

Chapter 1

Ayurvedic body-types & nutrition

~ how to live in tune with our constitution & eat a healthy diet ~



Change is not something that we should fear.
Rather, it is something that we should welcome.
For without change, nothing in this world would ever grow or blossom,
and no one in this world would ever move forward
to become the person they're meant to be.

~ anon ~

Understanding Vata, Pitta & Kapha

Vata, pitta and Kapha are known as doshas in Ayurveda; they are the underlying principles that govern the nature, transformation and structure of the physical universe. Each dosha is composed of two of the five elements (ether, air, fire, water and earth) and it is the specific combination of these elements that determines each dosha's characteristic qualities and ultimately their overall effect in nature. Every object in the natural world is composed of the elements of vata, pitta and kapha and it is the relative proportion of each dosha or element that determines its uniqueness and differentiates it from another objects.

Vata is composed of the elements of air and space and its qualities are light, subtle, moving, cold, dry, hard and rough. Vata governs movement in the mind and body. Pitta is composed of the elements of fire and water and its qualities are hot, acidic, sour and sharp. Pitta governs transformation in the mind and body, whether it's the digestion, assimilation and metabolism of food and water into energy or the digestion and assimilation of thoughts and ideas into actions. Kapha is composed of the elements of earth and water and its qualities are heavy, cold, slow, binding, sticky and smooth. Kapha is responsible for the density and structure of our body.

A person with a predominance of Vata dosha walks more quickly, has a lighter build and has colder and dryer skin than someone with a predominance of Pitta or Kapha dosha in their constitution. Vata-type people also tend to have very quick, agile minds and can be very creative. However, if their constitution goes out of balance through excessive movement or irregularity they can suffer from feelings of restlessness, boredom, fear, stress and anxiety. This may manifest in the body as poor circulation, cold hands and feet, constipation and dry skin.

A person with more Pitta in their constitution has a hotter, fierier, more dynamic personality. They have lots of energy, high ambitions, sharp intellects and good leadership qualities. However, if they go out of balance and their innate 'fire' becomes too high they can quickly become angry, stressed and frustrated. They generally have a strong digestive fire and immune system but when they slip out of balance they can develop rashes, ulcers, acid stomachs and heart problems.

A person with a predominance of Kapha dosha in their constitution is generally slower, heavier, calmer and more grounded than either Pitta or Vata. They are caring, loving, forgiving individuals with a placid, easy-going nature. They have strong, solid bodies but can suffer from weight gain, lethargy and heaviness when they are out of balance.

With an understanding of the qualities inherent in the elements that combine to make up the three doshas we are able to keep the doshas in balance in our own bodies and thereby remain healthy, happy and free from dis-ease. Any excessive increase in any of the qualities present in our doshic make-up will tend to aggravate that dosha and will lead to imbalance. To decrease a quality we need to increase its opposite quality. Thus, if we are a predominantly Vata body-type and we become excessively cold or are exposed to noisy, busy environments with excess movement we will soon become imbalanced and un-grounded. If we immediately introduce the opposite qualities of warmth or calmness and quietness we will soon bring ourselves back into a grounded, more balanced state. Similarly, for a Pitta person, who has a predominance of heat, the opposing quality of coldness will bring them back into balance. A Kapha person, who has a predominance of heaviness, will be balanced by the opposing quality of lightness.

I hope the next piece 'The dosha family go shopping' will help you to understand how extreme Vata, Pitta and Kapha body-type people conduct their lives!

The Dosha family go shopping

Characters: Mr Kapha Dosha, Mrs Pitta Dosha, Master Vata Dosha

It's a lovely sunny morning in the beautiful village of Toadbury where the Dosha family are beginning to go about their daily business. Mr Kapha Dosha has volunteered to do the shopping whilst Mrs Pitta Dosha tidies the house ready for the arrival of their friends later that day. Master Vata Dosha isn't quite sure what he's going to do on this particular day but he's rather tired as he's spent most of the night worrying about the gig he's managed to pull off at the Three Shires Inn later that evening. He's busy tuning his guitar but his mind just won't settle and he's afraid that his debut at this important venue will be a complete flop.

In typical Kapha fashion Mr Dosha has woken late again and is still eating his breakfast at 10am. He listens patiently to his wife as she rapidly reels off the shopping list – he's a little distracted by their cat, Pretty Polly, who's in the garden trying to stalk a beady-eyed Blackbird. However, he nods politely and is thankful she's written it all down as usual. He agrees to be back by 11'o' clock at the latest but hasn't any idea what the time is anyway as he's misplaced his watch again for the fourth time in a week. As he steps out of the house he's pleasantly amused by the duelling duo again – the cat is now looking rather angry and slightly embarrassed as the Blackbird she's just attempted to pounce upon has decided to put an end to the silly game. She'd cautiously manoeuvred into her final approach and was all ready to pounce, confident of a delicious reward. However, the Blackbird was keenly aware of the cat's presence and at the last moment had nonchalantly flown to the top of the garage roof, sung a melodious wee tune and then swooped so low over Pretty Polly that she has to duck for cover and almost fell in the goldfish pond in the process.

Mr Kapha laughs heartily and takes a seat by the garden shed to lap up some of the morning sun. He listens to the Robins and Linnets, gazes at the Swallows and Swifts catching flies above him and sighs deeply as aromas from the honey-scented roses gently drift over on the light, warm breeze. He feels a deep gratitude and contentment and gradually dozes off in the sun blissfully unaware of his angry wife approaching. She strides purposefully towards him, her ginger hair flowing wildly behind her. He wakes abruptly, senses the urgency in her angry reproach as he remembers his shopping duty and makes his way to the car. He settles into the car seat, adjusting it slightly to accommodate his somewhat corpulent build, puts on some music and slowly backs the car into the street. As he lazily makes his way to the shops his mind is still in the garden, soaking up the sun and smelling the fresh roses. He finds a convenient parking space, realises he's forgotten the shopping list and strolls to the precinct via his favourite park with the large pink and red Rhododendrons and majestic Cedar trees.

He can't resist the sweet, homely smells of the bakery and stops off to buy some doughnuts. He ambles into the supermarket and is immediately tempted by the fascinating array of meats and cheeses at the deli counter. He chooses a few and tries to remember what Mrs Pitta Dosha had on her shopping list. He wishes he'd remembered it – she'd typed it out very neatly and even arranged it in order of the rows in the store. However, he does the best he can and makes his way home laden with all manner of 'goodies' he feels will please his guests.

His wife has finished all the housework in record time and has even tidied his office and trimmed the bushes in the front garden. However, she's none too pleased at his late return and can't imagine why on earth it's taken three hours to do a tiny bit of shopping and how in the Lord's name he could lose the car in such a small town. On finding he's forgotten to buy almost half the groceries on her list she flies off

into a rage again and slams the door so hard that even the windows in the garden shed rattle a little. She screeches tyres as she zooms out onto the street and is at the shops in ten minutes flat. She parks neatly near the entrance of the supermarket, clears sweet packets and chocolate wrappers out of the car into a nearby rubbish-bin and hurries to the aisles. She methodically marches down one aisle after another, rapidly ticking off all the items on her list. She jumps the queue at the fast checkout, packs the food in the boot of the car and charges off to the printers to collect some business cards she ordered several weeks before. On her way home she gets the car washed at the local garage, selects some choice flowers to brighten the living room from the tree nursery and calls in at the hairdressers to check her appointment for later that day. She's home within an hour and quickly unpacks the car before making a quick salad for lunch.

Meanwhile Master Vata Doshia has been searching his chaotic room for the song sheets he's been working on for weeks. He finally finds it half-hidden, torn and crumbled under a tee-shirt amongst all the dirty jeans and piles of books by the bathroom door. He's still undecided as to the most appropriate order of play and is completely at a loss regarding whether or not to start with his own song. He's been told repeatedly that it's very good but he thinks that perhaps another song – one that everybody will almost certainly love and be able to identify with would be better. In the frantic flurry of searching he's managed to knock over his guitar and broken a couple of strings which has stressed him even further as he's forgotten to buy any spares.

He asks his Dad if he can borrow the car, half hears the answer and rushes out of the front door. He jumps in the car, knocks the side mirror in passing and then realises he hasn't got any car-keys. He grabs them from the sideboard and hurries out of the house again and then almost runs over the cat as he backs the car out of the driveway. Finally, he stalls the engine as he hits the kerbs on the other side of the road. His erratic driving warrants the attention of a few rather more cautious drivers and their 'honking' and hand-signals agitates him even further.

