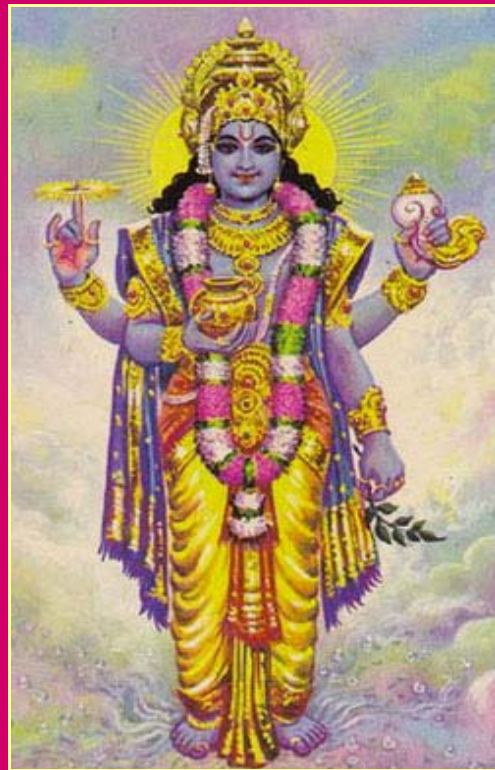


# The Basic Principles of Ayurveda



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## Ayurveda History

Ayurveda is a Sanskrit term for “knowledge of longevity.” It is the earliest health care system of India beginning over 5,000 years ago. Ayurveda (pronounced I-your-vay-da) was cognized by the ancient yogis from deep states of meditation and taught in an oral tradition from teacher to student.

As the essentials of Ayurveda were passed down through the generation’s three main texts emerged overtime:

- Charaka Samhita (1<sup>st</sup> century AD, internal medicine)
- Susruta Samhita ( 4-5 century BC, surgery)
- Ashtanga Hridayam Samhita (written 8<sup>th</sup> century AD)

The Charaka Samhita is the leading resource in regard to the depth and extent of its contents. Charaka is considered an exceptional author among the writers of the classical Indian medical texts even today.

Other minor works can also be found:

- Madhava Nidanam Samhita – (700 A.D.)
- Chakradatta – (10<sup>th</sup> century A.D.)
- Sarngadhara Samhita – (15<sup>th</sup> century A.D.)
- Bhavaprakasa Samhita (16<sup>th</sup> century A.D.)

## The Thirteen Natural Urges

Ayurveda calls attention to thirteen natural urges which should *not be suppressed* if good health and proper functioning of the body, mind and emotions are to be maintained.

- crying
- yawning
- hunger
- thirst
- sleep
- breath (shallow)
- urination
- defecation
- ejaculation/orgasm
- flatulence
- vomiting
- sneezing
- belching

## The Five Elements

All matter is composed of the five universal elements; namely the “*panchamahabhutas*” (pan cha ma ha boot tas). They are termed as:

- ether - akasha
- air - vayu
- fire - tejas
- water - jala
- earth - prithvi

## The Four Forces

Humans are considered miniature versions of the universe, composed of the five elements and four forces:

- atma - soul
- manas - mind
- kala - cycles of time
- indriyas - senses

## The Mental Gunas

The five elements manifest from universal consciousness into individual consciousness as three attributes or mental *gunas*:

- *sattva* - equanimity
- *rajas* - activity
- *tamas* - inertia

The *gunas* also manifest as behavioral and moral tendencies.

- A *sattvic* mental constitution is pure minded, compassionate, clear and cooperative.
- A *rajasic* mental constitution is egotistical, ambitious, aggressive, selfish, competitive, controlling and restless.
- A *tamasic* mental constitution is lazy, possessive, depressed, sad and dull.

As with the doshas, there can be many blends of these attributes, depending on the predominance of the *gunas*. Various problems involving the mind and the *gunas* arise from a combination of influences.

## The Tridosha Theory

The Ayurvedic understanding of the universe is based on a three-fold system called the “*tridosha theory*.”

The five elements integrate into physical form as the three *doshas*. Everyone is a unique combination of the three doshas known as: *vata, pitta and kapha*.

