

An Ayurvedic Guide to Healthy Elimination



Ok. Let's be completely honest for a moment. Who among us has not suffered from constipation, diarrhea, or some other malady affecting the bowels? For many of us, these disturbances are somewhat routine occurrences. And yet, as a culture, we're morbidly afraid to talk about them. Fortunately, *Ayurveda* has a lot to say about why these types of imbalances are so common, and what we can do to correct them. So, perhaps it's time to cast aside any resistance, stigma, or embarrassment in order to offer our bodies some real support in the area of elimination. This resource explores Ayurveda's perspective on this topic in some depth. If you were hoping to find a few quick recommendations for an acute case of [constipation](#) or [diarrhea](#), click on the appropriate link for some suggestions. But if your symptoms recur frequently, consider returning here soon so that you can begin to explore and address the root cause of your imbalances. The truth is that, for all of us, our bowel habits and stools can teach us a great deal about what our bodies need in order to return to balance.

Ayurveda views elimination as an important indicator of overall health because healthy elimination generally points to strong agni (digestive fire), which is one of the cornerstones of well-being and longevity. Perhaps even more significantly, Ayurveda recognizes that the digestive tract is the very first place that imbalances arise in the body. This being the case, our stools tend to offer very early warning signs that something is amiss physiologically, even if the imbalance is fairly minor at first. If an emerging imbalance is not properly addressed, it will either take root in the digestive tract (as a more serious condition), or spread to other tissues and create disturbances there. If, on the other hand, we can learn to understand and respond to the early indications of discord, our bodies have a remarkable ability to self-correct and heal.



It is amazing what we can learn about ourselves just by paying attention to our bowel habits and our stools. But, given the taboo nature of this topic, the easily observable indications of health and imbalance that can be seen in our daily cycles of elimination are often overlooked. We hope that this exploration will be both enlightening and inspiring for you, and that it will offer you a number of practical tools to support healthy elimination in your own life.

What Defines Healthy Elimination?

According to Ayurveda, healthy elimination occurs one to two times daily.¹ In a perfect world, the first bowel movement of the day occurs within a few minutes of waking, ideally before sunrise. If there is a second bowel movement later in the day, it often occurs after a meal, in the afternoon or evening. Balanced stools themselves:¹

- are well formed, about the consistency of a ripe banana.
- maintain their shape after being eliminated.
- are a light brownish-yellow color.
- float (if eliminated into a toilet bowl containing water).
- are slightly oily.
- are not sticky; the anal orifice is easily cleaned and the stool does not stick to the toilet.
- have only a mild odor.

Does your reality fall a little short of the ideal? Most do. It's not surprising, really. Leading fast-paced, stressful lives, ingesting processed foods, multitasking, and eating on the run can all take a significant toll on digestive health and excretory function. But that's why exploring this topic is so valuable—so that we can foster balance in our bowel habits, our stools, and throughout our bodies.

Through the Lens of Ayurveda: The Channel of Elimination

In Ayurveda, the physiological systems in the body (like the reproductive system or the urinary system) are called channels—each with important overall functions. Many of us are accustomed to thinking about the digestive tract as a continuous whole, with each of its component parts—the mouth, the esophagus, the stomach, the small intestine, the colon, etc.—contributing to the complex process of refining ingested food until what's left is finally eliminated as waste. But consider this: over 5,000 years ago, Ayurveda distinguished the channel of food (which starts at the mouth and ends with the small intestine), from the channel of solid waste (which begins at the colon and continues to the anus). It's not that the ancient rishis were confused about the continuity of the human digestive tract. They simply recognized important distinctions in the functions (and the therapeutic treatment) of these two channels. While the two are certainly related and can impact one another, the first is more about taking food and nutrition into the body; the second is primarily about eliminating waste.