Once in town he parks haphazardly near the music store and forgets to lock the car. Once in the shop he grabs the guitar strings he needs and then quickly dashes back to the car for his wallet. He fiddles with the remote key fob and is more than a little confused when he finds the car is now locked but presses the remote control once again and unlocks it. In his haste he bangs the car mirror back into place but scuffs his new suede shoes on the kerb as he narrowly misses knocking over a postman.

On his way home he realises he's forgotten to pick up the hair gel he'd intended to buy and turns the car round. His usual supplier is completely out so he heads to the next village which is also where his friend Joe lives. After picking up some gel and shampoo he heads to Joe's but then realises Joe needs the song sheets which are back at home. He turns round and heads home only to realise that he's almost out of fuel and needs to make a detour to find a garage. He finally arrives home; flies upstairs, grabs the song-sheets and heads back to Joe's. Joe's not in and he's forgotten to bring his mobile and as Joe's number is on the mobile he has no way of finding out where he is. He decides to drive home again and try again later. As he pulls into the driveway he recognises Joe's car and suddenly remembers he had arranged to meet him at 2pm. He scratches the door of his Dad's car on the wall as he gets out and apologises profusely to his friend for being late.

Joe has brought a new tape and it plays soothingly in the background, his mother has made him his favourite cup of Chamomile tea and his father has finally got round to typing out his song sheets and determined the right order of play. His mind settles and he relaxes briefly. His mother takes a relaxingly cool shower, makes herself some peppermint tea and then practices some yoga and meditation for twenty minutes. His father, after much procrastination, goes to their gym in the basement and plays some Wagner while he exercises for half an hour. By four pm all is settled and peaceful at the Doshia household and order is restored once again.

Vata Dosha

Vata governs all movement in the mind and body. It controls the flow of blood, the elimination of waste products, the act of breathing and the movement of thoughts in the mind. It is considered the leader of the three doshas (energies or energetic principles in the body) as Pitta and Kapha cannot move or exist without it. It is therefore imperative that Vata is brought back into balance whenever it is disturbed.

You need to balance the movement of Vata if many of the following conditions are present:

- Your skin or hair is dry, rough and thin.
- You feel cold easily or have poor circulation with cold hands and feet.
- You are chronically underweight and find it difficult to gain weight.
- Your mind is constantly anxious, restless and agitated and you are prone to worry and fear.
- You experience constipation or have frequent flatulence.
- You suffer from insomnia or have unsettled sleep and disturbing dreams.
- You suffer from vaginal dryness or menstrual cramps and PMT.
- You have spells of forgetfulness and absent mindedness.
- You experience discomfort or stiffness in the joints or lower back pain.
- You easily become fatigued and have poor endurance.
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Tips for balancing Vata:

- Follow a Vata balancing diet favouring cooked foods rather than raw foods and salads.
- Go to bed early bedtime and have lots of rest.
- Diffuse calming and grounding aromatic oils or incense into your home and office. Orange, geranium, lavender, basil, spruce & fir are excellent in this regard.
- Maintain a regular daily routine by integrating the 'Daily Routine' (see later section).
- Give yourself an Abhyanga massage using warm sesame oil each morning.
- Ensure you have regular, daily elimination. Triphala herbal formula helps in this regard.
- Stay warm, especially in cold, windy weather.
- Take gentle walks in the countryside to calm and balance the mind.
- Wear calm, soothing colours such as pastels, green or brown.
- Do not overexert and rest whenever the body becomes tired or over stimulated
- Relax often by practicing meditation, pranayama, Yoga or Tai Chi.
- Chant 'Ram' (pronounced 'rarm') 108 times each day.
- Read light, humorous, feel-good novels and turn the television off one hour before bed.
- Take up walking, fishing, bird-watching or gardening for general relaxation.
- Take up writing, drawing, painting or acting to balance your creative energies.
- Avoid excessive talking and try to have a day of silence each week.
- Wrap up warm and keep dry in the winter - cover your head on cold, windy days.
- Avoid loud, noisy environments
- Rest for short periods throughout the day
- Avoid excessive use of VDU displays

The Vata balancing diet

- Favour warm, hearty, nourishing foods with added butter/oil – favour salty, sour and sweet tastes.
- Try and reduce light, dry, cold foods and pungent, bitter and astringent tastes
- Hot, milky, creamy cereals (wheat, oatmeal or rice), soups and stews are all very good for pacifying Vata.
- All dairy products are good (ideally organic and unpasturised) – milk should always be boiled first.
- Oils are good but favour ghee, coconut oil, olive oil, Udo’s oil, flax/pumpkin oil and sesame oil.
- Reduce your intake of light, dry, cold foods such as crackers, nuts, seeds and salads.
- Take nuts and seeds in small quantities only – they are best freshly ground with oil added.
- Reduce the intake of all bean products except tofu, mung beans, mung dhal and red lentils.
- The best grains are rice and wheat but you can take barley, corn, millet, buckwheat, rye and oats in moderation.
- Favour stewed and well ripened, sweet or sour fruits but reduce the intake of dry or light fruits such as apples, pears, pomegranates, cranberries, and dried fruits (if uncooked). Dried fruits are good if they are cooked after soaking overnight.
- Sweeteners are good (in moderation), especially jaggary, honey, maple syrup and algarve.
- Vegetables should be cooked and not raw. Peas, green leafy vegetables, broccoli, cauliflower, celery, zucchini and potatoes are acceptable in moderate quantities if they are cooked, especially with Ghee or oil and Vata reducing spices but it is best to avoid sprouts and cabbage.
- Hot, nourishing desserts such as apple pie help pacify Vata.
- Eat a substantial breakfast to help improve energy levels throughout the day.
- Herbal teas (camomile, fennel, basil) with a few digestive biscuits are good for Vata energy slumps.
- Avoid stimulants such as coffee and alcohol.
- Sip hot water throughout the day to flush out impurities and balance Vata.
- Warm milk flavoured with ghee, cardamom, cinnamon and nutmeg is excellent before bed.

Vegetables		Fruits		Herbs/Spices	
FAVOUR	REDUCE	FAVOUR	REDUCE	FAVOUR	REDUCE
Asparagus	Broccoli	Apricots	Dried fruit	Basil	Coriander seed
Leeks	Brussels sprouts	Avocados	Un-ripened fruit	Black pepper	Fenugreek
Artichoke	Cabbage	Bananas	Apples	Cardamom	Parsley
Okra	Cauliflower	Berries	Pears	Cinnamon	Saffron
Beetroot	Celery	Cherries	Pomegranates	Clove	Turmeric
Parsnip	Mushrooms	Raisins	Prunes	Cumin	
Olives	Peas	Pineapple	Watermelon	Fennel	
Corn	Peppers	Rhubarb		Ginger	
Butternut squash	Tomatoes	Plums		Liquorice	
Green beans		Peaches		Marjoram	
Peppers		Oranges		Mustard seeds	
Radishes		Lemons		Nutmeg	
Carrots		Grapes		Oregano	
Courgettes		Kiwi		Sage	
Cucumber		Dates		Thyme	
Green beans		Figs			
Leeks		Mangoes			
Pumpkin		Melons			
Sweet potatoes		Papayas			
Turnip		Peaches			
		Plums			

Pitta Dosh

Pitta dosha is made up of the elements of fire and water through which it manifests the qualities of pungent, hot, penetrating, oily, sharp, liquid, spreading and sour. Its primary function is transformation and is the force of metabolic activity in the body associated with the endocrine function, digestion, body temperature, visual perception, hunger, thirst, and skin quality. In Western terms we can categorise the activities of pitta in terms of amino acids, enzymes, bile, hydrochloric acid and hormones. This explains the seemingly contradictory combination of fire and water to form pitta. Pitta exists as water or oil in the body, thus preserving the tissues from the destructive aspect of fire. It resides in the eyes, blood, sweat glands and lymph but its primary site is in the small intestine. Mentally it plays a role in understanding, in digesting sensory impressions.

