

# Vata

## The Energy of Movement

### General Description

Vata provides the essential motion for all bodily processes and is extremely vital for health. On an annual basis, vāta is most prominent in the fall and at the change of seasons, and these are the most important times to be careful of diet and lifestyle. One purpose of lifestyle considerations is stabilize this motion. Routine is very useful in assisting the vata individual to effectively ground all this moving energy.



A person with vata predominant is blessed with a quick mind, flexibility and creativity. Mentally, they usually grasp concepts quickly but then forget them just as quickly. Alert, restless and very active, vata people walk, talk and think fast, but are easily fatigued. They tend to have less willpower, confidence, boldness and tolerance for fluctuation than other types and often feel unstable and ungrounded. When unbalanced, vata types may become fearful, nervous and anxious. In the external world, vata types tend to earn money quickly and spend it quickly. They are not good planners and as a consequence may suffer economic hardship.

Vata types have variable appetite and digestion. They are often attracted to astringent foods like salad and raw vegetables, but their constitution is balanced by warm, cooked foods and sweet, sour and salty tastes. With a tendency to produce little urine, their feces are often hard, dry and small in size and quantity.

Vata resides in the colon, as well as the brain, ears, bones, joints, skin and thighs. Vata people are more susceptible to diseases involving the air principle, such as emphysema, pneumonia and arthritis. Other common vata disorders include flatulence, tics, twitches, aching joints, dry skin and hair, nerve disorders, constipation, and mental confusion. Vata in the body tends to increase with age as is exhibited by the drying and wrinkling of the skin.

Since the attributes of vata are dry, light, cold, rough, subtle, mobile and clear, any of these qualities in excess can cause imbalance. Frequent travel, especially by plane, loud noises, continual stimulation, drugs, sugar and alcohol all derange vata, as does exposure to cold and cold liquids and foods. Like the wind, vata types have a hard time becoming and staying grounded. Routine is difficult but essential if vata is to be lowered and controlled. It is best for vata types to go to bed by 10 PM as they need more rest than the other types. In general, people with excessive vata respond most rapidly to warm, moist, slightly oily, heavy foods. Steam baths, humidifiers and moisture in general are helpful. Daily oil massage before bath or shower is also recommended.

### Dietary Considerations

General food guidelines for decreasing vata include warm, well-cooked, unctuous foods. One should have small meals three or four times a day and may snack as needed while maintaining a two hour gap between each meal. Regularity in meal times is important for vata. Those with vata-dominant constitutions do well with one- pot meals such as soups, stews and

casseroles. They can use more oil in cooking their foods than the other two doshas and experience better digestion if they limit their intake of raw foods.

Well-cooked oats and rice are good for vata because they are not too drying when cooked with plenty of water and butter or ghee. While cooked vegetables are best for vata, the occasional salad with a good oily or creamy dressing is all right. Nightshades—tomatoes, potatoes, eggplants and peppers—as well as spinach should be avoided if the vata person has stiff, aching joints or muscles. Sweet, ripe and juicy fruits are good for vata. The astringent and drying fruits, such as cranberries, pomegranates and raw apples, should be avoided. Fruit should always be eaten by itself on an empty stomach.

Many vata people can satisfy their need for protein by judicious use of dairy products, but can also use eggs, chicken, turkey, fresh fish and venison if they wish. Legumes are difficult to digest and should be consumed in limited quantity by those trying to pacify vata. The legumes should be the split type and soaked before cooking. Cooking them with a little oil and spices, such as turmeric, cumin, coriander, ginger, garlic and hing (asafoetida), will help prevent vata from being disturbed.

All nuts and seeds are good for vata, but are best used as butters or milks. Ten almonds, soaked in water overnight with skins removed the next morning, are a satisfying early morning food. Sesame oil is warming for vata, but all oils are good. All dairy products are good for vata with hard cheese being eaten sparingly. All spices are good, but should not be overused. Vatas can have half a glass of wine, diluted with water, during or after a meal. Since vata people tend to be prone to addiction, they should avoid sugar, caffeine and tobacco. Intensity itself can be intoxicating to vata, so one should seek relaxation and meditation to reduce vata.

#### **General guidelines for balancing vata:**

Keep warm

Keep calm

Avoid cold, frozen or raw foods

Avoid extreme cold

Eat warm foods and spices

Keep a regular routine

Get plenty of rest