

Vata/Pitta Dosha Overview with Dietary & Lifestyle Recommendations

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January, 2010

What is Vata?

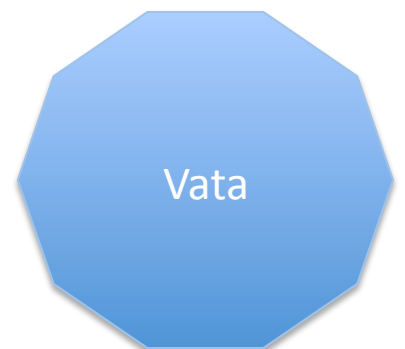
Vata is made up of the two elements space and air

Those with more Vata in their constitutions tend to be thin, with a slender frame and prominent joints, delicate skin that is naturally dry, and dry voluminous hair. They are quick and lively in thought, speech and action, and make friends easily. There is an element of airiness to their step, a quality of lightness in their laughter. Change is usually their second name. They are light sleepers and gravitate towards warm environments. Creativity and enthusiasm are hallmarks of balanced Vata.

If your constitution has more Vata in it, you will exhibit many of the characteristics and qualities of Vata when you are in balance than people who have more Pitta or Kapha in their make-up. And that's natural. But if the qualities become extreme, or more pronounced than usual at a given time, then the Vata in you has in all likelihood become aggravated or imbalanced, and needs to be brought back into balance by following a Vata-balancing diet and lifestyle

Factors that can cause Vata dosha to increase in the physiology include a diet that contains too many dry or raw foods, over-consumption of ice-cold beverages, exposure to cold dry winds, a variable daily routine, too much travel, and mental overexertion.

Signs that you need to balance Vata.



What is Pitta?

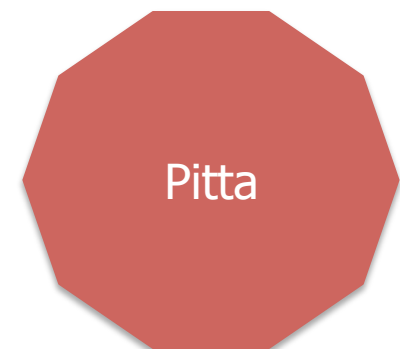
Pitta is made up of the two elements fire and water.

The characteristics of Pitta dosha: hot and a little unctuous, sharp, burning, liquid and acidic, always flowing in an unbounded manner, pungent and sharp. Pitta contains fire, but it also contains water. It is the source of the flame, but not the flame itself. Compare Pitta to gasoline--it is not hot to the touch, but it can be the source of flames.

People with more Pitta in their constitutions tend to be of medium proportions, with a frame that is neither petite nor heavy, warm skin that is very fair or ruddy and may be sensitive, and fine hair that tends towards premature graying or thinning.

They are sharp and determined in thought, speech and action. There is an element of purpose to their step, an intensity to their voice. Ambition is usually their second name. They are moderate sleepers and gravitate towards cooler environments. Self-confidence and an entrepreneurial spirit are hallmarks of balanced Pitta.

Factors that can cause Pitta dosha to increase in the physiology include a diet that contains too many hot or spicy foods, fasting or skipping meals, over-exposure to the sun or to hot temperatures, and emotional trauma.



The Pancha Maha Bhutus: Five element theory



Earth (Prithivi) is the idea of solidity and stability. Wood, metal, plastic, a blade of grass is made up of the idea of solidity. Each simply represents the solid form of matter and the principal that it provides stability. In the body, earth represents physical structure, in the mind it represents mental stability.

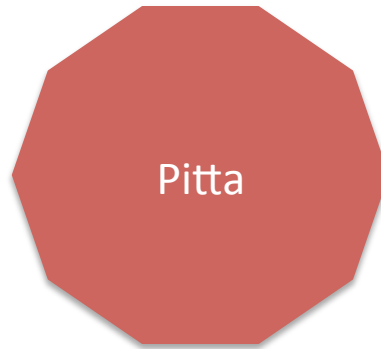
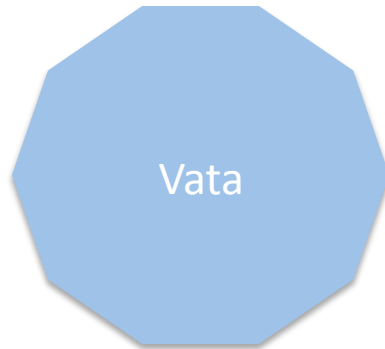
Water (Apas): is the idea of flow and liquidity. Water represents the liquid form of matter. It has no inherent motion of its own, but flows along the path of least resistance. Water not only represents H₂O in the body, but all liquids including metals and oils. On the body, water represents fluid; in the body it represents gentle, loving as compassionate emotions.