You need to balance the heat of pitta if many of the following conditions are present:

- Your skin is overly oily and prone to acne.
- You are prone to rashes, fevers or inflammatory skin conditions
- You have excessive hunger or thirst.
- You sweat profusely and have overly hot hands and feet.
- You suffer from infections, excess acidity, ulcers and heart problems.
- You are overly aggressive and prone to anger and frustration.
- You experience loose or hot, watery stools and diarrhoea-type elimination.
- You tend to be overly critical, domineering, obsessive or controlling in nature.
- You experience frequent eyestrain or tension headaches.
- You are going prematurely grey or balding.

Tips for balancing Pitta:

- Follow a Pitta balancing diet and avoid overly hot, spicy or sour foods.
- Avoid very heating substances such as red meat, alcohol and tobacco.
- Avoid excessive fasting and try to eat when you are hungry. Don't skip meals; especially lunch.
- Exercise moderately (short runs or swims) and only when the weather or climate is cool.
- Walk regularly in nature; especially by the sea. Walking in the moonlight is also very beneficial.
- Especially avoid prolonged exercise in very hot climates or environments.
- Keep your head and skin protected and refrain from sunbathing when the sun is hot.
- Reduce your exposure to hot environments such as saunas and steam rooms.
- Cultivate peaceful emotions and spend more time with people who love and fully accept you.
- Avoid and angry or stressed people and try not to argue – aim to agree more often!
- Take the time to be sweet and sociable and find the time to chat, laugh and play.
- Practice moderation and find time for enjoying leisure activities and appreciating natural beauty.
- Avoid overly competitive sports, deadlines and confrontation in general.
- Practice meditation, cooling forms of pranayama and gentle yoga postures.
- Avoid watching too much television and excessive use of computers.
- Massage the head with coconut oil at night.
- Wear cooling colours – blue, purple, green and avoid wearing red colours.
- Drink pomegranate juice or eat pomegranate seeds. Its astringent and bitter quality helps balance pitta, cleanses the liver and blood and works as an excellent heart tonic.
- Drink 30mls of Aloe Vera each morning.

The Pitta balancing diet

- Generally favour warm or cool and refreshing foods with the tastes of sweet, bitter and astringent such as; asparagus, lettuce, broccoli, cucumber, raita, mung dhal, summer squashes, courgettes, cilantro, coconut, cucumber, lime and green salads.
- Avoid very oily, salty, sour, fermented or pungent foods and spices such as chillies, alcohol, pickles, vinegar, hard or pungent cheeses, citrus fruits, sour cream, yoghurt, tomatoes, garlic, onions and chillies as they will aggravate the acid and pitta in the intestines and blood.
- Enjoy sweet, juicy seasonal fruits such as peaches, figs and berries.
- Avoid red meat and favour chicken or fish.
- Most vegetables, beans and lentils are good unless they are cooked with too much oil.
- Favour wheat, basmati rice, oats and barley and take corn, millet and rye in moderation.
- Drink cooling herbal teas such as peppermint, spearmint, rose, coriander or liquorice.
- Ghee is cooling and can be used for cooking and spreading on toast. Coconut oil can also be used for cooking whilst Udo's oil, flax oil or pumpkin oil can be used for salad dressings.
- A nourishing breakfast to balance pitta could include cereal, toast and apple juice.
- Japanese and Chinese type foods and salads are generally good for pitta digestion.
- Always avoid over-eating, especially in the evening.

Vegetables		Fruits		Herbs/Spices	
FAVOUR	REDUCE	FAVOUR	REDUCE	FAVOUR	REDUCE
Asparagus	Carrots	Apples	Apricots	Cardamom	Barbecue Sauce
Broccoli	Garlic	Avocados	Bananas	Coriander	Ketchup
Brussels sprouts	Onions	Sweet Cherries	Berries	Cinnamon	Mustard
Cabbage	Radishes	Coconut	Sour cherries	Dill	Pickles
Cauliflower	Spinach	Figs	Cranberries	Fennel	Salt
Celery	Tomatoes	Grapes	Grapefruit	Fenugreek	Sour dressings
Courgettes		Lime	Papayas	Mint	Spicy dressings
Cucumber		Mangoes	Peaches	Saffron	Vinegar
Green beans		Pears		Turmeric	
Leeks		Pineapple			
Lettuce		Plums			
Peas		Prunes			
Potatoes		Raisins			
Peppers					
Summer squash					

Kapha Dosha

Kapha governs all structure and lubrication or fluid balance in the mind and body. It controls weight, growth, lubrication for the joints and lungs, and formation of all the seven tissues (lymph, blood, fat, muscles, bones, bone marrow or nervous tissue and reproductive tissues).

You need to balance the heat of Kapha if many of the following conditions are present:

- You gain weight easily and find it very hard to lose weight.
- You tend to be overweight.
- You often feel dull, bored and lethargic.
- You lack energy and feel lazy or complacent.
- You experience sinus problems
- You have frequent and prolonged chest colds and flu.
- You suffer from congestive problems
- You suffer from asthma or bronchitis.
- You need lots of rest and sleep long hours.
- You wake up feeling heavy and un-refreshed.
- You find that you are possessive, greedy and over-attached.
- You feel discomfort in cold, damp weather.
- You experience bloating or water retention.
- Your digestion is slow and heavy even when you have only eaten a small meal.
- Your joints and muscles feel stiff and heavy, especially in the morning.

Tips for balancing Kapha:

- Follow a Kapha balancing diet with plenty of spices and pungent, bitter and astringent tastes.
- Skip breakfast if you don't feel hungry.
- Partake in some vigorous exercise each day – running, cycling, tennis, squash or rugby.
- Stay warm in cold, damp weather.
- Be early to bed and early to rise.
- Take time to enjoy warm showers.
- Have a vigorous, dry massage each morning.
- Wear bright colours – orange, yellow, red.
- Decorate your house in warm, bright, vibrant colours.
- Enjoy the sun and spend more time outdoors.
- Partake in exciting activities or adventure holidays.
- Take time out to have fun and meet new people.
- Seek out variety, embrace new experiences and take up a hobby.
- Use stimulating essential oils and incense with warming aromas such as pine, eucalyptus, clove, orange, basil & sage.

The Kapha balancing diet

- Favour warm to hot foods that are light and dry in quality. They should be cooked with minimal fat and water and be predominantly pungent, bitter and astringent in taste.
- Spicy Indian or Mexican food is good for Kapha as long as not too much oil is used in cooking.
- Avoid heavy, oily and cold foods and foods that have predominantly sweet, sour and salty tastes.
- Drink 1 litre of hot water with lemon and/or ginger daily. Have barley tea or post-digestive tea after main meals to cleanse the tissues, improve digestion, give energy and reduce hunger.
- Favour baked, grilled or sautéed food in preference to boiled, deep-fried or steamed food.
- Occasional have small side salads and raw foods to help tone the digestive tract.
- Avoid fried foods and cold cereals at breakfast – stewed fruit or toast with honey is much better.
- Favour barley, buckwheat, quinoa, amaranth, corn, millet and rye and limit oats, rice and wheat. Dry roasting grains in ghee before cooking helps make them lighter on the digestion.
- Increase your intake of vegetables but exclude mashed potatoes, turnips and parsnips.
- Lighter fruits, such as apples and pears are better for Kapha. Reduce heavy or sour fruits, such as oranges, bananas, pineapples, figs, dates, avocados, coconuts and melons.
- Honey is excellent for reducing Kapha but generally reduce other sugar products.
- Spices are all fine but reduce salt as it helps retain water and increases Kapha.
- Limit your intake of milk, butter, ice-cream, biscuits, cakes, chocolate, deep-fried food, white sugar, aspartame, tinned beans, fizzy drinks, yeasted bread, confectionary, sweet fruits, red meat, potatoes, hard or aged cheeses, salt and alcohol.
- Avoid low-fat products as these are highly processed and usually high in sugar.
- Have rice cakes, rye bread, chapattis and corn bread rather than yeast-risen bread.
- Pumpkin and sunflower seeds, almonds and walnuts are good but they should be lightly roasted and then ground before eating.
- Most beans are good as long as they are well cooked.

