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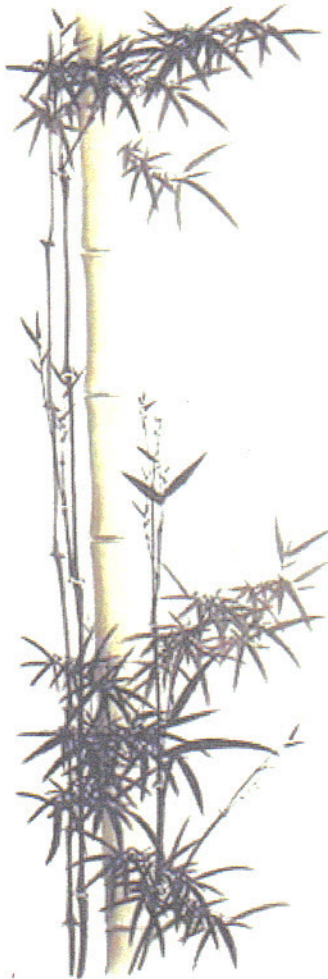
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June 20, 2015

Heal Yourself With Ayurveda

Heal Yourself With Ayurveda

by [Lissa Coffey](#)

The following is an excerpt from the "Heal Yourself With Ayurveda" on-line course. If you would like to enroll in the course, [click here](#).

Ayurveda Explained: What It Is and How It Can Help

The ancient Indian "science of life" called Ayurveda explains that human beings, like the Universe, are made up of each of the five elements (air, space, fire, water and earth) and the Soul. Therefore, our bodies are a microcosm of the Universe within itself.

How are these elements expressed in our bodies? Air is inhaled during breathing, it pumps the blood through our system to keep us alive. Space is in the hollow cavities of the body, and we require space to move around. Fire is a part of our digestive system that helps to break down the food we eat and burn calories to give us energy. Water composes about two-thirds of our body, and we need water to survive. Earth is in our bones and our vital minerals that keep us healthy.

These elements, in their biological form, are known as doshas: Vata, Pitta and Kapha. Vata is made up of a combination of Air and Space. Pitta is a combination of Fire and Water. Kapha is made up of a combination of Earth and Water.

Air Space Fire Water Earth



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Vata Pitta Kapha

Every activity and function of our mind and body is dependent upon the balanced or unbalanced state of our doshas.

Because we all have all of the elements in our bodies, we all have each of the doshas as well. But every one of us is born with a unique, individual balance of these doshas. So, no two of us are alike! The idea is to find what our own special combination of doshas is, and to work to keep in balance so that we stay in radiant health, mentally, emotionally, and physically.

Just about everything could be classified by its dominant dosha. Here are a few examples of the ways Vata, Pitta, and Kapha are expressed in the world around us. See if you can begin to guess which dosha you are:

VATA PITTA KAPHA
gazelle tiger elephant
hummingbird eagle swan
stars sun moon
bamboo pine oak
violin cello bass
sand clay mud
orchid rose chrysanthemum
emu kangaroo koala
hurricane volcano avalanche

Even film and literary characters could be described by their dominant doshas. Here are a few to get you thinking!

VATA PITTA KAPHA
Scarlett Rhett Melanie
Peter Pan Captain Hook Wendy
Olive Oyl Popeye Bluto
Tigger Rabbit Winnie-the-Pooh
Ace Ventura Erin Brockovich The Godfather
Snoopy Lucy Charlie Brown

While all three doshas express themselves in some way in everyone in both body and personality, in most cases one or two are dominant.

I will often refer to people who are Vata, Pitta or Kapha dominant as Vatas, Pittas or Kaphas. The correct way to pluralize these words in sanskrit is Vataja, Pittaja and Kaphaja, but to make it easier for us to follow and understand, I've simply added an "s."

Ayurveda helps us understand our natural

tendencies, how we operate, and what it takes for us to get along with the people in our lives. Through learning about our doshas, we learn to recognize our strengths and work on our weaknesses.

Ayurveda is most well known as an alternative form of health care. Ayurvedic medicine originated in India, where it has been around for over 5,000 years. Because of the tremendous work and dedication of people like Dr. Deepak Chopra, and Dr. Vasant Lad, Ayurveda has become widely recognized in the United States as a valuable system of healing. Today many doctors combine Ayurveda and Western medicine in a harmonious blending of East and West.

