

Foods to Avoid by Dosha

by

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Traditional Ayurvedic texts include detailed lists of foods that are beneficial and harmful for each dosha, and therefore each particular body constitution. Food lists for dual doshas, meaning body types which have fairly equal amounts of two doshas (Vata-Pitta, Pitta-Kapha or Vata-Kapha) can also be found in traditional texts. Modern day text books tend to follow the traditional Ayurvedic guidelines, but there are some different opinions of the proper foods for each dosha depending on the author. Foods are also now available such as crackers, canned foods, prepared foods, etc, that were not available in older times. Reviewing food guidelines by various authors is recommended. A comparison to the food guidelines of Chinese and Tibetan medicine is also very useful. It really comes down to each individual person and how they react to a particular food.

Different times of the year can also influence the effect a food has on us, as can eating a certain food at a different time of the day, or certain combinations of foods. A food which may be OK for you in the summer may be harmful in the winter, or a food eaten at lunch time may have a different effect if eaten at night.

One way in which Ayurveda lists foods is by their heating or cooling effect. Some foods are heating and therefore should be avoided during hot summer months. Other foods are cooling and should be avoided during the cold winter months. Some Chinese medicine authors take an opposite view and suggest warming foods during the summer and cooling foods during the winter. Their logic is that too much difference between the temperature inside the body and the temperature outside the body causes conflict which can begin an imbalance leading to disease. It has been observed that traditional cultures in warm climates tend to consume hot spices. One theory for this is that the hot spices promote sweating which has a cooling effect on the body. Also in a warm climate our digestion and appetite become weaker due to the hot weather. Hot spices help with digestion, and also impart taste to the food, making it more appealing.

The following list shows some of the main foods which greatly increase each particular dosha and which should be avoided if you either

1) have a higher natural amount of that dosha or

2) are currently experiencing an increase in that particular dosha.

**** This list should not be considered a complete listing of foods to avoid. There are many different opinions as to the correct foods for each dosha. ****

Vata constitution or imbalance ~ avoiding wind, cold and dryness

- dry foods including dry fruit, toast, crackers, granola, popcorn, etc.
- carbonated drinks (due to the gas in the carbonation)
- coffee, tea (caffeine in any form)
- roasted meat (meat should be in soups)
- beans (except mung with proper spices for Vata)
- split peas, chick peas (garbanzo beans)
- broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts (gas forming)
- lettuce
- raw foods
- ice cream (due to the coldness)
- white refined sugar (raw sugar and some fresh honey is OK ~ fresh is less than six months old)
- cold food and drink
- mushrooms (gas forming)
- yeasted breads (the yeast may cause gas formation)

Pitta constitution or imbalance ~ avoiding heat and acid

- many people have allergies to wheat, corn, soy, nuts, eggs, dairy and shellfish. These items should always be avoided in cases of increased Pitta.
- tomatoes, potatoes, peppers, eggplant (nightshade family)
- all sugar (sugar, honey, maple syrup, etc) and sweets (candy, cookies, etc)
- sweet potatoes, yams (the high sugar content may increase acidity)
- oats (contains phytic acid)
- coffee, tea (due to the acidity, not the caffeine ~ some herbal teas may be OK)
- brown rice (is considered heating)
- spinach, Swiss chard, beet greens, rhubarb (contain oxalic acid)
- radish, daikon (any spicy vegetables)
- carrots (may be OK if the central portion is removed)
- corn products including fresh corn, popcorn, corn meal, corn chips, etc.
- salt, soy sauce, seaweed (any product that contains sodium)
- all spices (coriander is an exception in some cases)
- all red meat and meat in general
- anything fried or deep fried
- all oils and oily food (except small amounts of ghee)

- cheese (except paneer, also called farmers cheese)
- hot foods and drinks
- alcohol, beer, wine
- carbonated drinks (due to carbonic acid)
- drinks or juices with high sugar content including sport drinks
- bananas, apples, figs, pineapple, papaya (most fruit in general due to sugar content or acidity ~ dried prunes are OK as they induce purgation which directly decreases Pitta)
- honey (except some fresh honey, 1/2 teaspoon per day - fresh is less than six months old)
- nuts of all types (especially roasted and salted nuts - some also say avoid coconut although young coconut meat may be OK)
- chocolate
- ice cream (due to the sugar and the effect of the cold ~ the cold is said to cause internal heat as the body tries to compensate for the cold in the stomach)
- all citrus fruit including lemons, limes, grapefruit and pineapple
- yogurt, kefir or anything fermented
- prepared meats such as lunch meats, salami, pepperoni, ham, hot dogs, etc. (due to the sodium and nitrates)
- yeasted breads (due to the acidity of the yeast)
- all condiments including mayonnaise, catsup, mustard, dressings, etc.
- vinegar or products containing vinegar
- pickles and pickled products
- all shellfish including clams, oysters, shrimp, muscles, scallops, lobster, etc.
- salt water fish (fresh water fish is usually OK in moderation, trout is best)
- egg yolks
- garlic, onion, leeks, scallions (all allium family)
- avocados
- grapes (traditional Ayurvedic texts list grapes as one of the best foods for Pitta, however, some people experience throat irritation when eating raw grapes. Grapes are also very acidic)
- strawberries, blueberries
- cantaloupe
- wheat (in some cases), rye, buckwheat
- okra (ladies fingers) in cases of skin irritation

Kapha constitution or imbalance ~ avoiding oiliness, heaviness, wetness, mucus and cold

- all dairy products including yogurt and all cheese including paneer
- bread and flour products (mucus forming)
- wheat and rice
- eggs (white and yolk)

- salt, soy sauce, seaweed (any product that contains sodium ~ some types of seaweed may be OK when treating certain thyroid conditions)
- all types of sugar including maple syrup (except 1 teaspoon old honey per day in 8 ounces of hot water with 1/2 teaspoon lemon juice in the morning ~ old honey is over 6 months old and is considered to be drying)
- sweets (pastries, cakes, cookies, etc) or sweet taste
- sweet fruit including figs, melons, bananas, etc.
- all cold food and drink
- all oils and oily food (except small amounts of sesame or mustard oil)
- fried or deep fried food
- meat (except a little roasted lean meat ~ white chicken or white turkey is best)
- salt water fish (fresh water fish is usually OK in moderation, trout is best)
- cooked oats (some dry oats are OK)
- potatoes, sweet potatoes, yams
- alcohol, beer, wine
- nuts (due to the oil)
- pickles and pickled products (due to sodium and vinegar)
- cucumbers (due to wetness and cooling effect)
- okra (increases sliminess)

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