Vegetables		Fruits		Herbs/Spices	
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FAVOUR	REDUCE	FAVOUR	REDUCE	FAVOUR	REDUCE
Asparagus	Butternut squash	Apples	Avocados	Most herbs & spices esp. Black pepper Cayenne pepper Cinnamon Coriander Cumin Ginger Fenugreek Hing Licorice Nutmeg Peppermint Turmeric	Sugar
Aubergine	Cucumbers	Apricots	Bananas		Aspartame
Broccoli	Courgettes	Berries	Coconut		Tamarind
Brussels sprouts	Olives	Cherries	Dates		Ketchup
Bean sprouts	Potato (mashed)	Cranberries	Figs		Lime Pickle
Cabbage	Sweet potatoes	Grapefruit	Grapes		Mango chutney
Carrots	Tomatoes	Mangoes	Mangoes		Mayonnaise
Cauliflower	Turnips	Papaya	Melons		Pickles
Celery (raw)		Peaches	Oranges		Salt
Chicory		Pears	Peaches		Soy sauce
Corn		Prunes	Pineapple		Yoghurt
Green beans		Pomegranates	Plums		
Fennel		Raisins			
Lettuce		Watermelon			
Peas					
Peppers					
Potatoes (roast)					
Radish/Spinach					
Swiss Chard					

More on balancing kapha to reduce excess weight

By balancing the kapha energetic principle in our body we will not only reduce excess fat and water but will also increase energy levels, enable the endocrine and digestive system to function better, and create a more youthful appearance. The key factor is to balance digestion as this will help to reduce cravings and normalise appetite.

A Kapha-related weight imbalance is due to a lack of digestive fire (low agni) and low metabolic rate so even though we may eat very small amounts of food, we still tend to gain weight. With this type of imbalance digestive impurities are being created, fat tissue is accumulating in the body and the formation of bone tissue is slowed down due to accumulation of fat tissue. The solution is to increase the metabolic rate and burn up the impurities.

When excess weight accumulates, it blocks nutrient circulation and can aggravate Pitta. This results in excess acid, excess thirst, irritability and an intense appetite for sweet, heavy, cooling foods — the very kind of foods that cause us to gain weight to begin with. The solution is to drink herbalised water containing small amounts of fenugreek, coriander and fennel throughout the day. Fenugreek burns fat and helps absorption, coriander eliminates toxins, and fennel helps with digestion. To make the water, boil one litre of water and pour into a thermos. Add half a teaspoon of ground fenugreek, half a teaspoon of whole coriander seeds and half a teaspoon of fennel seeds. Drink throughout the day. A mixture of one part ground turmeric, two parts ground cumin, three parts ground coriander and four parts ground fennel should be added to vegetables or legumes during cooking to help balance digestion, assimilation and stomach acid.

Exercise is one of the main activities that will help to burn ama and increases circulation and metabolism so an hour of walking, dancing, swimming or light weight training each day will help enormously. Emotional stress is another key factor in kapha imbalances and weight gain and can manifest as eating when you are not hungry or looking for something sweet to pacify a bad mood. Walking in nature, meditation, yoga and pranayama will all help with this situation as will massage and herbalised steam therapies.

Patience is also one of the key factors when attempting to balance Kapha. Kapha moves slowly so follow as many of the recommendations as you can and be confident that your body will gradually respond. Some people respond almost immediately but others may not see drastic changes for many months. However, once the blockages are cleared and the digestion is strong the weight will begin to fall away naturally and quite rapidly. This is not designed to be a fast method to shed pounds but a holistic approach from which you will see satisfying results gradually. Once you have built up your digestive fire and the metabolic processes are balanced, your diet can be more flexible.

On the following page is a list of the most important recommendations for balancing kapha and shedding excess weight. Some of the terms and procedures may be unfamiliar at this point but they will all be explained later in the book.

Recommendations for losing weight

- Follow a 'Kapha reducing' diet.
- Arise around dawn (5-6am) as this increases energy levels and helps reduce ama or toxins.
- Drink a cup of hot water with a slice of lemon on rising in the morning to cleanse the digestive tract of metabolic waste products.
- Massage your head vigorously with coconut oil each morning to sharpen the senses and nourish and strengthen your hair.
- Skin-brush your body each morning to improve blood circulation and help eliminate toxins.
- Massage under your rib cage with a little sesame oil to help improve digestion.
- Practice 'Belly Breath' (see 'pranayama' section).
- Practice fast pranayama 'huh-huh-huh' and chi-uh-ha' sounds (see section on 'healing sounds') to increase energy levels, balance the mind, tone the belly and improve digestion.
- Exercise (jog, swim or cycle) and practice some yoga each morning and evening.
- Practice meditation (20 mins am and pm) to improve mental clarity and increase energy levels.
- Have a ten-minute steam-inhalation session once or twice a week with eucalyptus essential oil. Boil some water and place in a sink or bowl, add a drop of oil, place a towel over your head and gently breathe in the steam. This especially good if you have blocked sinuses or respiratory allergies.
- Use a Neti Pot* with tepid saline water each morning (see section on 'using a Neti pot'). This is also good for reducing congestion in the head and sinuses.
- Use Nasya drops* (two in each nostril) each morning to ease sinus congestion, help prevent colds and heighten dull senses.
- Do not skip meals and eat only when hungry. Eat your largest meal at mid-day and only have a light, easily digestible supper (soup etc). Do not eat after 7pm.
- Take ginger pickle (see recipe section) before each main meal to improve digestion.
- Drink fresh, organic, homemade carrot (10oz), beetroot (3oz) and cucumber (3oz) juice (total of 16oz) with 1-2 tsp Udo's oil for breakfast. Alternative juices include: carrot (10oz) and spinach (6oz) or carrot (11oz) and cabbage (5oz). These can also be taken mid-morning and/or mid-afternoon.
- Decrease your intake of heavy, saturated fats but increase your intake of healthy fats such as flax, hemp, pumpkin or Udo's oil (1-2 tsp daily). This will help reduce food cravings, lower cholesterol and regulate the appetite. Use these oils on vegetables and salads and as salad dressings. However, do not use for cooking or frying but favour minimal amounts of ghee or coconut oil instead.
- Avoid commercial protein powder drinks. Instead eat live protein filled with the intelligence of nature from almonds, walnuts, sunflower seeds, flax seeds, sesame seeds and pumpkin seeds. These should be soaked overnight and ground just before eating (use an equal mix and take two teaspoons per day..
- Have a fluid day each week (see 'mini detox' section – this can be a juice fast or a soup fast). You can follow the rounding program described later in this book for extra benefits.
- Follow a 3-5 day 'Master Cleanse' (see relevant section later in book) every few months.
- Take Triphala tablets* (2-3) before bedtime to cleanse the digestive tract.
- Alternatively take Guggul Plus* to help reduce cholesterol and excess weight and Punarnava Plus* to help with water retention.
- Take Chywanaprash* (a.k.a. Amrit Kalash) twice a day as an immune system booster. It is very high in vitamin C and other anti-oxidants.

* see resources section at end of book (Pukka herbs)

A balanced diet & the six tastes

SWEET	Sugar, milk, butter, ghee, sweet fruit, bread, pasta, grains
SOUR	Yoghurt, lemon, vinegar, wine, soy sauce, grapefruit, aged cheese
SALT	Salt (also in vegetables; especially celery and seaweeds)
PUNGENT	Hot, spicy foods such as pepper, ginger, garlic, cayenne, chilli
BITTER	Leafy greens, olives, turmeric, horseradish, turmeric, fenugreek, nettle, lettuce, aloe
ASTRINGENT	Beans, lentils, dhal, honey, rhubarb, apples, leafy greens, pomegranate, sprouts

The tongue has taste buds which register all the above six tastes. If the body receives all these tastes in each meal it feels satisfied and will not overeat or feel hungry again soon after eating. However, there are far more taste buds that register the sweet as opposed to astringent or sour taste. This is because we do not require equal amounts of each taste. There are more 'sweet' taste buds because this is the taste we require the most of; sweet tasting foods, such as rice and milk, are nourishing and give us protein, energy and vitality. They are heavy and grounding and are required by Vata types much more than Kapha types.

Bitter tasting foods supply many vitamins, enzymes and minerals. They are also detoxifying, reduce water retention and are good as tonics for the liver and blood. Most are cleansing and help take away burning and itching sensations. In excess they can aggravate vata and dehydrate the body. Astringent tasting foods are also diuretic and blood purifiers. They help balance [pitta](#) and [kapha](#) but in excess can create gas and constipation. Spices are certainly a quick, convenient and flavourful way of incorporating the more unusual bitter and astringent tastes. Salt helps the body retain water and maintains substance and grounding, whilst pungent and sour tasting foods burn up toxins and stimulate the digestion.