Ayurveda emphasizes the importance of proper movement and flow throughout all channels of the body, and the channel of elimination is no different. Regular movement of the bowels is an essential part of keeping the digestive channels flowing properly. But healthy elimination also carries out the critical functions of absorbing water and glucose, forming stools, eliminating solid waste, and clearing heavy metals and toxins from the body.¹



Common Imbalances in the Channel of Elimination

While there are certainly many things we can do to generally foster healthy elimination (see general strategies below), identifying which *dosha(s)* are involved in a specific imbalance allows us to pursue deeper, and more focused therapeutic strategies. The following table is meant to facilitate this process.

Healthy Versus Imbalanced Stools¹

	Balanced	Vata	Pitta	Kapha
Quantity	moderate	scanty	moderate	copious
Qualities	slightly oily, soft	dry, hard	oily, liquid, hot	oily, slimy, sticky, slow
Consistency	similar to a ripe banana in shape and consistency	bullet-like, similar to deer or rabbit droppings	loose, semi-solid, frequently fall apart in the water	well-formed (but often sticky, or with mucus)
Buoyancy	floats (because there is no ama)	sinks	can float or sink	sinks (may float with mucus)
Color	light brownish-yellow	dark brown	yellow-green or red	pale yellow
Odor	mild, non-offensive	slightly astringent, mild	sour, pungent, acidic, very strong	mild, may smell sweet
Regularity	1–2 times per day, once upon waking	irregular, tends toward constipation	frequent (commonly at least 2–3 times per day, tends toward diarrhea)	1–2 times per day, may not feel complete, and may occasionally skip a day
Subjective Experience	easy and natural to pass	difficult to pass, can cause straining and can even be painful	passes quickly; can feel hot, urgent	often feels sluggish, slow, or incomplete, sticky; difficult to clean



Sometimes it is very easy to identify personal tendencies at a glance—in which case, you'll find more specific support for returning to balance here:

Vata-Type Elimination

Pitta-Type Elimination

Kapha-Type Elimination

If you remain uncertain after reviewing the table, you're welcome to peruse all three dosha-specific elimination guides to gain a deeper understanding of each type of imbalance. Or, a qualified Ayurvedic practitioner can offer a more personalized assessment of your needs.

More Complex Imbalances

It is also important to keep in mind that longstanding imbalances in the channel of elimination often involve more than one dosha, and can easily lead to more complex disorders such as irritable bowel syndrome and inflammatory bowel disease. These conditions are more serious and should be treated only by qualified practitioners—in partnership with your primary healthcare provider. That said, understanding the Ayurvedic perspective on these types of disorders can provide valuable insights.

Irritable Bowel Syndrome

Ayurveda views irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) as an imbalance involving both *vata* and *pitta*. *Vata* (which is mobile) pushes the hot, sharp, and liquid qualities of *pitta*, from their seat in the small intestine, into the colon—where *pitta* disrupts the function of elimination.² IBS can cause alternating diarrhea and constipation, or result in a general tendency toward one or the other.² If you suffer from IBS, a trained Ayurvedic practitioner can recommend a protocol appropriate for your particular manifestation of the disease, but common treatment strategies include the use of individualized herbal formulas, supportive foods such as yogurt or soaked flax seeds, and *bastis* (Ayurvedic enemas) to lubricate and soothe the colon.²

Inflammatory Bowel Diseases

Vata and *pitta* are also both involved in inflammatory bowel diseases such as ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease. The Ayurvedic perspective on inflammatory bowel disease is that it is a result of *vata*'s mobile quality displacing *pitta* into areas of the digestive system that are not adequately protected against *pitta*'s hot, sharp nature. The specific diagnosis depends on where *pitta* lodges in the digestive tract and how it disturbs the local tissues. In the case of ulcerative colitis, *pitta* inflames the colon, leading to ulceration of the bowel wall and the disruption of normal bowel function.² In Crohn's disease, while *vata* remains the instigator, and *pitta*'s hot, sharp qualities are still the inflammatory agents, the inflammation and ulceration can occur anywhere in the GI tract.

