

FEEL GOOD FOOD

The right things to eat for your dosha

Do you feel bloated simply at the sight of bread, whilst your friend can happily eat it without any problem? Or maybe you eat chocolate knowing that you'll pay the price with a bout of spots, but your partner has no consequences. It could all be down to your dosha. "When it comes to diet and lifestyle, we can find balance by eating foods and doing activities that are opposite in nature to the attributes of our dosha," says expert practitioner in ayurvedic medicine, Geeta Vara. Here she explains how to find the foods that work for you.

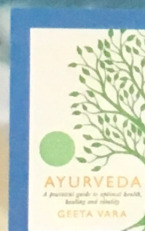
VATA

Since vata types have an unpredictable appetite, eating only when hunger is present is a must-do. Keep meals simple and moderate the portion size. Slowing down the speed of eating will also help vata types to digest food well. Foods that are simple, moist, oily, warm and cooked are the best choices for vata. Root vegetable, meat or lentil soups, or kitchari, are perfect options. Foods that have a naturally sweet, sour and salty taste can be balancing for vata. Note: sweet does not mean sugary!

Foods that balance vata can include beetroot, carrots, sweet potato, grains (such as rice), whole wheat foods and quinoa, plus lentils, ripe fruits, dates, milk, cheese, natural yoghurt, eggs, nuts, seeds and plenty of herbal tea.

Vata dominant types can be susceptible to digestive issues such as indigestion, gas, flatulence, bloating, pain and constipation. Fennel tea is great for this type of digestive upset. A good starting point for balancing vata-influenced digestive disturbances is to avoid foods that are cold, dry, rough and light in nature. For example, raw vegetables, popcorn, salads, crackers, cabbage, beans, salad, pastries and cold water.

DOSHA	BALANCED BY	IMBALANCED BY
VATA	Natural sweet, sour and salty tastes. Dense, warm, moist, oily, smooth or simple foods.	Bitter, pungent and astringent tastes. Dry, rough, cold and light foods. Plus, lots of food varieties in one meal.
PITTA	Sweet and bitter tastes. Hearty portions, cooling foods, and some raw, dry and dense foods.	Sour, pungent (spicy), salty tastes. Oily, liquid, fried and processed foods, plus stimulating drinks (coffee/alcohol).
KAPHA	Bitter, pungent and astringent tastes. Warm, dry, light and simple foods. Small portions.	Sweet, sour and salty foods. Dense, heavy, moist, oily, smooth and cold foods.



BOOKshelf

Ayurveda: Ancient Wisdom For Modern Wellbeing by Geeta Vara is published by Orion Spring on 7 June in paperback, eBook and audio.

PITTA

Pitta types are likely to have a strong appetite and good digestion, so ensuring that you do not skip meals and that meals are hearty in portion size (and are energy sustaining) is important. Pitta types can be susceptible to digestive issues such as acid reflux, heartburn, inflammatory issues, loose motions or ulcers in the digestive tract. Foods that are cooling, grounding, nourishing and mild in nature, as well as bitter and sweet tastes, will bring balance to the pitta dosha.

Balancing foods can include most grains (such as rice and quinoa), whole wheat, beans, lentils, milk, root vegetables, coconut products, watermelon, celery, cucumber, cabbage, kale, ghee, sunflower seeds, avocado and sweet fruits (such as fig or mango).

Pitta types should try to avoid foods that are too spicy, sour, acidic or salty, (such as chillies, raw onions, vinegars, spicy curries, citrus fruits), as well as foods that are fried and processed, because these can aggravate the digestive system.

KAPHA

When kapha types suffer an imbalance, they can get digestive issues such as loss of appetite, nausea, stomach ache, congestion and sluggish motions. Eat smaller meal portions and refrain from snacking, plus only eat when you're hungry.

Kapha types tend to be indulgent by nature and respond well to foods that are light, dry and stimulating. Foods that are bitter, pungent and astringent can also bring balance. Plant-based proteins such as lentils and beans are great for kapha, as are green vegetables such as spinach and kale. Plus, try eating light and warm grains (like millet and buckwheat), apples, honey, rice cakes, lemons and limes, as well as spices and spiced herbal teas.

Foods that can trigger kapha's problems are those that are high in fat and heavy and cold by nature. These include excessively sweet, sugary and processed foods, as well as heavy meats, cheese, milk, yoghurt and potato.

AYURVEDA AND DIGESTIVE HEALTH

Sebastian Pole, ayurvedic practitioner, herbalist and co-founder of Pukka Herbs (pukkaherbs.com) explains why understanding Ayurveda can help improve your health and wellbeing

Ayurveda could be called the 'science of digestion'. It teaches that a faulty digestion is the cause of most diseases. However good your diet is, if your digestion is impaired then you cannot absorb the appropriate nutrients required for nourishment.

Ayurveda promotes a theory that anything can be a food, a medicine or a poison, depending on 'who' is eating it, 'what' is eaten, and 'how much' of it is eaten. For example, fresh ginger root is delicious in cooking as a flavour that can help digestion. It is a stimulating medicine that can help clear a cold and induce a sweat when taken as a strong hot tea. However, if too much is taken, it can make you sick, causing acidity and vomiting, hence acting as a 'poison' in the wrong circumstances.

Generally speaking, Ayurveda shows that the most beneficial foods are rice, wheat, barley, mung beans, asparagus, grapes, pomegranates, ginger, ghee, milk and honey. These are all tonics to the tissues and digestive system. It also teaches that it is best to avoid habitual use of heavy meats, cheeses, yoghurt, refined salt, processed foods, refined sugar, coffee, tomatoes, bananas, citrus fruits and black lentils. These can create stagnation and undigested toxins — the scourge of all of our health problems. Eating is considered to be the most important activity that can affect your health. Whilst it is an essential habit, and for some an addiction, it can be empowering to transform your eating habits to only include healthy foods that are rejuvenating and life-giving.

MOVE MORE

Find the exercise that works for your dosha

Finding an exercise that you really enjoy and can flourish at is a great feeling. Geeta Vara explains the activities that align with your dosha

VATA

The quick, mobile, airy qualities of vata make these types prone to fluctuating energy levels. Strenuous, high energy and competitive sports can exhaust the volatile energy of vata, so try exercise that is fun, inspiring and light in intensity. This could include gentle walking, swimming, golf, dancing, table-tennis and yoga. Give movement that encourages agility, coordination, balance and stretching a go. Breathing and meditation are really grounding and balancing for the vata mind.

KAPHA

Kapha types have a naturally strong stamina, so vigorous exercises that improve strength and endurance will help kapha types in balance. Regular physical exercise helps to balance the heaviness of kapha and prevent sluggishness from setting in. Try movement such as brisk walking, taking the stairs, regular stretching on a daily basis, especially for those in sedentary day jobs. Exercise like mountain or rock climbing, cycling, aerobics, swimming, hiking, long-distance running, hiking, ashtanga and vinyasa flow yoga are all good options for the kapha type, as are stimulating breathing meditations.

PITTA

Pitta dominant types love a challenge and can be competitive in nature, so are best-suited to movement that has a cooling and calming nature. Exercises can include water-based activities, such as swimming and sailing, or outdoor pursuits, such as cycling, skiing, jogging or mountain climbing. Regular walks in the parks or woodlands, by water (rivers, lakes and the sea), plus t'ai chi, hatha or yin yoga also support pitta types. Competitive and high intensity sports can quickly imbalance a pitta person. Cooling exercises and meditation practices are really beneficial too, as is down time and laughter.