*Vata, pitta* and *kapha* are found in every cell, tissue and organ in different degrees. Your distinct *prakruti* or individual constitution is established by pulse diagnosis, observation and personal health history. These are important steps to understanding your basic qualities, tendencies and needs. There are seven constitutional types:

- vata
- vata/pitta
- vata/kapha
- pitta
- pitta/kapha
- kapha
- vata-pitta-kapha (tridosha)

## The Doshas

- Vata is composed of the ether and air elements.  
Vata is responsible for movement in the body and mind.  
Balanced Vata produces flexibility and a balanced mind.  
Out of balance Vata is fearful, anxious and nervous.
- Pitta is composed of fire and water.  
Pitta functions are associated with the digestive processes, metabolic activity and body temperature.  
Balanced Pitta lends itself to intelligence and leadership.  
Out of balance it expresses itself as anger, hatred and jealousy.
- Kapha is composed of earth and water.  
Kapha corresponds to the building up of body tissues and stored substances. Kapha lubricates, moistens and maintains immunity.  
Balanced Kapha is love and forgiveness.  
Out of balance Kapha is associated with attachment, greed and congestion.
- Tridosha is a combination of all three doshas; Vata, Pitta and Kapha.



## Imbalances of the Doshas

Constitutional inequities can be supported by following dietary and behavioral modifications. This may offset latent disease tendencies resulting from the lack of balance in the *doshas* from birth.

If a person is physically healthy, the three doshas are present in appropriate proportions and in an organized way. If a person is unhealthy, at least one or more of the doshas may be relatively deficient or excessive, so that its quality becomes adulterated.

*Vitiation* is a term used to describe aggravation in relationship to doshic imbalance. The term *vikruti*, is the state of imbalance in the doshas. Awareness is crucial in recognizing *vikruti* to stave off tendencies leading to illness or disease.

Each of the doshas has an important location that is considered its major site. These sites are where *vitiation* is most likely to occur.

Vata is located in the large intestine.

Pitta is located in the small intestines.

Kapha is located in the stomach.

Disorders may occur from or result in the doshas being deficient, excessive or vitiated (aggravated):

### Vata deficiency

- lethargy/lack of movement
- lack of enthusiasm
- confused perception

### Vata excess

- roughness in voice and skin
- dark discolorations
- desire for heat
- piercing pain
- constipation
- insomnia
- weakness

### Vata vitiation

- swelling, gas, distended abdomen
- rumbling sounds in the intestines

### Pitta deficiency

- dull complexion
- reduced body heat

### Pitta excess

- burning sensations
- desire for coolness
- yellow coloring - skin, eyes, feces, urine
- poor circulation and appetite

### Pitta vitiation

- burning sensations
- irritability

### Kapha deficiency

- sensation of dryness
- feeling of emptiness in the stomach
- looseness of the joints
- thirst and weakness

### Kapha excess

- whitish complexion
- heaviness of limbs
- feeling of coldness
- excess sleep or drowsiness
- phlegm

### Kapha vitiation

- slow perception
- lethargy
- slow digestion
- vomiting
- mucus coating

## The Digestive Fire

*Agni* is the Vedic term meaning transforming or burning. It is composed of different types of enzymes responsible for good digestion. The digestive fire or *agni* is of key importance according to the principles of Ayurveda.

There are four types of *agni*:

- *sama* - balanced digestion, no after effects
- *vishama* - irregular, gas, bloating, distention
- *tikshna* - sharp, hyper, acid reflux, heartburn
- *manda* - slow digestion, heavy, dull

When *agni* is not functioning at an optimal level, *ama*, the by product of undigested food turns to toxic waste clogging the channels. In due time, this will lead to a state of disease. It is of paramount importance to keep your digestive fire strong throughout your entire life.

## How the Food We Eat Affects Us

Food choices are an important aspect of Ayurvedic healing and contribute greatly to the formation and function of the *doshas* and *dhatu*s.

