

# **Dietetics in Ayurveda with special reference to Prakruti**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Dietetics can be defined as the branch of knowledge concerned with diet & its effects on health. According to WHO the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being. Ayurveda, the "science of life," is a system of medicine that utilizes various therapies including diet, herbal preparations and yoga, to restore harmony and balance within the body. It focuses more on the healthy living and well being. One of the main goals of Ayurveda is to maintain health of a healthy individual and to attain the health in the diseased. As per our Science, of the 3 pillars of health diet is the most important & is responsible for the growth & development of the human body.

One of the important concepts in Ayurveda is "Prakruti"- the innate nature of an individual & is determined at the time of conception itself & remains the same throughout the life. Knowing of prakruti helps in maintaining the health and preventing the diseases. Ayurveda prescribes various foods and lifestyles according to one's Prakruti and suggests that one should follow these guidelines to prevent various disorders and to promote health. In this era of lifestyle disorders in order to improve the quality of life & to bring down the cost of health care one should know about his prakruti & the diet suitable for his body constitution. Hereby this paper is intended to explain the concepts of diet in Ayurveda in a backlight of prakruti.

**Keywords:** Ayurveda, Diet, Prakruti, Lifestyle disorders

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## **Introduction:**

Ayurveda, the "science of life," is a system of medicine that utilizes various therapies including Diet, Yoga, and herbal preparations, to restore harmony and balance within the body. The principles of Ayurveda are based on the concept of Tridoshas- Vata, Pitta and Kapha, the dynamic forces with distinct characteristics that shape all things in the universe<sup>1</sup>. Tridoshas are nothing but a combination of Panchamahabhutas- Prithvi, Ap, Theja, Vayu, Akasha in different permutations & combinations.<sup>2</sup>

In humans, the Doshas control all mental, emotional, and physical functions and responses, and also determine the state of

the soul. They produce natural urges and individual preferences in food. They govern the maintenance and destruction of bodily tissue and the elimination of waste products<sup>3</sup>.

In Mahabharata it is said that from Ahara only all living beings are created & are further nourished<sup>4</sup>. One of the main goals of Ayurveda is to maintain health of a healthy individual<sup>5</sup>. As per the Science, of the 3 pillars of health, Diet(Ahara) is the most important & is responsible for the growth & development of the human body<sup>6</sup>. According to WHO the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being. In this era of lifestyle disorders in order to

improve the quality of life & to bring down the cost of health care one should know about his Prakruti & the Diet suitable for his body constitution. Hereby this article is intended to explain the concepts of diet in Ayurveda in a backlight of Prakruti.

### WHAT IS PRAKRUTI??

“Prakruti” a distinctive concept in Ayurveda is the innate constitution of an individual<sup>7</sup>. It is the expression of body functions in the form of morphology, physiology & behavior of an individual. It is determined at the time of conception when the male & female gametes join<sup>8</sup>. The state of existence of Dohas in dominance in the Sukra(male) & Aartava(female) during their union determines the prakruti. The prakruti formed here will be a qualitative, quantitative and unchangeable Doshik predominance from birth to death.

### WHY TO KNOW THE PRAKRUTI??

By understanding the individual constitution of every individual, we know which food and drink and what type of job, exercise are appropriate for maintaining their health. If the constitution is known then herbs, diet & other regimens including yogic postures can be advised correctly both for disease treatment & to promote longevity. A person is able to prevent various disorders from developing and is also able to promote his health by knowledge of his/her Prakruti. Prakruti plays a very important role on the onset / occurrence of disease and management / treatment of a disease<sup>9</sup>. Ayurveda suggests that one should follow these guidelines to prevent various disorders and to promote health.

### TYPES

According to Ayurveda there are seven<sup>10</sup> types of Prakruti where a combination of the

three Doshas manifests each individual. They are like

Mono types (Vata, Pitta or Kapha predominant)

Dual types (Vata-Pitta, Pitta-Kapha or, Kapha-Vata)

Equal types (Vata, Pitta and Kapha in equal proportions)

Very few people belong to Ekadoshaja Prakruti and most of the people belong to Dwandwaja or Dwidoshaja Prakruti. But for all practical purposes Vata pradhana, Pitta pradhana and Kapha pradhana Prakrutis are considered for diagnostic and physiological purposes.

### HOW TO KNOW ONES PRAKRUTI??

Some of the Physical & Psychological characters exhibited by each Prakruti is enlisted in the table given below. Table 1 & 2<sup>11,12,13</sup> by which one can easily assess ones own Prakruti.

