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A guide to the doshas | **VATA PITTA KAPHA**

Balance – the key to perfect health

Ayurveda identifies three fundamental principles

(called doshas) that function in our mind and body and throughout Nature. For a balanced, alert mind and healthy tissues, organs and bodily systems, it is necessary that these three doshas are in their balanced states.

The three doshas:



Vata, the principle of movement



Pitta, the principle of metabolism or transformation



Kapha, the principle of structure or cohesion

Many factors influence the balance of the doshas: the time of day, weather, diet, daily routine, work, sleep – in short, all influences to which we are exposed.

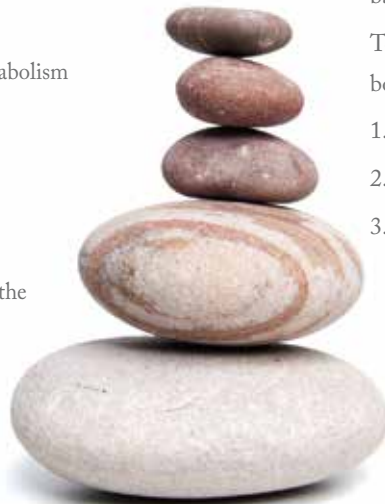
How to balance the doshas

If a dosha has gone out of balance, i.e. it has been ‘aggravated’ or ‘increased’, it can be brought back into balance using measures that are the opposite of those influences that caused the disturbance.

For example, if Vata has been aggravated by cold weather, then making sure to wear warm clothing and to eat warm food will be balancing.

To help maintain the doshas in lasting balance in the mind and body, Maharishi Ayurveda recommends:

1. a regular daily routine
2. a healthy diet adjusted for the individual
3. food supplements to bring balance to specific areas
4. aroma and music therapy to balance the senses
5. physical and breathing exercises
6. Transcendental Meditation to give clear awareness, deep rest and mental coordination



The activities of the doshas



VATA - movement

Vata is responsible for the nervous system, breathing, processes of elimination and evacuation and circulation.

When Vata is balanced one feels happy, enthusiastic, full of energy and creative.
The mind is calm, clear and alert.



PITTA - metabolism

Pitta is responsible for all metabolic processes, e.g. digestion and body temperature, and mentally for intellect and emotions.

When Pitta is balanced there is contentment, energy, good speech, strong digestion, proper body temperature and a clear mind.



KAPHA - structure

Kapha is responsible for firmness and stability of the body and fluid balance.

When Kapha is balanced there is stamina, strength, patience and mental stability.

Personal health evaluation

1. Tick the boxes that apply to you 2. Total the Vata, Pitta and Kapha columns 3. Whichever dosha has the highest total is predominant for you. You may find two doshas have larger totals, e.g. Vata and Pitta.



Vata

Vata	Qualities	✓
Hair type	Dry, brittle	
Skin type	Dry, rough	
Mental activity	Quick, restless, creative	
Memory	Quick to learn and forget	
Sleep	Interrupted, light sleep	
Reaction to stress	Anxiety, worry	
Body size	Small frame	
Hunger	Irregular	
Walk	Quick	
Moods	Change quickly	
Weather	Aversion to cold, wind and damp	
Total		

**When Vata is in Balance:**

You are vibrant and enthusiastic, clear minded, flexible, imaginative, sensitive and quick to respond.

When Vata is out of Balance:

You are restless, have disturbed sleep, are fatigued, anxious and underweight.

To keep Vata in Balance:

Favour a regular routine, regular meals and mealtimes, early to bed and sweet, sour, salty, warm and heavy food.

Minimise excess travel, excess mental work, exposure to dry, windy weather; dry, light, cold foods and pungent, bitter, astringent tastes.

When Vata is more dominant:

End of the year - September - December; end of life - 60+ years; end of day and night - 2 - 6pm and 2 - 6am.

Products to balance Vata

Vata tea, Vata spice blend, Vata massage oil, Vata aroma oil, Sesame massage oil, Vata skin care cream, Vata shampoo, Vata soap.

Personal health evaluation

1. Tick the boxes that apply to you 2. Total the Vata, Pitta and Kapha columns 3. Whichever dosha has the highest total is predominant for you. You may find two doshas have larger totals, e.g. Vata and Pitta.