As different body-types require different quantities of each taste we must allow our own innate intelligence to determine what combinations it requires in terms of optimum nutrition, especially since this may change on a daily and/or seasonal basis. Our limited modern model of nutrition is continually being updated and adapted as we discover new groups of molecules (such as vitamins, minerals enzymes and proteins) that our body requires to function optimally. It then struggles to determine the appropriate amount of each vitamin, mineral, enzyme or protein our bodies require and in what combinations they should be taken in. The debate will probably go on forever as there are so many variables to consider. However, Ayurveda has a simple solution – simply accept that our own body knows intuitively and instinctively just what it needs at any particular moment. It relays its message through our desire for particular taste combinations and we should follow those impulses for maximum health. Of course, to be sure that these signals are getting through we need to remain relaxed, balanced and fully aware. The life-style recommendations in this book are designed to facilitate this process.

To summarise: the only effective way to reduce the amount of food you eat and to cut down on unhealthy cravings is to include all six tastes in every meal. Furthermore, these six tastes are not required in equal amounts but should be combined in proportions to suit your particular body type.

Vata body-types: Generally require more sweet, sour and salty tastes especially in winter or if stressed. Meals should also be heavy, warm, oily and nourishing (soups and stews are good).

Pitta body-types: Generally require more sweet, bitter and astringent tastes especially in summer. Food should also be slightly heavy and oily and small cold dishes may be included.

Kapha body-types: Generally require more bitter, astringent and pungent tastes, especially in spring or if feeling heavy, lethargic or dull minded. Food should also be light, dry and warm to aid digestion and heavy, oily foods and dairy products should be excluded.

Improving digestion & maintaining health

In the west the majority of people suffer from everyday digestion problems such as gas, bloating, stomach pain, constipation, heartburn, and fatigue after eating. Ayurveda provides simple solutions to these common complaints by considering not only what we eat but how we consume our meals.

To ensure food is properly digested, assimilated and metabolised by the body it is important to follow these guidelines:

- Eat at the times when the body has the necessary enzymes available to cope with the digestion of food. The peak time for enzymatic production is mid-day and this is the time to eat the largest meal of the day. By ensuring that the heaviest foods and largest quantities are eaten at this time, the bodily tissues are able to fully utilise the nutritional value of foods consumed. This helps reduce the amount of food required by the body and reduces food cravings between meals. It also goes a long way to helping reduce weight and maintaining hormone balance. The evening meal should be light as the body produces far less enzymes to help digest food at this period of the day. You should aim to eat at least three hours before going to bed and this should therefore be between 5-7pm.

Have you ever gone out for a late dinner and found that it was a strain to wake up the next morning or that it was difficult to be efficient during the following day? These are often the side effects of improperly digested food. The best way to avoid these problems is to follow nature's prescription of suitable times to eat. When the sun is strongest the digestive fire is also strongest. Agni is associated with the Sun. This is one of the ways ayurveda seeks to connect our mind and body with the environment. As the sun goes down so does our agni. Late night meals interfere with sleep and after 10:00 p.m. the body is working to burn off toxins and continue to digest food from the day. If you eat after 10:00 p.m., the food may cause toxins to accumulate in the system, and as a result the next day you wake up tired. If you are not able to wake up fresh and clear, then it is important to analyze the quantity of food and the time of night you are eating dinner.

- Each meal should be taken in a peaceful, pleasant environment and should not be consumed when irritated, angry or stressed as this hinders the digestive process and leads to bloating, gas and the build-up of toxins in the gut. Excessive talk or a noisy environment hinders the digestion and leads to undigested food remaining in the body causing wind and bloating. Watching television or reading during eating can also have similar effects. Our bodies need an uplifting and settled environment in order to process and absorb the nutrients from our meals. If that is not available then we should at least be sitting down to eat - not standing, walking or driving. The act of eating is life-giving. The process of eating, according to ayurveda, is something reverent and important for the development of consciousness as well as our physical health. When we sit down to eat our stomach is in a relaxed posture and our awareness is on the taste, texture, and smell of the food. This will greatly improve the digestion.
- Whilst it is important to drink between 1-2 litres of water per day, liquid should not be consumed half an hour before or one hour after eating as this ensures that the digestive enzymes responsible for digesting food aren't diluted by excessive water intake. It is, however, useful to sip small amounts of hot water with a meal as this aids the digestive process. Ayurveda recommends taking a small cup of 'Post-digestive' tea (see 'herbal teas') to help with the digestive process. Hot water with fresh ginger, lemon, fennel seeds or mint leaves should be sipped throughout the day.
- The next ayurvedic recommendation also addresses agni. Ayurveda recommends avoiding cold drinks at meals and ice cold foods in general. This is like putting cold water on the burning logs. Iced water,

normally served at restaurants, extinguishes the digestive fire. Even juice or milk right out of the refrigerator is too cold for the digestion. Juice should be taken at room temperature and water without ice. Once you get into this habit of drinking beverages at room temperature you will notice a dramatic improvement in your digestion and the way your body feels while eating and after the meal. Cold drinks and foods mixed with warm cooked foods can cause stomach cramps, bloating and general discomfort in the stomach area. If you have a pitta imbalance you can take cool drinks in-between meals. Cold or frozen foods are not recommended for pitta either because even though they may temporarily cool down the heat, the agni is still being over stimulated and the imbalance will continue. Try slightly cool drinks made with rose water, or milk blended with dates or fresh mangos.

- Avoid caffeine, alcohol and carbonated soft drinks and switch to life-giving, vitality-boosting beverages. Water, that most basic yet most overlooked elixir of life, helps to rehydrate the system and flushes toxins from the body. Water that has been boiled and cooled has the added healing element of fire in it. Adding herbs and spices suited to your physiology or designed to correct a specific imbalance can enhance the healing quality of the water you drink. At bedtime, drink a cup of warm milk (boil and cool it for added digestibility) blended with a spoonful of ghee, a pinch of ginger, a pinch of cardamom and a pinch of nutmeg will aid sleep.
- Cut down on sugar, wheat, coffee, tea, alcohol and red meat as these hinder the digestive process, leach nutrients and water from the body or block the uptake of nutrients from food. This is especially so with sugar as this 'feeds' the 'bad' bacteria in the gut and helps them multiply – this leads to candida, bloating, wind and indigestion.
- Another way to improve the digestion is to stimulate the agni or digestive fire before we begin eating. Weak digestive agni may result in fatigue after eating so Ayurveda recommends eating a one inch piece of fresh ginger with a few drops of lemon juice and a few pinches of salt on it before a full meal. This starts to activate the salivary glands, producing the necessary enzymes so that the nutrients in the food are easily absorbed by the body. See 'Ginger Pickle' recipe.

Balancing your digestive agni is a key principle in Ayurvedic medicine. That's why ayurveda recommends a number of general practices for better digestion. Digestive agni can be compared to a burning fire. If the flame is very low than it will take a long time to cook the food. In the same way if the fire is too big it can burn the food. If we put a huge log on a low fire it will extinguish it. Our digestive fires should be balanced so that we can digest our meals efficiently and smoothly.

- Ideally, each main meal should provide the six tastes of bitter, sweet, pungent, astringent, sour and salty. This ensures the nutritional requirements of the body are met and reduces the need for snacking and over-eating. Specific mixtures of herbs or 'churna's' may be added during cooking or sprinkled over food to ensure a balance of the six tastes in each meal (see 'churna' recipes). Spices not only add flavour and aroma; they also bring therapeutic value to the meal. They help boost natural immunity, and most of them boost the digestion so that the body is better able to absorb and assimilate the nutrients from the foods you eat.
- Start the day with a stewed apple and raisins as this is light, warm and nourishing and breaks the fast of the night slowly. The digestive system needs warm, nourishing foods in the morning to stimulate it, but not too much. The digestive fire is just waking up, and will be at full capacity when the sun is high in the sky, at noon. Heavier proteins and larger amounts of food are best digested later in the day. A stewed apple also helps your elimination system, because it is easy to digest and contains lots of fibre. It also contains vitamins, trace minerals, and antioxidants. This is also a good recommendation for weight loss as anything that is light on the digestion, and adds nutrients rather than empty calories, helps burn body fat.