The principle behind Ayurveda is balance. Ayurveda is used in two ways: as a preventive health care system by keeping the body balanced, and as a responsive health care system to bring the body back into balance. While Western medicine looks at an illness and seeks to rid the patient of its symptoms, Ayurveda looks at the whole patient and seeks to bring him or her back into a state of balance, thereby creating a natural state of health.

Mind/body balance is obtained through a connection between the mind and body, where thought acts on matter to create health or illness. In the place where mind meets body, there are three operating principles of nature, or doshas: Vata, Pitta, and Kapha. While we cannot see these doshas, we see the effect that they have on our mind and body. They operate as "metabolic principles." Each person is born with a unique combination of each of these three doshas, which make up his or her mind/body type. The goal is to find your particular mind/body type and keep it in balance for optimum health. This balance is achieved through diet, exercise, and lifestyle.

Since health is more than the physical, it is also mental, emotional, and spiritual, Ayurveda can be used to help us create and maintain healthy relationships. It can help us to better understand ourselves, and the people in our lives. We can work with our natural strengths to help balance each other out. We can stop trying to "change" others to fit our needs, and instead accept a person's characteristics as a part of their wholeness, and honor who they are.

Ayurvedic Mind/Body Type Characteristics (The Three Doshas)

Vata

Vata-type people are generally thin and find it hard to gain weight. Because of this, Vatas have very little energy reserve and can tire easily and get themselves out of balance. Vatas need to get sufficient rest and not overdo things, stay warm, and keep a regular lifestyle routine.

The Vata dosha controls all movement in the body, including breathing, digestion, and nerve impulses from the brain. When Vata is out of balance, anxiety and other nervous disorders may be present. Digestive problems, constipation, cramps, and even premenstrual pain usually are attributed to a Vata imbalance.

The most important thing to know about Vata is that it leads the other doshas. Vata usually goes out of balance first, which causes the early stages of disease. More than half of all illnesses are Vata disorders. Balancing Vata is important for everyone, because when Vata is in balance, Pitta and Kapha are generally in balance as well.

Pitta

Pitta-type people are generally of medium size and well proportioned. They have a medium amount of physical energy and stamina. They also tend to be intelligent and have a sharp wit and a good ability to concentrate.

Fire is a characteristic of Pitta, whether it shows up as fiery red hair or a short temper. Since Pittas' body temperature is generally warm, Pitta types can go out of balance with overexposure to the sun. Their eyes are sensitive to light. They are ambitious by nature but also can be demanding and abrasive.

Pitta types are known for their strong digestion but should be careful not to abuse it. Their heat makes them particularly thirsty, and they should take caution not to douse their agni, or digestive fire, with too much liquid during meals.

Pitta dosha leads us to crave moderation and purity. We rely on Pitta to regulate our intake of food, water, and air. Any toxins, such as alcohol or tobacco, show up as a Pitta imbalance. Toxic emotions such as jealousy, intolerance, and hatred also should be avoided to keep Pitta in balance for optimum health.

Kapha

Kapha-type people tend to have sturdy, heavy frames, providing a good reserve of physical strength and stamina. This strength gives Kaphas a natural resistance to disease and a generally positive outlook about life.

The Kapha dosha is slow, and Kapha types tend to be slow eaters with slow digestion. They also speak slowly. They are calm and affectionate but, when out of balance, can become stubborn and lazy. They learn slowly, with a methodical approach, but also retain information well with a good understanding of it.

Kapha dosha controls the moist tissues of the body, so a Kapha imbalance may show up as a cold, allergies, or asthma. This is worse in Kapha season, March through June. Cold and wet weather aggravates Kapha.

Kapha types need to progress to stay in balance. They should not dwell in the past or resist change. They need lots of exercise and need to be careful not to overeat. Kaphas need stimulation to bring out their vitality. Kapha dosha teaches us steadiness and a sense of well-being.

Double Doshas

When you are a double-dosha type, two doshas are presenting themselves strongly in your constitution. This means that you can have qualities of each of the two doshas. These qualities do not "blend" together, but rather show their influence individually, either one trait or the other will present itself at a time.

