

What is Ayurveda?

by Lisa Dunsdon

Ayurveda encompasses science and philosophy that balances the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual components necessary for **holistic health**. Aside from the role of the physical postures and breathing in yoga in spiritual training, yoga has also been long renowned for its health benefits. The practice of **Pranayama** is repeatedly said to eradicate disease and the science of Ayurveda, combined with Yoga practice can be a powerful tool towards developing a healthy lifestyle and **longevity**.

In Ayurveda it is recommended that the diet consist of light fresh food as it promotes the "Sattvic" qualities or qualities of the mind. In Relation to Ayurveda and diet there are many factors to consider when selecting and eating food in your Yoga routine. Some of these are as follows:

- the natural properties of the food being heavy or light,
- if there are healthy compatible combinations,
- the season, eating season fruit and vegetables
- any processing it has gone through and;
- the way in which it is eaten.

A vegetarian diet is recommended for yogins. Quantity is important and as a rule of thumb when eating half the stomach should be full with solids, a quarter with liquids and a quarter empty. When in yoga postures (or asanas) different organs are also internally massaged and this stimulation of the organs can effect the body in different ways. Therefore the time of day that food is eaten in relation to when the postures are done is also important. There are three constitutions described within Ayurveda, and different Yoga poses (asanas) have been categorised as suitable within each.

Kapha: Someone who is solidly built, usually with a good constitution however has a tendency to become lethargic or adverse to activity. Smooth, thick skin, lustrous (coarse) hair, large eyes and mouth. Calm and complacent. This type needs vigorous postures to counterbalance tendency to be lethargic. Kapha postures can also be applicable to those of us that are in a strong health phase where our life is stable and relatively free from stress. For the diet Kapha types can be strengthened by grains, fruits, milk and ghee.

Pitta: Someone who is mentally active, medium balanced build, fine straight hair, fiery eyes, big appetites, usually good endurance wise unless they get too hot. Can be angry and impatient. This type needs postures that soothe the mind. It is also applicable to those who are at a stage in their life where they are emotionally agitated or stressed. For the diet Pitta types who can be characterised by desires and activity these characteristics can be increased by pungent, salty, sour foods and meat.

Vata: Someone who is possibly erratic in activity, thin and may tire easily. Dry hair and skin, small eyes, variable appetite, poor stamina, light sleeper and can appear to be "spacey". This type needs restorative postures. It is also applies to those who are in periods of change, insecurity and debility due to illness or stress. For the diet Vata types who are characterised by instability these characteristics can be increased by dry, stale foods.

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