

# **Ayurveda**

## ***Wisdom of Life for Vibrant Health and Divine Longevity***

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Ayurveda is a holistic system for health and well being on all levels -- physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual. Health in any one of these areas is most worthy. Ayurveda aims to lift our health in all areas so that we may be welcoming, cultivated vessels for higher consciousness in tune with the natural intelligence of the universe. Ayurveda (pronounced eye-yer-vay-duh) means the wisdom of life in Sanskrit. Ayu means living and Veda is science or revealed wisdom. Key in the revealed Ayurveda wisdom is that living a life in balance with nature will bring robust, conscious experience. The source of healing is the underlying field of consciousness that connects us all. Through time-tested Ayurvedic principles and practices we can do our part to make ourselves ready and receptive to healing from the great underlying field sometimes called the Absolute transcendent reality or Purusha.



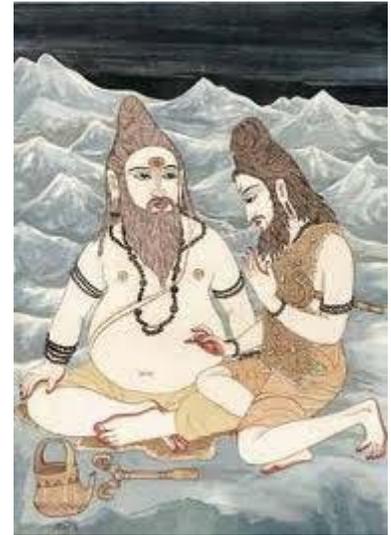
Like waves on an ocean, our individual consciousness is part of a vast sea of energy and intelligence. When our awareness of the ocean beneath us is cut off, each wave sees itself as separate, unique, individual, and isolated; but beneath each wave is the same ocean.

Because of our limited experience of consciousness we tend to assume we are a wave and not the ocean. We have a body, thoughts, and emotions but we are not these things of course. We are part of a universal whole that will nurture our cells, our thoughts, our energy with great sophisticated organization and intelligence if we make contact with the underlying field. Ayurveda teaches us these ways.

Perhaps you have heard about the three doshas in Ayurveda – Vata, Pitta, and Kapha and how we may select and eat foods to do the best for our doshas. Doshas are sometimes also called bioenergies or simply Ayurveda “types”. Well, eating for balancing our doshas is just one part of Ayurveda. Also included in this holistic approach is meditation, yoga, massage, herbal supplementation, energy points, aromas, purification and tonifying techniques, and other lifestyle approaches all which serve to connect us with divine intelligence, energy, and healing.

## The Short History of Ayurveda and Ayurveda Today

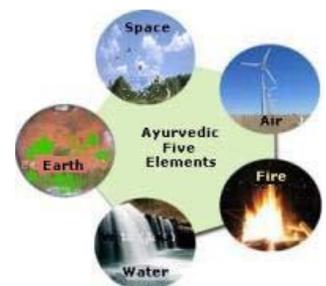
Ayurveda is the oldest system of healing in the world and has informed Chinese, Tibetan, Greek and other systems of medicine. The roots of Ayurveda began over 5000 years ago when, according to tradition, the rishis, or great seers, of India gathered to live in the foothills of the Himalayan Mountains with the aim to learn how to eradicate illness and disease that was plaguing the world. They observed the fundamentals of life, meditated together and organized the knowledge they received into the codified system of Ayurveda. The tradition was passed down orally until written down during the Vedic period in India (1500 BC). The primary Ayurveda text is known as the Charaka Samhita and is regarded as sacred. The originating belief was that to relieve someone of disease enables a person to follow a spiritual path. Enlightenment can be attained by those who enjoy good physical, emotional, and mental health. From the base of good health one can soar. Although Ayurveda was suppressed in India and nearly all Ayurveda training universities were dismantled during many years of occupation, Ayurveda is now experiencing resurgence.



