



Meru Institute

Yoga ~ Ayurveda ~ Community Ministry

Introduction to Ayurvedic Nutrition and Cooking

Healing With Food

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What is health?

Sama dosha samagnis cha

Sama dhatu mala kriya

Prasamnatmendriya Manah

Swastha ityabhidhiyate

—Sushruta Samhita, 15:38



Digestion

Conventional view		Ayurvedic View
Personal preference, habit, body image, emotions etc.	Why do we eat?	To take in Prana to live
Calories	Element of Nutrient	Panchamahabhuta
Counting calories from different food groups	Focus	How body processes what we eat



Digestion

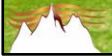
Conventional view		Ayurvedic View
Caloric value	Importance	Individual Constitution
Balancing Food ingredients	Balance	Balancing diet depending on Prakriti
Depending on food groups	Dietary recommendations	Depending on the taste of the food
You are what you eat	Goal	You are what you digest



Ahara: nourishment

- Food
- Water
- Breath
- Emotion
- Information through the senses

*All three doshas are in nature
and in every cell of the body*



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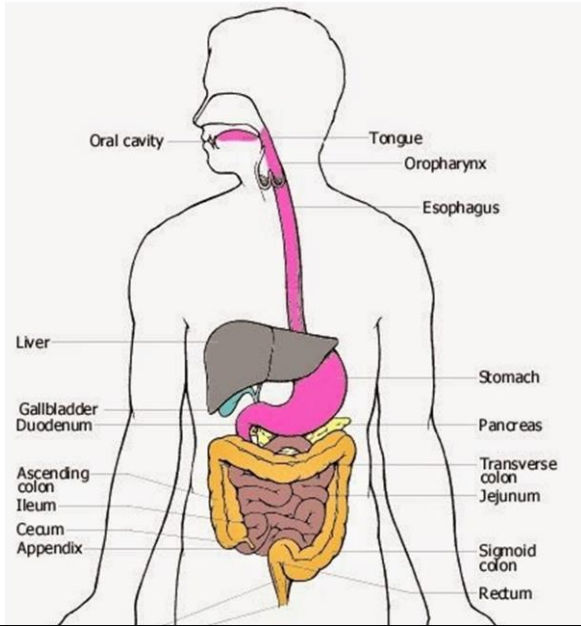
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Digestion

The body transforms ahara into

- Doshas
- Dhatus
- Malas

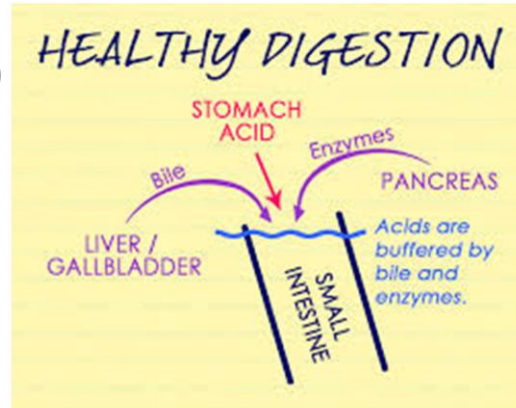




Seats of Doshas in Digestive Tract

- Stomach: Liquifies (Kapha)
- Small intestines: Cooks (Pitta)
- Colon: removes gases (Vata) and liquids and solidifies

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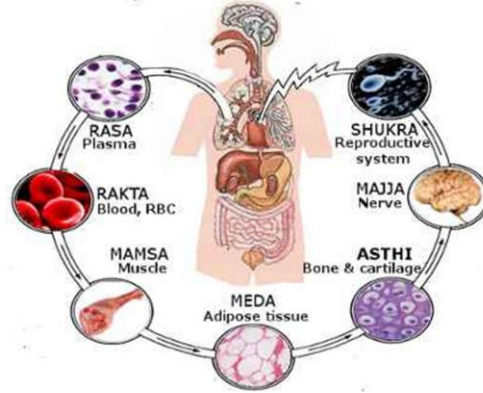
The Seven Dhatus (Tissues)

How food is transformed into the cells and tissues of our body through digestion, according to Ayurveda.