- It is important not to eat if there is no hunger/appetite present. Often the feeling of ‘needing something’ to eat is really a need for liquid intake – try and listen to the body’s signals. Often the body needs smaller, easily digestible soups and fruit/vegetable juices rather than a ‘full-blown’ meal, to gain energy and vitality.
- Eat slowly and always chew your food well - many digestive enzymes are added from the salivary glands and these are stimulated by the action of the jaw. Food that enters the stomach should be ‘soup like’ as the stomach has no teeth to do this for you.
- At the end of a meal it is beneficial to wait for five minutes before taking seconds or a desert as this gives the body time to register fullness and to indicate whether it requires more. You should leave the table feeling light, refreshed and energetic. If you feel heavy and tired after eating this is an indication that you have eaten too much or that the food you ate was nutritionally poor. Allow five to ten minutes before leaving the table and then take a short walk for ten to fifteen minutes to aid the digestive process.
- Food consumed should always be of the highest quality. Fresh, organic food is best and all refined, processed food is best avoided. Colour, taste and presentation are as important as nutritional content as the pleasure we get from smelling, seeing and tasting food determines the abundance of enzymes necessary for proper digestion.
- If raw foods are eaten these should be taken at the beginning of the meal and always in small quantities (less than one third of the total meal content). Whilst raw food contains an abundance of vitamins and enzymes the body finds it harder to break these down than cooked food and this can lead to severe digestive problems, especially if the body is already under stress and the digestion is working less than optimally. The best cooking method is to lightly steam vegetables as this ensures minimal loss of enzymes and maximum retention of nutrients.
- According to Ayurveda sweet, fruit deserts should be taken at the beginning of a meal rather than at the end. Sweet tastes satisfy hunger and quench the appetite and therefore reduce the need for large amounts of food. Fruit that is left sitting behind the main meal waiting to be digested (up to six hours) can ferment and produce large amounts of gas and bloating. This destroys the ‘good’ digestive flora and encourages the production of ‘bad’ digestive flora/bacteria.
- To properly digest a meal the stomach should be no more than a third full. A third should contain food, a third the liquid you have been consuming before the meal and a third air or space. This allows the digestive juices to fully break down the food contained there.
- Another ayurvedic tip for digestion is to drink a fresh yogurt drink called Lassie either during or after the meal. This drink consists of 1/4 cup fresh homemade yogurt, 1 cup room temperature water and sugar to taste. Blend it for one minute in the blender. Lassie is light and contains lactobacilli, necessary bacteria that lubricate the intestines to help digestion go smoothly. Lassie drinks help to reduce gas and bloating. They also taste delicious and can make a meal more satisfying and nutritious. See ‘lassie’ recipes.
- Adequate intake of essential fatty acids (omega 3,6,9) will help reduce cholesterol, high blood pressure, diabetes and obesity. These can be found in fresh deep-sea fish such as mackerel, sardines and salmon and in many freshly-ground nuts and seeds. However, the best way to ensure an adequate intake is by adding oil to your food. Olive oil is good but flax oil, pumpkin oil and borage oil are better. Better still is a specially formulated blend called ‘Udo’s oil’ (see ‘Savant’ in the resources section) which contains all the essential fatty acids or omegas in their ideal ratios for optimum health and nutrition.

- Fruits and vegetables contain lots of phyto-nutrients, and a variety of senses-pleasing colours, tastes and textures. Ayurveda has always recommended eating lots of fruits and vegetables, not only for their nutritional value, but also because they are natural internal cleansers. Modern research concurs that fruits and vegetables are powerful disease-prevention foods - in fact, it is now recommended that you eat nine servings of antioxidant-rich fruits and vegetables a day to prevent cancer and other free radical induced diseases.
- Eat naturally intelligent foods. Almost three-quarters of the products sold in supermarkets contain genetically modified ingredients and many of the chemicals and pesticides used in growing foods have been linked to numerous diseases. Processed foods, genetically modified foods, and foods to which additives or artificial preservatives have been added are no longer alive with the intelligence of nature. According to ayurveda, the human physiology is a reflection of the laws of the universe, and the more in tune our lives are with nature, the healthier we are likely to be. Our digestive system is designed to process foods that are closest to nature - whole grains, pulses, fruits and vegetables. Help your digestion function optimally by choosing organic foods whenever possible - your health is worth the extra cost.
- Cook your food correctly. The purpose of ayurvedic cooking is to combine the intelligence of the spices, the intelligence of vegetables and the intelligence of the fat - all the different enzymes and energetics - in a way that is not confusing for your body's intelligence to break down and incorporate. Ayurvedic cooking methods are easy on the digestive system. You can prepare ayurvedic vegetables in one of two ways. The first way is to steam the vegetables and then add the spices which have been sautéed in ghee, coconut oil or olive oil. The second way is to sauté the spices in ghee, coconut oil or olive oil and to then add the vegetables and sauté for a few minutes. Cover and cook at low temperature. If you are making a curry (vegetables with sauce), add a small amount of water to finish cooking the vegetables
- Give your digestive system a break. According to ayurveda, the build up of ama or toxins in the physiology is the root cause of most disorders. That's why ayurveda recommends internal cleansing at the change of each season for optimal health. During internal cleansing, eat light yet nourishing foods such as mung bean soup or kicharee and drink lots of warm water or 'Detox Tea' through the day. See 'teas' in recipe section. Fresh, sweet juicy fruits are excellent cleansers. Periodic internal cleansing gets rid of accumulated junk from inside the body and boosts the digestion for the next season.
- Triphala is an excellent aid to elimination and purification and will help strengthen and purify the digestive/immune system. It is best taken in the late evening. A herbal paste called Chywanaprash is also excellent in this regard.
- Water is essential for good, digestion, ridding the body of toxins, maintaining immunity and healthy skin. When the water is herbalised it has an even stronger, more beneficial action.
For kapha types: To a thermos of boiled water, add 2 thin slices of fresh ginger root, 2 basil leaves, 2 whole cloves, 1/2 teaspoon of whole cumin seeds and 2 pinches licorice powder. Sip hot, during and after meals.
For pitta types: 2 pinches of Indian sarsaparilla powder, 1/4 teaspoon cumin seeds, 2 pinches of licorice powder, 1/2 teaspoon fennel seeds and 1/2 teaspoon of coriander seeds. Drink at body temperature throughout the day, alternating with plain boiled water.
For vata types: 1/2 teaspoon whole cumin seeds, 1/2 teaspoon whole coriander seeds, 1/2 teaspoon fennel seeds, 3 pinches of ashwagandha root powder and 1 pinch whole root licorice powder. Drink warm.

- Exercise each day as your body craves routine. If you exercise at fifty percent capacity at the same time every day, eat at the same time and sleep at the same time, your body will respond with better digestion, better sleep and overall better immunity. Yoga, walking, cycling, dancing and swimming are all excellent in this regard. The way to tell if you are exerting more than fifty percent capacity and starting to exceed your capacity is if sweat starts to form on your nose, forehead or under the arms. Another sign is if you can no longer breathe through the nose. Breathing through the nose is recommended for ayurvedic exercise. If you start to need to gulp air through the mouth, it's time to slow down or stop. If you follow this one guideline, you will always feel energized by exercise instead of exhausted. Each day, you will find that your capacity increases and that you can exercise more intensely or for a longer duration. Very naturally you will be able to handle more exercise without ever straining.
- The practices of meditation, chanting and pranayama will also help balance the mind, subtly tone the body, improve digestion and massively reduce stress.
- Retiring to bed early and waking early is necessary for the maintenance of hormone balance in the mind and body – this creates happiness and a stress-free mind; the prerequisite of proper digestion.
- Better relationships are formed when the mind and body are in harmony. The beauty of Ayurveda is that it takes into account all areas of life. While you may think that your problems with relationships start with the other person, the fact remains that you can change only yourself. Most relationships go wrong when the people involved start blaming each other. If you stop and look within, you will surely find that blame doesn't always lie with the other person. At the basis of all relationships is the human heart. The heart is the seat of Sadhaka Pitta, the sub-dosha of Pitta concerned with emotions. To use modern terminology, Sadhaka Agni is related to the neuro-hormones that are located in the brain and all over the body, including the heart. The neuro-hormones located in the heart send signals to the brain to register depression or happiness, depending on how the individual processes an experience.

