



## 7. Foundational strokes (thirumu, eduthu thirumu, akam thirumu)

### Foundational Strokes in Kalari Uzhichil

(Thirumu, Eduthu Thirumu, Akam Thirumu—what they are, how to do them, and when to use them)

#### 1) Why these three strokes matter -

These are the **base grammar** of Kalari Uzhichil. Done well, they:

1. spread and warm oil, 2) hydrate fascia and improve glide, 3) guide venous-lymph return, 4) modulate autonomic tone, and 5) prepare tissues for precise **marma** work. Master their **pressure, direction, and intention** and the rest of your techniques become safer and more effective.

#### 2) Thirumu – the long gliding stroke

**Definition** - A smooth, continuous glide delivered with palm or forearm, typically **along the muscle/fascial line** and **toward the heart** on limbs.

**Primary aims** - Warm and spread oil, reduce surface drag, encourage venous/lymph return, and switch the client toward parasympathetic tone.

**Tools & contact** - Palm pads (thenar/hypothenar) for general use; flat or ulnar forearm for larger regions (thighs, back); feather-finger finish at transitions.

**Pressure & tempo** - Light→moderate depth, **2-3 cm/s** surface speed; sink to **one-third tissue depth** at most; keep perceived intensity  $\leq 4/10$ .

##### Direction cues -

- Limbs: **distal → proximal**; finish each region with two long returns to the inguinal or axillary “gates.”
- Trunk/back: along-fibre with gentle **oblique spirals** over ribs to respect natural helical lines.

**Breath & pacing** - Enter depth on the client’s **exhale**; lighten on the inhale; maintain an unbroken rhythm.

**Body mechanics** - Lunge stance for long returns, shoulders relaxed, wrists neutral; drive from the **rear foot**, not the arms.

**Where it shines** - First minutes of any session; decongesting heavy limbs (Kapha states); preparing the field before marma holds; post-training DOMS flushing.

##### Common errors & fixes -

- Sliding on too much oil → use a **thin film first**, top up every 5-7 minutes.
- Pushing with arms → step closer, hinge at hips, **glide from body weight**.
- Skipping proximal clear → spend **30-45 s** with light skin-stretch at axilla/inguinal before heavy returns.

#### 3) Eduthu Thirumu – the pick-up knead

**Definition** - “Eduthu” means **to lift/pick up**. This is a **lift-roll-replace** stroke that gently **picks up** the soft tissue from the underlying layer and **kneads** it between palm/thenar pads or thumb-fingers.

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**Primary aims** - Free superficial fascial adhesions, **increase local circulation**, soften guarded muscle bellies without provoking stretch-reflex.

**Tools & contact** - Bilateral hands alternating; for larger muscles (quadriceps, gastrocs) use both palms in a rolling sequence; for smaller areas (forearm flexors) use thumb-finger pinch with **broad pads**, not tips.

**Pressure & tempo** - Moderate, elastic; **1-2 lifts per second** in a steady rhythm; intensity **3-5/10**; avoid pinching pain.

**Direction cues** -

- Along-fibre first, then **short cross-fibre lifts** over mature adhesions only.
- Always replace the tissue **toward proximal** to assist return.

**Breath & pacing** - Lift on exhale, replace on micro-inhale; keep cadence even to avoid bruising.

**Body mechanics** - Horse stance; elbows soft; wrists straight; move your **whole torso** slightly with each lift to spare the hands.

**Where it shines** - Thighs, calves, gluteals, parascapular region; waking up **Kapha-heavy** tissue; mid-session after Thirumu has warmed the field.

**Common errors & fixes** -

- Pinch pain → broaden contact; slow tempo; add oil.
- Sliding instead of lifting → reduce oil; dry your fingertips; **think "scoop up-roll-set down."**
- Over a varicose vein → **avoid**; treat surrounding tissue only.

## 4) Akam Thirumu — the inner (medial) spiral/sweep

**Definition** - "Akam" means **inner/within**. This is a **medial-directed sweep or spiral** that **draws tissue toward the midline** or a central node (e.g., Nābhi, Hṛidaya) using broad palm or heel of hand. It integrates periphery with core and is the classic stroke for **abdominal/chest calming** and **joint centring**.

**Primary aims** - Encourage **midline coherence**, calm viscera and diaphragm, organise scapular/hip tissues **toward the socket**, and prepare/close **agni** marmas with **broad, non-jabbing** contact.

**Tools & contact** - Broad palm, heel of hand, or flat forearm (abdomen/back); feather fingertips around face/upper chest.

**Pressure & tempo** - Light→light-moderate, **slow (0.5-1 cm/s)**; emphasis on **direction and breath** more than depth; intensity **≤ 3-4/10**.

**Direction cues** -

- Abdomen: **clockwise spirals** that narrow gently **toward Nābhi**, never pressing vertically.
- Chest: sweeping **lateral → medial** arcs that meet softly over the sternum (**Hṛidaya**) on exhale.
- Shoulder/hip: **lateral tissues drawn "inward"** toward the joint centre while the limb is positioned neutrally.

**Breath & pacing** - Always time entry with the **exhale**; hold stillness for **one breath** at the centre; release slower than entry.

**Body mechanics** - Horse stance for trunk; torso close; elbows soft; the **whole body** follows the spiral to keep contact smooth.

**Where it shines** - Anxiety, apical breathing, postural de-centring of shoulder/hip, session **opening/closure** to integrate work.

**Common errors & fixes** -

- Pressing vertically on **Hridaya/Nābhi** → switch to **broad, shallow** contact; feel for soft pulse—not pressure.
- Going too fast → slow to the client's breath; **exhale-led** movement only.
- After big meals/reflux → elevate head/torso; keep very light; shorten duration.