Pitta

Pitta	Qualities	✓
Hair type	Fine, thin, reddish	
Skin type	Soft, ruddy, sensitive	
Mental activity	Sharp, efficient	
Memory	Good general memory	
Sleep	Sound, medium length	
Reaction to stress	Anger, irritability, criticise	
Body size	Medium frame	
Hunger	Sharp	
Walk	Determined	
Moods	Intense, slow changing	
Weather	Aversion to hot weather	
Total		



Pitta

When Pitta is in Balance:

You are loving and contented, articulate and precise, courageous, have strong digestion, lustrous complexion, good concentration, sharp intellect and enjoy challenges.

When Pitta is out of Balance:

You are demanding, irritable, frustrated and prone to skin problems, greying hair and loss of hair.

To keep Pitta in Balance:

Favour regular breaks from work, regular meals, enjoy natural beauty and good company, early to bed and eat sweet, bitter and astringent foods.

Minimise alcohol, smoking, excessive heat and sunshine, deadlines, hot and dry food.

When Pitta is more dominant:

Middle of the year - June-September; middle of life - 20 - 60 years; middle of day and night - 10am - 2pm and 10pm - 2am.

Products to balance Pitta

Pitta tea, Pitta spice blend, Pitta massage oil, Pitta aroma oil, Pitta skin care cream, Pitta shampoo, Pitta soap.

Personal health evaluation

1. Tick the boxes that apply to you 2. Total the Vata, Pitta and Kapha columns 3. Whichever dosha has the highest total is predominant for you. You may find two doshas have larger totals, e.g. Vata and Pitta.



Kapha

Kapha	Qualities	✓
Hair type	Thick, oily	☐
Skin type	Oily, moist, thick	☐
Mental activity	Calm, steady, stable	☐
Memory	Good long term memory	☐
Sleep	Sound, long deep sleep	☐
Reaction to stress	Not easily ruffled, stubborn	☐
Body size	Large, solid build	☐
Hunger	Can easily skip meals	☐
Walk	Slow, steady	☐
Moods	Steady, non-changing	☐
Weather	Aversion to damp and cool	☐
Total		☐



When Kapha is in Balance:

You are affectionate and compassionate, forgiving, steady, relaxed, methodical, with good stamina and memory and resistant to illness.

When Kapha is out of Balance:

You are dull, complacent, lethargic, overweight, with a tendency to allergies, oily skin, slow digestion and oversleep.

To keep Kapha in Balance:

Favour exercise, mental stimulation and variety in life, drier foods with pungent, bitter, astringent tastes.

Minimise sleep during the day, overeating, heavy and oily foods, exposure to cold, wet weather.

When Kapha is more dominant:

Beginning of the year - January - April; beginning of life - 0-20 years; beginning of day and night - 6 - 10pm and 6 - 10am.

Products to balance Kapha

Kapha tea, Kapha spice blend, Kapha massage oil, Kapha aroma oil, Kapha skin care cream, Kapha shampoo, Kapha soap.

Six main food tastes

Each taste is associated with chemicals your body needs.

Sweet	carbohydrates, sugars, fats: sugar, milk, bread, rice, wheat, pasta.
Sour	organic acids: yoghurt, cheese, citrus and other sour fruits, tomato.
Salty	salts: salt.
Pungent	volatile oils: spicy foods, cumin, ginger, pepper.
Bitter	alkaloids, glucosides: green leafy vegetables.
Astringent	tannin: beans, lentils, pomegranates, some apples.

Six main food qualities

Heavy	e.g. meat; cheese; oils; wheat.
Light	e.g. millet; pear; yellow mung dal; sugar.
Oily	e.g. butter; cream; nuts; oils.
Dry	e.g. popcorn; crispbreads.
Hot	e.g. chillies; alcohol.
Cold	e.g. milk; cucumber.



Healthy eating guidelines

Maharishi Ayurveda emphasises the health benefits of a vegetarian diet, but it is also recommended that any changes made to one's diet should be made comfortably and gradually.

If meat is to be eaten

Generally chicken, turkey and fish are preferable, although all types of meat, eggs and fish should be minimised in Pitta and Kapha diets.

Eat in a settled and quiet atmosphere

Do not work, read, or watch television during meals. Always sit down to eat. Eat at roughly the same times every day.

