

Ayurveda for Life

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Sushrut, one of the Founders of Ayurveda, performing surgery around 600 BCE

Ayurvedic definition of a healthy person

Sama dosah samagnis ca sama dhatu
mala kriyah prasannatmendriya
manah svastha ityabhidhiyate
(Sushruta Samhita, 15.38)

One who is established in Self, who has balanced doshas, balanced agni, properly formed dhatus, proper elimination of malas, well functioning bodily processes, and whose mind, soul, and the senses are full of bliss is called a healthy person.

GANESH MANTRA

OM GAṆĀNĀM TVĀ GAṆAPATĪM HAVĀMAHE |

KAVIM KAVĪNĀM UPAMAŚRAVASTAMAM ||

JYEṢṬA RĀJAM BRAHMAṆĀM BRAHMAṆAS PATA Ā NAḤ |

ŚRṆVANNUTIBIḤ SĪDA SĀDANAM ||

VAKRATUNḌA MAHĀKĀYA SŪRYA KOṬĪ SAMAPRABHA |

NIRVIGHNAM KURŪ ME DEVA SARVA KĀRYEṢU SARVADĀ ||

SIDDHI BUDDHI ŚAKTI SAHITA |

ŚRĪMAN MAHĀGANĀDIPATAYE NAMO NAMAḤ |

NIRVIGHNAM KURŪ ||

We invoke you Ganesha who are the ruler of all Gods
You who are the most renowned, full of inspiration
The most elder one among high Gods.
Oh, the divine father of all mantras, the leader of all Gods
By listening to our humble prayer,
Come with all your divine protective energies and sit amongst us
To protect us and fulfill our sacrifice of learning.
With curved tusk, big body, and effulgence equal to a thousand suns
Make me free of all obstructions, O God, in all my duties and in every way.
Intelligent Shakti, friend, The Lord of Great Hosts I bow to you
Make me free of all obstructions.

Fundamentals of Ayurveda

class #4 notes: The 20 gunas

The 20 gunas or attributes were articulated by Charak. These gunas are organized into 10 pairs of opposing qualities. Their nature as well as their effects on the doshas are described below:

1. Guru (heavy) -increases K and decreases V and P. Guru is *bruhana* or building and anabolic therefore it promotes growth and tissue building. Examples of food include meat, hard cheese, wheat, psyllium, cakes, sugar, and yogurt – also root veggies to a lesser extent. Extremely guru elements are lead and plutonium. Sleep is guru. We need some guru in the diet to stay grounded and it is especially important when practicing lots of pranayama and/or asana. Guru foods are hard to digest.

3. Manda (dull/slow) – increases K, decreases P and V. Manda is *shamanam* or pacifying. It promotes peace, calmness, sluggishness, tranquility, slowness, and quiet. Manda is present in foods like tofu, tapioca, psyllium, potatoes, beef, buffalo, almond milk and herbs like valerian. Alcohol and marijuana are manda in their effects. Most manda foods are a bit tasteless and they dull agni so they should be properly spiced.

5. Shita (cooling/cold) – increases V and K, decreases P. Shita is *stambha* or stunned/ frozen. Shita causes cooling but in excess causes stagnation, numbness, congestion, vassal constriction, mucus accumulation, slowing of digestion, unconsciousness, immunity reduction. The most shita consumable is ice. Hima means ice, which is also the root of the word Himalaya. Milk is also shita (even if it is taken warm).

2. Laghu (light) – increases V and P and decreases K. Laghu is *laghatva* or lightening and catabolic. It therefore promotes alertness and higher awareness. Foods that are laghu are ghee, dried chiles, popcorn, etc. The diet should contain a good deal of laghu if one's main practice is meditation.

4. Tikshna (sharp) – increases P and V, decreases K. Tiksha is *shodanam* or cleansing. Tiksha foods are pungent like ginger, peppers, cayenne, etc. Alcohol, marijuana and anesthetics are also tikshna because they penetrate the cells very quickly even though their effects make us dull.

6. Ushna (hot) – increases P, decreases V and K. Ushna is *svedana* meaning that it causes sweating. It kindles agni, causes perspiration and vassal constriction. Drinking or eating hot foods can initially cause cooling since it vassal dilates but in the long run it is heating. Curries, chiles, and hot foods (temperature) are ushna.

