



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.



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, Hridaya) 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** maras 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 (**Hridaya**) 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 **Hṛidaya/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 **Hṛidaya** 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 (Hṛdaya, 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)
Thirumu	Long, continuous glide	Warm, drain, parasympathetic shift	Palm / forearm	2-3 cm/s	1/3 tissue
Eduthu Thirumu	Lift-roll-replace	Free superficial adhesions, perfuse	Palms / thumb-fingers	1-2 lifts/s	1/3 tissue
Akam Thirumu	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 Nābhi	No vertical pressure
Chest	Intercostal glides on exhale	None or very light	Lateral→medial to Hṛdaya	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.