



The Dasha Handbook

Pitta



The Art of Living Retreat Center



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The Dosha Handbook: Pitta



Welcome to this guide for better understanding how your body and mind work. Did you ever wish life came with a playbook? I sure did growing up. This handbook is just that — a guide on how to live, based on your Ayurvedic body-mind type, or dosha.

In this handbook you'll find:

- New insights into how your body and mind work
- The foods that give you more energy (and less trouble!)
- Lifestyle choices suited to your type
- Herbal supplements to help you feel balanced and at ease

The guide is designed with three main sections -- food, lifestyle and supplements -- sections you can use as an ongoing reference. Whether you print it out, stick pages to your fridge or save it to your phone, there are plenty of ways to use this guide so that Ayurveda becomes easy, convenient and useful.

So feel free to read ahead, or jump straight to the section that interests you.



Ayur-Veda: the Science of Life

People are different. It's part of what makes being a human being so special, there is no one just quite like you. But why? For thousands of years, people have been asking what makes us different. Why are some people able to eat more than others? How can some leap out of bed in the morning, ready to face the day, while others take hours to fully wake up? Is there a reason why some people can handle the cold better than others?

Answers to these and many more questions can be found through the ancient holistic practice of Ayurveda, the healing branch of yogic science.

Ayur-veda literally means the “knowledge of life and longevity.” Many modern healing practices have their roots in Ayurveda, including massage with medicinal oils, dietary therapies, herbal remedies, psychiatry, acupressure, color and gem therapy and meditation.



Not a One Size Fits All Approach

Ayurveda tells us that people are not “one size fits all.” They come in three body-mind types, or combinations of types. The Sanskrit names are vata, pitta and kapha. For example, physically, some of us are tall and thin, some are mid-size and some have a stocky frame.

Humans have vata, pitta and kapha traits in various combinations and proportions. One trait is usually predominant, one secondary and the third is least prominent.

In that way, each of us has a particular combination of physical mental and emotional traits that make up his or her type, or prakruti. Just like we have unique fingerprints, we also have unique “energy prints,” proportions of vata, pitta or kapha that are uniquely our own.

Once you know your dosha, you can use that knowledge as a blueprint for a happier, healthier life. Your custom diet and lifestyle plan will include knowledge of the right foods, herbs, activities, climates and places that are right for you.

Balance is our normal state of order. When in balance, physically, mentally and emotionally, good health follows. When out of balance, the result is disease. The root of the word “disease” is “dis”-“ease,” a state where we feel in tension, out of balance, and out of whack. Ayurveda is all about coming to a state of ease — relaxed balance and abundant energy.

What is an Ayurvedic Type?

Your Ayurveda type is your physical, mental and emotional blueprint -- all of the physical traits and mental tendencies present when you were born. It is what makes you YOU.

Modern medicine calls this blueprint a genetic code. Ayurveda calls it your prakruti, your “essential nature” or individual type. It is your own combination of physical, mental and emotional characteristics.

Knowing your type is essential to understanding how to maintain inner balance and correct imbalances that may arise. What may be good for one person may not be good for you.

Learning about your Ayurvedic body-mind type will give you valuable information for nurturing your body’s inner intelligence. You can identify the foods, activities, and lifestyle that have the greatest benefits for you. This understanding will allow you to make the best choices for your own health and wellbeing.

By following the lifestyle that best suits your type, you better your chances to stay fit, energetic, healthy and happy.



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Understanding Your Type: Pitta

According to Dr. Lokesh Raturi, Art of Living Ayurvedic Physician, “A pitta person is active, moderately built, good looking, leadership quality, perfectionist, dynamic and intelligent.”

When in balance, pittas make great leaders. They like to be the boss. With an abundance of self-confidence and endurance, pitta types are competitive, enjoy challenges and make good public speakers.



Brad Pitt is an example of a Pitta body type

Pitta people are born with hotter constitutions, containing more of the fire element. Under stress, a pitta may become irritated and angry. Pitta out of balance can be ugly: pushy, aggressive and demanding — a Donald Trump syndrome.

Physical Traits

Physically, pitta types have a medium frame with good muscle development. The hair may be prematurely gray, like Steve Martin. Bodily problems related to this fiery dosha can include inflammation of the skin (like eczema), skin cancers, ulcers and heartburn.

Pittas love good food and have strong appetites. They don't like to miss or wait for meals. They prefer a buffet or fast food over a prolonged European dining experience.

Pitta Dosha Imbalance

Too much pitta often comes from a diet that aggravates the pitta heat. Combined with emotional stress, excess pitta can be a recipe for disaster. When I was a medical student, our most senior resident suddenly went from doctor to patient one morning — after vomiting blood. He turned out to have a duodenal ulcer, brought on largely by the intense stress. In Ayurvedic terms, there was too much pitta. The root of the problem was a pitta-provoking (fast food) diet, combined with toxic stress and lack of sleep.

Excess pitta may present as

- acid reflux and peptic ulcer disease
- excessive sweating/heat intolerance
- inflammation in the skin and joints
- anger and irritability
- self-criticism and impatience



Dietary Guide For Pitta

Ayurveda has given us an abundance of treatments for balancing excess pitta. Perhaps most important is a diet that cools down the pitta fire. In summertime, cooling, juicy fruits like watermelons and peaches are ideal for keeping pittas in balance. Spices like cinnamon, cardamom and coriander are also beneficial.