The first thing to do is to look at which dosha is dominant in each section, mind and body. You may be one dosha in mind and another in body. If this is the case, you can follow one routine when it comes to the physical and another when it comes to the mental issues. If you have both doshas in both areas, you need to use the remedies that are appropriate for that particular condition at the time.

Vata-Pitta

If Vata is dominant in the body, then you are likely thin like a Vata dosha dominant person. You are also quick, humorous, and talkative, but since Pitta is present, you may be more ambitious than pure Vatas. Pitta lends some stability and strength, but also may bring a tendency toward anger. You may have a stronger digestion because of Pitta's fire, which also improves circulation.

If Pitta is dominant in the body, you'll look more like the muscular Pitta type. Vata's influence may make you a little more prone to get stressed-out, and nervous.

Read about both Vata and Pitta and see what parts apply more to your own situation.

Pitta-Kapha

Kapha is so strong structurally that most likely you will have a heavier physique, even if Kapha is not dominant in the body section of the test. Pitta's influence makes you more muscular than pure Kapha types, though.

If Pitta is more dominant in the mind section, you will have more drive and ambition, but that may also mean more of a tendency toward anger and criticism.

If Kapha is more dominant in the mind section, you will be more laid-back, but are more prone to laziness. You need motivation to get active.

Read about both Pitta and Kapha and see what parts apply more to your own situation.

Kapha-Vata

This is a pretty rare type because Kapha and Vata seem to be opposites in so many ways.

If Vata is dominant in the body section of the test, then most likely you will be thin like a Vata, yet relaxed and kick-back like a Kapha. You can be quick like a Vata, yet procrastinate like a Kapha. Both Kaphas and Vatas dislike the cold.

If Kapha is dominant in the body, you are more solidly built, and may display Vata in your creativity and zest for life.

Because of Vata's digestive sensitivity, watch your diet carefully.

Read about both Kapha and Vata and see what parts apply more to your own situation.

Tri-Doshas

When all of the scores in a dosha test are within one point of each other, or evenly distributed, you are one of the rare few who are "Tri-Doshic". When you have this mind/body type, you are more likely to remain in balance, because the ratio of

Vata, Pitta and Kapha is nearly even. You will tend to have lifelong good health and a good immune system. However, whenever you do get out of balance, you must work harder to balance all three doshas, because you don't have a "lead" dosha to start with.

Sometimes it's hard to figure out some of the answers to the questions that determine doshas, and in that case, your body type may be obscured by a Vata imbalance. Vata is the lead dosha, and can oftentimes present like Pitta or Kapha. For example, you may be small-boned, but overweight. A Vata imbalance could very well cause such confusion.

The doshas like to move around, and there are hundreds of ways that they relate to each other - so to be in equal ratio at birth is highly improbable. You may actually be a double-dosha type after all. The most important thing to remember is not to try to fit yourself into a particular category, but to learn as much as you can about yourself. The Tri-Dosha needs to look more carefully at keeping in balance with the seasons and the clock, and seeing how each particular dosha expresses itself in the mind and body. Look at which dosha is dominant in the mind section, and which dosha is more dominant in the body section. You probably have qualities of all three doshas, and you need to find ways to keep in balance that go with the seasons, too. (see the section on the calendar and the clock)

An Ayurvedic physician can provide the most accurate diagnosis of a mind/body type. Typically, the doctor will use a special pulse diagnosis, have you answer a series of questions, and look at your tongue and your physical features to determine your particular combination of doshas. The doctor can also detect any imbalances and recommend specific Ayurvedic herbs and lifestyle adjustments, if necessary. If you are interested in learning more about Ayurveda and adopting this lifestyle, and particularly if you are not feeling well, it would be a good idea to consult an Ayurvedic professional.

Vata, Pitta, and Kapha doshas are present in everyone, just in different proportions. And all three doshas need to be kept in balance. To do that, you need to be aware of your own mind/body type. Your mind/body type is determined by which dosha or doshas are most prevalent in your personality and physical makeup.

Being in balance not only means being healthier AND HAPPIER,
BUT ALSO BEING THE BEST PERSON YOU CAN BE.