First, the food eaten is liquified into nutrient fluid in the stomach (K). then it is transformed into the tissues, using the digestive "fire" (enzymes, acids, etc) in the small intestines (P) as well as the metabolic "fires" of each tissue to create the next tissue. The food molecules are broken down more and more at each level to form the different tissues. Each tissue also has sub-tissues as that are created in this way at the same time. Waste product from this process is removed through urine, feces and sweat. After these seven dhatus are produced, digestion continues to create three subtle dhatus...ojas, tejas and prana.



Ayurveda Seven Dhatus





AGNI (METABOLIC FIRE)

- JATHARAGNI
- DHATVAGNI
- BHUTAGNI



Inadequate Agni creates Ama

- Insufficient Agni (Samagni)→
 - increase of Kapha, congestion, cold, pressure, Kapha issues
- Excess Agni (Tikshagni)→
 - Increase of Pitta, inflammation, Pitta issues, heat, hot flashes, lack of circulation, heart issues
- Erratic Agni (Vishamagnii)→
 - Increase of Vata, dryness, gas, pain, Vata issues

- Balanced Agni (Samagni)→ NO AMA



Contributing factors to agni for digestion:

1. Rasa – taste (6 tastes)
2. Guna – attributes (20 attributes)
3. Virya – potency (hot, cold)
4. Vipaka –metabolism (sweet, sour, pungent)
5. Karma –action (chemistry, effect)
6. Prabhava- specific action (specific to the food or herb, not gunas, etc)



The Chemistry of the Six Tastes in Ayurveda

Sweet (Earth and Water)

Qualities: Cooling, Heavy.

K+ V- P-

Sugar, milk, rice, licorice, honey, fat, grapes, dates, asparagus

In Moderation: Wholesome to body, increases tissues, contributes to bone growth, strengthens eyesight, purifies blood and lymph, improves complexion, adhesion of fractures, relieves thirst, swooning and burning sensation

In Excess: Diabetes, obesity, laziness, asthma, tumors, headache, fever, abdominal vomiting, lymph glands engorge, coma, worms



The Chemistry of the Six Tastes in Ayurveda

Sour (Earth and Fire)

Qualities: Heating, oily, light..

P+ K+ V-

Mango, pomegranite, lemon, prunes, yogurt, wine (alcohol), vinegar, aspirin, cheese (fermented foods)

In Moderation: Aids in digestion, increases appetite, restores natural bowel movement, originates mucuous secretion and is pleasant and refreshing

In Excess: Itching, anemia, hemmorage,thirst, edema, dizziness, burning sensation, poor eyesight, giddiness, increase in blood impurities





The Chemistry of the Six Tastes in Ayurveda

Salty (Water and Fire)

Qualities: Heating, Heavy, Oily.

P+ K+ V-

Sea Salt, Rock Salt, Kelp, Soy Sauce

In Moderation: Helps digestion, anti-spasmodic, laxative, creates heaviness, oiliness & heat. Purgative, eliminating wastes, increases body heat

In Excess: Disturbs blood, increases skin diseases, causes inflammation, peptic ulcers, rash, pimples, hypertension, baldness, edema, ulcers, loss of virility and ojas (immune system depletion)



The Chemistry of the Six Tastes in Ayurveda

Bitter (Air and Ether)

Qualities: Cooling, dry, rough light.

V+ P- K-

Turmeric, mustard greens, gentian root, sandalwood, rhubarb, coffee, aloe vera, fenugreek

In Moderation: Stimulates appetite and digestion, reduces fat and liquid secretions, purifies and improves secretion of milk, useful in fever, destroys toxins, worms, relieves burning and itching, drying to body and causes reduction in fat, bone marrow, urine, feces.

In Excess: Tissue energy is lost, depletes plasma, blood, muscle, fat, bone marrow, semen (sexual debility), unconsciousness, malaise, dizziness, nervous disorders, dryness.





The Chemistry of the Six Tastes in Ayurveda

Astringent (Air and Earth)

Qualities: Light, drying, heating

V+ P- K-

Alum, tumeric, persimmon, golden seal, unripe banana, coffee, tea

In Moderation: Stops excessive bleeding, heals ulcers, improves abnormal discharges, reduces fat and excessive moisture, liquifying, lessens secretions from mucuous membranes.

