

*Ayurvedic Cooking  
for Self-Healing*



# Ayurvedic Cooking for Self-Healing

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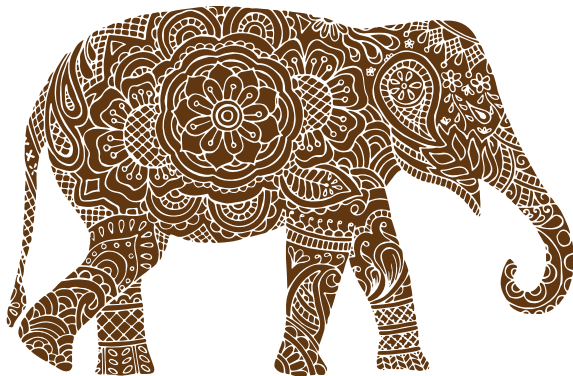
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# FACTORS THAT AFFECT OUR HEALTH

Ayurveda is a way of healing and a way of life that always takes into consideration the whole person. According to the teachings of Ayurveda, every aspect of life contributes to overall health. Poor health seldom has a simple or single cause. This chapter will cover just a few of the things that may affect one's well being. Some factors will respond to changes, like diet, and some are beyond individual

control, like the weather. With the latter, there are actions that can be taken to reduce or eliminate the impact. Of course, it is not possible or wise to try to change everything at once. Ayurvedic literature states slow and steady is the best route to successful change. Most people find that diet is the best place to begin an Ayurvedic lifestyle.



## The Doshas

One's sense of well being reflects the inner state of health. Good health is the maintenance of one's unique combination of the doshas, a balanced condition of *agni*, of the seven body tissues, of the three waste systems (urine, sweat and feces), as well as balance in the mind, senses and consciousness. It is equally important to one's well being to have love, happiness, and clarity in daily living.

Doshic imbalance governs internal biochemical changes that will eventually lead to either high or low metabolism.

Pitta dosha governs all physical and biochemical changes that take place within the body. Through this process foodstuffs are transformed into energy, heat and vitality. Pitta performs these functions throughout one's life, but is especially prominent during the adult years. All these activities of pitta depend upon "digestive fire" or *agni*. Poor *agni*

means poor health. Wrong diet such as hot spicy foods, wrong lifestyle such as living in a hot climate and repressed emotions can alter the normal function of pitta.

Anabolism is the process of building up the body. It is the repair, growth and creation of new cells. This process is managed by *kapha* and is most active in the baby, child and teen years. *Kapha dosha* can be disturbed by excessive intake of dairy, cold and oily foods.

Catabolism is the destructive, but necessary, stage of metabolism. Larger molecules are broken down into smaller ones. This molecular death is governed by *vata dosha* and is most active in old age. Repeated intake of *vata* provoking food, such as salads and popcorn, and over exercising can escalate *vata* and disturb health.



## Improper Eating Habits

1. Overeating
2. Eating soon after a full meal
3. Too much water or no water during a meal
4. Drinking very chilled water during a meal or, indeed, anytime
5. Eating when constipated
6. Eating at the wrong time of day—either too early or too late
7. Eating too much heavy food or too little light food
8. Drinking fruit juice or eating fruit with a meal
9. Eating without real hunger
10. Emotional eating
11. Eating incompatible food combinations
12. Snacking in between meals



## Time of Day and Time of Season

The body's biological clock is regulated by the doshas. The time of maximum activity of kapha is during early morning and early evening, 6 to 10 AM and 6 to 10 PM. The pitta period is during midday and midnight, 10 AM to 2 PM and 10 PM to 2 AM, while vata hours are dawn and dusk, 2 to 6 AM and 2 to 6 PM. Thus a pitta type disease, like *ulcers*, may cause the most discomfort late at night in the pitta time of the biological clock. The reverse is also true, in the sense that experiencing a sharp pain in the stomach region late at night may signify ulcers or another pitta type aggravation.

After food is ingested, it passes through various stages of digestion, each one involving a specific dosha. To digest one major meal takes 6 to 8 hours. For approximately two and a half hours after eating food, the dominant dosha is kapha, which is associated with the stomach. Roughly two and a half hours later, pitta dosha is dominant. This period and dosha are associated with the small intestine, where bile and intestinal enzymes are at work.

Ultimately, the digestion is completed in the colon, the predominant site of vata, where absorption and elimination occur. This stage is a time of vata domination. Gas, a quality of vata, will often occur here if food is not properly digested.