Fire (Tejas): is the idea of light, heat and transformation. It is obvious that fire is hot and that it gives off light. Its transformative property is seen in its power to convert wood into ash. Fire represents force of evolution, converting who we are to who we are becoming. Fire creates the heat of fevers and the spiciness of the pungent taste, Fire illuminates truth, and dispels ignorance. In the body, fire governs digestion; in the mind, perception.

Air (Vayu) is the idea of motion, Whatever moves in nature is propelled by air. The wind is the physical representation of air, Its mobile quality is self evident. Moreover, air is the force behind all motion, It is the force that moves a butterfly or hummingbird, an Airplane or a person's arm. Air can even move the earth in the form of an earthquake or mudslide. Air is not just O₂ it governs all movement in the body. In the body, air governs the movement of the nerve impulses, the breath and movement of limbs. In the mind, it moves thought

Ether (Akasha) is the idea of connectedness or space. Ether is the space that exists between things; it connects everything together. Ether is the space that the other elements fill Ether is so subtle that we cannot perceive it with our senses and yet we know it is there. It is the subtlest form of matter that can only be perceived in meditation. Ether is the fabric that all creation is built upon. In the body, ether represents the cavities or empty spaces that exist. In the mind, it represents consciousness.

Attributes of the Tri Doshas



Vata:

Definition: That which move things

Elements: Air & Ether

Governing Acton: Movement

Chief Locations: Large intestine, pelvic cavity, bones, ears, thighs and nerves

Chief Symptoms: Pain

Disturbance examples: Excessive movement, twitching, rapid breathing, rapid heart rate

Qualities: Cold, dry, light, subtle, flowing, mobile, sharp, hard, rough, clear

Pitta:

Definition: That which digests things

Elements: Fire and Water

Governing Acton: Digestion and Metabolism

Chief Locations: Small intestine, lower stomach, blood, sweat glands eyes, skin, liver and spleen

Chief Symptoms: Fever

Disturbance examples: Excessive heat in areas of the body

Qualities: Hot, moist, light, subtle, flowing, mobile, sharp, hard, rough, clear

Kapha:

Definition: That which holds things together

Elements: Water & Earth

Governing Acton: Lubrication, structure and growth, stability, immune strength

Chief Locations: Stomach, chest, throat, head, plasma, liquids of the body and synovial membranes

Chief Symptoms: Swelling

Disturbance examples: Swelling

Qualities: Cold, moist, heavy, gross, dense, static, dull, soft, smooth, cloudy

Vata/Pitta Food Program

Tastes

Best: Sweet.

Small Amounts: Astringent & Sour.

Worst Tastes: Salty, Pungent & Bitter

Grains – These may be eaten as a cooked grain or as unyeasted bread

Best: Basmati Rice, Cooked Oats, Wheat

Moderation: Amaranth, Barley, Millet, Quinoa, Brown & White Rice, Rye

Avoid: Buckwheat, Corn Flower products, Dry Oats

Dairy – It's best to use organic milk products when ever possible. Milk can be taken with a small amount Ginger and Cardamom

Best: Butter, Cottage Cheese, Cream Cheese, Ghee & While Milk

Moderation: Buttermilk, hard non-salted cheeses, Kefir, Sour Cream, Yoghurt

Avoid: Ice Cream, Frozen Yoghurt

Sweeteners - Moderate use of sweeteners are preferred, as bodies with the Vata/Pitta constitutions tend to metabolize sugars into fats.