Do not eat too quickly or too slowly

Eat to about 3/4 of your capacity. Do not leave the table very hungry or very full.

Allow time for digestion

Avoid taking a meal until the previous meal has been digested.

Take a few minutes to sit quietly

Take time after eating before returning to activity.





Tastes that balance **Vata**

Pungent, Bitter, Astringent strengthen Vata: pungent, bitter and astringent tastes increase Vata and all phenomena to do with movement, penetration and cleansing of channels.

If you need to pacify Vata, therefore, you need to focus on the sweet, sour and salty tastes and eat more warm foods.



Tastes that balance **Pitta**

Salty, Sour, Pungent strengthen Pitta: that is, they strengthen all those functions associated with a rise in temperature; for example, metabolic processes. An excess of these tastes, however, aggravates Pitta and needs balancing out with sweet, cooling foods.

Maharishi Ayurveda identifies ten distinct body types and three major seasons of the year

Once you know your body type this chart will help you decide what diet will suit you best at different times of the year.

10 Body Types	Kapha Season - <i>January to May</i>
Vata	Vata diet
Pitta	Pitta diet
Kapha	Kapha diet
Vata-Pitta	Vata/Kapha ¹
Pitta-Vata	Vata/Kapha ¹
Vata-Kapha	Kapha diet
Kapha-Vata	Kapha diet
Pitta-Kapha	Kapha diet
Kapha-Pitta	Kapha diet
Vata-Pitta-Kapha	Kapha diet

(1) Balance of Vata and Kapha diets. Select equal proportions of food from the “favour” section of each diet. (The “minimise” sections can be ignored at this time).



Tastes that balance **Kapha**

Sweet strengthens Kapha: sweet or madhura taste is a builder of those tissues that are formed from earth and water. Hence, sweet substances strengthen Kapha. An overload of sweets, on the other hand, can create a Kapha imbalance, which needs to be corrected with pungent, bitter and astringent tastes and warming foods.

Pitta Season - <i>June to August</i>	Vata Season - <i>September to December</i>
Vata diet	Vata diet
Pitta diet	Pitta diet
Kapha diet	Vata/Kapha ¹
Pitta diet	Vata diet
Pitta diet	Vata diet
Pitta/Vata ²	Vata diet
Vata diet	Vata diet
Pitta diet	Pitta/Vata ²
Pitta diet	Vata/Kapha ¹
Pitta diet	Vata diet

(2) Balance of Pitta and Vata diets. Favour especially the foods in the "favour" sections of both diets. Otherwise go by the Pitta diet.

How to choose foods to balance Vata, Pitta and Kapha

Choose foods that have the opposite qualities to the dosha that you want to balance. For example, if you have a predominance of Vata in your nature (cold, dry skin, restlessness, worry, light sleep), keep Vata in balance by favouring warm, moist, oily, heavy, sweet, sour and salty foods and by reducing cold, dry, light, pungent, bitter and astringent foods.

A balanced diet should include the six tastes in a meal at least once a day.
The tastes are: sweet, sour, salty, bitter, astringent, pungent.



Sweet - Rice



Salty - Salt



Astringent - Dal



Bitter - Greens



Sour - Lemon



Pungent - Hingu

How to choose products to balance Vata, Pitta and Kapha

Some Maharishi Ayurveda products have Vata, Pitta or Kapha in the name. For example, to balance Vata there is Vata Tea, Vata Spice Blend, Vata Massage Oil, Vata Aroma Oil, Vata Skin Care Cream, Vata Shampoo, Vata Soap and Blissful Sleep-Vata supplement.



*Maharishi
Ayurveda Vata
products*



Vata diet | *Recommended foods*

Favour: foods that are warm, oily, heavy, sweet, sour, salty.

Minimise: foods that are cold, dry, light, pungent, bitter, astringent.

Dairy Products

All dairy products pacify Vata dosha. Do not take milk with a full meal. Cheese should be soft and fresh.

Fruits

Favour sweet or heavy fruits, such as avocados, grapes, cherries, peaches, melons, berries, plums, bananas, sweet oranges, pineapples, mangoes and papayas. Avoid or reduce dry or light fruits, such as apples, pears, pomegranates, cranberries and dried fruits. Dried fruit can be taken if soaked in hot water, (dates are best taken with ghee).