## 5) Putting the three together — default mini-sequences

### A) Lower limb flush (5-7 min/leg) -

1. **Thirumu** distal→proximal (2-3 passes).
2. **Eduthu Thirumu** along quads/calf (1-2 minutes).
3. **Thirumu** long return to inguinal (1-2 passes).
4. **Akam Thirumu** short medial sweep at thigh root to “dock” into pelvis (20-30 s).  
**Outcome** - lighter leg, warmer foot, easier knee tracking.

### B) Abdomen & chest calm (6-8 min) -

1. **Thirumu** broad clockwise belly sweep (1 min).
2. **Akam Thirumu** narrowing spirals toward **Nābhi** (2-3 min).
3. **Thirumu** intercostal glides on exhale (1-2 min).
4. **Akam Thirumu** lateral→medial chest sweeps ending in **Hridaya** hold (1-2 min).  
**Outcome** - longer exhale, softened jaw, steadier pulse.

### C) Scapular reset (5-6 min/side) -

1. **Thirumu** parascapular long glides.
2. **Eduthu Thirumu** pick-up kneads over rhomboids/infraspinatus.
3. **Akam Thirumu** draw lateral tissues **inward** toward the glenoid; finish with short **Thirumu** outflow to arm.  
**Outcome** - freer abduction, less neck drag.

## 6) Dosha-guided modulation

### Vāta↑ (cold, tense) -

- **Thirumu** - slower, warmer, longer returns.
- **Eduthu Thirumu** - gentle, fewer lifts; avoid fast tempo.
- **Akam Thirumu** - prolonged, soothing spirals at abdomen/feet.

### Pitta↑ (hot, irritable) -

- **Thirumu** - even tempo, neutral-cool oil; avoid friction.
- **Eduthu Thirumu** - minimal; keep depth light-moderate.
- **Akam Thirumu** - brief chest-centre seals; cool cloth ready.

### Kapha↑ (heavy, puffy) -

- **Thirumu** - brisker light strokes; more passes.
- **Eduthu Thirumu** - energetic, rhythmic lifts to wake tissue.
- **Akam Thirumu** - short, crisp inward sweeps; seated finish to avoid drowsiness.

## 7) Safety & clinical notes

**Varicose veins** - use **Thirumu** around the area only; **no** Eduthu Thirumu directly over veins.

**Acute inflammation/trauma** - avoid Eduthu Thirumu and strong Thirumu; use cooling oil and distal drainage first.

**Agni marmas (Hridaya, Nābhi)** - **Akam Thirumu** must stay **broad and breath-timed**; never jab or hold vertical pressure.

**Neuropathy/fragile skin** - lighten all strokes; more **Thirumu**, minimal Eduthu Thirumu.

**Pregnancy** - abdomen **very light** and only if comfortable; prefer side-lying; avoid deep medial sweeps near groin.

## Summary Tables

### A) Quick spec sheet

Stroke	Definition	Aim	Best tools	Tempo	Depth (max)
<b>Thirumu</b>	Long, continuous glide	Warm, drain, parasympathetic shift	Palm / forearm	2-3 cm/s	1/3 tissue
<b>Eduthu Thirumu</b>	Lift-roll-replace	Free superficial adhesions, perfuse	Palms / thumb-fingers	1-2 lifts/s	1/3 tissue
<b>Akam Thirumu</b>	Medial spiral/sweep	Midline integration, visceral calm	Palm / heel / forearm	0.5-1 cm/s	Light-moderate

### B) Region-by-region guidance

Region	Thirumu	Eduthu Thirumu	Akam Thirumu	Notes
Feet-calves	Distal→proximal long returns	Calf bellies only	Short medial sweep at knee root	Avoid varicosities
Thighs	Long along-fibre passes	Rolling kneads quads/adductors	Inward sweep to groin	Clear inguinals first
Abdomen	Broad clockwise	Minimal or none	Narrowing spirals to <b>Nābhi</b>	No vertical pressure
Chest	Intercostal glides on exhale	None or very light	Lateral→medial to <b>Hridaya</b>	Keep cool if Pitta↑
Back	Paraspinal long glides	Parascapular kneads	Inward draw toward spine	Avoid direct spinous pressure
Shoulder/hip	Along-fibre cuff/hip glides	Local kneads	Inward centring toward socket	Pair with joint positioning

### C) Common errors → quick fixes

Error	Why it's a problem	Fix
Too much oil too early	Lose tissue feel	Thin film first; top-up later
Pinching during Eduthu	Triggers guarding	Broaden contact; slow cadence
Fast Akam spirals	Overstimulates	Match to exhale; slow down
Skipping proximal clear	Fluid congestion	Prepare axilla/inguinal 30-45 s
Arm-driven Thirumu	Therapist strain	Drive from legs/hips; neutral wrists

### D) Dosha modulation at-a-glance

Dosha state	Oil temp	Thirumu	Eduthu Thirumu	Akam Thirumu
Vāta↑	Warm	Slow, long	Gentle, sparse	Prolonged, soothing
Pitta↑	Neutral-cool	Even, non-friction	Minimal	Brief, light centre holds
Kapha↑	Warm-hot	Brief Brisk, many passes	Energetic	Short, crisp inward sweeps



## Key take-aways

1. **Thirumu sets the stage, Eduthu Thirumu changes texture, and Akam Thirumu integrates the system**—use them in that order unless a clinical reason says otherwise.
2. **Keep depth within one-third of tissue**, match tempo to the client's **exhale**, and always **clear proximals** before heavy limb work.
3. **Direction matters:** Thirumu flows to the heart, Eduthu returns tissue proximal after each lift, Akam gathers **toward the midline**.
4. Fewer, cleaner passes done with excellent **mechanics and breath** beat many fast, sloppy strokes—every time.