Best: Fresh Honey (unheated) Maltose, Maple Sugar, Maple Syrup & Rice Syrup

Moderation: Date Sugar, Dextrose, Fructose. Grape Sugar, Jaggery, Molasses, Sucanut

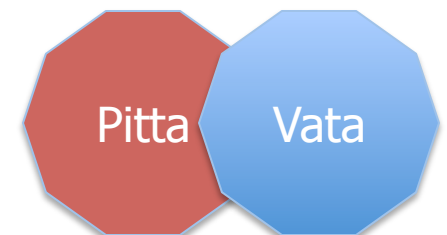
Avoid: White Refined Sugar

Oils - Oils should generally be used abundantly if the skin is dry.

Best: Avocado, Coconut, Ghee, Olive Oil & Sunflower oil

Moderate: Almond, Castor, Corn, Flaxseed, Sesame & Soy

Avoid: Canola, Lard, Margarine, Mustard, Peanut & Safflower



Vata/Pitta Food Program

Fruits — Fruits are best when they are well ripened and sweet. This will bring balance to both doshas. In general, due to their lightness, their intake should be consumed in moderation.

Best: Apricots, Avocados, Bananas, Blackberries, Blueberries, Cantaloupe*, Coconut, Dates, Figs, Jujube (cooked) Grapes, Lemons, Limes, Mango, Nectarines, Oranges, Papaya, Peaches, Pears, Persimmons, Plums, Pomegranates, Prunes, Raisins, Raspberries, & Strawberries

Moderation: Apples, Cherries, Cranberries, Grapefruit, Sweet Pineapple, Tangerines & Watermelon.

Avoid: Dry Fruit, Jujube, Olives, Sour Oranges, Sour Papaya, Sour Pineapple & Sour Plums.

*=Cantaloupe should be eaten alone as a meal, and not be mixed with other foods.

Vegetables — Cooked vegetables are best as they are more nourishing. Raw salads are preferable in the summer, but not during the colder, dryer months.

Best: Artichokes, Avocado, Bean Sprouts, Cauliflower, Cilantro, Corn, Jerusalem Artichokes, Leeks, Okra, Cooked Onion, Potato, Pumpkin, Seaweed, Squash (Acorn, Winter, Crookneck, Zucchini, etc), Sunflower Sprouts & Tomato (vine Ripened).

Moderation: Alfalfa Sprouts, Asparagus, Beets, Bell Pepper, Bitter Melon, Broccoli, Brussels Sprouts, Cabbage, Carrot, Celery, Cucumber, Eggplant, Green Beans, Kale, Lettuce (raw), Mushrooms, Mustard Greens, Parsley, Peas, Spinach, Sweet Potato, Sour Tomatoes & Turnips.

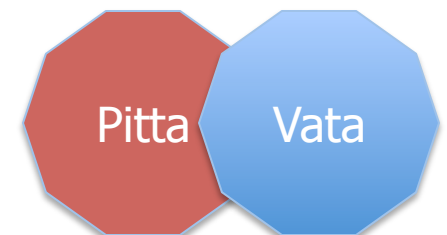
Avoid: Cabbage, Chilies, Hot Peppers, Raw Onion, Tomato Paste and sauce

Nuts and seeds — These should be eaten lightly dry roasted to assist digestion and only very lightly salted

Best: Coconut, Pine nuts, Sunflower Seeds

Moderation: Almonds, Brazil Nuts, Cashews, Lotus Seeds, macadamia, Pecans, Pistachio & Pumpkin Seeds

Avoid: Peanuts



Vata/Pitta Food Program

Meats – Much research has been conducted that shows that plant-based diets are much more beneficial for humans in preventing diseases. If meat is to be consumed, white meat is preferred over dark.

Best: Chicken, Egg Whites, Fresh Water Fish & Turkey

Moderation: Beef, Lamb, Duck, Seafood, Venison

Avoid: Dark Meat of Turkey and Chicken, Shellfish

Legumes - Beans should be taken with spices to aid in digestion. Soaking beans before cooking them also aid in digestion and prevent excess gas

Best: Tofu & Mung Beans,

Moderation: Adzuki Beans, Black Gram, Chickpeas, Kidney Bean, Black Lentils, Navy Beans, Pinto Beans, Soy Beans & Split Peas

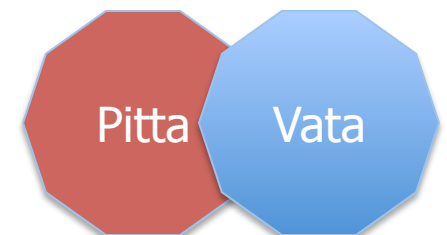
Avoid: Fava Beans & Red and Yellow Lentils