7. Snigda (oily/unctuous) – increases K and P, decreases V. Snigda is *kledhana* or moisturizing. It is very calming, soothing, lubricating, smoothing, and relaxing. Many facial & body oils contain this guna such as neem oil, mahanaraynan oil, castor oil, sesame oil, almond oil, moisturizers containing beeswax, etc. (includes edible oils such as ghee, olive oil, and the like). Oils and massage are used for bonding and increasing affection between people.

9. Shlakshna (slimy/smooth) – increases K and P, decreases V. Things that are shlakshna are *ropana* meaning that they are demulcent and heal wounds. They lubricate and give flexibility. Foods like tapioca, okra, psyllium husk, oysters, licorice tea, flax seed, slippery elm and snails are shlakshna. Ghee, oils, avocado, butter and soft and cooked cheeses are also shlakshna. One should eat a lot of shlakshna foods while practicing yoga, especially butter and ghee.

8. Ruksha (dry) – increases V, decreases P and K. It is *shoshana* or drying. Chile peppers with their pungent taste are ruksha even though they liquify mucus because this is just a reaction of kapha which senses that it is getting too dry. Ruksha in excess from too much chile can even cause dysentery. We use the pungent taste to absorb things like mucus secretions, moisture and certain foods. When one takes ruksha foods, it may cause hard stools and constipation. Choking, constriction, pain, and dry weather will cause the skin to become dry, rough and cracked. Loneliness is a dry quality. US culture is often quite ruksha.

10. Khara (rough) – increases V, and decreases P and K. It is drying and constipating. Things that are rough are *lekhana* or scraping. Raw honey, tumeric, clove, cayenne pepper and all khara and great to take when one is congested as they scrape the lungs. Tobacco is excessively khara which makes it carcinogenic in the lungs and the stomach. Also raw vegetables, bran, roughage, and beans (except moong dal and red lentils) are khara. In Ayurveda we try not to use khara for constipation because it increases vata which is an imbalanced vata condition to begin with. It is better to use “smoothage” than roughage such as psyllium, flax and apple pectin to move bowels and help overcome tendency to constipation.

11. Sandra (dense) – increases K and decreases V and P. Things that are sandra are also *prasadana* or nourishing and enhancing. Items that are sandra are grounding, make the body more dense, heavy, compact and have high food value. Meat, cheese, almonds, date dream/mudaka balls, raisins, nuts, chocolate, chicken soup, pemmican, and nut butters are good sandra foods. Power bars and other similar products (especially those that contain soy) are dense but not good for you as they are too dry and indigestible. Thick masks in beauty care are also examples of sandra.

13. Murdhu (soft) – increases P and K and decreases V. This guna is *shlatana* or and soothing, relaxing and even fluffy. Creates softness, love, delicacy, tenderness, and care. There seems to be less murdhu in pioneer cultures which tend to be hard. In excess, murdhu will provoke mucus and increase K. Love is soft while anger is hot sharp and penetrating. Fear is dry and rough. K needs a hard bed, P needs a moderate bed, and V needs a soft bed.

15. Stira (static) – increases K and decreases V and P. It is *dharana* or support providing like a splint. It is very important especially in yoga because without it one has lax ligaments, or hyperextension and it is very easy to come out of alignment and cause injury. A lack of stira can become much worse as one gets older. Stira holds things in place. Psyllium husk is stira.

12. Drava (flowing) – increases K and P and decreases V. This guna is *vilodana* or dissolving. Water is an example but without fire it is very dense (ice). Water fasts and the shankar prakshalana dissolve or flush toxins. This quality is used to dissolve and uptake nutrients. It is important to have this quality in a meal so that it does not just sit in your stomach without being readily absorbed. Indian meals typically have a dal or sambar to serve this purpose. Herbs should be taken with warm water for the same reason. Almonds can be soaked overnight to remove skins and then help them become more digestible by adding drava (otherwise you just make expensive poop).

14. Kathina (hard) – increases V and decreases P. In later stages of disease kathina can increase K such as in tumor formation. Kathina is *dhrudi karam* which means compact. It increases hardness, strength, and rigidity. In excess increases callousness, selfishness and insensitivity. Nuts are kathina.