In Excess: Impotence, infertility, sterility, gas, constipation, engorges channels, thrombosis, constipation, scanty urine, paralysis (stroke, blood clot), Vata disorders



The Chemistry of the Six Tastes in Ayurveda

Pungent (Fire and Air)

Qualities: Light, drying, heating

V+ P+ K-

Ginger, garlic, pepper, radish, onion, chili peppers

In Moderation: Stimulates appetite, prevents obesity, purifies body of toxins, helps assimilation and absorption of food, removes cough, kills worms and intestinal parasites, sedative, reduces semen, milk, fat .

In Excess: Thirst, intoxication, unconsciousness, tingling and burning sensation, fainting, drying up of semen and ovum (sexual disability), trembling, vertigo, fever, feebleness, pain in hands, feet, sides, back, leg muscles.



Balanced, easy to digest, hot, cooked meals.





Food for Agni

Eat according to your agni

Samagni: eat all rasas/tastes

Mandagni: reduce sweet, bitter tastes and heavy foods,
eat sour and pungent foods and easy to digest foods

Tikshagni: reduce sour and pungent tastes, eat sweet
and bitter tastes, eat heavy foods

Vishamagni: eat according to the condition



Eating to Stay in Balance

	Vata nature	Pitta nature	Kapha nature
Eat more: Tastes:	sweet, sour, salty	sweet, bitter, astringent	pungent, bitter, astringent
Foods	rice, sugar, milk, wheat, grains citrus, cheese, fermented foods ok, salt	rice, sugar, milk, wheat, sweet fruits, bitter melon, bitter herbs, pomegranites, turmeric	hot peppers, onions, mustard, ginger, bitter melon, turmeric
Eat less/avoid: tastes:	pungent, bitter, astringent	sour, salty, pungent	sweet, sour, salty
Foods:	hot peppers, onions, mustard, ginger, bitter melon, turmeric	citrus, cheese, fermented, salt, tomatoes, peppers	rice, sugar, milk, wheat, grains citrus, cheese, fermented salts



Foods predominant in Earth element

The qualities in these foods are heavy, gross, grounding. They give stability and strength and help build Dhatus in the body. Sweet and astringent taste have this bhuta.

E.g. Potatoes, sweet potatoes, pumpkin, Beets, Mangoes

Herbs – Shatavari, Vidari, Bala, Sariva

Foods predominant in water element

The qualities in these foods are liquid, cold, moist, and mobile. They maintain fluid balance, moistness in the body, create a sense of contentment.

E.g. Milk, fruit juice, water, fish, lotus



Foods predominant in fire element

These foods create hot, sharp, subtle, dry, light qualities in the body. The main function is digestion, maintaining body temperature, clarity of thoughts, giving radiance to the skin.

E.g. Ginger, black pepper, jalapeños, garlic, lime,

Mustard seeds, chitrak, Pippali

Foods predominant in air element

The qualities in these foods are dry, light and subtle. Function is to create lightness clarity, movement.

E.g. variety of beans, leafy vegetables, herbal smokes



Foods predominant in ether element

Subtle, light, clear are the qualities created by these foods. Many bitter foods have these qualities.

E.g. Greens, bitter melon, fenugreek, guduchi, neem



Shamana Dravyas – Calming, palliating

Oil has moist, sticky, heavy qualities, so balances Vata.

Ghee is sweet and cooling, so is recommended in Pitta.

Honey is dry, sharp, rough, astringent, so balances Kapha

Kopana Dravyas – aggravating

Fish, Udad dal, Yogurt etc aggravate doshas

Swathahita Dravyas – neither aggravating or palliating

Rice, wheat, mung, natural sugar are swastha hita dravyas. They do not aggravate or palliate doshas.



Stages of Digestion

1. Sweet. In mouth. Saliva. (Creates Rasa Dhatu)
2. Sour. In stomach. (Creates Rakta Dhatu)
3. Salty, in small intestines. Bile and pancreatic juices.) Creates Rasa and Mamsa and Meda Dhatu)
4. Pungent. In jejunum, small intestines. Pungent enzymes. (Creates Rasa and Asthi dhatu)
5. Bitter. In ileum, small intestines. Creates Rasa Dhatu and Majja Dhatu.
6. Astringent, in cecum, large intestine. Earth and air elements (Rasa, Shukra and Arthava Dhatu created.)



