

Ayurveda



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Ayurveda – The Science of Life

Ayurveda is a 5,000-year-old system of natural healing that has its origins in the Vedic culture of India. Although suppressed during years of foreign occupation, Ayurveda has been enjoying a major resurgence in both its native land and throughout the world. Tibetan medicine and Traditional Chinese Medicine both have their roots in Ayurveda. Early Greek medicine also embraced many concepts originally described in the classical ayurvedic medical texts dating back thousands of years.

More than a mere system of treating illness, Ayurveda is a science of life (Ayur = life, Veda = science or knowledge). It offers a body of wisdom designed to help people stay vital while realizing their full human potential. Providing guidelines on ideal daily and seasonal routines, diet, behavior and the proper use of our senses, Ayurveda reminds us that health is the balanced and dynamic integration between our environment, body, mind, and spirit.

Recognizing that human beings are part of nature, Ayurveda describes three fundamental energies that govern our inner and outer environments: movement, transformation, and structure. Known in Sanskrit as Vata (Wind), Pitta (Fire), and Kapha (Earth), these primary forces are responsible for the characteristics of our mind and body. Each of us has a unique proportion of these three forces that shapes our nature. If Vata is dominant in our system, we tend to be thin, light, enthusiastic, energetic, and changeable. If Pitta predominates in our nature, we tend to be intense, intelligent, and goal-oriented and we have a strong appetite for life. When Kapha prevails, we tend to be easy-going, methodical, and nurturing. Although each of us has all three forces, most people have one or two elements that predominate.

For each element, there is a balanced and imbalance expression. When Vata is balanced, a person is lively and creative, but when there is too much movement in the system, a person tends to experience anxiety, insomnia, dry skin, constipation, and difficulty focusing. When Pitta is functioning in a balanced manner, a person is warm, friendly, disciplined, a good leader, and a good speaker. When Pitta is out of balance, a person tends to be compulsive and irritable and may suffer from indigestion or an inflammatory condition. When Kapha is balanced, a person is sweet, supportive, and stable but when Kapha is out of balance, a person may experience sluggishness, weight gain, and sinus congestion.

An important goal of Ayurveda is to identify a person's ideal state of balance, determine where they are out of balance, and offer interventions using diet, herbs, aromatherapy, massage treatments, music, and meditation to reestablish balance. (source - the Chopra Center)



THE DAILY ROUTINE

by Vasant Lad, B.A.M.&S., M.A.Sc., Ayurvedic Physician

A daily routine is absolutely necessary to bring radical change in body, mind, and consciousness. Routine helps to establish balance in one's constitution. It also regularizes a person's biological clock, aids digestion, absorption and assimilation, and generates self-esteem, discipline, peace, happiness, and longevity.

1. Wake Up Early in the Morning

It is good to wake up before the sun rises, when there are loving (sattvic) qualities in nature that bring peace of mind and freshness to the senses. Sunrise varies according to the seasons, but on average vata people should get up about 6 a.m., pitta people by 5:30 a.m., and kapha by 4:30 a.m. Right after waking, look at your hands for a few moments, then gently move them over your face and chest down to the waist. This cleans the aura.

2. Say a Prayer before Leaving the Bed

"Dear God, you are inside of me, within my very breath, within each bird, each mighty mountain.

Your sweet touch reaches everything and I am well protected.

Thank you God for this beautiful day before me.

May joy, love, peace and compassion be part of my life and all those around me on this day.



I am healing and I am healed."

After this prayer touch the ground with your right hand, then the same hand to the forehead, with great love and respect to Mother Earth.

3. Clean the Face, Mouth, and Eyes

Splash your face with cold water and rinse out your mouth. Wash your eyes with cool water (or one of the eye washes mentioned below) and massage the eyelids by gently rubbing them. Blink your eyes 7 times and rotate your eyes in all directions. Dry your face with a clean towel.

Tridoshic eyewash: try triphala eyewash - $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. in 1 cup water, boil for 10 minutes, cool and strain.

Pitta eyewash: use cool water or rose water from organic rose petals - most commercial rose water has chemicals in it that will sting the eyes.