16. Chala (mobile) – increases V and P, and decreases K. Chala is *prevana* or activating. Chala items are stimulating exciting, inspiring, restlessness, and shaky. Thoughts, feelings and emotions are chala. Chiles are chala because they stimulate the body and because their taste moves quickly throughout other food. A lot of anti-depressant herbs such as brahmi are *prevana* and they get us through stuckness and indecisiveness and are great to get someone moving.

17. Shukshma (subtle)- increases V and P, decreases K. It is *shrotogametva* or “penetrating into all the channels” like mint, jasmine and other airborne essences. Marijuana, alcohol, aspirin and all poisons are subtle and can make us spacey. Herbs are sometimes powdered or burned to make them more subtle and thus more penetrating to the cells.

19. Vishada (clear) – increases V and P, decreases K. These items are *kshalana* or cleansing. Water is vishada. Examples include water cleanses like shankar prakshalana for cleansing the internal system. Vishada pacifies but creates isolation and diversion.

17. Stula (gross) – increases K, decreases V and P. Stula is *samvarana* which is tissue protecting. An example of using this guna properly is giving milk for osteoporosis. In excess it causes obstruction and obesity. Meat and cheese are stula.

20. Pichila (sticky) or Avila (cloudy) – increases K, decreases P and V. This guna is *lepana* or coating. You can make a nice face mask out of items with lepana. It can also create congestion. Pichila causes cohesiveness in the body and mind and can cause attachment. All dairy products are avila. Excess can cause a lack of clarity in the mind.

Times of Day and Seasons

Vata Times and Seasons

Approximately 2:00 pm – 6:00 pm and 2:00 am – 6:00 am

Fall and Early Winter

Since Vata is light and alert, we are best supported to wake before 6:00 am, before the Kapha time sets in. Further, we may have an active period in the afternoon, which is supportive for work and exercise. Morning yoga before 6:00 am is ideal partially because of the time but also because the atmosphere's energy is quiet and clear. Further, early morning yoga will support your muscles rest position to be naturally longer, so you will eventually feel less stiff in the morning.

In the Fall, the leaves are drying and getting rough, the air is crisp and cool, things blow around, and the temperatures and day/night times are in great fluctuation. In Colorado, we are additionally already high in elevation, which is Vata aggravating. Vata predominant people must take extra care of themselves in the fall.

Pitta Times and Seasons

Approximately 10:00 am – 2:00 pm and 10:00 pm to 2:00 am

Summer

This is the hottest time of the day, the sun is highest in the sky and it is the ideal time to take your largest meal of the day. It is also the time of the day when we are supported to be most active and to work. Our mind is sharpest during this time of day so it is a good time for studying, analysis and test-taking. If you go to sleep at about 10:00pm, with little or nothing to digest, the Pitta time will support burning out toxins while you sleep.

Summer is the hottest season so Pitta individuals must ensure to take extra care of themselves by staying cool and avoiding hot and spicy foods, etc.

Kapha Times and Seasons

Approximately 6:00 am -10:00 am and 6:00 pm -10:00 pm

End of Winter, Spring

Since Kapha time will make us naturally feel heavy or tamasic in the body-mind, this is a great time for rest. If you can, get to bed by 10:00pm, before the Pitta time starts. It is also wonderful to be able to rest at the end of the day by having a light dinner with your family (ideally between 6:00 and 7:00 pm). If you sleep past 6:00 am, you are likely to feel more groggy until 10:00 am.

In Spring the earth is often wet and heavy as snows melt. These conditions aggravate Kapha so these individuals must take better care of themselves by staying active, eating lightly, kindling agni, and clearing congestion.

The Six Tastes in Ayurveda

Sweet: Earth + Water

The sweet taste has many excellent qualities including promoting strength and longevity, increasing ojas (the vital essence of life) and nourishing all 7 dhatus (tissue layers). In excess it leads to diabetes, obesity, lymphatic congestion, edema, and general stagnation of kapha. The sweet taste helps us experience the sweetness of life.

Sweet foods include wheat bread, milk, cream, ghee, rice, honey, maple syrup, and certain sweet fruits such as ripe bananas, ripe pears, watermelon, mangos, dates, etc.

Sweet foods are good for reducing Pitta and Vata but they can aggravate Kapha.

Sour: Earth + Fire

Sour foods can be cleansing and illuminating to the palate and body and mind. They are refreshing and stimulating, and help to purify the blood and liver in moderation. In excess, they can aggravate inflammatory conditions, irritation, heartburn, ulcers, acne, rashes, and hyper-acidity.

