

# Choice

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## Your Health and Wellbeing Success Starts Here!

Are you a health-conscious consumer, looking to come into the industry or looking for a suitable treatment? Find out what the experts say and read.





# Agni Ama

**You are not only what you eat but how, where and when you eat! Digestion is probably one of the single most important concepts in Ayurveda in relation to overall health.**

**A** strong balanced agni is at the core of optimum health. Agni refers to the functional fires in our body and is responsible for digesting, transforming and assimilating what we absorb through food and drink as well as the air we breathe and the stimuli received through our five senses.

There are several stages where agni plays a role; firstly, the Jathara agni in the digestive tract which is our main digestive fire. The ingested food is then circulated and nutrients are digested further by the dhatvagnis for each of the sapta dhatus (seven bodily tissues), from rasa (plasma), rakta (blood), mamsa (muscle), medas (adipose), asthi (bone), majja (marrow) and shukra (reproductive tissue) to the final level where Ojas is produced. The five bhutagnis digest the panchamahabhutic elements present in the food.

Ayurveda places great value on keeping the Jathara agni in balance by following suitable regimens according to one's Prakruti (dosha constitution). When agni is in a balanced state (sama agni) the food and drink we consume is optimally assimilated and provides nourishment to the dhatus and as a result we prosper in good health.

***"Agni is responsible for life span, complexion, strength, health, enthusiasm, corpulence, lustre, immunity, energy, heat processes and prana. Agni is the root cause of both health and disease" (Charaka Samhita. Chikitsa Sthana .15 v1-2)***

Signs of a healthy agni can be seen with lightness, easily passing stools, feeling of hunger and thirst, radiant skin, good levels of energy. An imbalanced digestion is the cause of most disease in the body and these are of three types.

Vishama agni is associated with airy qualities of vata flaring up or putting out the agni. Vishama means irregular and those with this type of agni will tend to have a mix of intense or no hunger, and have a sensitive digestion with a limited digestive capacity. Regularity and a vata-controlling diet would be key to bringing back balance.

Tikshna agni is affected by the qualities of pitta. Tikshna mean penetrating or sharp. An excessive appetite with a fast digestion, the ability to handle heavy or difficult to digest foods are typical signs of this type of agni. A pitta-pacifying diet would be suitable in this case.

Manda agni represents kapha qualities in digestion where there is sluggishness in



digestion. Those with manda agni will gain weight easily even from small portions of food. A kapha-reducing diet would be most suitable here.

### Signs of vitiated agni - Vishama (vata)

Variable appetite and digestion (quantity and timing), flatulence and bloating, constipation, dark coating on tongue, dry mouth, underweight, insomnia, mental restlessness.

### Tikshna (pitta)

Strong appetite, acid reflux, food digested quickly, burning sensations, thirst, diarrhoea, yellowish coating on the tongue, sour taste, moderate weight, impatience, irritability, anger.

### Manda (kapha)

Low appetite, slow digestion, feeling of heaviness, overweight, lassitude, sleepiness after eating, excess salivation, white coating on the tongue, mucosal stools, mentally dull, depression.

### So what causes an imbalanced agni?

If we continue to eat foods that disrupt our digestion such as heavy, cold, excessive spice, raw, fried foods, incompatible food combinations, medicines or even fasting or emotional upset and stress, our agni becomes weakened and starts to create ama (sticky waste product of undigested food) which has no supportive function in the body. Ama then starts to circulate through the body lodging itself where there are pre-disposed weaknesses such as the joints, skin or arteries, causing disease such as skin conditions, arthritis, heart disease etc.



### Ayurveda stipulates various regimens to reduce ama and support a balanced agni:

- ☺ Eat in a calm environment, do not eat when you're upset. Keep a peaceful and pleasant mood while eating
- ☺ Always take time and sit down to eat (don't eat in front of your computer or TV or while you're driving or walking)
- ☺ Only eat when you're hungry and after your previous meal is digested
- ☺ Eat at a sensible pace. Not too fast/slow
- ☺ Include all six tastes (sweet, sour, astringent, bitter, salty, and pungent) at every meal
- ☺ Opt for cooked warm foods rather than raw foods, as they are much easier to digest. Favour vegetables and whole grains. Kitchari is an ideal

fuel for a strong agni

- ☺ Only fill a third of stomach with food. Stop before you feel full
- ☺ Avoid ama-producing foods such as dairy, heavy meats
- ☺ Rock salt and ginger before dinner stimulates the function of agni
- ☺ Eating the evening meal ideally at 6.30pm, avoiding heavy foods
- ☺ Avoid snacking between meals
- ☺ Supportive herbs would include: trikatu, ginger, cinnamon, black pepper, amalaki and fennel.
- ☺ If ama is present and agni is to be rekindled, the practitioner will advise on various fasting methods, digestive herbs and even pancha karma therapies (purification treatment) **CHW**

### Causes of ama can be due to one or more of the following reasons:

#### Causes of ama

Indigestion of food or incompatibility  
Over-eating  
Heavy or indigestible articles of food  
Raw uncooked foods  
Foods which are too cold  
Unclean/contaminated foods  
Too much water in food  
Suppression of natural urges  
Hunger/irregular diet-habits

#### Signs of ama

Coated tongue  
Sluggish appetite  
Sensitive digestion/indigestion  
Irritable elimination/ foul smelling or sinking/sticky stools  
Fatigue/lethargy  
Bad breath/sticky mouth  
Generalised body ache/pain  
Depression  
Low immunity

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