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How to Remedy Common Vata Imbalances

Vata-Pacifying Guidelines

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| <p>Daily Regime</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Rise daily by 6am . Daily bowel movement . Abhyanga wt sesame oil . Shower and Pray/Meditate . Time for rest & reflection . Yoga/walking/short hikes . Listen to soothing music . Keep warm . Get enough sleep 7- 8 hrs . Meditate & bed by 10pm | <p>Daily Meals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Breakfast by 8am . Lunch 12pm - 1pm . Dinner by 7pm . Favor warm and freshly cooked . Favor Sweet, Sour, and salty foods . Minimize intake of raw foods . Avoid cold foods and drinks | <p>Legumes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Mung beans . Red lentils . Tofu/Tempeh <p>Grains</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Rice . Quinoa . Wheat . Cooked Oatmeal | <p>Veggies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Asparagus . Zucchini . Carrot . Beets <p>Fruits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Banana . Avocado . Apricot . Berries | <p>Spices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Cardamom . Cumin . Ginger . Cinnamon <p>Fats/Oils</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> . All Soaked nuts and seeds . Coconut oil . Olive oil |
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Ayurveda - Vata Pacifying Foods

(source: <https://www.banyanbotanicals.com/info/ayurvedic-living/living-ayurveda/diet/vata-pacifying-foods/>)

Vata is balanced by a diet of freshly cooked, whole foods that are soft or mushy in texture, rich in protein and fat, seasoned with a variety of warming spices, and served warm or hot. These foods calm vata by lubricating and nourishing the tissues, preserving moisture, and maintaining warmth, all while supporting proper digestion and elimination. What follows are some specific principles that we hope will empower you in discovering a vata pacifying diet that works for you.

Qualities to Favor and Avoid

Vata is cool, dry, rough and light, so eating foods that neutralize these qualities - foods that are warm, moist, oily, smooth, and nourishing - can help to balance excess vata. This section offers a closer look at the qualities of various foods. An improved understanding of these qualities can guide you in making specific dietary choices that will better support vata.

Favor Warm Over Cold

The warm quality can be emphasized by eating foods that are warm in

temperature, foods that have a warming energetic, and by using warming spices generously (most vata pacifying spices are warming... see our list below). On the other hand, it is best to avoid foods with a cooling energetic, cold and frozen foods or drinks, carbonated drinks, large quantities of raw fruits and vegetables, and even leftovers that have been kept in the refrigerator or freezer. The cold quality is inherently increased in these foods, even if they are served hot.

Favor Moist and Oily Over Dry

Vata's dryness is offset by eating cooked rather than raw foods, by cooking and garnishing foods with generous amounts of high-quality oils or ghee, and by staying hydrated. Drink plenty of fluids, ideally warm or hot - but no cooler than room-temperature. In addition, moist foods like berries, melons, summer squash, zucchini, and yogurt help offset vata's dry quality, as can hydrating preparations such as soups or stews. Oily foods like avocado, coconut, olives, buttermilk, cheese, eggs, whole milk (preferably non-homogenized), wheat, nuts and seeds are generally supportive as well. Avoid exceptionally drying foods like popcorn, crackers, white potatoes, beans, and dried fruits.

Favor Grounding, Nourishing, and Stabilizing Over Light

While the heavy quality is the true antithesis to vata's lightness, very heavy foods like deep-fried choices can easily overtax vata's delicate digestion. Eating too much in one sitting can also be overly heavy, so it's important not to overeat. It's better to think in terms of grounding vata's lightness with sustenance - eating foods that offer solid, stabilizing sources of energy and deep nourishment to the physical body. Generally, these foods will naturally taste sweet. Cooked grains, spiced milk, root vegetables, stewed fruits, nuts, and seeds are good examples. Highly processed foods such as canned foods, ready-made meals, and pastries are often quite heavy, lack prana (vital life force) and are generally quite detrimental to vata. Similarly, stimulants such as caffeine, nicotine, and hard alcohol should be avoided, as they are generally not supportive of vata's need to stay grounded and stable.

Favor Smooth Over Rough

There's a reason that raw fruits and vegetables are sometimes called roughage; their fibrous structure gives them a very rough quality. This is why vata does well to resist large quantities of raw vegetables and fruits. Even cooked, some foods

like broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, dark leafy greens, and many beans are exceptionally rough and should be avoided. Conversely, eating foods and preparations that are smooth in texture - things like bananas, rice pudding, hot cereal, hot spiced milk, puréed soups, and the like - can really help to soothe vata's roughness.

Tastes to Favor and Avoid

Vata is pacified by the sweet, sour, and salty tastes and aggravated by the pungent, bitter, and astringent tastes. Understanding these tastes allows us to better navigate a vata pacifying diet without having to constantly refer to extensive lists of foods to favor and avoid.