Specific treatment strategies for inflammatory bowel disease will depend on the individual, but usually focus primarily on soothing *pitta*, while simultaneously stabilizing and correcting the movement of *vata*.² Common remedies include customized herbal formulas, soothing foods such as stewed apples and apple juice, the internal use of cooling aloe vera gel, and *bastis* (Ayurvedic enemas), which use oil or herbal tea to pacify both *vata* and *pitta* in the colon.²





General Strategies to Support Healthy Elimination

Whatever your specific imbalances, the following strategies tend to support healthy elimination on a very general level, and are typically appropriate for anyone.

Hydrate

Taking in an appropriate quantity and quality of fluids is a great place to start because being properly hydrated is critical to both digestion and elimination. How much fluid is appropriate can vary widely—depending on one’s age, constitution, imbalances, climate, and activity level. But chances are that if you tend to have dark, pungent, or scanty urine, infrequent urination, a tendency toward constipation, or dry skin, you may be under-hydrated.

If you think you need more fluids, try drinking a cup or two of warm water upon waking, and a large glass (about two cups) of warm or room temperature water 20–30 minutes before your meals. These tactics not only help to cleanse and hydrate the tissues, they can also awaken the digestive capacity and dramatically improve digestion.³ Ayurveda generally recommends avoiding iced beverages (including iced water) and does not recommend more than a few sips of water (or other beverages) with meals; these fluids, when taken with food, can dilute or inhibit the digestive process. And finally, focus on receiving adequate amounts of cleansing, hydrating fluids—we’re talking primarily water and herbal teas (though small amounts of fruit and vegetable juice can also be supportive for some). In general, it is best to avoid drinks that are loaded with sugar or caffeine, like soda or coffee.



Implement A Daily Routine

Physiologically, our bodies are highly adapted to having a sense of routine. Ayurveda tends to be elegantly intuitive and this recommendation is a perfect illustration; it just makes sense that regularity in our schedules would foster regularity in our bowels. If you don't have much of routine, consider starting with some simple focal points throughout your day: work toward getting up and going to sleep at about the same time, and try carving out a consistent time to eat breakfast, lunch, and dinner each day. These simple steps give our nervous systems a sense of normalcy, quiet the stress response, and support our bodies in carrying out routine physiological functions.

If your elimination is not especially regular, you might also consider setting aside a few minutes for a bowel movement each morning, even if there is no urge. Simply sit quietly on the toilet, breathe into your belly, and relax. Allowing your body the time and space to eliminate in this way each morning (even if nothing happens) can invite a more regular habit of doing so over time.

Exercise is also an important component of a routine—one that can be critically important to regular bowel habits. When we are underactive, the metabolic system slows and the bowels can become especially sluggish. Exercising 3-4 days per week fires up the metabolism and helps to support regular elimination. Even something as simple as a 20 minute brisk walk can make a big difference. Ayurveda recommends different types and intensities of exercise for different individuals. For more specific recommendations, please see our resources on [vata](#), [pitta](#), and [kapha](#)-type elimination.

If you are generally intrigued by the idea of developing a daily routine that will foster balance and overall health, please explore our resource on creating an [Ayurvedic daily routine](#).



Eat Well

As one might expect, diet has a profound effect on elimination. A healthy diet emphasizes nutritious, seasonal, whole foods and limits processed foods and refined sugars. But in Ayurveda, it matters not only what we eat, but also when we eat, how much we eat—even how we eat. For instance, it's incredibly important to offer our full attention to the act of being nourished. Fostering a degree of presence with our food can dramatically improve our digestive capacity. In addition, consider adopting the following Ayurvedic practices to further strengthen digestion and elimination.

Follow Your Hunger

Ayurveda views appetite as an important precursor to nourishment. Hunger is a natural indication that the body is ready to eat and that the digestive fire is strong enough to digest a meal, so it is best to eat only when we are hungry.² But for many of us, distinguishing real hunger from a more emotional desire to eat can be tricky. We have to ask ourselves if we are emotionally objective. And, if we have eaten a substantial meal within the last 3–4 hours, it's quite possible that the “hunger” is more of an emotional craving. Real hunger comes with a natural feeling of lightness and clarity, a pleasant anticipation of eating, and is satisfied by food.⁴

Eat Appropriate Quantities of Food

In the West, we are generally accustomed to eating very large meals. Ayurveda recommends much smaller meals: just the amount of food that we could hold in our two cupped hands.² Another helpful guideline is to think about filling the stomach 1/3 with food, and 1/3 with water, leaving the final 1/3 empty for optimal digestion.² Any water taken with a meal should be room temperature or warm, not iced.² And ideally, we would not ever eat to full satiation.

