

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.



According to Ayurvedic theory, everything in the universe – living or not – is connected. Good health is achieved when your mind, body, and spirit are in harmony with the universe. A disruption of this harmony can lead to poor health and sickness.

For followers of Ayurveda, anything that affects your physical, spiritual, or emotional well-being can cause you to be out of balance with the universe. Some things that can cause a disruption include:

- genetic or birth defects
- injuries
- climate and seasonal changes
- age
- emotions

How your body works to keep you healthy and your unique physical and psychological characteristics combine to form your body's constitution, or prakriti. Your prakriti is believed to stay the same for your entire life. However, how you digest food and eliminate waste can influence it.



Every person is made of a combination of five basic elements found in the universe:

- space
- air
- fire
- water
- earth

These elements combine in the human body to form three life forces or energies, called doshas. They control how your body works. The three doshas are:

- vata dosha (space and air)
- pitta dosha (fire and water)
- kapha dosha (water and earth)

Everyone inherits a unique mix of the three doshas. One dosha is usually more dominant. Each dosha controls a different body function. It is believed that your chances of getting sick are linked to the balance of your doshas.



Vata: Movement and Change

If Vata dosha predominates, movement and change are characteristic of your nature. You will tend to always be on the go, with an energetic and creative mind. As long as Vata is in balance, you will be lively and enthusiastic, with a lean body.

If excessive stress in your life leads to your Vata force becoming imbalanced, your activity will start to feel out of control. Your mind may race, contributing to anxiety and insomnia. You may start skipping meals, resulting in unintended weight loss, and your digestion may become irregular. If you notice these early symptoms of a Vata imbalance, slow down, take time to meditate, don't skip meals, and get to bed earlier. A regular lifestyle routine helps ground Vata so you are not carried away into the ethers.

[Learn more about Vata here.](#)

Pitta: Transformation and Metabolism

A healthy Pitta constitution results in strong appetites and strong digestion of both information and experience. When Pitta becomes imbalanced, heat begins to rise in the body and mind. Heartburn, ulcers, hypertension, and inflammatory

conditions reflect excessive accumulation of the fire element.

Mentally, too much Pitta manifests as irritability and anger. These symptoms are signals to “chill.” Stop packing in too many things to do in too little time. Reduce your competitive activities, decrease your consumption of alcohol (fire water), and go for a walk in a natural setting where you can be surrounded with abundant blue (water) and green (plants).

[Learn more about Pitta here.](#)

Kapha: Structure and Fluidity

People with a predominance of Kapha in their nature are solid, reliable, contented souls. But when Kapha builds to excess, weight gain, fluid retention, and allergies manifest in the body. Excess Kapha in the mind manifests as resistance to change and stubbornness. People with an excess of Kapha tend to hold on to things, jobs, and relationships long after they are no longer nourishing or necessary.

To lighten the heaviness of Kapha, get yourself moving and start exercising today. Eat lighter, spicy foods, and give away things you have been accumulating that you know you'll never use.

[Learn more about Kapha here.](#)

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