Strategies for healthy eating habits include:

- Maintaining a strong digestive fire
- Proper eating schedule
- Correct quantity of food
- Proper food combinations
- Proper liquid consumption
- Organic food –no GMO foods
- Preparation of food
- Dosha specific spices/ herbs
- Foods in season
- Environment
- Anti Ama Diet – non toxic food sources

## The Seven Dhatus

The word *dhatu* comes from the root word *dha* which means basis or foundation. In Ayurvedic medicine, the structural components that nourish the body are called *dhatu*s or tissue levels. There are seven primary *sapta dhatus*:

- *rasa* – plasma tissue, lymph
- *rakta* – blood, red blood cells
- *mamsa* – muscle
- *meda* – adipose tissue, fat
- *asthi* – bone and cartilage
- *majja* – nerve, marrow, connective tissue
- *shukra/artava* – male and female reproductive system

Problems that occur in the dhatus are:

- Insufficient nourishment
- Over nourishment
- Structural damage

## Ayurvedic Digestion

During the process of digestion each *dhatu* is supplied and nourished with refined nutrition to carry our physiological tasks in the body; what is left over becomes the waste product or *mala*.

- Ahararasa, pure essence is refined, digested food; the waste becomes feces and urine.
- Rasa dhatu (plasma tissue) is supplied with the nutritive essence of refined, digested food; the mala of rasa is mucus.
- Rakta (blood) is obtained from refined rasa; the mala of the blood is bile.
- Mamsa (muscle tissue) is formed from refined rakta; the mala of mamsa is excrement from the eyes, nose and ears.
- Meda (adipose tissue) is formed from refined *mamsa*. The mala from the fat tissue is sweat.
- Asthi (bone tissue) is formed from refined *meda*, the mala is body hair and nails.
- Majja (marrow) is formed from the refinement of the bone; the mala is tears.
- Refinement of marrow produces *shukra dhatu* or *artava dhatu* for offspring. The mala is *ojas*.
- Refined *ojas* is the energy reserves of the body and generates no mala. It is decreased by: anger, fear, worry, sorrow, overwork, drugs, pollution and unhealthy food.



- *Rasa* and *ojas* forms a concentric circle that turns back on itself to nourish the entire body and all the *dhatu*s.

It takes approximately 35 days after food is ingested to go through all the *dhatu* levels. *Ojas* is the essence of the seven *dhatu*s and is created when *shukra* is properly formed from the action of all the *dhatu agnis*.

If there is any malfunction in the process, *ojas*, will not receive proper nourishment as the preceding *dhatu*s will obtain the nutrition first.

The most important means of supporting *ojas* is maintaining a holistic lifestyle with proper diet, rest, exercise and meditation. *Ojas* is responsible for physical and mental strength, inner and outer beauty, a powerful immune system and strong aura.

## The Malas

A *mala* is something that is to be excreted. *Malas* can be excessive, deficient, or polluted. There are three types of *malas*:

- urine
- feces
- sweat

## The Srotas

*Srota* or *srotasmi* is another word for pathway or channel and is also described as “ducts.” There are 14 *srotas* that affect the physical structures:

- respiratory system
- digestive system
- water system (intake and distribution)
- lymphatic system
- circulatory system
- muscular system
- adipose system
- skeletal system
- nervous system
- reproductive system
- sebaceous system
- excretory system
- urinary system
- menstrual system
- lactation system
- mind – emotions, sensory impressions, thoughts

According to Charak, keeping the *srotas* free from obstructions is the key to health. However, the *srotas* may ultimately be affected in the following ways:

- deficiency, weakness or too little of a substance
- excessiveness, agitation or drainage
- blockage of flow, obstruction, by passed
- overflow of substances that appear where they should not

### **Daily and Seasonal Routines**

Aside from constitutional factors and diet, the *doshas* are affected by changes within the environment. The most consistent environmental influence is the changing of the seasons. Ritu means season and charya means routine. Ritucharya therefore means the routine followed in the different seasons. Cleansing and detox procedures known as “*Panchakarma*” are normally performed during these transitional junctures. Following a daily routine for your unique body type is known as Dinacharya.