Today as we understand the inadequacies of our medical system to fully embrace our vital health because of that system's orientation to treating disease, the rising costs of healthcare, and simply the separation of healthcare from spirit, Ayurveda offers promise. Holism, contact with nature, self care and personal change are among Ayurveda's central concerns. Rarely do we treat the symptoms in Ayurveda; rather, we treat the root cause. The root cause is being out of balance with nature and a mistake in our intellect to understand our divine nature. Ayurveda aims to prevent disease before it occurs through a customized assessment and approaches for identified imbalances. And further, Ayurveda promotes robust health and relationship with the divine.

### Elements and Doshas

According to the rishis, from pure consciousness arose the sound of Om and in turn the five great elements-- earth, water, fire, air, and space-- that make up the universe took birth and from those elements the three doshas --Vata, Pitta, and Kapha -- emerged. Ayurveda explains that humans are made up of these five elements and the Soul. At one time it was thought that these five elements were actually in each component of the universe, now it is understood that the character and



qualities of each of these five elements is what is present in everything in an infinite variety of proportions. Earth is in the substance of our bodies including our bones and the minerals that we need to survive. Water composes over two-thirds of our body and supports movement and growth in our cells. Fire is the spark of our digestive fire that enables us to break down food and transform it to energy. Air is inhaled and carries blood throughout our system nourishing all aspects of our body. Space is the hollow cavities of our body and is the vessel for our spiritual receptivity. The elements combine in a bio-energetic form to create the doshas.

Vata is created of air and space

Pitta is created of fire and some water

Kapha is created of earth and water

Every conscious and unconscious function of our body, mind, emotions, and spirit are dependent upon the state of our doshas—whether balanced or unbalanced. The three doshas are responsible for all of the physiological and psychological processes in the body and mind. Vata, Pitta, and Kapha doshas have particular functions in the body but they do not work in isolation. Full health and wellbeing is only possible when the doshas work harmoniously together and they can only best do this when each one is in balance with nature and operating at its best. It is then that the positive qualities of the dosha are evident and we are healthy and poised for spiritual journey.

### The Three Doshas

	<b>VATA</b>	<b>PITTA</b>	<b>KAPHA</b>
Function:	Movement, Transportation, Communication	Digestion, Metabolism, and transformation	Strength, Structure, Immunity, Lubrication
Keyword:	Changeable	Intense	Relaxed
Composed of:	Air & Space	Fire & some Water	Water & Earth
Governs:	Colon; Nervous System; Inside Bones	Small Intestines, Stomach, Liver, Skin	Chest, Low Back
Qualities:	Light, Dry, Rough, Dark, Changeable, Movable, subtle	Hot, Sharp, Pungent, Intense, Flowing (but grounded)	Unctuous (oily), Cold, Heavy, Sticky, Slimy, Moist, Stable, Strong, Soft

We all have all the elements and doshas within us but no two of us are alike. We have our doshic original constitution from birth—that never changes. This is called our Prakruti and our current doshic state of balance, or imbalance, is called our Vikruti. If our constitution dosha is

Pitta then we might tend to have more Pitta balance issues although one cannot count on this. We really need to examine our current state of balance—our Vikruti. We might have a constitution of any one of the doshas—Vata, Pitta, or Kapha or often a mix of two such as Pitta-Kapha or Vata-Pitta. Some people are tri-doshic but this is rare. The physical characteristics of each dosha type give us our best clue for our Prakruti, our birth constitution. The other characteristics, those that change with our experience of life’s stressors and our lifestyle habits, help to point out our Vikruti.

Our body type and a few other physical characteristics like eye and hair color are our best indicators of Prakruti. While this may be useful information it is really our current imbalance—our Vikruti that is of much greater interest to us in our quest to rebalance ourselves. You may wish to take an Ayurveda Dosha self-assessment. Visit the Resources tab at <http://www.RadiantLifeAyurveda.com>. You can use the chart there to get a general idea of your constitution and current imbalance. If you print out the chart you can put check marks by items that tend to describe you. A full assessment by an Ayurveda Doctor or Practitioner will be a more accurate than this self report assessment. This will, however, give you a general feel for your doshas. An Ayurveda professional would use objective measures such as pulse diagnosis, tongue analysis, in addition to an assessment interview to ascertain your constitution and current imbalances within your doshas as well as your seven layers of tissues and doshic energy reserves. A self assessment though is a good start.