Sour foods include yogurt, sour grapes, vinegar, certain aged cheeses, fermented foods, kombucha, and many citrus fruits.

Sour foods are good for Vata and should be avoided/reduced by Pitta and Kapha.

Salty: Water + Fire

Salty foods are heating, and heavy. In moderation, they can keep the body hydrated, help digestion, supports proper electrolyte balance and brings out the flavors in food. Certain salts are also laxative and can be cleansing. In excess, salty foods cause hypertension, excess body heat, edema, increased blood pressure, ulcer aggravation, and even skin problems.

Salty foods include all types of salts, soy sauce, miso, tamari, and seaweed.

Salty foods are good for Vata but should be avoided/reduced by Pitta and Kapha.

Pungent: Fire + Air

The pungent taste helps to stimulate digestion, reduce congestion, improve circulation and support mental clarity. It cleans the GI tract and respiratory tissues, and is heating and light in nature. In excess it can burn the tissues creating inflammation, nausea, heartburn, choking, diarrhea, and a reduction in fertility.

Chilies, ginger, garlic, onions, black pepper, mustard, and horseradish are all pungent.

Pungent foods are good for moving the Kapha dosha, but they aggravate Pitta and Vata.

Bitter: Air + Space

The bitter taste is most lacking in the American diet and is quite medicinal and undervalued. Bitterness is very cleansing to the palate, liver, and blood, reduces fever, kills certain parasites, and stimulates digestion. It can enhance other flavors as well. It is light and drying to the system. Overuse can cause dehydration, emaciation, and sexual debility.

Kale, arugula, dandelion and other bitter greens, sprouts, tumeric, coffee, aloe vera, rhubarb, fenugreek, and bitter melon/bitter gourd (used in asian cooking) are all bitter.

The bitter taste is great for Kapha and Pitta but not so good for Vata.

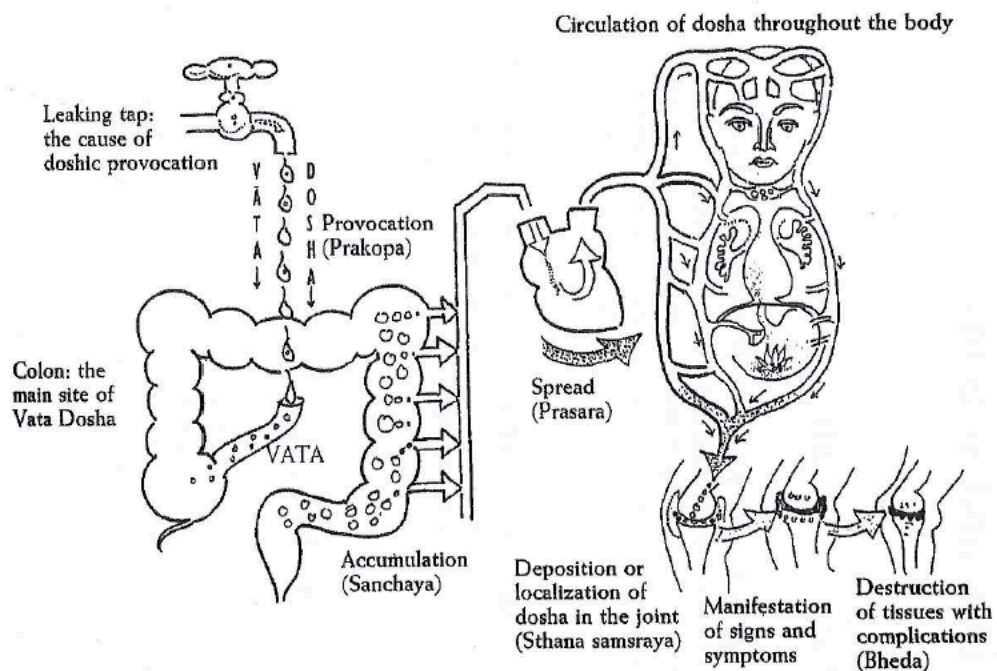
Astringent: Air + Earth

The astringent taste is cooling, drying and constricting. It can produce a dry choking sensation in the throat and mouth. It can help the healing of ulcers and the clotting of blood, as it is anti-inflammatory and vaso-constrictive. It can also reduce sweating and diarrhea. In excess it causes weakening, constipation, heart spasms, dehydration, gas retention, dry mouth and even premature aging.