Kapha eyewash: try diluted cranberry juice, 3-5 drops in a teaspoon of distilled water.

4. Drink Water in the Morning

Then drink a glass of room temperature water, preferably from a pure copper cup filled the night before. This washes the GI track, flushes the kidneys, and stimulates peristalsis. It is not a good idea to start the day with tea or coffee, as this drains kidney energy, stresses the adrenals, causes constipation, and is habit-forming.

5. Evacuation

Sit, or better squat, on the toilet and have a bowel movement. Improper digestion of the previous night's meal or lack of sound sleep can prevent this. However the water, followed by sitting on the toilet at a set time each day, helps to regulate bowel movements. Alternate nostril breathing may also help. After evacuation wash the anal orifice with warm water, then the hands with soap.

6. Scrape your Tongue

Gently scrape the tongue from the back forward, until you have scraped the whole surface for 7-14 strokes. This stimulates the internal organs, helps digestion, and removes dead bacteria. Ideally, vata can use a gold scraper, pitta a silver one, and kapha copper. Stainless steel can be used by all people.

7. Clean your Teeth

Always use a soft toothbrush and an astringent, pungent, and bitter toothpaste or powder. The traditional Indian toothbrush is a neem stick, which dislodges fine food particles from between teeth and makes strong, healthy gums. Licorice root sticks are also used. Roasted almond shell powder can be used for vata and kapha, and ground neem for pitta.

8. Gargling

To strengthen teeth, gums, and jaw, improve the voice and remove wrinkles from cheeks, gargle twice a day with warm sesame oil. Hold the oil in your mouth, swish it around vigorously, then spit it out and gently massage the gums with a finger.

9. Chewing

Chewing a handful of sesame seeds helps receding gums and strengthens teeth. Alternatively, chew 3-5 dried dates and an inch of dried coconut meat. Chewing in the morning stimulates the liver and the stomach and improves digestive fire. After chewing, brush the teeth again without using toothpaste or powder.

10. Nasal Drops (Nasya)

Putting 3 to 5 drops of warm ghee or oil into each nostril in the morning helps to lubricate the nose, clean the sinuses, and improve voice, vision, and mental clarity. Our nose is the door to the brain, so nose drops nourish prana and bring intelligence.

For **vata**: sesame oil, ghee, or vacha (calamus) oil.

For **pitta**: brahmi ghee, sunflower or coconut oil.

For **kapha**: vacha (calamus root) oil.

11. Oil Drops in the Ears (Karana purana)

Conditions such as ringing in the ears, excess ear wax, poor hearing, lockjaw, and TMJ, are all due to vata in the ears. Putting 5 drops of warm sesame oil in each ear can help these disorders.

12. Apply Oil to the Head & Body (Abhyanga)

Rub warm oil over the head and body. Gentle, daily oil massage of the scalp can bring happiness, as well as prevent headache, baldness, graying, and receding hairline. Oiling your body before bedtime will help induce sound sleep and keep the skin soft.

For **vata** use warm sesame oil.

For **pitta** use warm sunflower or coconut oil.

For **kapha** use warm sunflower or mustard oil.

13. Bathing

Bathing is cleansing and refreshing. It removes sweat, dirt, and fatigue, brings energy to the body, clarity to the mind, and holiness to your life.

14. Dressing

Wearing clean clothes brings beauty and virtue.

15. Use of Perfumes

Using natural scents, essential oils, or perfumes brings freshness, charm, and joy. It gives vitality to the body and improves self-esteem.

For **vata** the best scent to use is hina or amber.

For **pitta** try using khus, sandalwood, or jasmine.

For **kapha** use either amber or musk.

16. Exercise

Regular exercise, especially yoga, improves circulation, strength, and endurance. It helps one relax and have sound sleep, and improves digestion and elimination. Exercise daily to half of your capacity, which is until sweat forms on the forehead, armpits, and spine.

Vata: Sun salutation x 12, done slowly; Leg lifting; Camel; Cobra; Cat; Cow. Slow, gentle exercise.

Pitta: Moon salutation x 16, moderately fast; Fish; Boat; Bow. Calming exercise.