Times to Eat

Ritucharya: times VPK dominant

Seasons

Prakriti

Vikriti

State of Agni/Hunger





Quantity of food

- Age
- Constitution
- Season
- Balance/imbalance of doshas
- Exercise
- Type of food





Signs of good digestion

- feeling satisfied
- feeling light and energized
- breathe easily
- talk and walk easily
- sharp senses, energetic
- good bm



Qualities of Food

- Prakriti of food (rasa, virya vipak)
- Processing of foods
- Mixing foods
- Quantity of foods
- Environment where it is grown
- Unripe vs. ripe
- Food for the individual



What not to do

- Eat too much or too little
- Combining wrong foods ie alcohol and milk products, honey and boiling water
- Fasting too long
- Eating wrong foods
- Not considering stage of life cycle (ie spicy food in Pitta stage)
- During difficult digestion avoid: cruciferous vegetables, fried foods, heavy sweets



Cooking Spices

- Coriander
- Cardamon
- Ginger
- Turmeric
- Hing
- Nutmeg
- Cumin
- Clove
- Cinnamon
- Sesame oil

I honor you for continuing on the path of Ayurveda from
India to the U.S. and bringing it into your lives.

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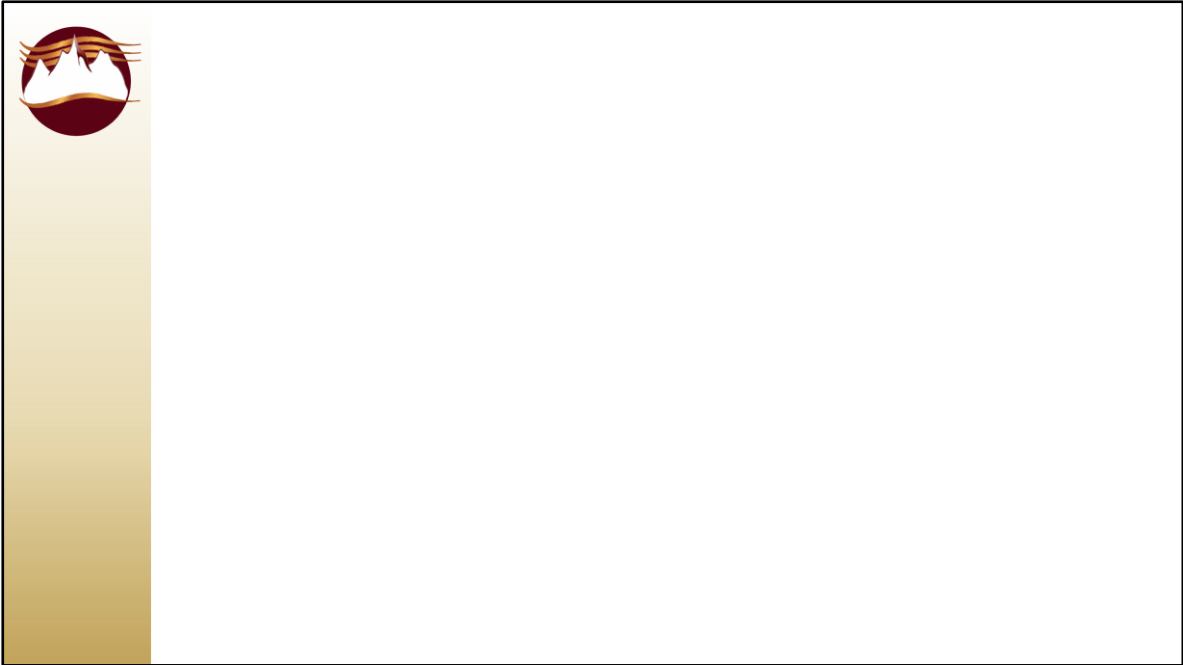
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—Author

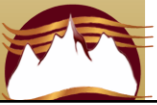


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