Allow Adequate Time Between Meals

The metabolic function works best when it is allowed to completely digest one meal before it starts in on another. It is usually a good idea to allow at least 3–4 hours between meals. While this timeframe can vary based on the meal itself and the individual, the return of natural hunger is usually a good indicator that the digestive system is ready for action.

Undertake a Dietary Cleanse or Detox Program

Stoking the digestive fire with a cleanse can be an incredibly powerful way to support proper elimination and improved overall health. The basic premise of a cleanse is that our bodies are inherently intelligent; when we provide a break from the barrage of potentially harmful inputs, our bodies immediately allocate the extra energy to cleaning house—repairing and rejuvenating the system for optimal performance. Cleanses can help to clear toxins, balance the doshas, kindle a stronger digestive fire, and balance the cycles of elimination. A cleanse can be as simple as a half or full day fast, a short juice cleanse, or a longer monodiet of something like kitchari. Ayurveda offers a number of effective cleansing techniques. If you are intrigued and would like some guidance choosing the one that is right for you, please visit our [Introduction to Ayurvedic Cleansing](#).



Meditate to Reduce Stress

Stress can have a very detrimental impact on our overall health, and is particularly disruptive to digestion and elimination. Ayurveda recognizes the power of a number of subtle therapies for stress reduction. Meditation is a very effective technique; it helps to minimize our experience of stress and also encourages the development of more constructive responses to stressful situations. Even 10–15 minutes of daily meditation can have a profound impact on your state of mind and your digestive health. If you do not already have a meditation practice, [Empty Bowl Meditation](#), as taught by Dr. Vasant Lad, is a simple but powerful practice appropriate for most anyone.

Devote a Few Minutes Each Day to Pranayama

Pranayama is the practice of working with the breath to affect both gross and subtle aspects of the mind-body organism. Like meditation, pranayama supports balance in the nervous system and begins to unwind the cycle of chronic stress that can trigger imbalances in the digestive tract. Pranayama also helps to access and reset longstanding patterns in the energetic body. Further, by breathing deeply into the abdomen, we naturally unwind tension patterns that can inhibit digestion and elimination. Specific pranayamas for each dosha are recommended in our resources on [vata](#)-, [pitta](#)-, and [kapha](#)-type elimination.

Practice Yoga

Yoga is another therapy that can help to reduce stress, strengthen digestion, and keep the channel of elimination relaxed and flowing properly. Specific practices for each dosha are recommended in our resources on [vata](#)-, [pitta](#)-, and [kapha](#)-type elimination.

Take Triphala

Triphala, a traditional Ayurvedic formula comprised of three fruits, is balancing for vata, pitta, and kapha. Triphala has a particular affinity for the colon and is therefore very supportive of healthy elimination. It is revered for its unique ability to gently cleanse and detoxify the digestive tract, while replenishing, nourishing, and rejuvenating the tissues.

About half an hour before bed, take two [Triphala tablets](#) with a glass of warm water. If you prefer a powder, steep 1/2–1 teaspoon [Triphala powder](#) in a cup of freshly boiled water for 10 minutes. Cool and drink. Or, you might try [Triphala liquid extract](#) before bed instead.



Consider the Condition of Agni

When it comes to imbalances in the channel of elimination, identifying the root cause usually requires looking at and tending to the broader condition of the agni (digestive fire). If you are interested in understanding more about agni, please consider exploring these complementary resources:

- [The Importance of Healthy Digestion](#)

Symptoms in the channels of elimination are often the result of broader imbalances with agni (the metabolic fire). As an introduction to the critically important Ayurvedic concept of agni, this resource explores agni's role in maintaining health and vitality throughout the body, and offers practical tools for kindling the sacred fire within.