It is important to understand and thereby respect the special psycho-emotional makeup of others. Rather than blame others for reacting differently than we do, it's better to develop understanding and tolerance, based on the knowledge of Ayurvedic mind-body types. If you are feeling irritated with someone, it's best to look to your own physiology rather than blame him or her. Once we start to live more in harmony with nature we are naturally more tolerant and forgiving. Good digestion not only positively effects our physical health but our mental and emotional health as well but. This also works the other way round; better relationships create better digestion, better health and a happier life.

Other nutritional considerations

Water

Water is essential to life. It has many healing properties and contributes up to 70% of our body weight. It keeps the skin soft, supple and free of wrinkles, removes inorganic mineral deposits, flushes out toxins, prevents constipation, protects against viruses/infections and helps remove cholesterol and excess fat. The type of water we drink today, and the insufficient amounts consumed, contribute to arteriosclerosis, illness and premature aging. Unfortunately tap water often contains the residues or homeopathic concentrations of modern drugs and hormones which are not removed during the filtration process at sewage plants. It may also contain toxic chemicals such as chlorine and fluoride. Even today's naturally distilled water, rain, is often polluted by our industrial technology. Bottled water, water filters water purifiers, water coolers, water softeners, reverse osmosis systems and water distillers may help rectify this situation. However, whilst distilled water contains only pure H²O - water that is free from harmful inorganic compounds, toxic chemicals, bacteria and viruses - the electricity and heat used to produce it may reduce its 'life-energy' or prana.

We should ideally drink between 1 - 2 litres per day depending on our body-type. Just as we use hot water to soften and dissolve impurities and fat from our dishes, pots and pans so too should we use it to detoxify our body. Cold water hardens and congeals fat in our body whilst hot water softens and dissolves fat. Cold water slows down our digestive capabilities and hinders digestion whilst hot water speeds up our metabolism and helps the digestive process. Body or room temperature water is relatively neutral and preferable to cold water consumption. Water combined with tea or coffee acts as a diuretic and should be followed by an equal amount of plain water to prevent dehydration. Adding a slice of lemon or ginger to our hot water can help the cleansing process and further improve digestion.

Table Salt (sodium chloride)

Table salt is subject to very high temperatures during the refining process which hardens the grains and allows them to flow more easily - it also renders them virtually insoluble in water and difficult for the body to metabolise. This can cause water-logging of our tissues, increased blood pressure and encrustation of the arteries, veins and capillaries. We should therefore reduce the use of refined table salt and favour natural salts such as unrefined sea salt, black or rock salt instead. Kelp and other seaweeds are also excellent sources of organic sodium as are many vegetables; celery being especially good.

Meat Products

Meat is often high in saturated fats and cholesterol, both of which may contribute to clogging of the arteries. It can also contain dangerous microbes such as salmonella and E.coli, as well as many residual antibiotics and steroids. Red meat in particular is very heating to the body and very difficult to digest. It is best to obtain our protein from grains, cereals, soya products, pulses, lentils, nuts and seeds. However, if meat forms a large part of your diet; eat organic, favour chicken and fish and ensure an adequate supply of fresh fruit, pure water and vegetables.

Processing and Refining Foods

These modern techniques reduce the nutritional value of foodstuffs by as much as 95%. Many have sugar or salt added to improve taste or prolong shelf life, while others contain inorganic minerals, flavouring and synthetic additives. The body cannot utilise these harmful substances and wastes a great deal of energy in its attempt to expel them from our body. Consuming vast quantities of these products inevitably leads to ill health and premature aging as the body builds up toxic substances it has failed to eliminate.

Carbohydrates, Oils and Fats

These play an essential role in our body and are responsible for our energy levels, tissue repair, hormone production and vitamin assimilation. Fast releasing carbohydrates such as refined white sugar are best avoided

while slow releasing carbohydrates found in whole-grains, fruit and vegetables are vital for proper cell-to-cell communication and tissue functioning. Oils high in linoleic acid and/or alpha-linoleic acid are essential to the body. Hemp, Flax, Pumpkin, Walnut, Udo's and Soya bean oil are excellent with Sunflower, Safflower, Sesame, Rice Bran and Evening Primrose coming a close second. Again, the refining and processing of these oils destroys their life-enhancing properties and renders them harmful to the body. It is best to try and obtain organic, unrefined, cold-pressed oils whenever possible and to remember that only small quantities are required by the body each day for optimum health and vitality.

Vitamins and minerals

Whilst the body requires an abundant supply of vitamins and minerals it is generally accepted that the soil our food is grown in is no longer as effective in supplying these nutrients as it once was. Our soils are over-used and crop rotation has become a thing of the past so nutrients are taken out but not returned.

Non-organic produce is further disadvantaged by the fact that the pesticides, fungicides and insecticides, used to help increase production, prevent the plants from producing many of the nutrients in the quantities that we require for good health. Fertilisers may be added to the soil but these again are mainly inorganic and do not possess the wide spectrum of minerals required for good health – if certain minerals are not put back into the soil the plant will no longer possess them in its make-up and we will therefore no longer have them in our diets.

However, supplementing our diet with vitamin and mineral supplements may have limited effect and may even be detrimental to our health. Firstly, most supplements are inorganic and have been synthetically produced in a laboratory – this means that they will lack the essential 'life-energy' that we only receive from 'live' plants and our body may have limited capacity to use the lifeless nutrients contained within them. Many people have reported that some supplements they have taken come straight out the other end with the manufacturer's details still visible on the tablet! Secondly, it is practically impossible to replicate nature and finding the right 'blend' of nutrients to ensure that they go to the right place in the right amounts and produce right effects is nigh on impossible too. Thirdly, we all have different body-types and therefore different vitamin/mineral requirements so no one pill will suit all people. What may be beneficial for one person may be detrimental to the next and cause further toxicity in the body.

The only way to really guarantee we ingest all the nutrients we need in their correct form, combination and quantity is to eat the correct foods, ie; fresh, organic produce. If we were to eat the recommended five servings of organic fruit, vegetables and grains per day and vary the type of produce we choose each day this would go most of the way towards ensuring better health. If we were also to choose foods suitable for our body type this would help still further. If we were to increase the amount of fruit and vegetables we ate each day by supplementing our diet with freshly prepared vegetable juices, which are very easy to digest, we would be eating as healthily as is possible in today's world.

Leafy Greens

Dark leafy green vegetables such as collard greens, spinach, swiss chard, mustard greens, bok choy greens, sorrel, turnip greens and many varieties of kale are considered a particularly nutritious class of vegetables. They contain important minerals such as calcium, magnesium, iron, potassium, vitamin A, vitamin K, vitamin B1 and vitamin B2. Ayurveda recommends that we have some leafy greens each day to help meet the nutritional requirements for optimal health.

Leafy greens help replenish liquid in the body and refresh and purify the subtle channels called shrotas. They also supply prana or life energy that provides sustenance to mind and body. They help balance pitta and kapha. People who need to balance vata should eat them prepared with [ghee](#) or olive oil and vata balancing spices. They are very beneficial for people suffering from skin problems as they are cooling, gently purifying and nourishing for the skin. Due to the high mineral content of calcium and vitamin A, leafy greens are highly beneficial for reproductive health and menopause. They contain antioxidants that help to prevent aging and disease.

There are different methods of cooking leafy greens. Some are tender and cook very quickly whilst others, such as kale, may need cooking longer. It is best to keep the leaf part whole when cooking. However, if there are tough stems, such as on collard greens and kale, then it is best to slice the stem into bite size pieces. The tough stem should be cooked until tender or it may cause abdominal discomfort.

Genetic engineering

This technology involves inserting genetic material from animals, insects, virus's and other organisms into the DNA of food products such as corn, soybeans, and tomatoes. From an Ayurvedic perspective nature's innate organizing power or intelligence is woven into the DNA and determines the characteristics of different species. By splicing foreign genetic material into the DNA of a plant, the plant's fundamental connection with the wholeness of life is damaged. This damage gets passed on to us at the dinner table.

The ayurvedic texts define the source of all disease and suffering as pragyaparadh, or "the mistake of the intellect." This occurs when individuals (or even single cells) "forget" their connections with the wholeness of life and believe themselves to be isolated entities. Creating, and then eating, genetically engineered foods exposes us to pragyaparadh.