### AYURVEDA AND BALANCED DIET

A proper and healthy Diet is a much discussed topic nowadays. Changing lifestyles, busy life schedules and the partiality to junk food and fast food over home cooked meals, more often disrupt the entire Dosh balance in the body leading to diseases. Overeating, skipping meals, eating overcooked, stale or frozen food can adversely affect the body constitution.<sup>14</sup>

In Ayurveda diet is based not just on the nutritional values but also on the Prakruti of the person. When the body ingests food based on its Prakruti, the Doshas remain balanced leading to a healthy body and a peaceful mind.<sup>15</sup>

Though different kinds of diet are suggested in Ayurveda, there is no specific diet which

can be said to be ideal for every human body. It is because every human being is unique with his Prakruti<sup>16</sup>. There are various factors that need to be kept in mind while working out the ideal Diet for every individual as it will be distinctly different based on the person's specific constitutional characteristics.

Just like modern science explains balanced diet based on macro and micronutrients. In Ayurveda, one has to look at the Prakruti, Agni, Koshha of a person and Rasa, Guna, Virya, Vipaka of food and also the Ritu(season) for designing a ideal dietary regimen.

## Tables

**Physical Characteristics (Table 1)**

FEATURES	VATA	PITTA	KAPHA
Body Structure	Short/lean		Well built
Body Parts	Habit of shaking/moving Visible prominent blood vessels & tendons Unsteady gaze Eyes not completely closed during sleep Rough palm & sole	Sensitive body parts Excessive body odour Scanty eyelashes Eyes appear reddish on exposure to sun alcohol or anger Coppery coloured palate, lips, tongue & sole	Wide chested Long limbs Wide Prominent eyes with long eyelashes Fleshy body parts Large forehead
Skin	Tendency for cracking & tanning of skin Cold in touch	Tendency for yellowish discolouration Hot in touch Presence of multiple moles/birth marks	Soft/unctuous skin Cold in touch
Hair	Scanty hair on scalp & body Rough/dry hair	Scanty hair on scalp & body Brownish/blond hair	Stiff hair Curly hair
Nails	Rough/dry/uneven	Coppery colored	Long
Joints	May produce sound on movements	Slack joints	Deep & well lubricated joints
Sleep	Alert Sleep	Less sleep	Excessive
Voice	Dry/hoarse	Commanding	Pleasing
Activities	Quick/restless	Motivated/purposeful	Slow

**Psychological features (Table 2)**

VATA	PITTA	KAPHA
Anxious	Intelligent	Have a meticulous approach towards studies
Quick in grasping things but fails to retain for long	Neat & tidy	Slow in understanding things
Easily susceptible to happiness/sorrow/ grief / likes & dislikes	Tendency to be angry on slightest provocation	Not easily susceptible to happiness/ sorrow/ grief / likes & dislikes

Easily Prone to jealousy	Cannot endure stressful activities	Has a good endurance to stress
Has less number of friends/ associates	Likes hearing praises/ pleasing things about him	Very popular among friends/ associates

VATA PRAKRUTI DIET (Table 3)

Eat more	Eat less
Cereals like Rice, wheat	Barley, corn, millet
Pulses like Black gram, Horse gram	Green gram, Bengal gram, lentil
Vegetables like radish, sweet potato, onion, pumpkin, spinach	Leafy vegetables, Snakegourd, Cabbage, Brinjal, Bittergourd, cucumber
Fruits like, gooseberry, grapes, banana, dates, apple, pineapple, pomegranate	Pear, melon
Spices like Asafoetida, clove, cardamom, cinnamon, pepper, cumin, garlic, coriander Meat of cow, goat, buffalo etc	Turmeric
Milk, ghee, curd, buttermilk, butter	
Oils like sesame oil, mustard oil, coconut oil	Corn oil
Meat of goat, buffalo etc	

PITTA PRAKRUTI DIET (Table 4)

Eat more	Eat less
Cereals such as rice, wheat, barley, millet	Cereals such as corn
Pulses like greengram, bengal gram	Pulses such as black gram, horsegram
ghee, butter, fresh curd, milk	sour buttermilk and curd
vegetables such as snakegourd, bittergourd, brinjal, cabbage, spinach	radish, onion, sweet potato
fruits such as gooseberry, grapes, apple, dates, pomegranate, banana	citrusfruits, peach
spices such as coriander, turmeric	spices such as cumin, garlic, pepper, clove, cardamom, cinnamon, asafoetida
Oils like Sesame oil, Coconut oil, sunflower oil	Almond, corn, mustard oil
meat of goat, buffalo	sea fish