Sweeteners

All sweeteners are good for Vata (but not in excess). Note that when taking honey it should not be heated above 40C.

Beans

Avoid all beans except for tofu (soybean curd) and mung dal.

Nuts

All nuts are good.

Grains

Rice and wheat are very good; reduce barley, corn, millet, buckwheat, rye, oats.

Oils

All oils pacify Vata.

Spices

Cardamom, cumin, ginger, cinnamon, salt, cloves, mustard seed, and small quantities of black pepper all pacify Vata.

Vegetables

Beets, carrots, asparagus, cucumbers, and sweet potatoes are good, but they should be cooked and not raw. The following vegetables are acceptable in moderate quantities, if cooked, and especially with ghee (clarified butter) and Vata-reducing spices: peas, green leafy vegetables, broccoli, cauliflower, celery, courgettes, spinach (small quantity). It is best to avoid sprouts and cabbage.





Pitta diet | *Recommended foods*

Favour: foods that are cold, heavy, oily, sweet, bitter, astringent.

Minimise: foods that are hot, light, dry, pungent, sour, salty.

Dairy Products

Ghee (clarified butter), milk (see below), cream and cream cheese are good. Avoid sour milk, e.g. yoghurts, aged cheeses and salty butter.

Fruits

Sweet fruits are good e.g. grapes, pomegranates, bananas, avocados, mangoes. Avoid sour fruits.

Sweeteners

White or semi-refined sugar is good. Avoid molasses and brown sugar. Honey can be taken in small quantities (but do not heat it above 40C).

Beans

Mung dal and soybeans are good.

Nuts

Avoid all nuts, except coconut.

Grains

Wheat, rice, barley, and oats are good. Avoid millet, corn, buckwheat, and rye.

Oils

Ghee is best for pacifying Pitta dosha.

Spices

The following are fine: coriander, cumin, ginger (small amounts), turmeric, saffron, fennel, cinnamon, cardamom. Avoid pepper, mustard seeds, cloves, chillies.

Vegetables

Asparagus, courgettes, cauliflower, broccoli, cabbage, green beans, potatoes, sweet potatoes, peas, peppers, are fine. Reduce beets & carrots, and avoid tomatoes.





Kapha diet | *Recommended foods*

Favour: foods that are light, dry, warm, pungent, bitter, astringent.

Minimise: foods that are heavy, oily, cold, sweet, salty, sour.

Avoid large quantities of food, especially at night.

Dairy Products

Avoid aged cheeses. Avoid or reduce other cheeses and yoghurt. Low-fat milk is better. Always boil milk before you drink it, and take it warm. Do not take milk with a full meal or with sour or salty food. You may add one or two pinches of turmeric or ginger to whole milk before boiling.

Fruits

Favour lighter fruits such as apples and pears.

Reduce heavy or sour fruits such as oranges,

bananas, pineapples, figs, dates, avocados, coconuts, and melons.

Sweeteners

Honey is good (but do not heat it above 40C).

Avoid sugar products.

Beans

All beans are fine except tofu (soya bean curd).

Nuts

Avoid all nuts.



Grains

Most grains are fine, especially barley and millet. Do not take too much wheat, rice or oats.

Oils

Reduce or avoid all oils; very small amounts of ghee (clarified butter) are fine.

Spices

All spices are fine except for salt.

Vegetables

All are fine, except tomatoes, cucumbers, sweet potatoes and courgettes.





Health Consultations

For a precise understanding of your mind/body type, imbalances you have in your system and dietary and lifestyle adjustments you need to make, we recommend a health consultation with a Maharishi Ayurveda practitioner.

Using observation, enquiry and pulse diagnosis the practitioner is able to advise what herbal supplements suit you best and what treatments will most help to remove toxins and restore balance to your whole system.



Health Treatments

There are two main types of Maharishi Ayurveda health treatment:

Single treatments for individual health concerns for example for lower back pain, for improving sleep or for balancing Vata, Pitta or Kapha dosha.

Panchakarma treatment

a combination of treatments taken over 3, 5 or 7 days to completely revitalise the mind and body.

All treatments are given by highly experienced Maharishi Ayurveda therapists.



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