

Ayurvedic Lifestyle



Ayurvedic Lifestyle – Eat According to Your Constitution

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Guidelines for a Healthy Ayurvedic Diet (*Vata-Pitta*)

Foods to enjoy:

Cooked vegetables such as pumpkin, squashes, marrow, courgette, spinach, asparagus, fennel, swede, sweet corn, onions, carrots, parsnips, beetroot, celery, sweet potatoes, French beans, mange-tout, chicory, kale, chard, rocket, alfalfa, chestnuts, artichokes, leeks, mushrooms and seaweed. However, potatoes, peppers, aubergine, cauliflower, broccoli and peas should only be taken occasionally. Lettuce and salads made with leaves only (esp. bitter ones like rocket, radicchio, sorrel etc.) can be taken at lunchtime, preceding the meal and served with oil. Avocados are also okay.

Pulses like green and split *mung* beans, *tur dat* and red lentils are easy to digest, balancing and nourishing to the body. Sprouted *mung* can also be used, but need to be cooked. To get the full value from pulses they should be eaten together with grains (esp. rice).

Grains including rice (red, brown or white), oat, rye, maize, millet, amaranth, quinoa, kamut, spelt, polenta; basically everything other than wheat. Flours made from the above grains and also from potatoe and buckwheat are excellent substitutes for 'normal' flour. Bread (wheat free!) should only be eaten when toasted as the dry heat stops further fermentation. Porridge made without milk, but with cinnamon and cardamom, coconut flakes, soaked raisins or stewed fruit is an ideal breakfast: easy to digest, highly nutritious, warming and energising.

Seeds and nuts are heavy to digest and can be *vata* increasing. If taken at all, they should be ground, soaked over night or made into a paste or milk. Peanuts and cashew nuts should be avoided though. The flesh, milk, cream and flakes of coconuts can be used liberally.

All sweet fruits such as apples, pears, apricots, grapes, cherries, plums, sweet berries, fresh figs, dates and also pomegranate. Lemons can be taken in moderation. Bananas are very cold in energy and therefore best eaten when cooked. They should be avoided while having a cough, cold, flu or mucus accumulation in the respiratory tract. Unsulphured dried fruits are okay, but should preferably be soaked or made into a stew.

Of all milk products *ghee* (clarified butter) is the best - it is like a medicine (highly *pitta* reducing) and can be cooked with and added to practically everything. Normal butter is also good and definitely better than margarines and other such processed spreads! Milk should only be taken warm and, preferably, spiced with ginger, cardamom, cinnamon or turmeric. Good alternatives to cow milk are goat and sheep milk or soya and rice milk. Fresh cheeses such as cottage cheese, feta and ricotta are easier to digest than hard, old ones and are also less mucus producing. They are best enjoyed with some black pepper to stimulate agni.

If meat is eaten at all one should stick to white meat only, i.e. chicken and turkey. Fish is very hot and *pitta* increasing in nature and therefore best avoided. If eaten, opt for fresh water fish rather than seafood. Eggs, tofu eh and miso are okay in moderation, but seitan (pure wheat gluten) and uorn (highly processed fungus protein isolate) sho d definitely be avoided.

Sweeteners: refined sugar and artificial sweeteners (aspartame, NutraSweet etc.) should be replaced *byjaggery* (solidified sugar cane juice), raw cane sugar, Rapadura, date syrup, maple syrup, rice syrup

or honey. Honey should not be heated, as it is not heat stable: when cooked, baked or heated over 40°C, it denatures and causes sticky obstructions in subtle channels.

Drinks: Tea and coffee can be drunk, but herbal or green teas are better. Good alternatives to real coffee are *Caro*, *Barley Cup* or dandelion coffee. Ginger tea made from fresh roots is warming, *agni* increasing, removes mucus and toxins and is the number one remedy for coughs and colds. Plain hot water is also good for clearing the digestive tract. Fresh vegetable and fruit juices are very nourishing, but should be avoided in cold weather or while suffering from colds.

Most essential is the use of spices. Cumin, coriander, fennel and saffron are the best for balancing all *doshas*, increasing *agni*, and should be used liberally. Black pepper, turmeric, curry powder, cinnamon, cardamom, cloves, mustard seeds, nutmeg, *ajwain*, onion and fenugreek seeds, all fresh and dried herbs as well as onions, garlic and ginger can also be used. Asafoetida (*hing*) reduces *vata* and should be added when cooking pulses, beans and cabbage to reduce their gas producing properties.

Foods to avoid:

Heavy to digest foods such as wheat meat (esp. red meat) and refined sugar. These foods severely decrease the digestive fire (*agni*) and produce mucus and toxins (*ama*). Deep fried foods are also heavy to digest and highly *vata* increasing.

Sour foods such as tomatoes and sour fruits (oranges, pineapples, grapefruits etc.), vinegars and hot spices like chillies. These foods increase *pitta* and heat in the body and also reduce the digestive power (esp. tomatoes).

Fermented or fermentation increasing foods like alcohol, hard cheese and yeast-containing foods such as marmite, yeasted pates and beer. All fermented foods are sour in nature and therefore have *pitta*-increasing qualities. Whenever there is too much *pitta* and heat in the intestines, fermentation is multiplied, thus resulting in gas and decreased digestive capacity.

Raw vegetables, sprouted beans and salads. They are hard to digest, cooling and *aira* producing. Broad, black-eyed and kidney beans, chickpeas, kohlrabi, Brussels sprouts and cabbage should be avoided even when cooked.

Ice-cold foods and drinks are immediate 'killers' for the digestive fire. They are best avoided totally, but if taken then not directly before, after or together with meals.

Avoid ready-made, tinned and microwaved foods! They are devoid of life force (*prana*), deplete the digestive fire and *agni* in the body.

Generally:

- Cooked is better than raw!
- Warm, sloppy, soupy meals are better than heavy, dry, solid foods.
- Never mix milk with fruit, with meat or with fish, as these are incompatible food combinations!
- Never heat honey above 40°C!
- Only eat when hungry and when the last meal has been digested (after 3-4 hours).
- Avoid eating late at night and leave at least a 2-hour gap before going to sleep