Ayurveda encourages awareness of lifestyle habits accordingly. This means modifying sleep habits, diet choices and activities.

Counteracting the adverse effects of the seasons will help one to gain the benefit of being in harmony with Mother Nature.

### **Misuse of the Senses**

Further, the body and mind can be affected by how we use our sensory organs and the daily activities we follow. Our mind can be negatively affected by what is seen, felt or heard.

Treatment may involve carefully regulating what is acceptable to the sensory field. There is also an additional possibility for disease or disorders to arise due to these factors:

- overworking
- strenuous physical work
- misuse of the intellect
- over talking, over thinking, over doing
- dwelling on negativity, over reacting
- excess sexual activity
- too much TV, cell phones, computers

## The Disease Process

Ayurvedic literature discusses a series of six steps outlined in the disease process. *Samprapti* or pathogenesis is the result of the accumulation of the doshas:

- Accumulation – accumulation of the dosha in its primary site; vata-colon, pitta-small intestine, kapha- stomach. This initial stage occurs usually due to dietary factors and is the starting place for the disease process.
- Aggravation – excitation of the accumulated doshas, whereby the doshas leave their normal site.
- Overflow – original site is full and disperses to a new site where it begins to get worse.
- Relocation – disturbances move to wherever a weak site exists.
- Manifestation – disease becomes apparent by which western medicine can identify it by name at this stage.
- Chronic – last stage where complications set in, distinction of the disease manifests at other sites simultaneously leading to a chronic diseased state or the passing away of the person.

## Ayurvedic Questionnaire

Take this dosha self-test, circle what applies to you, add up your scores in each column to determine your body/mind type:

### Physical

Body	Vata	Pitta	Kapha
shape of face	thin, boney	medium, angular	full, round
weight	light	medium	heavy
stamina	short	moderate	strong
coloring	darkish	reddish, coppery	whitish, clear
eyes	small, unsteady	reddish, piercing	big, wide
fingernails	thin, cracking	medium, soft, pink	thick, strong, white
teeth	small, protruding	moderate, yellow	large, white
hair	thin, coarse, dry	fine, red, blonde	thick, wavy
chest	flat, sunken	moderate	large, broad
Totals			

## Mental

Mind	Vata	Pitta	Kapha
memory	learns easy/forgets	sharp	slow, never forgets
quality	quick, creative	penetrating	stable, lethargic
digestion	irregular	strong	slow
sleep	light	moderate	heavy
temperament	nervous	impatient	easy going
speech	fast, omits words	clear, precise	slow, clear
dreams	fear, fly, running	anger, struggle	romantic, few
Totals			

Add up your totals for each of the columns both body and mind, enter them below. In general people are dual doshas having a score for two doshas that are close in number. Possibilities exist to be one dosha but it is rare to have scores indicating all three.

Body      Vata\_\_\_\_\_      Pitta\_\_\_\_\_      Kapha\_\_\_\_\_

Mind      Vata\_\_\_\_\_      Pitta\_\_\_\_\_      Kapha \_\_\_\_\_

## Summary

Taking conscious steps to change your lifestyle through diet, exercise, herbs, meditation and massage will relieve many health conditions. Choosing self awareness in your journey toward enlightenment supports spiritual healing in the here and now.

The ancient study of Ayurveda requires years of serious study; however, it is my intention that this introductory e-book will give one a basic understanding in the field of Ayurvedic physiology.

May Ayurveda grant your wishes of good health, beauty and spiritual advancement as it manifests into global awareness.

**Namaste.**

*All information is for educational purposes only, and is not intended to replace standard medical care or advice.*



## Book Recommendations

- Absolute Beauty – Radiant Skin & Inner Beauty through the Ancients Secrets of Ayurveda by Pratima Raichur
- A Life of Balance by Maya Tiwari
- Ayurveda the Science of Self Healing by Dr. Vasant Lad
- Encyclopedia of Ayurveda by Swami Sada Shiva Tirtha
- Textbook of Ayurveda by Dr. Vasant Lad
- Yoga and Ayurveda by Dr. David Frawley

All books are available for purchase online from major bookstores.