Emphasize

Sweet

- Favor naturally sweet foods like fruits, most grains, root vegetables, milk, ghee, fresh yogurt, nuts, seeds, most oils, and vata-pacifying meats (see our list of foods to favor and avoid).
- The sweet taste is the foundation of a vata pacifying diet. It is the predominant taste in most of vata's staple foods.
- Sweet foods tend to be grounding, nourishing, strength building, and satisfying.
- Emphasizing the sweet taste does NOT require us to eat large amounts of refined sugar or sugary sweet foods. In fact, doing so tends to exacerbate vata's tendency to over-exert and then crash.

Sour

- Favor sour additions like a squeeze of lemon or lime juice, a splash of vinegar, a side of kimchi or sauerkraut, a bowl of miso, a slice of cheese, or a dollop of sour cream.
- Sour fruits like green grapes, oranges, pineapple, and grapefruit are also appropriate when eaten alone, and in moderation.
- The sour taste is generally not the centerpiece of a meal; instead, it tends to compliment and enliven other flavors.
- The sour taste awakens the mind and senses, improves digestion, promotes energy, moistens other foods, and eliminates excess wind.

Salty

- The salty taste is almost singularly derived from salt itself.
- But favoring the salty taste does not mean that your food should taste as if it's being cured.
- In fact, salt is already over-emphasized in the typical western diet. Simply being mindful of including savory flavors and ensuring that your food has some salt in it will likely be sufficient.
- Salt stimulates the appetite and digestion, helps retain moisture, supports proper elimination, and improves the flavor of many foods.

Minimize

Pungent

- Pungent is a spicy, hot flavor like that found in chilies, radishes, turnips, raw onions, and many spices. That said, in moderation, most spices are actually vata pacifying - see our list of foods to favor and avoid.
- The pungent taste is hot, dry and light; too much of it is extremely drying to the system, exacerbates the rough quality, and therefore disturbs vata.

Bitter

- The bitter taste predominates bitter greens (like kale, dandelion greens, collard greens, etc.), and is also found in foods like bitter melon, Jerusalem artichokes, burdock root, eggplant, and chocolate.
- The bitter taste is cooling, rough, drying, light, and generally reducing - all qualities that tend to aggravate vata.

Astringent

- The astringent taste is basically a flavor of dryness - a chalky taste that dries the mouth and may cause it to contract (picture biting into a very green banana).
- Legumes are classically astringent in taste - adzuki beans, black-eyed peas, pinto beans, soybeans, etc.
- The astringent taste is also found in some fruits, vegetables, grains, and baked goods - things like apples, cranberries, pomegranate, artichokes, broccoli, cauliflower, lettuce, rye, rice cakes and crackers.
- The astringent taste is dry, cold, heavy and rough in nature and so

understandably aggravates vata.

How to Eat

When it comes to pacifying vata, how we eat may be just as important as what we eat. Vata is deeply soothed when we choose to eat in peaceful environment - one where we can offer our full attention to the act of being nourished. And routine itself balances vata, so the practice of eating three square meals per day (at about the same time each day) further reduces vata and helps to strengthen delicate digestion. Sometimes, it is impossible to avoid all vata-aggravating foods. In a pinch, the detrimental potential of these foods can be minimized by making sure that they are well cooked, served warm, and garnished generously with oil or ghee. Lastly, because vata requires regular nourishment, it is best to avoid fasting. If you feel the need to do a cleanse of some sort, a mono diet of kitchari is much less vata-provoking than a fruit or juice cleanse, and is certainly better than an all-out fast.

Suggested Meals

Breakfast

Breakfast is a critical meal when vata is elevated. After an overnight fast, vata needs real nourishment and a hearty breakfast is generally very stabilizing.

- Hot Cereals - things like oatmeal, rice pudding, cream of rice, and cream of wheat - are also excellent choices. For a richer, creamier breakfast, the grains can be cooked in milk (or a substitute), or you can add a bit of hot milk after cooking. To make this meal even more vata friendly, garnish it with ghee, sliced almonds, and flax seeds, sweeten it with honey or maple syrup, and add warming spices like cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger, cloves, and cardamom.
- Another delectable breakfast is a date and almond shake, made from soaked dates, soaked and peeled almonds, and boiled milk (or a substitute) - blended together with warming spices like cinnamon and nutmeg.

Lunch

Ideally, lunch is the main meal of the day, meaning it's the largest and the most

nourishing of the three. Hearty grains, steamed and sautéed vegetables, appropriate breads, soups and stews are excellent building blocks for lunch. This is also the best time to enjoy a small salad, if you must have one. Try something like:

- Split mung dal with basmati rice, sautéed okra with shredded coconut, and naan. If you like, garnish this meal with cilantro, cucumbers, and a dash of yogurt.
- Rice pasta or gnocchi with pesto, black olives, pine nuts, cheese, and a side of marinated beets. If you like, add a small green salad tossed with an oily but stimulating dressing - like lemon-ginger vinaigrette.

Dinner

Dinner is ideally a bit smaller and lighter than lunch. But to soothe vata, it needs to offer adequate nourishment. Soups, stews, or a smaller serving of lunch often fit the bill. Try:

- Carrot soup with quinoa, asparagus, and a buttered tortilla.