Kapha: Sun salutation x 12, done rapidly; Bridge; Peacock; Palm tree; Lion. Vigorous exercise.

17. Pranayama

After exercise, sit quietly and do some deep breathing exercises as follows:

12 alternate nostril breaths for **vata**;

16 cooling shitali breaths (curling up your tongue lengthwise and breathing through it) for **pitta**;

100 bhasrika (short, fast breaths) for **kapha**.

18. Meditation

It is important to meditate morning and evening for at least 15 minutes. Meditate in the way you are accustomed, or try the "Empty Bowl Meditation". Meditation brings balance and peace into your life.

19. Now it is time for your breakfast!

Your meal should be light in the hot months or if your agni is low, and more substantial in the cold. Enjoy your day!

Ayurvedic Guidelines for Eating

Everyone has each dosha in their body constitution; eating with a balance in mind can help optimize our primary doshas, and also be utilized in a seasonal diet. Take note of the weather, and what feels imbalanced, and modify the diet with the right choices for better well-being. For instance, if you are cold, tired, and anxious, eating a Vata-balancing diet can help!

VATA BALANCE

(warming, soothing)

- Easy to digest soups, teas, eat more frequently but do not overeat.
- Add oils to your food, nuts and nut butters. Try almonds and sesame!
- Whole grains, brown rice
- Sweet taste (but not white sugar), honey, heavy fruits like bananas
- NO raw foods, rice cakes, alcohol or caffeine
- Dairy is great if tolerated, always boil milk, drink warm
- Ginger, garlic, cinnamon

PITTA BALANCE

(cooling, soothing)

- Eat regular meals
- Avoid spicy and salty foods
- Sweet tastes, especially fruits, raw is okay (no sour)
- Vegetables, steamed or raw, especially sweet potatoes, cucumbers, salads
- Some grains, some wheat, try quinoa and oats
- Reduce egg yolks and seafood
- Dairy if tolerated, especially yogurt and ice cream!
- Cinnamon, cardamom are good, reduce ginger, garlic and pepper

KAPHA BALANCE

(light, warm, stimulating)

- Reduce dairy, nuts, wheat, and rice, try barley and millet
- Eat more fruits and vegetables, beans, except tofu
- Honey is good, avoid sugar
- Apples, pears, and salads with lite salad dressing
- Occasional caffeine is okay, like green tea
- All spices, especially ginger and turmeric, but reduce salt!

In general, do not eat foods you cannot digest. Avoid overly processed foods and additives. Avoid eating when stressed or angry. Avoid coffee, red meat, white sugar. Dedicate the energy of the food before you eat. Chew consciously! Take a walk or lie on the left side for 10 minutes after meals.



INCOMPATIBLE FOOD COMBINING

by Usha and Vasant Lad, BAM&S, MASc

It is no surprise to see on the market today so many digestive and dietary aids for the stomach, along with pills for gas and indigestion. Most of these conditions likely begin with poor food combining. This is a subject of much debate amid the growing concern about diet and the many theories on the topic.

Ayurveda, an ancient holistic science of healing, offers a logical approach for determining correct diet based upon the elements comprising an individual's constitution: vata, pitta and kapha. This approach is quite different from the contemporary view of a balanced diet, based on eating from various food groups. Ayurveda believes that understanding the individual is the key to finding a truly balanced diet. It teaches that the gastric fire or agni in the stomach and digestive tract is the main gate through which nutrients enter the tissues and then pass along to individual cells, to maintain the life functions.

According to Ayurveda, every food has its own taste (rasa), a heating or cooling energy (virya) and a post-digestive effect (vipaka). Some also possess prabhava, an unexplained effect. So while it is true that an individual's agni largely determines how well or poorly food is digested, food combinations are also of great importance. When two or more foods having different taste, energy and post-digestive effect are combined, agni can become overloaded, inhibiting the enzyme system and resulting in the production of toxins. Yet these same foods, if eaten separately, might well stimulate agni, be digested more quickly and even help to burn ama.

