

INTRODUCTION TO AYURVEDA

The Doshas and YOU

Ayurveda (the 5,000 year old science of life) principles teach us how to learn to stay balanced and enhance the positive qualities of our constitution in tune with the seasons, stages of life and times of day...leading to overall wellbeing.

Nothing is static....our conscious choices assist with the body's constant regulating process of homeostasis, through shifts in diet, lifestyle and awareness/yoga practices.

5 elements constantly in a state of flux - Earth, Water, Fire, Air and Ether - combine together to make up the **3 Doshas : Kapha, Pitta and Vata**.

The Doshas are maybe best understood as 'mind-body principles/intelligences' and are represented in a unique mix in each individual which determines the qualities we exhibit in mind and body.

The Doshas represent the nature of the elements:

Kapha = Earth + water = Integrity and Structure of body and mind

Pitta = Water + Fire = Digestion and Metabolism

Vata = Air + Ether = Movement and Change, Nervous System

Prakriti = Natural Constitution

Vikriti = Current State = changeable

If the proportion of doshas in your current state is close to your birth constitution, then your health will be vibrant. A divergence between these states, however, indicates a state of imbalance.

Doshas in time of life

Birth-puberty = KAPHA, Puberty-Middle Age = PITTA, Middle Age-Old Age = VATA

Doshas and seasons

Late spring/Summer = PITTA Autumn/Early Winter = VATA Late Winter/Early Spring = KAPHA

Imbalances can manifest in following season due to actions in the season before.

Very important at times of seasonal transition to cleanse and look at balance, otherwise seasonal illnesses are likely to manifest - coughs, colds, allergies, etc

Doshas in 24 hour cycle

2am-6am = VATA – Wake up now to be more alert and fresh. Able to eliminate waste

Good time for Meditation (Ether element)

6am-10am = KAPHA – Good for exercise. If waking now will be slow and sluggish

10am-2pm = PITTA – Main Meal now as Agni (digestive Fire) at highest

Avoid confrontation, overheating in any form. Slow down and moderate

2pm-6pm = VATA – Good time to rest, restorative Yoga, savasana. Avoid over exertion

6pm-10pm = KAPHA – Avoid lethargy...go for a short walk after dinner

Don't over eat...lighter meal and allow 2 hours after eating before sleep

10pm-2am = PITTA – For digestion and repair

Avoid eating late at night and going to bed later than 10pm

VATA (Air/Ether)

Qualities are cool, mobile, rough, dry, light and variable

Positive traits when in balance – Creative, expansive ideas and ‘big picture’, joyful and energetic, lively, fun, mental quickness, expressive

Causes of Imbalance

- Excess travel, rushing, harsh exercise
- Lack of routine and regular eating habits
- Dry and cold food, stimulants ie/ alcohol, tea, coffee
- Sensory overload, late nights
- Windy, cold weather
- Lack of - purpose, satisfaction, sense of place and home, love

Negative manifestations when out of balance

Cool – Poor circulation, cold extremities, sensitive to cold, stiff muscles

Mobile- Restless, constantly fidgety hands/feet/eyes, unstable & hyper mobile joints, scattered mind, quick mood swings, walks and talks quickly, likes to travel +, restless mind

Rough – Rough/ cracked/calloused skin, brittle nails and hair, cracking joints,

Dry - Dry skin, hair and tongue, tendency towards constipation, dry/hoarse voice, anxiety, worries, fears

Light - Weight loss, light/broken sleep, ungrounded, spacey

Variable - Irregular and variable digestion, bloating, wind, appetite, moods, etc....resistant to routine!

Balancing VATA bring in the opposite....REGULARITY, grounding, warming, lubricating

- Develop daily ROUTINES
- Deep Breathing, slowing down, creating sense of purpose and connection
- Staying warm, avoiding excess windy conditions
- Rest and relaxation
- Self massage with warm oil
- Eat warm, cooked, moist food with warming spices (ginger, cardamom, cinnamon, cumin) and ghee
- Wholesome sweet taste
- Calming physical exerciseYoga, Tai Chi, walking, swimming, daily meditation

PITTA (Fire/Water)

Qualities are hot, sharp, light/bright, oily and intense

Positive traits when in balance – Mentally sharp, motivated, passionate, competitive, joyful, courageous

