

Yoga for YOUR Body Type

Written by Kathy on July 15, 2011 · [Leave a Comment](#)

By Juliet Jivanti

Defining Ayurveda

Many people have heard the word “ayurveda,” but may have only a nebulous understanding of what it involves. A sister science to yoga, ayurveda is a 5,000-year-old system of medicine that first evolved in India but is becoming increasingly popular in America. Ayurveda is referred to as the knowledge or science of life and is a conjunction of two Sanskrit words: ayur “life” and veda “knowledge.”

The roots of ayurveda stem from the Vedic culture of ancient India. Handed down through teachers and writings, ayurveda influenced Hippocrates and the Greek system of medicine and is believed to be the only [complete](#) medical system still in existence that has been continually practiced since its inception. It encompasses diet, medicine, astrology, lifestyle, herbology, yoga, meditation, breathing techniques and home design concepts based on sacred geometry that preceded and hugely influenced the Chinese practice of feng shui.

Ayurveda offers a path to optimal health and development for each individual through its profound understanding of natural laws. Living with the cycles of nature maintains health and a disconnection from those natural cycles leads to disease. Going beyond symptoms to the root cause of the disease is where true healing begins. Balancing the body, mind and spirit allows us to understand the language of nature so that we can live harmoniously. Ayurvedic practices restore holistic health, resulting in self-healing, vitality and longevity.

The Three Doshas

According to Ayurveda, everything in the universe, including the human body, is composed of five elements: ether (or space), air, fire, water and earth. These elements come together in three dynamic biological forces known as the doshas: vata, pitta and kapha. Each person is a unique combination of all doshas, although some elements are more predominant. Therefore, each person must be treated individually according to their dosha or unique constitution.

Ayurveda believes that by balancing the various mind-body functions the natural intelligence of the body will respond by rebalancing itself. When we understand our one-of-a-kind, genetic make-up we can make adjustments in our daily practices and [diet](#) which will return us to our natural state of wellness.

Take a fun, informative questionnaire to determine your dosha, or what combination of doshas you are, at www.AyurvedicHealthCenter.com.

Characteristics of the vata dosha

Sanskrit root of vata is “vah,” which means vehicle, to carry or to move. Vata is a combination primarily of ether and air elements. The classic description of vata individuals is that they tend to have dry thinner skin, a light frame, cold hands and feet, rough nails, coarse kinky hair, talkative, quick movements, hyperactive or variable stamina and tend toward darker skin and eyes. Keep in mind that these are only general tendencies and are expressed differently for each person. Vata governs all movement. Functions of vata include movement of thoughts, ingestion, circulation, respiration, peristalsis, elimination.

The gunas, or qualities, of vata are dry, light, cold, rough, subtle, mobile. Imbalanced vata exhibits worry, fear, anxiety, dryness, gas, bloating, constipation, muscle cramps, [joint pain](#), insomnia.

Balanced vata exhibits creativity, enthusiasm, flexibility.

Characteristics of the pitta dosha

Sanskrit root of pitta is “tapa,” which means heat. Pitta is a combination primarily of fire and water elements. The classic description of pitta individuals is that they tend to have higher body temperature, strong appetite, sharp mind, light colored, light sensitive eyes (often hazel, green or blue), frequently thirsty, have oily skin and hair (usually straight and blond), are focused, organized, driven and athletic. Keep in mind that these are only general tendencies and are expressed differently for each person. Pitta governs transformation.

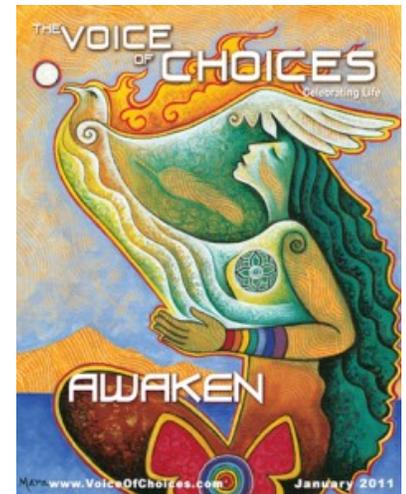
Functions of pitta include metabolism, digestion, body temperature, appetite, thirst, color. The gunas, or qualities, of pitta are oily, sharp, hot, light, spreading, liquid. Imbalanced pitta exhibits anger, criticism, judgment, indigestion, heartburn, inflammation, diarrhea, rashes.

Balanced pitta exhibits understanding, intelligence, courage.

Characteristics of the kapha dosha

Sanskrit roots of kapha are “ka,” which means water, and “pha,” to flourish. Kapha is a combination primarily of earth and water elements. The classic description of kapha individuals notes they tend toward roundness and softness in the body and facial features, with cool, thick, soft skin. There may be a tendency toward fluid retention or excess mucus, slow digestion and movements with thick hair and large soft eyes. Keep in mind that these are only general tendencies and are expressed differently for each person.

Kapha governs structure. Functions of kapha include lubrication, nourishment, support, stability, growth, strength, repair, retention, taste.



The gunas, or qualities, of kapha are heavy, slow, cool, oily, smooth, dense, soft, stable.

Imbalanced kapha exhibits attachment, greed, possessiveness, slow digestion, colds, cough, congestion, mucus, weight gain.

Balanced kapha exhibits love, compassion, forgiveness.

Personalize Your Practice

Ayurvedic yoga is personalized for each individual. Practicing yoga tailored specifically for your constitution brings you back to your natural balance. According to the principles of ayurveda, like increases like. Therefore, you may be drawn to a yoga practice that will increase the gunas, or qualities, that are already predominant in your nature. This is contrary to what is naturally balancing. For example, a pitta person may be drawn to intense, fast power yoga, when what he or she really needs to balance their constitution is a more peaceful, tranquil approach.

Ayurvedic yoga provides the means to modify your yoga practice based on your individual prakruti (innate constitution), vikruti (current constitution) and the three doshas (vata, pitta and kapha). Ayurvedic yoga is an all-encompassing practice which is equally applicable for beginners and seasoned practitioners of yoga.

Complimentary Approaches

The sister sciences of yoga and ayurveda have complemented and enhanced each other since their inceptions thousands of years ago. While practicing one without the other is beneficial, it is similar to eating a nutritious diet without exercising – an incomplete approach to health. The synergistic union of yoga and ayurveda brings a holistic approach. The ancient practices of ayurveda support a foundation of strength, vitality and longevity of body and mind. Yoga, then takes us onward toward the path of self-realization. Yoga provides the key to spiritual development, which is the knowledge of our true nature.

Together, ayurveda and yoga provide the insight for each person to create a way of life in harmony both with the world of nature and our higher self.

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