

Now celeb health

My day as Gwyneth

Gwyneth Paltrow is a fan, but what's so alluring about ashtanga yoga, Ayurveda, acupuncture and Gyrotonics? We sent Jini Reddy to find out how to get healthy the Gwynnie way



7.30am Breakfast

Keyed up at the prospect of so much 'me time', I've barely slept and wake up bleary-eyed. Still, factoring in the night feeds with baby Apple, I feel Gwyneth and I are now on a level playing field.

A shower and a fortifying breakfast of porridge oats and blueberries later, I'm ready for the long trek into town – unlike Gwyneth, my postcode is more outer than inner London.

10am Yoga

Arrive at The Life Centre in Notting Hill, where everyone looks polished

and well-to-do and cradles a long bag filled with a yoga mat in their arms as if it were a baby. Instructor Kahti Goupil strides in. I tell her she looks fit (leaving out the word 'frighteningly'). The France-born teacher offers a Gallic shrug and rolls out her purple mat.

She teaches what she calls 'dynamic yoga', an offshoot of ashtanga. 'It's similar – postures are linked with the breath in a powerful, flowing style – but dynamic yoga is more tailored to the individual and the postures can differ from those used in ashtanga,' says Kahti.

When we start I feel stiff and

clumsy, but as she talks me through the downward dog, the tree pose and even a wobbly shoulder stand, my confidence grows. Kahti assures me yoga isn't about competitiveness or flexibility, but 'bringing self-awareness to the body, which in turn creates an awareness of others'. By the end of the class I feel lighter and taller and the tension I often have at the back of my neck and shoulders has disappeared. A private session is a wonderful luxury, but I suspect the pace is faster in a group class and doubt if I'd enjoy it as much.

Private lessons at The Life Centre start from £50 for an hour. Call 020-7221 4602 or visit www.thelifecentre.org.

12pm Ayurvedic consultation and lunch

Next I dash over to Wimpole Street in the West End to meet Gopi Warrior, chairman of the Ayurvedic Company of Great Britain. Ayurveda, he says, is an ancient Indian medical system – 'the oldest in the world, dating back to 3000BC'. To become a practitioner requires five and a half years' rigorous training, so

understandably he's fed up with the number of charlatans in the West 'who light an incense stick, give a light massage and call it Ayurveda'.

We're all a combination of energetic forces or 'doshas', known as pitta, vatta and kapha, explains Gopi. Restoring balance to our doshas is the key to good health and the aim of any Ayurvedic treatment. Therapies are wide-ranging and include massage, dietary regimes, meditation and herbal medicine. 'I can tell from your voice, the warmth of your skin, your pulse and your appearance that you're predominantly a vatta-kapha type,' he says. Broadly speaking this means I prefer hot weather; am eager, healthy but prone to stress; and have thick hair.

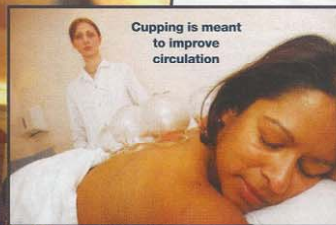
Lunch is delicious and designed to complement my doshas: curried potatoes with mustard seeds, basmati rice and a dessert of sago pudding. To cure my high blood pressure I'm advised to steer clear of chillis, cold 'fridge' food (though fresh is fine) and to take up yoga

and practise a form of meditation that involves staring at a candle. Despite eating a substantial meal, I don't feel at all bloated. Gopi inspires confidence, so I'm happy to try his advice. And who am I to argue with the world's oldest medical system? To find out more, contact the Ayurvedic Company of Great Britain on 020-7224 6070 or at www.ayurvedagb.com.

3pm Gyrotonics

After the meal I'm in no mood for exercise of any description. And, staring at the pulley, weights and wires contraption in Elaine Puren's studio in Bermondsey, I feel like I'm about to be hung, drawn and quartered. But Elaine gives me some good reasons to try it out: Gyrotonics will apparently release the tension in my body, strengthen my abdominal muscles and spine and increase the flexibility of my joints. Dancers, she says, are especially fond of Gyrotonics – and wouldn't we all like a dancer's poise and grace?

The hour-long session is a blur of manoeuvres. I sit on the wooden bench and, with Elaine's guidance, turn a wheel with my arm – it's akin to stirring a pot – while making a wave movement with my body. We repeat this over and over, until Elaine tees I'm performing the movement in a fluid motion. Next come arm twists that involve swinging from side to side while pulling weights. This move demands intense focus. I don't



Cupping is meant to improve circulation

feel any of the exhilaration that normally comes with exercise – until I lie on my back, stick my legs in the stirrups and watch them hanging weightlessly in the air, that is.

When we're done, I'm relieved. I lack the patience to learn the basics, but Gyrotonics will surely appeal to yoga and Pilates fans in search of a flat stomach and a fresh fix.

Elaine charges £40 per hour of tuition. Visit www.studio.seventyfour.co.uk.

5pm Cupping

After a long drive to north London, I arrive at health clinic Body Matters feeling shattered. Acupuncturist and practitioner of oriental medicine Amanda Cox takes a brief medical history and inspects my tongue and pulse – which she says is 'weak' and reflects my flagging energy levels. After that, I'm only too happy to fling myself on her treatment table.

Cupping, says Amanda, is an ancient Chinese technique that's traditionally used as part of acupuncture treatment.

Apparently it helps to improve circulation, relax tight or painful muscles and ease cold and flu symptoms. Which sounds blissful because right now my back is numb and stiff.

Amanda briefly inserts a flame into each of the cups – they look like little glass jam jars. Next she places the cups on my back and the vacuum created by the flame 'sucks' the skin upwards. 'This brings blood to the surface and improves circulation,' says Amanda. I feel as though I have an affectionate squid on my back – an odd but not painful sensation.

Sometimes Amanda gives a massage with the cups to stimulate qi (energy), but it's the end of a hectic day (for me) and she doesn't want to overload my system, so after just 10 minutes she removes them. Before getting dressed I look in the mirror and admire the big round, red blotches that remain. Despite the brevity of treatment, I feel surprisingly energised. For a while, anyway...

A cupping session costs £45. Call Amanda at Body Matters on 020-7419 7900. ■



Jini gives Gyrotonics a go to achieve the poise of a dancer

Gwynnie is clearly left glowing by the techniques on trial



Ayurveda encourages eating food that complements your doshas



A private session of dynamic yoga leaves Jini feeling taller and lighter