Causes of imbalance

- Over competitive, intense work environment
- Hot, spicy food, stimulants ie/ black tea, coffee, alcohol
- Deep fried oily food, fermented food, tinned tomatoes, nut butters
- Over worked, busy-ness
- Hot, humid conditions
- Suppressed emotions...esp. anger/jealousy

Negative manifestations when out of balance

Hot – Heat stressed, excessive thirst, anger, irritability, volatile, ulcers, heartburn

Sharp – Judgemental/critical/opinionated, sharp hunger, over analytical mind, over concerned re.appearance

Light/bright – Sensitive to bright light, ungrounded

Oily – Oily hair/skin, skin ailments/outbreaks, may have reddened skin, loose bowels

Intense – Intense hunger, over intense attitude/driven/goal orientated, addiction

Balancing Pitta...bring in the opposite....MODERATION, cooling, grounding, soothing

- MODERATION...knowing when to stop, avoid pushing
- Do not skip meals
- Relaxing in Nature, by water
- Staying cool
- Deep breathing to dissipate heat
- Wholesome sweet taste
- Cooling herbs and additions to food – coriander, lemon juice, coconut, rosewater, fennel, basmati rice, milk, ghee
- Calming physical exercise...yoga, Tai chi, walking, swimming, daily meditation

KAPHA (Water/Earth)

Qualities are Heavy, Slow, Cold, Static, Damp and Cloudy

Positive traits when in balance are – Love, patience, forgiveness, 'Earth Mother', steady, softness, grounded

Causes of Imbalance

- Sedentary lifestyle
- Monotonous, boring routine, no intellectual challenges
- Excess sleep, excess eating....emotional eating
- Excess sweet and cold food...esp. cold dairy, bread, refined sugars, bananas, nuts
- Damp, cold conditions
- Laziness, procrastination

Negative manifestations when out of balance

Heavy - Overweight, feeling of heaviness after eating, reduced appetite

Slow – Slow movement, speech, sluggish metabolism and bowels, inertia

Cold – Repeated colds, aversion to cold

Static – Lethargy, laziness, unmotivated, hoarding, attachments to people and things

Damp – Congestive problems in chest, throat, sinus, head, moist bowels

Cloudy – Cloudy, mental dullness, depression

Balancing Kapha... bring in the opposite.... VARIETY ,STIMULATION, warmth, movement

- Invigorating exercise and mental challenges
- Variety in activities and daily life
- Eat light, warm, pungent food in moderate amounts....pepper, cinnamon, ginger, some green chilli
- Stay warm
- Sleep less...no day time naps!
- Emotional housekeeping –introspection, distinction between being nice and being taken advantage of...learning to say NO

Jathara Agni : Digestive Fire

Fire- transforms, consumes and purifies

Our process of digestion begins from the first sight and smell of food to it's final assimilation through all the tissues of the body : from white blood cells, plasma and lymph, Red blood cells and platelets, muscles, fat tissue, bones, nerves and reproductive tissue.... ending in OJAS= pure refined substance giving us deep resilience within the body to stress and disease

Mental Agni : Mental digestion

Clarity and understanding, detached loving observation

Mental Agni goes hand in hand with Jathara Agni and when balanced work together to give us the right information on what our body needs at any moment. If unbalanced can lead to unhealthy cravings

When our Agni is working well we-

- Have clarity and discrimination
- Healthy complexion
- Abundant energy/endurance
- Courage and assuredness
- Healthy elimination
- Natural Joy

When our Agni is not working well we create **AMA** through partially digested food. AMA is sticky substance which clogs pathways and tissues preventing further nourishment. AMA is drawn to the weaker tissues creating disease.

Signs of AMA

- Feeling fatigue and depression
- Thick tongue coating
- Bad breath
- Low Appetite
- Strong Body Odour
- Poor concentration
- Aching muscles

Improving Agni and Reducing AMA

- Sit and breathe before meals, give thanks, let go of negative emotions
- Don't eat in a stressful, busy or over stimulating environment
- Eat with awareness....don't over eat or eat when not hungry
- Chew well
- Regular mealtimes
- Don't drink excessive liquids....esp. mealtimes
- Drink warm water (add some fresh ginger) - sip through the day
- Don't rush off after eating

- Have warm, moist, easily digestible food cooked with ghee and kitchen herbs and spices for balancing your dosha
- Avoid...cold dairy, cold water, tinned foods, stale food, meat, fermented *food*, processed and refined food
- Eat main meal at midday and avoid heavier meals at night