- [The Importance of Agni](#)

This article explores the specific functions of agni, as well as the signs and symptoms of both healthy and impaired agni.

- [The Four Varieties of Agni](#)

This resource compares balanced agni to the different types of imbalances that can disrupt it, and offers appropriate therapies for each type of imbalance.

- [Ama: the Antithesis of Agni](#)

This piece introduces the toxic, undigested material called *ama*, whose qualities directly oppose those of agni. Ama in the body can either be the cause or the result of impaired agni—and in either case, threatens our health.

Your Unique Path to Healing

Ayurveda honors the body's innate intelligence. In many cases, when we return the body to balance, it heals itself naturally, and our symptoms simply cease to exist. It's also important to understand that, in Ayurveda, context is everything. Ayurveda teaches us to look beyond our symptoms and to identify the primary imbalance(s) behind them. Correcting the underlying cause is a fundamental part of the Ayurvedic healing process. This is why each individual's situation is so important. A seasoned Ayurvedic practitioner might give two people with Crohn's disease very different recommendations. Likewise, two people with chronic constipation might be directed to follow individually nuanced treatment strategies. It all depends on who they are as individuals—their age, their constitution, their imbalances, their diet, their lifestyle, their strengths, and their weaknesses. In other words, in Ayurveda, it matters how you arrived at this particular moment in time, and that context can help to reveal where it is that you have the greatest capacity to heal—your unique entry point for profound change.

A qualified Ayurvedic practitioner can support you in getting to the bottom of—and resolving—your particular concerns. But with or without professional guidance, Ayurveda offers a number of elegant treatment strategies for every ailment. Finding the specific combination of tools that will most powerfully support you can take a bit of time and effort. But, it's a rewarding journey, and we sincerely hope that we can support you along the way.



References

¹ Lad, Vasant. *Textbook of Ayurveda, Volume II: A Complete Guide to Clinical Assessment*. Albuquerque: The Ayurvedic Press, 2006. Print. 105-107, 278, 316-318.

² Lad, Vasant. *The Complete Book of Ayurvedic Home Remedies*. New York: Three Rivers Press, 1998. Print. 100, 153-155, 212-213.

³ Douillard, John. *Fan Your Digestive Fire: Just Add Water*. LifeSpa, 18 Apr. 2014. Web. 8 May 2014.

⁴ Lad, Vasant. *Textbook of Ayurveda Vol III: General Principles of Management and Treatment*. Albuquerque: The Ayurvedic Press, 2012. Print. 142.



Vata-Type Elimination



Excess vata in the channel of elimination tends to cause scanty, dry, hard stools that can be difficult or painful to pass. Vata can also cause gas, bloating, gurgling intestines, colicky pain, irregularity, and [constipation](#).¹ These symptoms are usually accompanied by an irregular appetite and variable digestion; some people also tend to alternate between constipation and diarrhea. Related ailments caused by excess vata include low back pain, sciatica, non-bleeding hemorrhoids, prolapsed rectum, and fissures or fistula.^{1, 2}

Constipation During a Cleanse

It is very common for mild constipation to crop up during a cleanse, especially if it involves eating only kitchari, which is a particularly astringent food. If you would be interested in some gentle measures that you can take to support proper elimination during a cleanse, without drastically altering the structure of your cleanse, [click here](#). That said, if you are working with a practitioner, it is always preferable to seek personalized support.



Balancing Vata

In general, when vata is elevated, we need to balance vata's cold, dry qualities with warmth, oil, and lots of fluid in order to return to balance. It is therefore important to slow down, keep warm, and stay hydrated. In addition, the following diet, lifestyle, and herbal recommendations will help to pacify vata so that the channels of elimination can return to balance.

