



Ayurveda

Ayurveda is the system of medicine that evolved in India and has survived as a distinct entity from remote antiquity to the present day. Ayurvedic Medicine. Ayurveda is thought to be the world's oldest healing system. This 5,000-year-old ancient Indian medical system is based on a natural and holistic approach to physical and mental and emotional health.¹

The word "Ayurveda" is derived from Sanskrit "ayur" (life) and "veda" (knowledge). Translated, it means "knowledge of life."² A core philosophy of Ayurveda is that everything in the cosmos is reflected and mirrored in the microcosm of the human being. The universe is composed of five elements: ether, air, fire, water, and earth. These five elements intertwine in varying degrees to create the three doshas:

Vata, Pitta, Kapha.

Vata:

Composition: Air and space, Vata is associated with movement, creativity, and flexibility. People with a dominant Vata dosha tend to be thin, have dry skin, and experience anxiety and insomnia.

Strengths: learn quickly, highly creative, multitasker, kind-hearted, flexible, "on the go," naturally slim.

Weaknesses: forgetful, anxious, unstable mood, can get overwhelmed easily, highly sensitive to the cold, have trouble sleeping, varied appetite and eating patterns, prone to digestive issues and gas, poor circulation.

Pitta:

Composition: Fire and water, Pitta is associated with digestion, metabolism, and transformation. People with a dominant Pitta dosha tend to have a medium build, oily skin and are prone to anger and irritability.

Strengths: intelligent, purposeful, learns quickly, self-determined, learns skills easily, a

strong desire for success, a strong, natural leader, fast metabolism, good circulation, vibrant skin, and hair.

Weaknesses: impatient, prone to conflict, increased appetite, moody when hungry, prone to acne and inflammation, sensitive to heat and cold.

Kapha:

Composition: Earth and water, Kapha is associated with stability, structure, and lubrication. People with a dominant Kapha dosha tend to have a heavier build, oily skin, and experience lethargy and depression.

Strengths: empathetic, caring, trusting, patient, calm, wise, happy, romantic, strong bones and joints, a healthy immune system.

Weaknesses: prone to weight gain, slow metabolism, sluggishness, over-sleeping, breathing issues (asthma, allergies), increased risk of heart disease, mucus, susceptible to depression, required regular motivation and encouragement. 3,4

The elements and doshas that comprise the macrocosm also make up our individual constitutions. The purpose of Ayurveda is to bring balance to these doshas and elements in harmony with the changing times of day, seasons, and phases of our lives, to promote and maintain quality and longevity of life.

The ayurvedic treatment combines products (mainly in the form of herbal medicine-- yet may also be derived from animals, metals, and minerals.)⁵ Treatment options include diet, acupuncture, massage therapy, yoga, exercise, and lifestyle. The goal of Ayurvedic medicine is to promote health, not fight disease. From this perspective, optimal health emerges from our daily habits-- how we eat, breathe, move, sleep, interact, and connect with one another and our world.

Ayurvedic practitioners create a treatment plan specifically designed for each individual, taking into account their unique constitution (prakriti), their primary life force, and in balance with the world we live in.

The fundamentals on which the Ayurvedic system of medicine is based are essentially true for all times and do not change from age to age. These fundamentals are based on human factors and on intrinsic causes, not extrinsic causes. Civilization may change, human habits may change, and the environment may change but humanity remains the same. Changes in the environment, new modes of living, and new avocations, all might contribute to certain modifications of a disease or the appearance of new diseases. But disease attacks the human host, and if the human being is very much the same as his ancestor, the reactions to the

disease, signs, and symptoms would be the same. The methods adopted to cure the disease may differ in their form but not in their essential approach.

It is said that the originators of the Ayurvedic system of medicine did not base their practices on the experimental method if by this it is meant that there are no record of studies in anatomy, physiology, pathology and pharmacology, the criticism is not without meaning. But the development of surgery the classifications of disease, the observations of signs and symptoms, prognosis, and the descriptions of the nature, toxicity, and therapeutic value of drugs as described in the literature all clearly demonstrate a high level of knowledge which would not have been possible for men without the scientific approach. One thing we should not lose sight of is the fact that the men who gave the system to the world were drawn from the highest intellectual and spiritual hierarchy. Their motive was compassion. Their purpose was to alleviate human suffering and their recorded precepts were for their disciples whom they trained for the service of humanity. The emphasis therefore in the texts is on the practical aspects of medicine. It is also possible that these great seers through the practice of Yogic disciplines were endowed with the faculty of intuition which helped them to discover many truths. Students of chemistry will be familiar with the famous observation "Let us learn to dream; then perhaps we shall learn the truth". We see that the experimental method has serious limitations, especially in the world of medicine.

A medical journal from thirty years ago looks outdated and obsolete today. The so-called truths or findings given to the world yesterday with a wealth of experimental findings and statistical figures are controverted today with evidence that is no less impressive. While we should all believe in progress, we should fight the temptations to look at mere newness as a virtue. Nor should we underrate the contributions made to human knowledge by seers endowed with intuition or some indefinable faculty that has enabled them to perceive the truth far ahead of their time.

Resources:

1. <https://www.mountsinai.org/health-library/treatment/ayurveda>
2. <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/wellness-and-prevention/ayurveda#:~:text=Ayurveda%2C%20a%20natural%20system%20of,translates%20to%20knowledge%20of%20life.>
3. <https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/vata-dosha-pitta-dosha-kapha-dosha#the-three-doshas>
4. <https://www.yogajournal.com/lifestyle/health/intro-ayurveda/>
5. <https://www.nccih.nih.gov/health/ayurvedic-medicine-in-depth>