We are all threads in the fabric of creation, say ancient ayurvedic texts. To believe ourselves to be the weavers, capable of successfully manipulating nature's intelligence, is a symptom of pragyaparadh and this assumption reveals our ultimate naiveté. The genetic program of a living organism is vastly more powerful and more complex than limited human intelligence.

Therefore, consuming genetically food exposes us to unknown forces that may seriously damage the fine tuning and functioning of our physiology and cause long-tem chronic health problems.

The adverse effects of eating microwaved food

Microwave cooking is one of the most important causes of ill health but has largely been ignored by the public due to its speed and convenience. Russian research concerning adverse neurological effects of altered magnetic states of microwaved foods caused the Russian government to outlaw all food microwave apparatus in 1976 (this law was unfortunately lifted after Perestroika).

Another study reported in the US journal Paediatrics (vol. 89, no. 4, April 1992) showed depletion of antibodies and breakdown of enzymes when breast milk is microwaved. The US Food and Drug Association also found a problem with the release of potentially toxic molecules into the food from packaging designed to help brown food during microwaving.

Microwaves also tend to heat foods unevenly, indicating that some of the food is not sufficiently heated to kill all the bacteria or parasites that might be present. This uneven heating also creates hot spots in food that may release synthetic oestrogens found in certain plastics. But even when using only glass (Pyrex) containers, low levels of radiation escaping from the ovens may be harmful.

Two researchers, Dr. Bernard H. Blanc and Dr. Hans Hertel, confirmed that microwave cooking significantly changes food nutrients and has a detrimental effect on the human body. Their research revealed the following about microwaved food:

- The body cannot recognise and consequently not metabolize radiolytic byproducts (isomers) created in microwaved food. These by-products accumulate in the body.
- Male and female hormone production is altered by continually eating microwaved food.
- Minerals, vitamins and nutrients are quantitatively reduced and qualitatively altered, so that the body gets little or no benefit, and absorbs these altered compounds that cannot be broken down.

- The minerals in vegetables are altered into cancerous free-radicals.
- Microwaved food causes stomach and intestinal tumours as well as cancerous cells in the blood.
- The prolonged eating of microwaved food causes increase of low-density lipoprotein cholesterol.
- Continually eating food processed in a microwave oven gradually causes brain damage by de-polarising or de-magnetising brain tissue.
- Continual ingestion of microwaved food causes immune system deficiencies through lymph gland and blood serum alterations (increase of white and decrease of red blood cells).
- Eating microwaved food causes loss of memory and concentration, emotional instability and a decrease of intelligence.

Microwaved blood kills patient

In 1991, there was a lawsuit in Oklahoma concerning the hospital use of a microwave oven to warm blood needed in a transfusion. The case involved a hip surgery patient, Norma Levitt, who died from a simple blood transfusion. It seems the nurse had warmed the blood in a microwave oven. This tragedy makes it very apparent that there's much more to "heating" with microwaves than we've been led to believe. Blood for transfusions is routinely warmed, but not in microwave ovens. In the case of Mrs. Levitt, the microwaving altered the blood and it killed her. It's very obvious that this form of microwave radiation "heating" does something to the substances it heats. It's also becoming quite apparent that people who process food in a microwave oven are also ingesting these "unknowns". Because the body is electrochemical in nature, any force that disrupts or changes human electrochemical events will affect the physiology of the body.

Also, from an Ayurvedic perspective, food cooked in this unnatural way lacks prana or 'life-energy' and has little usefulness as part of a healthy balanced diet. However, whichever way you look at it, there appears to be very serious concerns regarding the safety of eating food cooked in micro-waved ovens and therefore subject to high frequency, alternating current electromagnetic waves. Should you be the owner of such a dangerous gadget we recommend that you give it to the nice men at the recycling centre and don't just give it to someone else!

Summary of healthy dietary principles

- all body-types -

- Eat only when you are hungry (sometimes only a drink is required to satisfy a craving).
- Eat breakfast to help prevent a mid-morning energy slump (especially Vata types).
- Drink a glass of fresh, organic fruit/vegetable juice each day (esp; carrot, apple and spinach).
- Don't mix fruit and vegetables juices apart from carrot and apple.
- Eat the largest meal at mid-day – this is when the digestive fire is at its strongest.
- Take 'Ginger Pickle' (see recipe section) half an hour before each meal.
- Sit down whilst eating and put your full attention on the food being eaten - do not divide the mind and weaken the digestive juices by excessive talking, reading or watching television. Always be conscious of the taste of food and the act of eating and try and eat in a settled, peaceful environment.
- Eat only food that is attractive, wholesome, aromatic and tasty - this ensures proper digestion.
- Eat fresh, organic food whenever possible and always avoid processed and refined products.
- Try to avoid lifeless, nutrient-poor food such as micro-waved, pre-cooked, left-over or canned.
- Favour unprocessed, unrefined oils such as Udo's, flax, pumpkin, ghee and olive oil.
- Use honey, maple syrup, fructose, algarve and stevia extract for sweetening.
- Reduce the use of refined sugar, salt, white flour, hard cheese and processed or mirco-waved food.
- Ttry and avoid tea, coffee, alcohol, pastries and meat. If you do eat meat try and choose white meat or fish in preference to red meat as they are easier to digest.
- Use soya, rice, almond, hazelnut or oat milk as a substitute for pasteurised cow's milk.
- Sip hot water during a meal but refrain from taking any liquids for up to half an hour before and after food. This ensures that the stomach's digestive enzymes do not become diluted.
- Drink one to two litres of mineral/distilled water or herbal teas daily. Ginger, lemon, peppermint, fennel, coriander and the digestive teas (see recipe section) are good.
- Drink hot water with fresh lemon or fresh ginger to reduce weight and/or eliminate toxins/impurities.
- Eat fruit separately from main meals to prevent fermentation in the gut.
- If you are a Pitta type, or even a Kapha type with good digestion, you can include a small salad and dressing before your main mid-day meal in the summertime.
- Always chew your food thoroughly – this stimulates the salivary glands and also ensures food reaches the stomach in a pre-digested, liquid form that is easier to digest and assimilate.
- Avoid over-eating – rest and relax for a few minutes before taking a second helping.
- The amount of chewed food that will fit into your cupped hands is equal to the size of a third of your stomach. Your digestion system works at its best when your stomach contains one third food, one third liquid and one third space at the end of a main meal.
- Leave the table feeling sated but not heavy and bloated – energy levels should feel replenished.
- Take a short stroll after a large meal, and then a short rest afterwards if desired
- If you are a Vata type and experience flagging energy during late afternoon, stop and have a small snack or fruit juice.
- Eat at least three hours before bed and only have a light meal of cereal, toast or soup.
- Vata types benefit from milky bedtime drink with added ghee, cinnamon, nutmeg and raisins.
- Aloe vera juice is good for everyone but it is especially beneficial for those suffering from pitta imbalances. It is good for digestion, cleansing and elimination. Take about 30mls of the juice each day.
- [Turmeric](#) is both bitter and astringent and is a blood purifier and antioxidant. One teaspoon cooked with your meals is an excellent way to increase antioxidant intake. Vata people should use half this amount as it is can sometimes be too drying and depleting for them.

The day starts the night before.

An early night ensures deep, refreshing sleep.

Deep, refreshing sleep ensures one wakes early - rested and revitalised.

Waking early - rested and revitalised - ensures time for massage, yoga and meditation.

Massage, yoga and meditation ensure the mind and body are awake and alive.

Mind and body - fully awake and alive - ensure a happy countenance.

A happy countenance ensures a stress-free mind.

A stress-free mind creates a positive mind.

A stress-free, positive mind imparts love and peace to those around.

An atmosphere of love and peace creates a wave of harmony throughout the room.

A wave of harmony throughout the room creates a wave of harmony throughout the house.

A wave of harmony throughout the house creates a wave of harmony throughout the city.

A wave of harmony throughout the city creates a wave of harmony throughout the country.

A wave of harmony throughout the country creates a wave of harmony throughout the world.

The peace and harmony of every individual in every town, in every city, in every country is in your power and their happiness rests in your arms. If you are fully awake in the present moment, having learnt from and let go of the past, the future will take care of itself. You simply need to bathe in the joy of being fully alive in every present waking moment.

And the real beauty is – you can start today.



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