Diet

- Focus on eating a [vata-pacifying diet](#), and on eating three solid meals each day (ideally at about the same time each day).
- Increase the amount of quality oils in your diet (especially [ghee](#), [sesame oil](#), and olive oil).
- Drink at least 60-80 ounces of fluid each day. Water and herbal teas that are either warm or hot will be best.
- Eat more fruit (at least one hour before or after other foods).
- Up other sources of fiber in your diet: oatmeal, wheat bran, oat bran, whole grains, and cooked vegetables.³
- Stoke the digestive fire about thirty minutes before lunch and dinner by chewing a slice of fresh ginger (about the size of a nickel) with a pinch of sea salt, a few drops of lime juice, and about ¼ teaspoon honey. If this feels overwhelming, you could take one or two [Vata Digest tablets](#) about thirty minutes before lunch and dinner, instead.

Lifestyle

- Focus on establishing a [vata-pacifying daily routine](#); consistency in the structure of the day is especially pacifying to vata.
- Get plenty of vata-pacifying exercise:
 - Make sure that your exercise routine is not overly stimulating, but gentle and grounding instead. Favor activities like walking, hiking, light jogging, swimming, or gentle cycling.
 - Practice [vata-pacifying yoga](#) or a handful of slow and purposeful [sun salutations](#) each morning.
- Practice 5-15 minutes of [Alternate Nostril Breathing](#) every day on an empty stomach.

Herbs

- Support your digestion and elimination with [Vata Digest tablets](#) or [Hingvastak](#) (the powdered form of the Vata Digest formula that can be taken alone or sprinkled on your food like pepper).
- Consider taking [Haritaki](#) instead of Triphala to more specifically balance vata (if vata is truly the primary concern).
- Balance vata systemically with [Healthy Vata tablets](#).



Additional Resources

Of course, an *Ayurvedic* practitioner can offer a more personalized perspective on the appropriate therapies for your unique situation. That said, if you are still hungry for more of the Ayurvedic perspective on digestion and elimination, you may find some of these resources helpful:

- [The Importance of Healthy Digestion](#)
Symptoms in the channels of elimination are often the result of broader imbalances with agni (the metabolic fire). As an introduction to the critically important Ayurvedic concept of *agni*, this resource explores agni's role in maintaining health and vitality throughout the body, and offers practical tools for kindling the sacred fire within.
- [The Importance of Agni](#)
This article explores the specific functions of agni, as well as the signs and symptoms of both healthy and impaired agni.
- [The Four Varieties of Agni](#)
This resource compares balanced agni to the different types of imbalances that can disrupt it, and offers appropriate therapies for each type of imbalance.
- [Ama: the Antithesis of Agni](#)
This piece introduces the toxic, undigested material called *ama*, whose qualities directly oppose those of agni. Ama in the body can either be the cause or the result of impaired agni—and in either case, threatens our health.
- [Ayurvedic Guide to Healthy Elimination](#)
This is a more comprehensive look at healthy elimination through the lens of *Ayurveda*; it highlights the importance of healthy elimination and offers some general tips for supporting proper elimination.



References

¹ Lad, Vasant. *Textbook of Ayurveda Volume I: Fundamental Principles of Ayurveda*. Albuquerque: The Ayurvedic Press, 2002. Print. 91-92.

² Lad, Vasant. *Textbook of Ayurveda, Volume II: A Complete Guide to Clinical Assessment*. Albuquerque: The Ayurvedic Press, 2006. Print. 278.

³ Lad, Vasant. *The Complete Book of Ayurvedic Home Remedies*. New York: Three Rivers Press, 1998. Print. 155-157.



Pitta-Type Elimination



Excess *pitta* in the *channel* of elimination tends to cause frequent or urgent stools that are soft, loose, liquid, or oily.¹ Pitta type stools may fall apart upon being evacuated or may tend toward diarrhea. They are also often hot, causing a burning pain when eliminated, and may have a strong (and frequently offensive) sour or acidic odor.¹ Excess pitta can also cause an insatiable appetite, acid indigestion, heartburn, blood in the stool, or bleeding hemorrhoids.¹

Balancing Pitta

To return to balance, we need to balance pitta's hot, sharp, light, and liquid qualities with foods, herbs, and experiences that are cooling, nutritive, heavy, and dense. In general, when pitta is aggravated, it is important to keep the mind and body cool and to avoid exercising at midday. In addition, the following diet, lifestyle, and herbal recommendations will help to pacify pitta so that the channels of elimination can return to balance.



