

Living in balance – Introduction to Ayurveda Part 2

In the last issue (of the Kuala Lumpur Post, magazine in Malaysia), I gave you a brief introduction to the basic principles of Ayurveda. Today you will get an overview of the three doshas and a short test to find out about your Dosha distribution. Lastly, I have put together practical tips to guide you into balancing your nutrition according to that.

First of all, for practical use it is important to find out how the three doshas **Vata** (movement), **Pitta** (transformation) and **Kapha** (firmness) are present in your body. This inborn composition determines the basic constitution. It manifests itself not only in the appearance, but also in all metabolic processes and above all in your ability to digest food.

Few people eat according to their constitution. In Ayurvedic understanding, this leads to Dosha Vriddhi (imbalances), which in turn negatively affects the digestion and can initiate a process that leads to disease. Depending on how long these imbalances persist, the basic constitution is more or less overshadowed. Sometimes it only reappears clearly after a few months of therapy or a change in diet. Therefore, the primary interest in Ayurvedic counseling, are the doshas that have become too strong (Vikriti), and only secondary the basic constitution (Pakriti).

Implementation in everyday life

To live in balance according to Ayurveda, you have to know the following:

1. The basic constitution
2. The current Dosha Vriddhi symptoms
3. Knowledge of foods that balance excessive doshas

Basic constitution

Of course, seven billion people cannot simply be categorized into three groups. However, an Ayurveda therapist roughly differentiates between seven types for determining the digestive power: Vata, Pitta and Kapha as well as Vata / Kapha, Vata / Pitta, Kapha / Pitta and Vata / Pitta / Kapha types.

The pure types are briefly introduced here.

The pure VATA type:

People belonging to the VATA type are slim, either very tall or very small, and usually have long and thin bones. Skin and hair are often prone to dryness. There are irregularities in the face. Of all seven types, these people have the least immune resistance. The digestion is delicate and irregular. They tend to be emotionally worried, are often changeable in temperament, but can quickly connect with other people. Vata types have varying digestion and the feeling of hunger is sometimes more or less pronounced. They can forget to eat. Usually they get hungry one to two hours after getting up.

The pure PITTA type:

Pitta type persons are stronger than VATA types, neither too big nor too small, with normal body weight. They are persistent, strong and rather hot-blooded. They can have spots, redness, impurities on their skin. They often have freckles and blush faster, have warm hands and feet, and very clear, intense eyes. Pitta types often turn gray at a young age. Their digestion is the strongest. They have to eat decent meals three times a day and can hardly

miss one. They are usually hungry shortly after waking up. They tend to be quick-tempered, are good strategists and leaders.

The pure KAPHA type:

People belonging to this group are heavier, but not necessarily overweight. The physique is compact and very muscular. They are the strongest and most enduring of all types. The immune system is strong, digestion is slow and steady. The hair is often very thick and shiny, the skin smooth and even, rather light. They are very stable and loyal. Emotionally, they can be lethargic and prone to depressive moods. Kapha types digest slowly, which is why they get usually hungry only three to four hours after waking up. It is better for them to eat only two medium-sized meals and no snacks in between.

With the following table you can roughly determine the distribution of the doshas. Check the column that suits you best per row (more than one cross per row is possible) and then add up your points. That gives you an approximate distribution of your doshas.

	VATA	PITTA	KAPHA
Tongue	Long, thin, dry, red-greyish	Tongue aligned with the row of your teeth, reddish	Tongue wider than the row of teeth, light red, wet
Face	Long, oval	Rather angular, pointed chin	Big, round
Hands	Long and thin fingers, brittle nails	Medium size hand, well proportioned, soft nails,	compact hand, symmetrical, hard nails
Figure	Tall and thin or small and thin	Medium size, well proportioned	Strong, muscular, wide
Appetite	Varying, gets hungry fast, but also satisfied fast	Strong, big meals, hard to leave out a meal,	small appetite, eats out of habit or emotionally; easy to skip breakfast
Bowels	Variable, sometimes 1-2 a day, sometimes none, tendency to hard bowels	1-2 per day, tendency to soft bowels	When healthy once a day, often only every other day,
Circulation	Cold hands and/or feet	Warm hands/feets, like an oven	Cool hands, but resistant to cold

DOSHA VRIDDHI - how an imbalance can arise

1. VATA - What brings Vata out of balance:

- cold food, ice cream and iced drinks
- spicy (chilli, garlic) and bitter (spinach) dishes
- dry dishes (chips, crackers, raw food)
- light and too little food (too much fruit, salads, raw food, water, fast)

