



DIETARY RECOMMENDATIONS

Nutrition is central to the Ayurvedic approach and to Maharishi Vedic Medicine. Food must nourish and nurture at the same time it brings balance to the body. Food conveys both consciousness and life-energy or *prana* to the individual. For food to be optimally life-enhancing, re-vitalizing, and nurturing three elements are key:

1. **Digestion—the ability to absorb and assimilate—must be strong.**
2. **Food must be fresh, delicious, and satisfying.**
3. **Food selection must be suited to the individual's imbalances.**

These are listed in order of importance. Without proper digestion, not only are important nutrients not absorbed, but food itself becomes toxic as it slowly rots in the digestive tract. If food is not fresh, it will contain no life-energy or *prana*, and will not give sufficient energy to the individual. If food is not delicious and satisfying, then it will not be digested and assimilated well. Finally, if the wrong foods are selected they can contribute to further imbalancing the individual. This last point is often where most people focus all the attention, whereas the first two are equally important.

CONSULTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

During your consultation you will receive information on your imbalances. Focus your food selection on balancing your imbalances first, not on your body type. Most problem areas involve both imbalance and the accumulation of *ama* or toxins in the body. By focusing on digestion and fresh, high-quality food, you will help to decrease *ama*. This will help almost as much as selecting the perfect foods.

To help with food selection, you will be given some guidelines. These should be taken as guides, not rules. If you limit yourself only to what is on the guidelines you will restrict your diet too much and will not be satisfied with what you are eating. Try to understand the general principle behind the diet, rather than just going by a list of foods to eat or avoid.

Because improving digestion is so important, the first dietary recommendations that follow are designed to optimize this aspect. Next will be information on the general guidelines for your situation. Finally, some recipes for simple and convenient meals that are useful for your imbalances follow.

OPTIMIZING DIGESTION

Ama develops when food or experience is not completely digested. Each time we eat on the run, or run right after a meal, digestion is hindered. *Ama* will be created in all but those with the strongest digestive power in this setting. The classic Ayurvedic texts give guidelines to encourage proper digestion and to prevent the creation of *ama*. These guidelines can be organized in terms of improving digestion itself, picking and preparing foods that are better suited to complete digestion, and optimizing the environment for digestion and assimilation. Some of these guidelines are:

IMPROVING DIGESTION

- 1) Eat when you are hungry.
- 2) Don't eat when you aren't hungry.
- 3) Eat to only 75% full.
- 4) Don't eat until the previous meal is digested (3 - 6 hours).
- 5) Avoid large amounts of liquid before, after or during meals.
- 6) Make lunch the large meal of the day.
- 7) Avoid ice-cold food and beverages.
- 8) Chew well.
- 9) Avoid large quantities of raw and uncooked food.
- 10) Do not eat when you are upset.
- 11) Do not eat too quickly or too slowly.

FOOD SELECTION & PREPARATION

- 1) Eat predominantly vegetarian food.
- 2) Eat organically produced food.
- 3) Avoid genetically engineered food.
- 4) Eat the freshest possible foods.
- 5) Avoid "sale" food that is old.
- 6) Do not eat burnt or rotting foods.
- 7) Avoid microwave ovens.

OPTIMIZING THE ENVIRONMENT

- 1) Eat in a settled, quiet atmosphere with a settled mind.
- 2) Do not work, read or watch TV while eating.
- 3) Always sit to eat.
- 4) Eat at approximately the same times each day.
- 5) Take a few minutes to sit quietly after a meal before returning to activity.
- 6) Don't eat right before bed.
- 7) Take food that is pleasant to both sight & palate.
- 8) Take food that is prepared by a happy, settled cook.

In making dietary changes, keep in mind the following Ayur-Vedic principles:

1. **“Without proper diet herbs are ineffective; with proper diet herbs are not necessary.”**
2. **“Whatever change is made, it must be done gradually, so as not to shock the system.”**

VATA REDUCING DIET

FOODS TO FAVOR

General: Warm foods and drink, unctuous (oily) food (in limited quantities), food with predominantly sweet, sour, and salty tastes

Grains: Rice, wheat

Dairy: All dairy products are good (avoid too much aged cheese)

Sweeteners: Natural sweeteners such as whole cane sugar, turbinado sugar, molasses, honey

Oils: All oils are good; favor more ghee, sesame, and olive oil.

Fruits: Sweet fruits, grapes, cherries, peaches, melons, avocado, coconut, bananas, sweet oranges, sweet pineapples, sweet plums, sweet berries, mangoes, fresh figs, dates, apricots, stewed fruits, soaked (overnight) raisins.

Vegetables: Well-cooked vegetables, beets, carrots, asparagus, cucumber, sweet potatoes, winter squashes, tender eggplant, zucchini, cucumber, artichoke, tomato (without skin), celery (not root), spinach (small amounts), tender white radish (prepared with some oil).

Nuts: All nuts are good.

Spices: Black pepper (in small quantity), cinnamon, cardamom, cumin, ginger, salt, clove, fennel, salt, hing, fenugreek, mustard seeds

Animal Foods for Non-Vegetarians: Chicken, turkey, seafood

FOODS TO AVOID

General: Dry foods, dry goods, cold or iced foods and drinks; foods with predominantly pungent, bitter, or astringent tastes.

Grains: Barley, corn, millet, buckwheat, rye, oats

Oils: Canola, mustard seed oil, rapeseed oil

Fruits: Dried fruits, apple, pear, pomegranate, cranberry (apples and pears acceptable if cooked)

Vegetables: Avoid raw vegetables. Potato, brussel sprouts, broccoli, cabbage, peas, cauliflower, lettuce, spinach, bean sprouts, zucchini, and celery may be eaten in small or moderate quantities, but should always be well-cooked.

Beans: All large beans should be avoided. Exceptions: Red lentils, green lentils, yellow (moong or mung) split lentils and tofu are good and should not be avoided if cooked well with spices and oil.

Animal Foods For Non-vegetarians: Beef