Diet

- Focus on eating a [pitta-pacifying diet](#).
- Emphasize energetically [cooling foods](#), drinks, and spices – things like cilantro, coconut, peppermint tea, coriander, fennel, and mint.
- Include a moderate amount of cooling oils like [ghee](#), [sunflower oil](#), or [coconut oil](#) in your diet.
- Drink a moderate quantity of fluid, mainly at room temperature.
- Try taking a few tablespoons of aloe vera juice or gel 2-3 times per day to cool and soothe the channels of digestion and elimination.

Lifestyle

- Focus on establishing a [pitta-pacifying routine](#), as this can help to ground and cool pitta's sharp intensity.
- Observe a pitta-pacifying exercise routine:
 - Make sure that exercise is not overly intense; do it with relaxed effort instead. Enjoy activities like walking, hiking, light jogging, swimming, or cycling in the morning or evening (when it is coolest), and try to breathe through your nose the entire time.
 - Practice [pitta-pacifying yoga](#) or a series of gently paced and purposeful [moon salutations](#) each morning.
- Practice 5-10 minutes of [Sheetali Pranayama](#) every day on an empty stomach. A few minutes of [Alternate Nostril Breathing](#) make a wonderful complement to this practice.

Herbs

- Support your digestion with [Pitta Digest tablets](#) or [Avipattikar powder](#).
- Consider taking [Amalaki](#) instead of Triphala to more specifically balance pitta (if pitta is truly the primary concern).
- Balance pitta systemically with [Healthy Pitta tablets](#).

Additional Resources

Of course, an *Ayurvedic* practitioner can offer a more personalized perspective on the appropriate therapies for your unique situation. That said, if you are still hungry for more of the Ayurvedic perspective on digestion and elimination, you may find some of these resources helpful:

- [The Importance of Healthy Digestion](#)
Symptoms in the channels of elimination are often the result of broader imbalances with *agni* (the metabolic fire). As an introduction to the critically important Ayurvedic concept of agni, this resource explores agni's role in maintaining health and vitality throughout the body, and offers practical tools for kindling the sacred fire within.



- [The Importance of Agni](#)
This article explores the specific functions of agni, as well as the signs and symptoms of both healthy and impaired agni.
- [The Four Varieties of Agni](#)
This resource compares balanced agni to the different types of imbalances that can disrupt it, and offers appropriate therapies for each type of imbalance.
- [Ama: the Antithesis of Agni](#)
This piece introduces the toxic, undigested material called *ama*, whose qualities directly oppose those of agni. Ama in the body can either be the cause or the result of impaired agni – and in either case, threatens our health.
- [Ayurvedic Guide to Healthy Elimination](#)
This is a more comprehensive look at healthy elimination through the lens of *Ayurveda*; it highlights the importance of healthy elimination and offers some general tips for supporting proper elimination.



References

¹ Lad, Vasant. *Textbook of Ayurveda, Volume II: A Complete Guide to Clinical Assessment*. Albuquerque: The Ayurvedic Press, 2006. Print. 105-107, 278.



Kapha-Type Elimination



Excess *kapha* in the *channel* of elimination tends to cause copious amounts of large, heavy, oily, pale, and sticky stools.¹ Kapha stools tend to be well formed, fairly regular, and they can have a somewhat sweet odor to them.¹ Kapha also commonly causes sluggish digestion, and the subjective feelings of heaviness and incomplete elimination. These symptoms are usually accompanied by a suppressed appetite, excess salivation, as well as frequent cough, colds, congestion, and allergies.² Some people may also experience mucoid vomiting, mucoid diarrhea, blood or pus in the stools, and a particular kapha-type of constipation, which is caused by stickiness and sluggishness (as opposed to vata's light, dry, and hard qualities).^{1,2}

Balancing Kapha

To return to balance, we need to balance kapha's heavy, slow, cool, oily, smooth, and sticky qualities with foods, herbs, and experiences that are light, sharp, hot, dry, rough, and clarifying. In general, when kapha is aggravated, it is important to keep warm and dry, to avoid daytime napping, and to stay active. In addition, the following diet, lifestyle, and herbal recommendations will help to pacify kapha so that the channels of elimination can return to balance.



