

ELEMENTS of AYURVEDA



AYURVEDA 101

The Three Doshas

Vata, pitta, and kapha—collectively known as the doshas—are one of the most foundational concepts in the tradition of Ayurveda. But what are they, exactly?

Each dosha embodies a particular combination of elements and qualities to create a functional entity—an energetic force of nature. The doshas, or some combination of them, can be identified in various seasons, climates, landscapes, activities, plants, and animals. In the context of our bodies, all three doshas are necessary to facilitate important physiological functions. But if they accumulate beyond healthy limits (those determined by one's constitution), the doshas can also wreak havoc on our health.

DOSHA	VATA	PITTA	KAPHA
Primary Elements	Air + Ether	Fire + Water	Water + Earth
Qualities	Dry Light Cold Rough Subtle Mobile Clear	Hot Sharp Light Liquid Spreading Oily	Heavy Slow Cool Oily Smooth Dense Soft Stable Gross Cloudy (Sticky)

All three doshas are present in everyone, but the ratio between them varies a great deal from one person to the next. Here is an overview of the essential nature of each dosha.

VATA

Vata is the energy of air and ether, movement and impulse, creativity and connection. This dosha governs breathing, the pulsation of the heart, muscle movement in general, nerve impulses, sensory perception, communication, and our capacity to experience flexibility, joy, and expansive consciousness.

In excess, vata can cause fear, anxiety, physical and emotional constriction, ungroundedness, poor circulation, constipation, dry skin, cracking joints, emaciation, insomnia, twitches, tremors, and other abnormal movements.

PITTA

Pitta is the energy of fire and water, digestion and transformation. This dosha governs appetite, digestion, absorption, assimilation, intelligence, charisma, courage, and ambition.

In excess, pitta can cause anger, jealousy, inflammation, excessive heat, heartburn, loose stools, migraines, rashes, bruising, bleeding disorders, sharp hunger, an overactive metabolism, and difficulty sleeping.

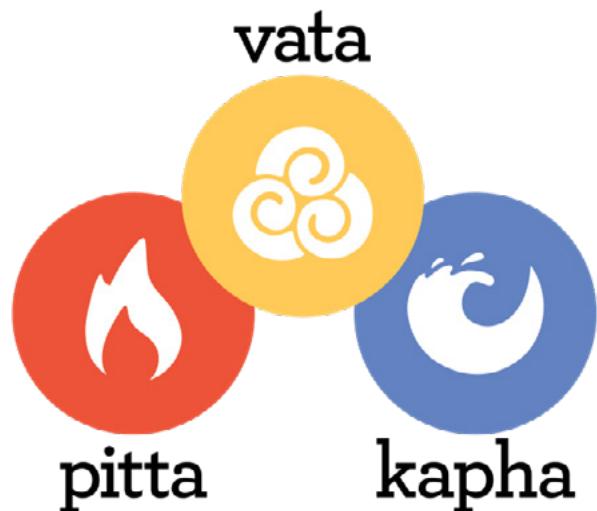
KAPHA

Kapha is the energy of water and earth, structure and cohesiveness, grounding and stability. This dosha governs nourishment, growth, lubrication, regeneration, fluid balance, fat regulation, strength, stamina, memory, and our ability to feel compassion and contentment.

In excess, kapha can cause attachment, greed, resistance to change, lack of motivation, heaviness in the mind and body, excessive sleep, depression, a sluggish metabolism, congestion, water retention, hardening of the arteries, and the formation of masses and tumors.

BEFRIENDING THE DOSHAS IN YOUR LIFE

It is important to remember that we all have innate strengths and gifts, as well as persistent challenge areas. The doshas are a wonderful tool for understanding both, and also for recognizing and correcting any imbalances at work in our systems. Invariably, the doshas shed light on our personal nuances, guide us in improving self-awareness, and can help us to understand how to offer support—precisely where and when it matters most.



The information on this handout is for educational purposes only and is not a substitute for medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. For more information pertaining to your personal needs, please see a qualified health practitioner.