- too much sports
- long and many trips (particularly by plane)
- little sleep
- wind

Effects of VATA-Vridhhi:

- Flatulence and constipation, abdominal cramps
- dry skin
- pulsating (headache) pain
- premenstrual syndrome
- Stiffness, cracking joints, muscle hardening
- metallic taste in the mouth
- tremor
- nervousness
- hearing loss
- emaciation, weakness
- Loss of joie de vivre

2. PITTA - The following can lead to PITTA excess:

- Food and drinks that are too acidic, spicy and salty (e.g. soy sauce, lemons, Asian fish sauce with chilli peppers)
- Food and drinks that are too hot
- fermented food and drinks (alcohol in all forms, cheese, soy sauce)
- skip a meal
- Eat too much per meal
- Suppress hunger and thirst (e.g. because of work), (water) fasting
- too little sleep or too much exercise
- too much sun

Effects of PITTA-Vridhhi:

- inflammation
- Hot flashes, burning sensations
- diarrhea
- little urine
- Excessive sweating
- strong body odor
- fainting
- bitter and sour taste in the mouth
- yellow discoloration of the skin and eyeballs
- poor eyesight
- irritability

3. KAPHA - The following factors lead to a KAPHA excess:

- salty and sweet dishes
- greasy and oily dishes
- cold food and drinks
- drink too much

- Dairy products
- too much sleep (> 8h), sleep during the day
- lack of physical activity
- Rain and cloudy weather

Effects of KAPHA-Vridhhi:

- mucus formation (runny nose, hay fever, bronchitis etc.)
- Weight gain, feeling of heaviness
- Lethargy, weariness
- swelling
- itching
- white discoloration (stool, skin)
- constipation
- sweet and salty taste in the mouth, excessive salivation
- Hyperflexibility of the joints
- melancholy

Europeans living Southeast Asia need to watch out for the following according to Ayurveda:

1. Eat lightly because digestion is weaker in hot countries.
2. Mostly vegetables, gently cooked and lightly seasoned with whole grain cereals.
3. Eat hard-to-digest foods (dairy products, fish and meat) at noon rather than in the evening and at the end of the meal.
4. Eat easily digestible foods such as fruits and lettuce at the beginning of the meal to avoid excessive fermentation in the intestine.
5. Indulge in the spices of this region, because they help kindle the digestive fire: cumin, turmeric, ginger (fresh), fresh coriander, coriander, cardamom, fennel, fenugreek seeds, but also laurel, rosemary, marjoram, oregano and not to be forgotten: black pepper!
6. Avoid "ultra-processed foods". This includes every form of ready-made food, from the stock cube with MSG (monosodium glutamate) as a flavor enhancer to the frozen lasagna.

These foods are not 'real' foods according to Ayurveda and hence not easy to digest. This food is manufactured in food laboratories from chemical components, which is why they are known in research as "ultra-processed" foods. They usually contain high levels of white sugar and unhealthy fats. Research is increasingly showing that excessive consumption of these foods causes illness. This applies to all countries.

Detox for doshas made easy

Finally, a tip for everyone who wants to have a healthy day of fasting from time to time.

How VATA fasts (once a month):

Breakfast: Smoothie from a fruit (rather sweet, e.g. dragon fruit, papaya,) plus ginger tea (cut a thumb-sized piece of fresh ginger into small pieces and boil in 1 liter of water for 10 minutes, let it steep for another 10 minutes) throughout the day.

Lunch: 1 cup of basmati rice plus 1-2 cups of finely chopped vegetables (one variety: e.g. zucchini, pumpkin, cauliflower); Cook together softly and soup, season with cumin, pepper and a little salt.

Dinner: cook vegetable soup without fat, only with water and spices as above.

Here's how PITTA fasts (1 day a week or 2 days every 2 weeks):

Breakfast: watermelon smoothie and ginger tea (see above)

Lunch: vegetable soup with green leafy vegetables (if very hungry add some rice)

Dinner: same as before, but without rice

This is how KAPHA fasts (1 day per week or up to 3 days in a row / month):

Breakfast: ½ grapefruit and ginger tea (see above)

Lunch: vegetable soup with green leafy vegetables

Dinner: same

Eating according to Ayurvedic principles leads to a feeling of lightness and strength. The recipes are not that difficult, but rather the realization that loved food habits are not as healthy and beneficial as one used to think. Changing the food habits step by step according to Ayurveda can be a healing experience. A life in balance brings well-being and increases your health.

Have fun trying it out!