Diet

- Focus on eating a [kapha-pacifying diet](#).
- Minimize the presence of oil and fat in your diet (the best oils for kapha are [sunflower oil](#) and olive oil).
- Reduce processed foods and sugars.
- Favor warm and hot beverages and be careful not to overhydrate. Hot water and herbal teas like ginger, cinnamon, cardamom, or clove can help to liquefy, dry, and eliminate excess kapha.³
- Eat three square meals each day (at about the same time each day) and try not to snack between meals.
- Focus on making lunch the main meal and eating smaller quantities of food at breakfast and dinner.
- Embrace a wide variety of spices in your cooking.
- Stoke the digestive fire about thirty minutes before lunch and dinner by chewing a slice of fresh ginger (about the size of a nickel) with a pinch of sea salt, a few drops of lime juice, and about ¼ teaspoon honey. If this feels overwhelming, you could take one or two [Kapha Digest tablets](#) about thirty minutes before lunch and dinner, instead.

Lifestyle

- Focus on establishing a [kapha-pacifying daily routine](#).
- Get plenty of kapha-pacifying exercise:
 - Make sure that your exercise routine is fun, vigorous, and stimulating—kapha thrives on activities like walking, hiking, running, cycling, and high intensity interval training.
 - Practice [kapha-pacifying yoga](#) or a handful of invigorating [sun salutations](#) each morning.
- Practice [Bhastrika Pranayama](#) every day on an empty stomach. You can start with just one or two rounds of ten breaths, but can slowly build up to five rounds of ten breaths. A few minutes of [Alternate Nostril Breathing](#) make a wonderful complement to this practice.

Herbs

- Support your digestion with [Kapha Digest tablets](#) or [Trikatu](#) (the powdered form of the Kapha Digest formula that can be taken alone or sprinkled on your food like pepper).
- Consider taking [Bibhitaki](#) instead of Triphala to more specifically balance kapha (if kapha is truly the primary concern).
- Balance kapha systemically with [Healthy Kapha tablets](#).



Additional Resources

Of course, an *Ayurvedic* practitioner can offer a more personalized perspective on the appropriate therapies for your unique situation. That said, if you are still hungry for more of the Ayurvedic perspective on digestion and elimination, you may find some of these resources helpful:

- [The Importance of Healthy Digestion](#)
Symptoms in the channels of elimination are often the result of broader imbalances with *agni* (the metabolic fire). As an introduction to the critically important Ayurvedic concept of agni, this resource explores agni's role in maintaining health and vitality throughout the body, and offers practical tools for kindling the sacred fire within.
- [The Importance of Agni](#)
This article explores the specific functions of agni, as well as the signs and symptoms of both healthy and impaired agni.
- [The Four Varieties of Agni](#)
This resource compares balanced agni to the different types of imbalances that can disrupt it, and offers appropriate therapies for each type of imbalance.
- [Ama: the Antithesis of Agni](#)
This piece introduces the toxic, undigested material called *ama*, whose qualities directly oppose those of agni. Ama in the body can either be the cause or the result of impaired agni – and in either case, threatens our health.
- [Ayurvedic Guide to Healthy Elimination](#)
This is a more comprehensive look at healthy elimination through the lens of *Ayurveda*; it highlights the importance of healthy elimination and offers some general tips for supporting proper elimination.



References

¹ Lad, Vasant. *Textbook of Ayurveda, Volume II: A Complete Guide to Clinical Assessment*. Albuquerque: The Ayurvedic Press, 2006. Print. 105-107, 278.

² Lad, Vasant. *Textbook of Ayurveda Volume I: Fundamental Principles of Ayurveda*. Albuquerque: The Ayurvedic Press, 2002. Print. 91-92.

³ Lad, Vasant. *Textbook of Ayurveda Volume III: General Principles of Management and Treatment*. Albuquerque: The Ayurvedic Press, 2012. Print. 113.