Poor combining can produce indigestion, fermentation, putrefaction and gas formation and, if prolonged, can lead to toxemia and disease. For example, eating bananas with milk can diminish agni, change the intestinal flora, produce toxins and may cause sinus



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congestion, cold, cough and allergies. Although both of these foods have a sweet taste and a cooling energy, their post-digestive effect is very different - bananas are sour while milk is sweet. This causes confusion to our digestive system and may result in toxins, allergies and other imbalances.

Similarly, milk and melons should not be eaten together. Both are cooling, but milk is laxative and melon diuretic. Milk requires more time for digestion. Moreover the stomach acid required to digest the melon causes the milk to curdle, so Ayurveda advises against taking milk with sour foods. These incompatible food combinations not only disturb the digestion but also cause confusion in the intelligence of our cells, which can lead to many different diseases.

Before you say “This is MUCH too complicated, how will I ever figure it out?”, there are some useful guidelines to introduce you to these concepts. And remember that Ayurveda is a strong proponent of the “go slowly” school of thought.

You might want to introduce yourself to food combining by eating fruit by itself, as many fruits create a sour and indigestible “wine” in the stomach when mixed with other food. Once you have adopted this change into your eating habits, try other suggestions from the list below. As a general principal, avoid eating lots of raw and cooked foods together or fresh foods with leftovers.

Various Factors that Can Lessen the Effects of Bad Food Combinations

- A strong digestive fire (if we are so blessed) can be the most powerful tool of all to deal with “bad” food combinations.
- Different quantities of each food involved in a combination can sometimes help significantly. For instance equal quantities by weight of ghee and honey are a bad combination—ghee is cooling, but honey is heating—whereas mixing a 2:1 ratio is not toxic. The reason? Prahbav, the unexplainable.



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- Very often spices and herbs are added in Ayurvedic cooking to help make foods compatible or to ease a powerful effect, e.g., cooling cilantro in very spicy food.
- If our bodies have become accustomed to a certain food combination through many years of use, such as eating cheese with apples, then it is likely that our body has made some adaptation or become accustomed to this. Which is not to say that we should continue this practice, but to explain why the newcomer to apples and cheese may experience a strong case of indigestion whilst the “old-timer” digests it adequately.
- Antidotes, like cardamom in coffee, or ghee and black pepper with potatoes, often can help alleviate some of the negative effects. (Coffee is stimulating and ultimately depressing to the system, and potatoes cause gas).
- If foods with different and possibly aggravating qualities, such as a mixture of vegetables, are cooked together in the same pot, the foods tend to learn how to get along. Using appropriate spices and herbs helps with this too.
- Eating a ‘bad’ combination occasionally usually does not upset the digestion too much.

Some Useful Tips to Aid Digestion

- Eat ½ teaspoon fresh grated ginger with a pinch of rock salt before each meal to stimulate agni.
- Salt also aids digestion, and helps to retain water.
- Alkalis help digestion and regulate gastric fire.
- Ghee stimulates agni and improves digestion.
- Small sips of warm water during a meal will aid digestion and absorption of food. Do not drink iced water as it slows agni and digestion. Indeed ice water should not be taken under most circumstances, as it is too shocking to the system.



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- Proper chewing is essential to good digestion, ensuring food gets thoroughly mixed with saliva.
- A cup of lassi at the end of a meal also aids the digestive process. Make by blending $\frac{1}{4}$ cup yogurt with 2 pinches of ginger and cumin powder in 1 cup water.
- Ideally, one should fill the stomach with one-third food, one-third liquid and one-third should be empty.

The following table lists some* of the incompatible food combinations worth avoiding.

Beans	fruit; cheese, eggs, fish, milk, meat, yogurt
Eggs	fruit, especially melons; beans, cheese, fish, kitchari, MILK, meat, yogurt
Fruit	As a rule, with any other food. (There are exceptions, such as certain cooked combinations, as well as dates and milk, which have the same rasa, virya and vipaka.)
Grains	fruit; tapioca
Honey**	With equal GHEE by weight (e.g. 1 tsp. honey with 3 tsp. ghee); boiled or cooked honey.
Hot Drinks	mangos; cheese, fish, meat, starch, yogurt
Lemon	cucumbers, milk, tomatoes, yogurt



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Melons	EVERYTHING – especially dairy, eggs, fried food, grains, starches. Melons more than most fruit should be eaten alone or left alone.
Milk	BANANAS, cherries, melons, sour fruits; bread containing yeast, fish, kitchari, meat, yogurt
Nightshades, e.g., potato, tomato	melon; cucumber, dairy products
Radishes	bananas, raisins; milk
Tapioca	fruit, especially banana and mango; beans, raisins, jaggary
Yogurt	fruit; cheese, eggs, fish, hot drinks, meat, MILK, nightshades

*Foods in CAPITALS are the most difficult combinations.