### **Dosha Time and Seasons**

During the seasons as noted the indicated dosha is more easily pressured out of balance. For instance our Vata is more likely to become out of balance in the fall and early winter as the weather has vata qualities at these times. Likewise—our time each day relates to the designated dosha that is most active in general and so might be more likely to be out of balance or we can work with this knowledge and for instance eat our biggest meal of the day at midday—the Pitta time when Pitta digestive functions are the strongest and we can retire before 10pm to be in Kapha time for the best sleep and arise by 6am to start the day with Vata energy. Also there are doshic times of life. Kapha is the dosha of our youth, Pitta of middle age and as we live longer, we are in the life season of vata.

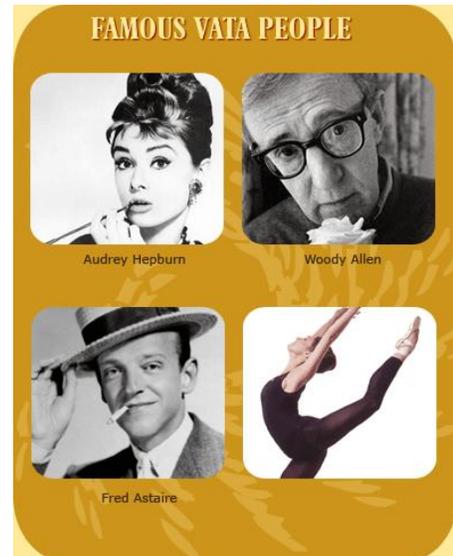
	<b>VATA</b>	<b>PITTA</b>	<b>KAPHA</b>
Season	fall, early winter	summer	Winter, early spring
Clock Time	2-6am or pm	10-2am or pm	6-10am or pm
Life time	About 50-55 and beyond	Middle Age 20-50	Youth- about 20-25

## Vata

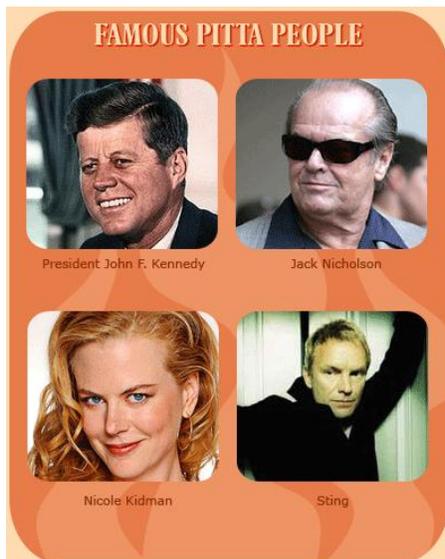
If we are Vata-type we tend toward thinness. When Vata is balanced, we are enthusiastic, creative, and spirited. We are light in physical substance and as such can tire easily with little reserve from which to draw. Vatas need to get sufficient rest and not overdo it. We do best to eat warm, cooked foods and to stay warm. Because Vatas can be “flighty” a regular lifestyle routine will help us to stay balanced.

The Vata dosha controls the nervous system and functions of movement in the body. Vatas are most bothered by issues of anxiety and fears and physical issues from too much dryness in the system like constipation, digestive issues, and menstrual cramps.

You don't have to have a Vata constitution (Prakruti) for your vata to become out of balance. Vata is responsible for over half of the imbalances and tends to be the dosha to go out of balance first and lead other doshas out of balance. When vata is in balance, the other doshas tend to more easily stay in balance.



## Pitta



If we are more Pitta type we are generally of medium size and have good muscle tone. We have a good digestion and thus generally good physical energy and stamina. We also tend to be smart in an analytical way and are determined and goal oriented in our work.