If your constitution is primarily pitta, follow these guidelines for a pitta balancing diet. Keep that pitta fire under control:



Foods For Pitta Balance

- Fruits: All sweet and astringent fruit, apples, figs, dates, pomegranates, avocados and melons
- Vegetables: Sweet and bitter veggies, collards, kale, asparagus, cabbage, leafy greens, sweet potatoes, pumpkin, sprouts
- Grains: Rice, wheat and oats
- Beans: All beans, in moderation — including black-eyed peas, butter beans, green beans, pinto beans and green peas
- All Nuts
- Dairy: Buttermilk, milk, ghee
- Oils: Coconut oil, olive oil and sunflower
- Spices: Use soothing and cooling spices like coriander, cilantro, cardamom, saffron and fennel. Hotter spices such as ginger, black pepper, clove, salt and mustard seed should be used sparingly. Very hot seasonings such as chili peppers and cayenne are best avoided.
- Pitta Balancing Tastes: Sweet, bitter and astringent

Foods to Avoid

- Extra spicy foods/chili peppers
- All fried foods
- Fermented foods (pickles, sauerkraut, kombucha, etc.)



Weight Management

Pittas are born with a medium frame and can normally gain or lose weight easily when they put their minds to it. They have excellent digestion, leading them to believe they can eat almost anything. Pittas should not skip meals or wait until they are starving to eat.



Lifestyle for Pitta

Exercise

When creating a fitness plan, make sure it is something you enjoy so you can stick with it. The plan should also be well-suited for your body-mind type.

For pittas, swimming is an ideal way to exercise. Water cools down the pitta heat while the vigorous workout relieves tension.

Pittas also enjoy challenging sports like skiing, hiking, mountain climbing and tennis. Take care not to overheat.



Yoga

As Ayurveda is the healing branch of yogic science, it is not surprising that yoga asanas play an important role in dosha balance. Below are seven asanas that are great for pittas.

Pittas should remember to have fun in their poses. As my yoga teacher always says, "Yoga is not a competition."

Avoid self-criticism. Work at 80% of effort. Practice in a cool space (avoid hot yoga). Focus on the exhalation — to let go of anger and frustration.

Recommended Yoga poses for pitta balance include:

- Child's Pose
- Cat-Cow
- Chair Pose
- Side Angle Pose
- Cobra
- Bridge Pose
- Corpse Pose (Shavasana)

Sun Salutations should be done gently, slowly and in a meditative manner. Avoid postures that bring too much blood flow to the head area, such as shoulder stands and head stands.

Forward bends are great for calming the body. In addition to cobra pose, boat and fish postures help release tension from the mid-abdominal area.

Living Well Tips: 7 Keys to Pitta Balance

Pittas are gifted with a fiery energy and are often workaholics. Such an inner drive can lead to amazing successes or a flaming burnout.

Here are seven tips for maintaining pitta balance that you can easily incorporate into your lifestyle:

1. Stay cool. Eat a pitta-pacifying diet and avoid overheating in summer.
2. Massage the body daily with coconut oil.
3. Cultivate a regular routine for eating, sleeping and working — lights out by 10 pm.
4. Exercise in morning or evening, which could include hiking or yoga based on your dosha.
5. Get out into nature to relax and wind down. Enjoy each evening sunset or moonrise.
6. Laugh as much as possible. Don't take life too seriously.
7. Manage stress with yoga and meditation, especially the [Sudarshan Kriya](#) (insert link to AOLRC).

Herbal Supplements For Pitta

Ayurvedic herbs that keep pitta in balance include neem and amalaki (also called amla, from the amla fruit). Neem is a cooling herb found in many preparations and is great for maintaining healthy skin and eliminating toxins. Amalaki cleanses excess pitta from the stomach and intestines.

As the principal ingredient in Chyawanprash, an Ayurvedic antioxidant superfood, amalaki boasts a number of benefits, including:

- Rejuvenative for the liver
- Helps balance blood sugar
- Supports a healthy reproductive system
- Promotes stable and healthy energy levels
- Cleanses and nourishes the blood
- Awakens digestion
- Promotes healthy hair
- Tonic for a clear mind

Another traditional Ayurvedic formula in churna (powder) form is Avipattikara Churna, available from Sri Sri Ayurveda.

Avi-patti-kara balances pitta in stomach and remove excessive heat in digestive system.

[For More Information](#)



Summary: Life In Balance

Ayurveda places great importance on recognizing the unique qualities of individual human beings. Ayurveda's understanding of constitutional types or doshas offers us a remarkably accurate way to pinpoint what is happening inside each individual. It allows us to customize treatment and offer specific lifestyle recommendations.

A pitta person is generally active, dynamic and intelligent — often a perfectionist. Pittas have a moderate build, a smart personality and leadership qualities. They can also be short tempered and prone to anger. Due to the unfortunate ease with which a pitta person gets imbalanced, hair loss and early graying are common.

Stress is best managed with yoga and meditation, especially the [Sudarshan Kriya \(link\)](#). Ayurvedic herbs for pitta balance include amalaki and neem.

The goal of Ayurveda is to prevent disease and promote health and longevity. Keeping the doshas balanced is one of the most important factors in keeping the whole mind-body system in balance. When we eat the proper foods and follow the lifestyle that suits our constitution, then we better our chances to stay fit, healthy and happy for life.

Physical balance means a body that is healthy and fit. Emotional balance gives rise to understanding, compassion and love.

...

“A physician, though well versed in the knowledge and treatment of disease, who does not enter into the heart of the patient with the virtue of light and love, will not be able to heal the patient.”

Physician-Sage Charaka,
one of the founders of
Ayurvedic medicine

Appendix

[\[Link to Dosha Quiz here\]](#)

