

## Cultivate your Life Through Ayurveda and Yoga

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As we know, the world is rapidly changing. Life is becoming more stressful and people gravitate toward instant gratification effects such as eating fast food on the go and receiving text messages instantly. There is no denying that health issues have and will occur due to three stressors, physical, emotional and toxic stress. Two ancient teachings, yoga and Ayurveda, complement each other to gain a deeper understanding of human existence and health.

In Sanskrit, Ayurveda translates to “the science of life and longevity.” Ayurveda is the art of daily living synergistically with the laws of nature. It does not discount one’s beliefs, but promotes a bigger picture approach of physical, emotional, mental and spiritual wellbeing. In the Ayurvedic philosophy, life is in balance when the three doshas, or fundamental energies, are in balance as well as balance between mind, body and spirit.

The three doshas are vata, pitta and kapha.

### Vata

Vata is the energy and principle of movement and related to space and air in the sense of prana. Vata is the flow of intelligence and energy throughout the mind and body. Vata is responsible for all movement in the body from a heartbeat, breath to movement of the cytoplasm in the cells. When balanced vata is creative, flexible, light, happy and joyful. When imbalanced vata is anxious, fearful, nervous and other traits that relate to the nervous system.

**Qualities:** dry, light, cold, clear, mobile and dispersing

### Pitta

Pitta is translated to fire, meaning heat or metabolism. The ruler of the stomach, pitta promotes appetite and vitality. It also plays a major role cellular absorption, digestion and body temperature. When balanced, pitta promotes intelligence and understanding of continuous learning. Out-of-balance pitta exudes fiery emotions such as anger, jealousy, criticism and hatred.

**Qualities:** hot, sharp, light, oily, liquid, pungent and sour

### Kapha

Kapha is known as the water and earth qualities. Kapha supplies liquid to the cells and systems including joints, skin and immune system. It also promotes anabolism, the repair of cells, muscles and bones. Excess kapha is seen through congestion of the lungs and psychologically greedy, lustful and envious.

**Qualities:** Strength, vigor, stability, love, calmness and forgiving

Each person contains qualities from all three doshas but generally one prime dosha dominates the constitution. It is common to see an individual with two doshas that are closely related or contain a secondary dosha. Therefore, if someone is primarily a pitta, but exudes many vata traits, one would be considered a Pitta-Vata. The Pitta-Vata would still contain kapha qualities, but to a lesser degree. To know your dosha it is best to consult an Ayurvedic doctor; in addition to, taking a constitution questionnaire.

In our stressful society, doshas or energies are easily imbalanced and disturbed. Thus, when one

dosha is out of balance, it does affect the other doshas. Many imbalances are caused from Vata, the principle of movement. When understanding vata, yogis can see how modern day stress adversely affects our health.

Stress causes a lack of focus, anxiety, depression and other mental issues. Like a snowball, stress manifests into something greater affecting the digestion and immune system, known as pitta and vata. When an imbalanced dosha is present, it requires the opposite qualities or remedies.

Yoga and Ayurveda are complimentary sciences and share the same source of knowledge, language and cultural foundation. Yoga poses are specific toward each constitution or imbalance. Below are examples of what poses are specific toward each imbalance or constitution.

## **Vata**

**Qualities:** dry, light, cold, clear, mobile and dispersing.

When imbalanced, incorporate yoga poses that promote: stability, focus, warmth, grounding and slow movements

**Eye Gaze:** Grounding eye gaze focus

**Vata-Balancing Poses include:**

Sun Salutations  
Downward facing dog  
Tree Pose  
Cobra  
Warrior 1 & 2  
Supine Spinal Twists

## **Pitta**

**Qualities:** hot, sharp, light, oily, liquid, pungent and sour.

When imbalanced, incorporate yoga poses that promote: cool, soft, grace and flow, side bends, twists, forward bends and slower-paced movements

**Eye Gaze:** Horizon or outward eye gaze focus

**Pitta-Balancing Poses include:**

- Moon Salutations
- Chair
- Side Angle Pose
- Revolved Side Angle Pose
- Bicycles
- Supine Spinal Twists

## **Kapha**

**Qualities:** Strength, vigor, stability, love, calmness and forgiving

When imbalanced, incorporate yoga poses that promote: heat, lightness, mobility, sharpness, dynamic and vigor

**Eye Gaze:** Upward and Sharp eye gaze

**Kapha-Balancing Poses include:**

- Sun Salutations
- Warrior Poses
- Side Planks
- Cow's Face
- Bow Pose
- Standing and Supine Spinal Twists

Life is a constant flow of emotions and events. Deeper awareness and taking care of our inner and outer worlds with yoga and Ayurveda will lead to a healthy, happy and long life.



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Elizabeth Kovar M.A. resides in Seattle, Washington where she instructs yoga and fitness programs, freelance writes, presents workshops and coordinates retreats. She obtained 318 hours of Ashtanga Yoga training from the Ayurveda Yoga Retreat and Hospital in Coonor, India. She also lived in the Yoga in Daily Life Ashram in Brisbane, Australia and now integrates travel and outdoors in part of her wellness pursuits to students. In 2013, Elizabeth will launch, "What the Om: An Indian Journey of Beauty, Culture and Chaos," which is a driver's seat perspective of her studying yoga in India experience. Kovar is co-speaker for the 2014 Alaskan cruise, Destination: A Better You. Questions or comments can be directed to [www.elizabethkovar.com](http://www.elizabethkovar.com) | [www.ABetterYouCruise.com](http://www.ABetterYouCruise.com)