



## Unit 2: Base Oils and Their Therapeutic Properties

### PAPER 7 — Herbal Preparations & Oils

## Unit 2: Base Oils and Their Therapeutic Properties

(Sesame • Coconut • Castor • Mustard • Extraction & prep • Doṣa selection • Seasonal use • Carrier vs. medicated oils)

### 1) Overview of commonly used base oils (what they feel like and what they do)

**Sesame (Tila taila).** The classical workhorse for external therapy. Naturally warm, moderately viscous, and deeply penetrating when gently heated. Under the hands it feels **silky-grippy** (good tissue purchase without drag), making it ideal for **Vāta** states—cold, dry, twitchy tissues that need uncton and steadiness. Excellent vehicle for **warming, mobilising** formulas (e.g., spice-aromatic blends).

**Coconut (Nārikela taila).** Cool, smooth, and softening, with a light initial slip that quickly becomes **even and calm**. Favoured for **Pitta** presentations—heat, redness, irritability, reactive skin—or hot climates and summer sessions. Straight coconut can feel a little “still”; therapists often pair it with slow, even pacing rather than brisk friction.

**Castor (Eraṇḍa taila).** Heavy, highly viscous, strongly unctuous. Feels **dense and anchoring**; excellent to **disperse deep congestion** and hold heat in cooler tissues, but too occlusive for full-body use. Best for **local** applications (peri-joint rings, chronic adhesions) or as a **10-25% blend** into sesame for short regions. Avoid on infected or macerated skin.

**Mustard (Sarṣapa taila).** Warm-pungent, lighter than castor but more stimulating than sesame. Creates a **tingling mobilising feel**; useful with **Kapha heaviness** and cold, puffy tissues in winter. It can irritate reactive skin; keep doses short, avoid face/neck, and never apply over hot inflamed joints.

Therapist’s rule of thumb:

**Sesame** = warm & deep; **Coconut** = cool & calming; **Castor** = heavy & anchoring (local); **Mustard** = warm & mobilising (short, selective).

### 2) Extraction and preparation techniques of base oils (how to get clean, potent, stable oils)

**Traditional/low-heat pressing (ghani / cold-pressed).** Seeds are crushed without external heat; yields retain more native antioxidants and aroma. Best base for medicated oils (taila) because they tolerate gentle **water-bath warming** and herbal processing without premature rancidity.

**Expeller-pressed (warm mechanical).** Slightly higher heat/pressure increases yield; still acceptable if **acid value** and **peroxide value** are low at purchase. Suits routine external use.

**Solvent-extracted / refined.** Maximises yield and removes odour/colour, but may strip beneficial companions (tocopherols, sterols). If used, choose reputable suppliers and reserve for **non-therapeutic** applications; not ideal for classical medicated taila.

#### Clinic preparation & handling (repeatable workflow):

1. **Inspect & log:** date, supplier, batch; check clarity and aroma (no painty/waxy notes).
2. **Settle & decant:** let particulates drop; decant to amber glass.
3. **Optional mūrchna (pre-purification):** gentle warming with detox herbs (traditional step) to improve stability and skin feel.
4. **Warm to use: 38-40 °C** via water bath; never direct flame.



5. **Post-session care:** strain any debris; top up bottles to minimise air headspace; store cool, dark.
6. **Shelf life:** fresh, unrefined oils perform best within **3-6 months** of clinic opening; smaller bottles reduce repeated heating-cooling cycles.

**Do not:** microwave, leave pumps uncapped, reheat the same bowl all day, or store oils in clear plastic exposed to light.

### 3) Selecting base oils for different body constitutions (Doṣa lens)

**Vāta (cold, dry, variable, easily over-aroused).**

- **Primary: Sesame** (warm, steady).
- **Adjunct:** add **10-25% castor** for dense adhesions; switch to **Kṣīra-processed sesame** (milk-processed) when Vāta mixes with Pitta irritability.
- **Technique pairing:** slow cadence, traction > compression, longer holds.

**Pitta (hot, irritable, reactive).**

- **Primary: Coconut** (cooling, softening).
- **Adjunct:** blend **coconut : sesame 2:1** if tissue is cool but guarded; finish with extra-light film to avoid occlusive heat.
- **Technique pairing:** even tempo, no friction heat, feather over head/parasternal fields.

**Kapha (heavy, cool-damp, puffy, sluggish).**

- **Primary: Sesame light film** or **mustard short-dose** for mobilising starts.
- **Adjunct:** brief **dry/steam primers** before oil; avoid castor except for tiny, stubborn foci.
- **Technique pairing:** brisk-light strokes, seated finishes.

**Mixed states (the norm):** treat **vikṛti** (current imbalance) first, then support **prakṛti** (constitution). Example: Pitta prakṛti with Vāta aggravation → use **warm sesame** for two or three sessions to settle Vāta, then return to **coconut-leaning** maintenance.

