

Pitta

The Energy of Digestion and Metabolism

General Description

Pitta types have many of the qualities of fire. Fire is hot, penetrating, sharp and agitating. Similarly, pitta people have warm bodies, penetrating ideas and sharp intelligence. When out of balance, they can become very agitated and short-tempered. The pitta body type is one of medium height and build, with ruddy or coppery skin. They may have many moles and freckles. Their skin is warm and less wrinkled than vata skin. Their hair tends to be silky and they often experience premature graying or hair loss. Their eyes are of medium size and the conjunctiva is moist. The nose is sharp and the tip tends to be reddish.



Those with pitta-dominant constitutions have a strong metabolism, good digestion and strong appetites. They like plenty of food and liquids and tend to love hot spices and cold drinks. However, their constitution is balanced by sweet, bitter and astringent tastes. Pitta people's sleep is sound and of medium duration. They produce large quantities of urine and feces, which tend to be yellowish, soft and plentiful. They perspire easily and their hands and feet stay warm. Pitta people have a lower tolerance for sunlight, heat and hard physical work.

Mentally, pitta types are alert and intelligent and have good powers of comprehension. However, they are easily agitated and aggressive and tend toward hate, anger and jealousy when imbalanced. In the external world, pitta people like to be leaders and planners and seek material prosperity. They like to exhibit their wealth and possessions. Pitta people tend to have diseases involving the fire principle such as fevers, inflammatory diseases and jaundice. Common symptoms include skin rashes, burning sensation, ulceration, fever, inflammations or irritations such as conjunctivitis, colitis or sore throats.

Since the attributes of pitta are oily, hot, light, mobile, dispersing and liquid, an excess of any of these qualities aggravates pitta. Summer is a time of heat, the pitta season. Sunburn, poison ivy, prickly heat and short tempers are common. These kinds of pitta disorders tend to calm down as the weather gets cooler. The diet and lifestyle changes emphasize coolness—cool foods, avoidance of chilies and spices (especially difficult for New Mexicans), and cool climates. People with excessive pitta need to exercise at the coolest part of the day.

Dietary Considerations

General food guidelines for pacifying pitta include avoiding sour, salty and pungent foods. Vegetarianism is best for pitta people and they should refrain from eating meat, eggs, alcohol and salt. To help calm their natural aggressiveness and compulsiveness, it is beneficial to incorporate sweet, cooling and bitter foods and tastes into their diets.

Barley, rice, oats and wheat are good grains for pitta dominant individuals and vegetables should form a substantial part of their diet. Tomatoes, radishes, chilies, garlic and raw onions should all be avoided. In fact, any vegetable that is too sour or hot will aggravate pitta, but most other vegetables will help to calm it. Daikon radishes are cleansing for the liver when pitta is in balance but should be avoided otherwise. Salads and raw vegetables are good for pitta types in the spring and summer as are any sweet fruits. Sour fruits should be avoided with the exception of limes, used sparingly.

Animal foods, especially seafood and eggs, should only be taken in moderation by pitta types. Chicken, turkey, rabbit and venison are all right. All legumes except red and yellow lentils are good in small amounts, with black lentils, chickpeas and mung beans being the best.

Most nuts and seeds have too much oil and are heating for pitta. However, coconut is cooling and sunflower and pumpkin seeds are all right occasionally. Small amounts of coconut, olive and sunflower oils are also good for pitta.

Sweet dairy products are good and include milk, unsalted butter, ghee and soft, unsalted cheeses. Yogurt can be used if it is blended with spices, a little sweetener and water. In fact, pitta people can use a sweetener better than the other two doshas because it relieves pitta. However, they should avoid hot spices, using cardamom, cinnamon, coriander, fennel and turmeric predominantly, with small amounts of cumin and black pepper.

Coffee, alcohol and tobacco should be completely avoided although the occasional beer may be relaxing for a pitta person. Black tea may also be used occasionally with a little milk and a pinch of cardamom.

General guidelines for balancing pitta:

Avoid excessive heat

Avoid excessive oil

Avoid excessive steam

Limit salt intake

Eat cooling, non-spicy foods

Exercise during the cooler part of the day