KAPHA PRAKRUTI DIET (Table 5)

Eat more	Eat less
Cereals and grains like rice, barley, corn, millet	Cereals like Wheat
Pulses like Bengal gram, Horse gram, Greengram	Pulses like Blackgram
Vegetables like Brinjal, radish, Snake gourd, Bittergourd, cabbage	ash gourd, Onion, sweet potato, cucumber
Spices like Asafoetida, Black pepper, Cloves, Coriander, cumin, Turmeric, cardamom	

Fruits Gooseberry, grapes, pomegranate, papaya, Lemon	Apple, pineapple, mango, plum, orange	Banana, Dates,	ripe
Diary products like Buttermilk	Curd, ghee, milk, butter		
Oils like Sesame oil	Oils like Coconut oil,	Mustard oil, Groundnut oil, Sunflower Oil	
Meat of goat	Meat of buffalo, fish		

### Relationship between Agni & Prakruti

Agni of a person is an imperative factor which should be looked into before advising a diet plan. Agni represents the digestive capacity and power. A proper Agni is one of the most important indications of good health<sup>17</sup>. Foods that have a greater amount of Teja Mahabhuta increase The Agni and those that have a greater amount of Jala or Prithvi tend to decrease the Agni.

In VATA PRAKRUTI-VISHAMAGNI<sup>18</sup> appetite will be variable in nature. so the time required for digestion and characteristic features of digestion will vary because of the Vishma Agni .

In PITTA PRAKRUTI-TEEKSHNAGNI<sup>18</sup> the appetite will be good and strong and the digestion will be quick due to Teekshna Agni .

In KAPHA PRAKRUTI- MANDAGNI<sup>18</sup> the appetite will be relatively lesser and digestion will be slow and the person can even skip a meal without undue discomfort.

### Relation between Rasa & Prakruti

The diet of a person should contain the Gunas(characteristics) and Rasas(taste) which will keep the Doshik balance of the body in equilibrium. The food consumed by a person should comprise of those Rasas in large quantity that are opposite to the innate nature of Dosha that forms his Prakruti

VATA PRAKRUTI person will have dominance of Tikta,Katu, Kashaya Rasa in

him so his diet should be consisting of Madhura, Amla, Lavana Rasa<sup>19</sup>.

PITTA PRAKRUTI person will have dominance of Katu, Amla, Lavana Rasa so his diet should be rich in Madhura,Tikta, Kashaya Rasa<sup>20</sup>.

KAPHA PRAKRUTI person will have dominance of Madhura,Amla,Lavana in him so balanced diet for Kapha Prakruthi should be one that is rich in Katu,Tikta,Kashaya Rasa<sup>21</sup>.

### Relation between Guna & Prakruti

The food consumed by a person should comprise of those Gunas in large quantity that are opposite to the innate nature of Dosha that forms his Prakruti

VATA PRAKRUTI person will have dominance of Ruksha, Laghu, Seeta etc Gunas in him so his diet should be consisting of Snigdha, Guru, Ushna etc Gunas<sup>22</sup>

PITTA PRAKRUTI person will have dominance of Snigdha, Teekshna, Ushna etc Gunas so his diet should be rich in Ruksha, Manda, Ushna etc Gunas<sup>22</sup>.

KAPHA PRAKRUTI person will have dominance of Snigdha, Seeta, Guru etc Gunas in him so balanced diet for Kapha Prakruti should be one that is rich in Ruksha, Ushna, Laghu etc Gunas<sup>22</sup>

The diet chart for each Prakruti is listed out in tables 3,4,5 considering the Rasas & Gunas suitable for each Prakruti.

### **Conclusion:**

Improper dietary habits are the primary reason for the increasing trend of health disorders in the current era. Every human being is unique therefore considerations on Ahara should also be unique to that individual. Ahara when taken in proper quantity at proper time following all

Niyamas contributes to health. More over in this era of lifestyle disorders one should know his Prakruti and the diet suitable for him in order to improve the quality of life & bring down the cost of health care. Last but not the least one should always keep in mind , “eat healthy & live healthy.” and healthy diet and healthy life can only be possible by knowing his Prakruthi and the diet that is best suited for it.

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