The seasons have attributes much like the three doshas and can cause aggravation and imbalance. For instance, the summer is hot, sharp and bright which provokes pitta. So pitta diseases like sunburn, hot flashes, exhaustion, acne and diarrhea may occur. Psychologically, people may respond to trifles with anger and hate.

Autumn is dry, light, cold, clear and windy, all aggravating qualities to vata dosha. Aches and pains in the joints and muscles may materialize, and the mind may become fearful, anxious and lonely.

The heavy, cold, dampness of winter can provoke kapha, leading to cough, cold and sinus congestion. Attachment and greed may develop in the mind when kapha is aggravated.

# Vegetables

## Bitter Melon



is bitter and cooling with a pungent vipaka. It can provoke vata, while its bitter quality can soothe pitta and kapha. It is a good food for fever, anemia, diabetes and worms.

*Note:* Bitter melon is an Indian vegetable available from specialty stores and Indian groceries.

1. During fever, take 2 tablespoons of fresh bitter melon juice 3 times a day, to bring down the temperature.
2. Cooked bitter melon, as in Bitter Melon Bhaji, is good for cleansing the liver and can help in anemia.
3. For intestinal worms and parasites, try 1 tablespoon of bitter melon juice with a pinch of trikatu, 3 times a day, 1/2 hour before each meal. Do this for 1 week and the worms should vanish.
4. Cooked bitter melon is laxative and can be used to relieve constipation and hemorrhoids.
5. Insulin-dependent diabetics can help to regulate the insulin dose by taking 2 tablespoons of bitter melon juice with 1/4 teaspoon of turmeric powder, 15 minutes before each meal.
6. Jaundice, hyperthyroidism and migraine headaches can all be helped by putting 5 drops of fresh bitter melon juice in each nostril in the morning and again in the evening.

## Carrots



are heating with a pungent vipaka, so they pacify kapha and stimulate pitta if eaten in excess. Raw carrots are rough and have astringent rasa, so they disturb vata.

Cooked carrots are sweet, pacifying vata. Carrots are digestive and laxative, and can detoxify the body.

1. For anemia, mix 1/2 cup each of fresh carrot and fresh beet juice with a pinch of cumin powder. Take this twice a day on an empty stomach.
2. Take 1 cup of carrot juice mixed with 2 teaspoons of cilantro juice twice a day on an empty stomach to give relief for hemorrhoids.
3. For chronic sprue—a disease endemic to tropical regions—take 1 cup carrot juice with a pinch of trikatu 2 times a day.
4. Chronic indigestion can be helped by a glass of carrot juice with 1 pinch of ginger powder.
5. Thoroughly mix 1/2 cup each of carrot juice and aloe vera juice. Take this twice a day as part of an anti-cancer program.

# Soup

In Ayurvedic cooking, soups are most often eaten with the main course. Soups made of beans, peas or lentils and spices are the most common, and provide the complement to a grain (usually rice) to make a very digestible, high-protein dish.



# Kokam Soup

V↓ P↓ K↓

SERVES 4

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9	dried Kokam fruits
4 C	water
2 Tbs	ghee
1 tsp	cumin seeds
4	curry leaves, fresh or dried
1 Tbs	fresh cilantro leaves, chopped
2	bay leaves
2 Tbs	chickpea flour
1/4 tsp	cinnamon
2 pinches	cayenne or black pepper
1/4 tsp	ground cloves
3/4 tsp	salt
1 Tbs	jaggery (or Sucanat) sugar

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1. Wash and soak the Kokam fruits in 1 cup of the water for 10 - 20 minutes. Then squeeze the fruit several times into this water and remove it from the water.
2. Heat a saucepan until medium hot and add the ghee, cumin seeds, curry leaves, cilantro and bay leaves. Stir or shake the pan until the seeds pop.
3. Pour in the fruit water plus 2 more cups of the water.
4. Mix the chickpea flour with the last cup of water very well, then add to the soup. Stir to prevent lumps forming. Add the cinnamon, cayenne, clove, salt and jaggery. Stir and boil gently for 5 minutes.

## Tips

- ▶ Do not store this in a metal container (except for a stainless steel one), for the acid in the fruit will react to the metal and turn the soup bad.
- ▶ Kokam is available from Indian grocery stores. It is sour and heating. This soup is a good appetizer and digestive. It stimulates normal gastric fire and detoxifies the body of toxins (ama). It is also an excellent blood cleanser. If taken before the meal, it acts as an appetizer. At the end of the meal, it is a digestive. Do not use for breakfast!
- ▶ Okay for pitta and kapha if not more than one cup is taken.

## Medicinal Uses

Good for diarrhea, heart, swellings, hemorrhoids and worms. It can help as an anti-allergic agent in skin rash.