### 4) Seasonal considerations in oil usage (ṛtucaryā translated to the table)

- **Hemanta/Śiśira (late autumn-winter):** Cold, dry winds lift Vāta. Choose **sesame**; allow gentle heat; add a touch of **castor** for stubborn stiffness. Mustard may be used **briefly** for Kapha heaviness—watch skin reactivity.
- **Vasanta (spring):** Kapha melts: swelling, heaviness. Use **lighter sesame films**, short **mustard** primers, or brief **dry fomentation** before oil.
- **Griṣma (summer):** Heat rises with Pitta. Switch to **coconut** or **coconut-forward blends**; reduce heat and friction; schedule sessions earlier in the day.
- **Varṣā (monsoon):** Agni dips; tissues feel damp-cool but reactive. Keep **oil thin and warm**, prioritise **sesame**, avoid heavy occlusion; impeccable hygiene to prevent folliculitis.

Practical guardrail: adjust **one** of the four dose levers at a time—**concentration × area × time × temperature**—and reassess.

### 5) Carrier oils vs. medicated oils: application and absorption (how they behave on skin)

**Carrier (base) oils.** Pure sesame, coconut, castor, mustard, etc. They determine **temperature feel, slip, viscosity, and penetration rate**. Best for **baseline tissue goals** (warmth/cool, glide/grip) and for clients with sensitivities.



Absorption depends on **fatty-acid profile** (shorter chains absorb faster), **skin hydration**, **temperature**, and **massage duration**.

**Medicated oils (taila).** Base oil **cooked with herbal decoctions and pastes** until water is driven off and lipid-soluble actives bond to the oil. They add **specific actions**: decongesting, cooling, nourishing, wound-soothing, etc. Absorb **deeper or more purposefully** than the base alone when skin is warm and the oil is fresh. In practice:

- Use **carrier oil** to test tolerance and set global tissue state.
- Layer or switch to **medicated taila** for **targeted** regions once tissues accept touch.
- Keep medicated oils **thin** over **sūkṣma** (neurovascular) and **agni** fields so tactile detail is preserved.

**Fractionated coconut (MCT) & light blends (modern clinic note).** These are stable, non-staining carriers with fast slip; they lack the “heft” of traditional bases. Use for **sensitive skin** or **head/neck** where minimal residue is desired, but recognise they deliver less “body” than classical oils.

## Summary Tables (LMS quick-reference)

### A) Base oils at a glance

Base oil	Thermal feel	Viscosity/Grip	Best for	Use sparingly/avoid for
<b>Sesame</b>	Warm	Medium, good purchase	Vāta dryness/cold; general use	High-heat climates without Pitta control
<b>Coconut</b>	Cool	Light-medium, smooth	Pitta heat/reactive skin; summer	Very cold tissues needing deep warmth
<b>Castor</b>	Warm-neutral (holds heat)	<b>Heavy</b> , anchoring	Local adhesions, peri-joint rings	Full-body use; infected/macerated skin
<b>Mustard</b>	Warm-pungent	Light-medium, stimulating	Kapha heaviness, winter primers	Face/neck; inflamed/hot joints; eczema-prone skin

### B) Doṣa-guided selection

Doṣa tilt	Primary base	Optional blend	Technique cues
<b>Vāta</b> ↑	Sesame (warm)	+10–25% castor for density	Slow, traction, longer holds
<b>Pitta</b> ↑	Coconut (cool)	2:1 coconut:sesame if guarded	Even tempo, minimal friction
<b>Kapha</b> ↑	Sesame (thin film)	Short-dose mustard start	Brisk-light strokes, seated finish

### C) Season-wise oil guide

Season	Tissue tendency	Base choice	Notes
Winter	Cold, dry, stiff	Sesame; tiny castor for foci	Gentle heat OK
Spring	Heavy, puffy	Light sesame; brief mustard	Add dry/steam primer
Summer	Hot, reactive	Coconut or coconut-forward blend	Avoid heat/friction
Monsoon	Damp-cool, reactive	Warm thin sesame	Extra hygiene; thin films

### D) Extraction & prep checklist

Step	Standard
Source & log	Batch, supplier, date; inspect aroma/clarity
Decant & store	Amber glass; cool, dark; minimal headspace
Warm to use	38–40 °C water bath; never direct flame
Aftercare	Strain, recap, date; discard oxidised oil
Shelf life	3–6 months after opening (unrefined)



## E) Carrier vs. medicated oils

Type	What it's best for	When to switch
<b>Carrier</b>	Setting global thermal/viscosity feel; sensitivity testing	Once tissue accepts touch and you need specificity
<b>Medicated taila</b>	Targeted effects (decongest, soothe heat, nourish)	After warm-up; keep thin over sūkṣma/agni fields

## F) Safety & dosing (do this every time)

Item	Guardrail
Patch-test new oils	24 h inner forearm
Heat + pressure	<b>Never</b> stack over Hṛdaya, Nābhi, Basti, Ādhipati
Mustard	Short, selective; avoid reactive skin & face/neck
Castor	Local only; very thin film
Session dose	Adjust <b>one</b> : concentration / area / time / temperature
Exit check	No dizziness; skin comfortable; give simple after-care

## Key take-aways

1. Choose your **base** for **temperature feel and grip**, not habit: sesame warms and penetrates; coconut cools and calms; castor anchors locally; mustard mobilises briefly.
2. Think **dose** as a system: concentration × area × time × temperature. Change one lever at a time.
3. Treat the **current state (vikṛti)** first; let **prakṛti** and **season** guide maintenance.
4. Use **carrier oils** to set the field; bring in **medicated taila** for precise aims—always thin and fresh, with impeccable safety around high-risk regions.