Astringent foods are lentils and beans, cruciferous vegetables, apples, pears, unripe bananas, pomegranate, tannins, saffron, basil, persimmons, alfalfa sprouts, and tumeric.

Astringent foods are great for Kapha, and Pitta but should be avoided/reduced by Vata.

SIX STAGES OF THE DISEASE PROCESS



*Excerpt from The Complete Book
of Ayurvedic Home Remedies by
Dr. Vasant Lad
This shows Samprapti, stages of
disease*

YOGA ASANAS FOR DOSHAS

VATA

Type of practice: calming, supporting, grounding, warm, Restorative, Gentle

Sitting Poses: Padmasana (lotus), Virasana (hero) - All forward folds

Standing Poses: Virksasana (tree), Trikonasana (triangle), Virabhadrasana 1 and 2

(Warrior 1 and 2)

Inversion: Headstand

Others: Navasana (Boat), Spinal Twists

Savasana: long, deep, and comfortable

↳ w/ pressure on belly, body wrap

ground by toe mount

Do not overwork

Warm room

PITTA

Type of practice: cooling, relaxing, moderating

Hip Openers: Eka Pada Rajakapotasana (one legged pigeon), Ardha Chandrasana (half moon).

Twists good
Backbends: Bhujangasana (Cobra), Dhanurasana (Bow) - Supported backbends

Forward Bends: Paschimottanasana (sitting forward bend), Uttanasana (Standing

Forward Bend)

Savasana: medium in length

No heated yoga, esp. in warm weather

KAPHA

Type of practice: motivating, stimulating, energizing, Vinyasa, Hot Yoga

Balancing poses: Natarajasana (dancer's), Virabhadrasana 3, (Warrior 3)

Inversions: Handstand, Pincha Mayurasana (forearm balance), Adho Mukha Svanasana (downward dog).

Active backbends, leveraged & lifted

Others: Sun Salutations, Urdhva Mukha Svanasana (upward dog)

Savasana: short in length, knees up

Please keep in mind that your needs change daily, and any practice should utilize some of each doshas recommended poses.

General Guidelines for Dosha Balancing

Practice these simple things for Ayurvedic Self Care

Taking Good Care of Vata

Keep a regular routine.

Keep warm and calm.

Avoid raw, dry and cold foods. Reduce bitter, pungent, and astringent tastes.

Eat warm foods and spices with plenty of good oils – root veggies are great.

Practice abhyanga (self massage w/ oil), oil feet at night.

Eliminate stimulants such as caffeine, excess media, drama, turmoil.

Do a slow, gentle, warming asana practice with a long savasana w/ body wrap

Practice nadi shodan pranayama (and bastrika for a short time when cold).

Limit sexual activity and do not stay up late.

Sleep 8-9 hours per night, with WiFi turned off, head to the South or East if possible.

Taking Good Care of Pitta

Avoid excessive heat, and aggravating situations.

Limit salt, oil, and fermented foods. Reduce salty, sour, and pungent tastes.

Avoid alcohol except an occasional beer (which is cooling).

Eat cooling, mildly spiced or slightly bland foods (less salt, garlic, chiles)

Drink cool (but not iced) drinks.

Learn to share control and decisions.

Do a less aggressive, restorative asana practice, especially in summer, 10 min savasana.

Practice shithali or shatkari pranayama to stay cool.

Sexual activity may be moderate.

Sleep 7-8 hours per night, with WiFi turned off head to the South or East if possible.

Taking Good Care of Kapha

Keep active, exercise daily.

Vary your routine.

Avoid heavy foods, excess meat, grains, and fats. Reduce sweet, salty, and sour tastes.

Limit dairy foods, and iced foods and drinks.

Okay to skip meals, good to fast occasionally, especially dinner.

Do a strong, warm vinyasa practice w/ lifts, upward movement & sweat, knees up for savasana, with small support under heart for gentle chest opening.

Use neti pot with salt to clear out congestion.

Practice bastrika or breath of fire vigorously.

Sexual frequency may be higher but very very careful about protection of pregnancy is not wanted.

Sleep 6-7 hours per night; wake at or before dawn, head to the South or East if possible.