- **Vāta pacification** – Warmth + oil viscosity lubricate dry joints, quiet restless nerves, ease cracking sounds.
- **Pitta cooling & detox** – Coconut or manjistha-rich blends tame tissue heat, reduce inflammatory enzymes, lighten burning pain.
- **Kapha mobilisation** – Ginger-laden oils thin lymph, break adhesions, and stimulate sluggish circulation.
- **Myofascial Plasticity** – Continuous oil film allows longer strokes without drag, encouraging collagen realignment and improved range-of-motion.
- **Rapid Micro-Repair** – Antioxidant herbs (ashwagandha, bala) scavenge free radicals from high-intensity training.
- **Sensory Re-set** – Warm oil on skin activates C-tactile afferents, enhancing parasympathetic tone and sleep quality.

### Summary Tables

Table 1 — Dosha-Guided Oil Selection

Dominant Doṣa / Symptom	Base + Key Herbs	Texture & Temperature	Primary Actions
<b>Vāta</b> ↑ — cold, pain, spasms	Sesame + <i>bala</i> , <i>āśvagandhā</i> , <i>dashamūla</i> ( <i>Dhanvantaram taila</i> )	Thick, 40 °C	Lubricates joints, calms nerves
<b>Pitta</b> ↑ — heat, redness, tendinitis	Coconut-ghee + <i>manjistha</i> , <i>sariva</i> ( <i>Pinda taila</i> )	Medium, 34–36 °C	Cools tissue, detoxifies blood
<b>Kapha</b> ↑ — heaviness, edema	Sesame-mustard + <i>ginger</i> , <i>kottam</i> ( <i>Kottamchukkādi taila</i> )	Light-medium, 42 °C	Thins lymph, invigorates circulation
<b>Post-trauma / Sprain</b>	Coconut-sesame + <i>tulasi</i> , <i>drumstick leaf</i> ( <i>Murivenna</i> )	Medium, 38 °C	Anti-inflammatory, speeds granulation

Table 2 — Heating Methods vs. Risk

Method	Temp Control	Aroma Retention	Risk Factor	Best Use Case
Water-bath beaker	Excellent ±1 °C	High	Minimal	Clinical batches, sensitive oils
Clay pot low flame	Moderate (visual cue)	High	Over-thickening if unattended	Traditional settings, aromatic oils
Electric warmer	Precision digital	Medium	Carbonisation if oil runs dry	Busy spa, multiple clients
Microwave (avoid)	Uneven	Low	Hot spots, oxidation	Not recommended



**Table 3 — Classical Kalari Oil Cheat-Sheet**

Oil Name	Classical Reference	Signature Herbs	Core Indications
<b>Dhanvantaram</b>	Aṣṭāṅga Hṛdaya	Dashamūla, Bala, Yashti	Vāta disorders, prenatal back pain
<b>Kottamchukkādi</b>	Sahasrayoga	Ginger, Costus ( <i>kottam</i> ), Camphor	Kapha myalgia, cold limb fatigue
<b>Murivenna</b>	Kerala folklore	Drumstick leaf, Tūlasi, Betel leaf	Acute sprain, ligament tear
<b>Sahacharādi</b>	Aṣṭāṅga Saṅgraha	Sahachara, Devadāru, Tāgara	Sciatica, peripheral neuropathy
<b>Pinda</b>	Bhaishajya Ratnāvali	Manjistha, Sariva, Sarjarasa	Tendinitis, burning soles

#### Key Take-Aways

1. **Right oil + right heat = half the cure.** Temperature modulates viscosity and dermal penetration; choose both consciously.
2. **Dosha and tissue state trump “one-size-fits-all.”** Tailor base lipid, herbal payload, and stroke rhythm to the receiver’s constitution and condition.
3. **Safety before aroma.** Preserve phytochemicals with gentle heat, discard oxidised batches, and patch-test sensitive skin.
4. **Therapist endurance matters.** Warm oil lowers required stroke force, protecting the practitioner’s wrists and thumbs during long Kalari sessions.

Applied skilfully, medicated oils transform Kalari Uzhichil from a mere massage into a **phytochemical-driven, dosha-specific treatment**—merging ancient plant wisdom with precise manual therapy for rapid, sustained recovery.