Spices— Spices aid in digestion and absorption of nutrients, as well as add flavor. Be careful that the spices consumed are not of excessive heat, which will greatly raise the fire element (Pitta), as this can lead to excessive heat, hyperacidity and general aggravation

Best: Bay Leaf, Caraway, Cardamom, Catnip, Chamomile, Cilantro, Cumin, Dill, Fennel, Lemon Verbena, Peppermint, Rosemary, Saffron, Spearmint, Turmeric,

Moderation: Anise, Basil, Cinnamon, Coconut, Fenugreek, Marjoram, Nutmeg, Oregano, Poppy Seeds, Sage, Salt, Star Anise & Thyme.

Avoid: Asafetida, Black Pepper, Calamus, Cayenne Pepper, Cloves, Raw Garlic, Horseradish, Marjoram, Mustards (hot), Horseradish & Hyssop



Pitta / Kapha Food Program

Condiments.

Best: None

Moderation: Carob & Mayonnaise

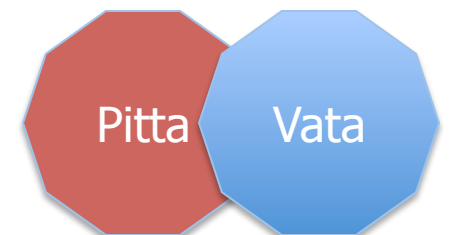
Avoid: Ketchup, Chocolate, Tamari & Vinegar

Beverages - These are best at room temperature or warmer, **Avoid Ice-cold drinks.**

Best: Teas (Chamomile, Mint, Licorice & Spice teas from the spice list) Water, Water with lime, Warm Milk

Moderation: Carrot Juice (diluted), Fruit Juices (diluted) Naturally Flavored Soda and Juice Beverages, Tea (Black or Green)

Avoid: Alcohol, Coffee (both Caffeinated & Decaffeinated) Soft Drinks (both Regular & Diet), Spicy Teas, Tomato Juice & Green Vegetable Juices.



Vata Lifestyle Recommendations

1. Since Vata dosha is characterized as restless, constantly in motion and irregular, the primary lifestyle recommendation for balancing Vata is to maintain a regular routine. That means rising and going to bed at roughly the same times each day, eating three meals at about the same times each day, and following a similar pattern of work and rest from day to day.
2. Do not skip meals. Eat a nourishing lunch at mid-day and lighter meals at breakfast and dinner. Sit down to eat each meal, eat in a peaceful atmosphere with your attention on your food, and sit quietly for a few minutes after your meal. If your digestive fire is irregular, practicing these eating habits will help make it more regular.
3. Daily elimination is very important to prevent ama from accumulating in the body. Triphala Rasayana helps promote regularity as well as toning the digestive system. Since Triphala is gentle, not habit forming and not depleting, it can be taken indefinitely to maintain regularity.
4. To pamper dry skin, to promote circulation and to nourish and tone muscles and nerves, indulge in an ayurvedic massage every morning before you bathe or shower. Use almond or jojoba oil for your massage. If you like, you can add 3-4 drops of a pure essential oil such as lavender or sweet orange to 2 oz. of massage oil. Mix well before use. Two or three times a week, massage your scalp with warm oil, and let the oil stay for an hour or two before you shampoo. After your shower or bath, apply a generous coating of a pure, gentle moisturizer all over your body to keep your skin feeling smooth all day long.



Vata Lifestyle Recommendations

5. Protect yourself from the cold and wind. Stay warm and toasty in cold weather by wearing several layers of clothing. Wear a cap and scarf when you go out to protect your ears and throat. Wear lip balm to prevent lips from getting dry and chafed.
6. Walking is the ideal exercise for balancing Vata. Walk in the early morning, for about 20 minutes every day.
7. You may have to woo sleep if Vata dosha is aggravated. It is important to get to bed early, so that you can get adequate rest each night. A cup of warm milk, with a pinch of nutmeg, can be helpful before bedtime.
8. Set aside about 30 minutes each day for meditation, to help calm the mind and enhance body-mind-spirit coordination.



Namaste & Thank You

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