Pittas have more digestive fire, but also more fire in our personalities. We generally have a warm body temperature. We can react to heat and light such as too much sun, light in our eyes or too much fire in our diet. We are goal oriented and often successful but can be controlling. Toxins, such as alcohol, cigarettes or drugs, or toxic emotions such as anger, jealousy, and intolerance create substantial imbalances for Pittas.

## Kapha

If we are mostly Kapha-natured, we tend to have strong, substantial frames and good strength and stamina. This offers Kaphas a strong immunity and a good-naturedness as we have the energy we need. When balanced, Kaphas are calm, loving, and loyal.

## FAMOUS KAPHA PEOPLE



Oprah Winfrey



Rev. Martin Luther King



Marlon Brando



Arnold Schwarzenegger

The Kapha dosha moves more leisurely, eats slowly and with slow digestion which can result in overweight issues. They are affectionate and sweet but, when out of balance, are often lethargic and could lean toward depression.

Kapha dosha controls the moisture in our body, so a Kapha imbalance may result in mucus issues such as colds and allergies especially in the cold and wet season of late winter and early spring.

Kapha types need to keep themselves moving or “couch potato” syndrome could set in. They may be slow to change and need to encourage themselves not to hold on to the past. They also need to be careful to not overeat. Kapha’s are sweet, loving, and dependable and can be of great support to the other two doshas,

### Moving forward

Dosha means “that which has a fault”. Now that does not mean we need to be critical of our dosha type. In this case, “fault” simply means not in the perfection of pure consciousness---and that would cover everyone I know! Pure Consciousness is the only perfection. Through Ayurveda we can identify our current doshic imbalance (remember our constitution gives us a clue but is not the determiner in identifying our current imbalance) and then tend to our doshic balance with awareness first and then with balancing strategies. Since no two people have the same combination of doshas in identical proportions, nor do they have the same external pressures, the resolution of balance is a customized approach.

In this article primarily you have been introduced to the basic terminology in Ayurveda and some informal ways to assess your imbalance. As you further explore Ayurveda you could learn about specific strategies used for rebalancing such as meditation, yoga, diet, herbs, and aromas. Our Ayurvedic mission is to identify imbalances, consider options for rebalancing and then restore balance so that we have radiant health in all forms. This is not a one-time thing but rather an ongoing process of finding homeostasis in a self environment that is constantly changing by stressors in our life, what we eat, and our thinking for instance. Once we understand the principles guiding our rebalancing process, we can make small adjustments here and there and they can lead to very helpful outcomes. Because the process is customized to an individual’s particular doshic makeup and current imbalance, small changes have a big impact. Through time-tested practices of Ayurveda we can lift our physical, emotional, mental,

and spiritual health so that we may be receptive to healing and higher consciousness in tune with nature and the intelligence of the universe. Ayurveda is a vast science with knowledge that can nourish you for a lifetime of learning. May this basic introduction serve you as you find many ways to learn more about Ayurveda and how it can benefit you in meaningful ways.

Namaste, Rhonda



Rhonda Egidio, PhD is an Ayurveda Health Educator and Consultant. She completed her certified training with Paul Dugliss, MD, Director of New World Ayurveda, an Ayurvedic Physician and renowned author who is shaping modern Ayurveda from the ancient principles. Rhonda is also a Professor of Education at Michigan State University specializing in Adult Learning and International Education. Her central belief is that all healing comes from the underlying field of consciousness and our connection with The Divine. We can prepare ourselves with readiness  
*I hope that you found this article helpful for your needs and interests.*

*If you would like to consider an individual appointment for assessment and customized strategies you may contact me at: [Rhonda@RadiantLifeAyurveda.com](mailto:Rhonda@RadiantLifeAyurveda.com) or 269-345-2991. I invite you to visit my web site <http://www.RadiantLifeAyurveda.com> for more information on classes and services.*