**According to ancient Ayurvedic literature, honey should never be cooked. If cooked, the molecules become a non-homogenized glue that adheres to mucous membranes and clogs subtle channels, producing toxins. Uncooked honey is nectar. Cooked honey is considered poison.



Yoga Asana for Doshas

VATA

Type of practice:	Calming, supporting, grounding
Sitting poses:	Padmasana (lotus), Virasana (hero)
Standing poses:	Vrksasana (tree), Trikonasana (triangle), Virabhadrasana 1 and 2 (Warrior 1 and 2)
Inversion:	Headstand
Others:	Navasana (Boat), Spinal Twists
Savasana:	Long, deep, and comfortable

PITTA

Type of practice:	Cooling, relaxing, moderating
Hip Openers:	Eka Pada Rajakapotasana (one legged pigeon), Ardha Chandrasana (half moon)
Backbends:	Bhujangasana (Cobra), Dhanurasana (Bow)
Forward Bends:	Paschimottanasana (sitting forward bend), Uttanasana (Standing Forward Bend)
Savasana:	Medium in length

KAPHA

Type of practice:	Motivating, stimulating, energizing
Balancing poses:	Natarajasana (dancer's), Virabhadrasana 3 (Warrior 3)
Inversions:	Handstand, Pincha Mayurasana (forearm balance), Adho Mukha Svanasana (downward dog)
Others:	Sun Salutations, Urdhva Mukha Svanasana (upward dog)
Savasana:	Short in length

Keep in mind that your needs change daily, and any practice should utilize some of each dosha's recommended poses.

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The 3 Gunas

Excerpted from
www.sanatansociety.org

According to the ayurveda, medicines and foods are sattvic, rajasic or tamasic or a combination of these gunas. The gunas are three fundamental attributes that represent the natural evolutionary process through which the subtle becomes gross. In turn, gross objects, by action and interaction among themselves, may again become subtle. Thus the three gunas are defined as :

Sattva : Essence (subtle)
Rajas : Activity
Tamas : Inertia (gross)

People equally can be more or less dominated by one of the three gunas and an important way to regulate these gunas in body and mind is through ayurvedic cooking :

Sattvic foods :

- Are fresh, juicy, light, unctuous, nourishing, sweet and tasty.
- Give the necessary energy to the body without taxing it.
- The foundation of higher states of consciousness.
- Examples : juicy fruits, fresh vegetables that are easily digestible, fresh milk and butter, whole soaked or also sprouted beans, grains and nuts, many herbs and spices in the right combinations with other foods,...

Rajasic foods :

- Are bitter, sour, salty, pungent, hot and dry.
- Increase the speed and excitement of the human organism.
- The foundation of motion, activity and pain.
- Examples : sattvic foods that have been fried in oil or cooked too much or eaten in excess, specific foods and spices that are strongly exciting, ...

Tamasic Foods :

- Are dry, old, decaying, distasteful and/or unpalatable.
- Consume a large amount of energy while being digested.
- The foundation of ignorance, doubt, pessimism, ...
- Examples : foods that have been strongly processed, canned or frozen and/or are old, stale or incompatible with each other - meat, fish, eggs and liquor are especially tamasic.

Saints and seers can survive easily on sattvic foods alone. Householders that live in the world and have to keep pace with its' changes also need rajasic energy. They ought to keep a balance between the sattvic and rajasic foods and try to avoid tamasic foods as much as possible.

Extracted and synthesized from the "Healing Cuisine" book, which provides many details on the three gunas and practical guidelines and recipes for balancing the gunas.

