

Tongue Scraping



The tongue is the entry way to the digestive system. In fact, it is the only part that is easily accessible and observable. Most of us don't generally think much about it, but there is much information that can be gained from examining the tongue. And by scraping the tongue as a part of our daily routine, we are affecting a positive influence within the entire body.

Tongue cleaning has been a recommended practice in Ayurveda for over 5,000 years. And yet, cleaning the tongue is a basic part of oral hygiene that the West has overlooked.

Why clean the tongue?

- **To remove accumulated “gunk.”** The body uses the tongue as one of its detoxification pathways, something you can attest to the morning after you eat a pint of ice cream. By using a tongue cleaner, you can easily remove the accumulated “gunk.”
- **To improve your breath and prevent infections.** Eighty percent of bad breath starts in the mouth, mainly on the tongue. The tongue harbors countless bacteria that can colonize to cause sore throats or worse. Because of this, the tongue is one of the main sources of bad breath and other infections in the mouth and throat. Use of a tongue cleaner helps to remove this bacteria and the phlegm that they live in.
- **To increase your sense of taste.** As you peel off layers of bacteria and phlegm from your taste buds, you will be able to taste your food with more acuity and pleasure.
- **To decrease plaque and oral debris.** The tongue is the main source of these, so by keeping the tongue clean we are reducing them within the mouth.
- **To stimulate bodily organs.** Scraping the tongue sends an indirect message to all the internal organs, and stimulates gastric fire and digestive enzymes.
- **To increase your awareness of the functions of your body.** When you scrape, you are also able to observe the tongue, which is an indicator of health within the body. This knowledge gives you the power to create better health by altering your behavior.

How do I scrape the tongue?

Use a tongue cleaner made of stainless steel, copper, silver or gold. You may also use a twig or a spoon. However, don't use your toothbrush, because this will just move the gunk around, driving it deeper into the tongue and embed it into your toothbrush. Gently scrape from the back or base of the tongue forward, until you have scraped the whole surface of the tongue nine times (or 7 to 14 times is fine).

After scraping, gargle with warm or room temperature water. On occasion, you may wish to gargle with salt water with a pinch of turmeric to keep your gums, mouth and throat healthy. Also, your daily routine should include brushing the teeth with a soft (not firm) toothbrush. The use of toothpastes and powders containing neem or tea tree oil is ideal. In addition, daily flossing is important.

Sources:
Ayurvedic Tongue Diagnosis, Walter Shantree Kacera, Ph.D.
Textbook of Ayurveda, Volume 2, Vasant Lad