

Introduction to Ayurveda: Aligning with Nature for High-Level Wellness

**Presented by Jennifer Moiles for AAPNA
Certified Holistic Health Counselor
Ayurvedic Lifestyle Counselor
Power Vinyasa Yoga Instructor
May 7, 2010**



Outline

1. Introduction and Definition of Ayurveda
 - a. 5000 year old “science of life”
 - b. Sustainable, completely natural, chemical-free method of prevention & health maintenance
 - c. Affordable – inexpensive or will save you money
 - d. Teaches us how to align with nature in order to reduce physical, emotional, and physiologic stress and to improve our energy & immunity
2. Brief overview of 5 elements theory and 3 doshas
 - a. Brief explanation of 5 elements and their characteristics
 - b. 5 elements are reorganized into Vata, Pitta, Kapha, (doshas) as they tend to occur together, to help us perceive & understand how the elements manifest in our body, quality of mind, & choices.
 - c. These give us a way to understand all energy matter & mind, and in turn help us understand how to make food & lifestyle choices that help us maintain balance, as opposed to pushing us toward imbalance and disease.
3. Discussion of VPK characteristics
 - a. Qualities – gunas
 - b. Relative to bodily functions – movement, transformative capacity, & form
 - c. Seasons
 - d. Times of day
 - e. Times of our life
 - f. Personality traits
 - g. Physical traits

Details:

Vata	like the wind, light, mobile, dry, cold, subtle
ether & air	Upward moving
	Relates to everything that moves in our body: circulation, respiration, elimination, menstruation, nervous system.
	Winter
	Elderly, late part of life

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Follow me on my blog! www.jenniferspeaceandgoodeatingblog.blogspot.com

Body type: thin, long bones, delicate features, dry skin, tends to be cold
Foods
Activities
Mental profile; quick, sharp, “ideas person,” creative, spiritual, scattered, anxious, fearful, live in their heads

Imbalance/illness: Insomnia, anxiety, constant movement of mind, arthritis, osteoporosis, constipation, bone loss, dementia.

Pitta fire and water

like fire, hot, sharp, spicy, liquid, oily
Fire is upward moving, water is downward
Relates to our digestive fire; transformative capacity
Summer
Late teens through fifties
Body type: medium frame, tends to be warm, athletic, red hair, early grey or balding
Foods
Activities
Mental profile; intense, intelligent, bossy, passionate, productive, successful, can be aggressive or **irritable** (with V & K)

Imbalance Illnesses: Acid indigestion, High BP, heart disease, inflammatory processes, infection, susceptible to “burnout,” ulcers, skin diseases

Kapha water and earth

heavy, substantial, dense, thick viscous, liquid, slow, stable, static
Downward moving
Relates to everything that gives us form & support; bones, bodily tissues & fluids, organs.
Spring
Childhood through teens
Body type: Larger frame & bones, large eyes, appears younger than age, strong but slower moving
Foods
Activities
Emotions – stable, grounded “earthy,” loving,

Imbalance/Illnesses: congestion, asthma, diabetes, hypothyroid sinus issues, slow digestion, obesity, **depression**

4. Recognizing VPK traits and making choices for balance. Examples:

Traffic:

Road Rage (P)
anxious, fearful driver (V)
or cool as a cucumber/doesn't care (K)

In the workplace

Creative, ideas person, but scattered, messy desk, chronically late (V)
High-achieving, workaholic, productive, organized, bossy (P)
Support person, remembers birthday parties & celebrations, reliable (K)

Seasonal Preferences:

Loves summer, not so happy in winter (V)
Healthy in summer, may accumulate mucus during winter months, terrible
spring allergies (K)
Loves winter, can't stand heat of summer (P)

Digestion:

Fast but gassy (V)
Robust (P)
Slow/heavy (K)

**Basically just an application of the principles of
yin/yang – employing opposite qualities to
promote balance**



Food Choices:

If symptoms of cold/dry and/or in winter time (V) –
moist, heavier, oily foods, soups, stews, cooked rather than raw foods

If symptoms of heat/acidity and/or in summertime (P) – naturally sweet &
cooling foods. Raw fruits & veggies, bitter greens, raw dairy.

If symptoms of heaviness/lethargy/congestion and/or in spring (K) – make
lighter choices; cleansing foods, heating spices to encourage good
digestion.

When you eat, may be more important than what you eat:

Lunch should be the main meal.
Allow enough time for complete digestion between meals
Eat a lighter meal in the evening to leave your body enough energy for
good rest.

How you eat may be more important than what and when you eat!

“When you eat standing up, death looks over your shoulder.”

Sit down, breathe, and chew, chew, chew your food! Anything not digested properly becomes “ama” – toxins. Eating while at your desk, anxious, busy or emotional inhibits the digestive process. Ama and a feeling of heaviness, lethargy or general “ickiness” is likely.

Exercise:

If you're a person who thinks, talks & moves fast (vata) -- choose exercise that is slower, more rhythmic, grounding & strengthening. Tai Chi, dance, or weightlifting, for example.

If you're someone who tends to be intense, irritable, competitive, driving yourself toward burnout (pitta) – slower, calming, cooling forms of exercise are a must. Yin yoga. Tai Chi. Especially savasana (corpse pose).

If you're someone who would rather not exercise at all (kapha) – find a trainer, class, or other enjoyable activity that will light a fire under your heels and get you motivated to move!

General lifestyle:

If you are chronically irregular, late, scattered, overwhelmed (vata) – get into a routine! Eat at regular times, exercise at regular times, go to bed and get up at the same time every day & evening.

If you're a consistent over-achiever; someone whose been accused of being a workaholic, or a little obsessive compulsive at times (pitta) -- carve out time every day to enjoy the sweetness of life; stop to smell the roses, practice gentle yoga in the evening, surround yourself with friends and loved ones, or get a massage!

If you're someone who can feel a little “stuck” at times (kapha) -- make it a point to get up early in the morning and get moving! Find one of your vata or pitta friends and ask them to be your walking buddy. Ask for support committing to a regular exercise routine, choose something or someone that's fun and engaging to be with every day and make that activity or that person a regular part of your life.

Breathing Techniques

For Vata: Alternate nostril breath

For Pitta: Alternate nostril breath, Shitali (cooling breath)

For Kapha: Ujjayi, breath of fire or skull shining

5. Question and answer wrap-up

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