The Bhagavad Gita – Chapter 14

The Yoga of the Distinction of the Three Gunas

- 01 The Supreme Lord said: I shall further explain to you that supreme knowledge, the best of all knowledge, knowing that all the sages have attained supreme perfection after this life.
- 02 Those who have taken refuge in this knowledge attain unity with Me, and are neither born at the time of creation nor afflicted at the time of dissolution.
- 03 O Arjuna, My Prakriti (or the material nature) is the womb wherein I place the seed (of spirit or Purusha) from which all beings are born.
- 04 Whatever forms are produced in all different wombs, O Arjuna, the great Prakriti is their (body-giving) mother, and the Purusha is the (seed or life-giving) father.
- 05 Sattva or goodness, Rajas or activity, and Tamas or inertia; these three Gunas (or states) of mind (or Prakriti) bind the imperishable soul to the body, O Arjuna.
- 06 Of these, Sattva, being calm, is illuminating and ethical. It fetters the embodied being, the Jeevaatma or Purusha, by attachment to happiness and knowledge, O Arjuna.
- 07 O Arjuna, know that Rajas is characterized by intense (selfish) activity and is born of desire and attachment. It binds the Jeeva by attachment to the fruits of work.
- 08 Know, O Arjuna, that Tamas, the deluder of Jeeva, is born of inertia. It binds by ignorance, laziness, and (excessive) sleep.
- 09 O Arjuna, Sattva attaches one to happiness, Rajas to action, and Tamas to ignorance by covering the knowledge.
- 10 Sattva dominates by suppressing Rajas and Tamas; Rajas dominates by suppressing Sattva and Tamas; and Tamas dominates by suppressing Sattva and Rajas, O Arjuna.
- 11 When the lamp of knowledge shines through all the (nine) gates of the body, then it should be known that Sattva is predominant.
- 12 Greed, activity, restlessness, passion, and undertaking of (selfish) works arise when Rajas is predominant, O Arjuna.
- 13 Ignorance, inactivity, carelessness, and delusion arise when Tamas is predominant, O Arjuna.

- 14 One who dies during the dominance of Sattva goes to heaven, the pure world of the knowers of Supreme.
- 15 When one dies during the dominance of Rajas, one is reborn as attached to action (or the utilitarian type); and dying in Tamas, one is reborn as ignorant (or lower creatures).
- 16 The fruit of good action is said to be Saattvika and pure, the fruit of Raajasika action is pain, and the fruit of Taamasika action is ignorance.
- 17 Knowledge arises from Sattva; desires arise from Rajas; and negligence, delusion, and ignorance arise from Tamas.
- 18 Those who are established in Sattva go to heaven; Raajasika persons are reborn in the mortal world; and the Taamasika persons, abiding in the lowest Guna, go to hell (or born as lower creatures).
- 19 When visionaries perceive no doer other than the Gunas (or the power of Brahman), and know That which is above and beyond the Gunas; then they attain nirvana.
- 20 When one transcends (or rises above) the three Gunas that originate in the mind; one is freed from birth, old age, disease, and death; and attains nirvana.
- 21 Arjuna said: What are the characteristics of those who have transcended the three Gunas, and what is their conduct? How does one transcend these three Gunas, O Lord Krishna?
- 22 The Supreme Lord said: One who neither hates the presence of enlightenment, activity, and delusion nor desires for them when they are absent; and
- 23 The one who remains like a witness; who is not moved by the Gunas, thinking that the Gunas only are operating; who stands firm and does not waver; and
- 24 The one who depends on the Lord and is indifferent to pain and pleasure; to whom a clod, a stone, and gold are alike; to whom the dear and the unfriendly are alike; who is of firm mind; who is calm in censure and in praise; and
- 25 The one who is indifferent to honor and disgrace; who is the same to friend and foe; who has renounced the sense of doership; is said to have transcended the Gunas.
- 26 The one who offers service to Me with love and unswerving devotion transcends Gunas, and becomes fit for realizing Brahman.
- 27 Because, I am the abode of the immortal and eternal Brahman, of everlasting Dharma, and of the absolute bliss.