

## History

Ayur (life) Veda (science) in Sanskrit, comes from the fundamental 5,000-year-old system of natural healing. It has served as the basis for Tibetan, Chinese, and Greek traditional medicine, and the principles aimed to balance the mind, body, and spirit are wisdoms that are becoming increasingly appreciated by scientific evidence.

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## Components of Health

### Doshas

From fertilization, a diploid zygote divides into three primary tissue systems, the endoderm (which comprises inner organs), the mesoderm (comprising the musculoskeletal system), and the ectoderm (making up the nervous system). The composition of these three systems represented in an individual, as well as natural occurring elements, determine their Dosha constitution. This principal arises from the concept that every individual is an individual universe, composed of all five elements naturally and intelligently combined to be sensitive to surrounding elements. Ether is the space that the other elements (air, fire, water, and earth) abound in. For example, an endomorph phenotype, dominated by the GI system, is likely to be a Kapha Dosha, which is represented by the elements earth and water. A mesomorph is dominated by the musculoskeletal system and likely to be primarily Pitta, represented by the elements earth and fire. An ectomorph dominated by the nervous system is likely to be primarily Vata Dosha, made up of the elements air and water.

### Dhatus

In Ayurveda, disease is the result of imbalanced Vata, Pitta, or Kapha. Doshas can become imbalanced when any environmental toxins via elements enter the body at the seven tissues. In Sanskrit, the Dhatus (tissues) Rasa (plasma), Rakta (blood), Mamsa (muscle) Medas (fat), Asthi (bone), Majja (marrow/nerve), and Shukra (germinal tissue) comprise the derms. The blueprint for each individual's personal composition of Doshas lies in the nucleus of every cell making up these tissues, so it is crucial to bring these elements into balance according to genetic makeup. An imbalance results in dysfunction of the tissues and their systems.

# Agni

The third component that must be in harmony with the Doshas and Dhatu is Agni. Often referred to as 'fire', Agni converts food to energy, driving metabolic processes. There are thirteen forms of Agni, classified by function and site of action. Some examples include regulation of body temperature, sexual, and digestive 'fire'-the homeostasis of which plays an important role in health.

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## Diagnosis

Ayurvedic practitioners stand on thousands of years worth of observation and data collection, beginning with guidelines established by the Indian 'Father of Medicine', Acharya Charakra, in his 300 BC text Charaka Samhita. With this knowledge, diagnosis and determination of Dosha composition is done through observation, physical examination, and health history. Certain physical and psychological characteristics have been consistent with vata, pitta, or kapha Doshas which an Ayurvedic practitioner can distinguish during their assessment. The difference from the Western assessment process is that treatment is then tailored based on not only the disease level, but also the particular patient level.

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## Dosha Balancing

The goal of this life science is to create balance in the body, mind, and consciousness according to individual constitution- preserving health and preventing disease. Therefore, treatment is aimed at balancing the Doshas through a change in daily routine (dincharya) and seasonal routine (ritucharya). Diet and nutrition play the primary role in wellness, beginning with the principal of regular and frugal meals. Meals are then tailored according to the six tastes (Rasas) that have a corresponding effect on each of the Doshas. Sweet tastes (Madhur) have an anabolic effect, promoting strength and nourishing the tissues. Sour tastes (Amla) stimulate digestive power and bitter tastes (Tikta) aid in absorption and detoxification while salty tastes (Lavana) enhance appetite. Pungent tastes (Tatu) promote sweating and clear the sinuses while astringent tastes (Kasha) promote healing.

Other treatments include Panchakarma, a detoxification regimen using Ayurvedic oil massage, steam baths, as well as nasal, bowel, and gastric irrigation to remove toxins. Ayurvedic medicine utilizes herbal remedies recognizing that their effects on each individual will differ, requiring a thorough understanding of biochemistry. This ancient concept, now termed pharmacogenetics, is gaining recent prominence as the metabolic pathways are being researched altering personal responses to drugs. Shirodhara therapy may also be incorporated, dripping medicated oil onto the third-eye. Overall, Ayurveda is an excellent traditional medicine system that can be utilized to balance mental, physical, and spiritual wellbeing promoting optimal health!

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## References

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