

## Ayurvedic Nutrition – Vata diet

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### Diet Based on Individuality or Constitution

Each person has a different need of nutrients and a different capacity to absorb and assimilate those nutrients. A healthy food for one person can be a disease causing factor for another. Constitutional nutrition is based on this point of view. As the biochemical nutritional system does not have a working model for individual differences in humans we need to use an existing system with a long history of beneficial results. The Ayurvedic system fits this requirement in all respects. But in order to use the Ayurvedic system we need to look at food and food classifications differently than we are used to in the biochemical nutritional model.

First, we must begin to view foods not as separate categories per se. Instead we need to shift our point of view to seeing food according to the person who is going to eat it. This requires a paradigm shift in the way we normally look at food. The prime difference is looking at food according to the metabolism of the person rather than according to the nutrient content in the food or broad food groups.

Instead of saying, “Eat an apple a day because it has vitamin X”, the new viewpoint is, “What shall I eat today to keep my metabolism in balance.” This is an individualistic approach that requires the person to have a minimum understanding and responsibility for their own health.

It should be clearly understood that people using constitutional nutrition are doing so because they want to take control over their life and health. If this is not your desire or goal, then please give this book to someone who does want to take power over their health and life. If you are interested in blaming people or circumstances, or in giving your responsibility for your health to other people then it is best for you to use the old, outdated, biochemical model of nutrition, which requires that you surrender your experience, observations and intimately, your personal power.

Ayurveda is a patient friendly system that not only encourages participation - it demands it. Only you are capable of restoring your own health because it is you who is lifting your hand to your mouth and putting in the basic supply of health (food) into your body. No one is force feeding you food.

### Eat According to Your Metabolic Capacity

An effort has been made to distinguish between very aggravating and mildly aggravating foods as per constitution. This also applies to the opposite situation of very beneficial and mildly beneficial foods. In both cases an attempt has been made to show the variegated qualities of food in relation to an individual. The headings, **Best, Medium, Mixed, Sometimes, Rarely and Worst** have been chosen to give an indication of food actions on any given constitutional type. For the mathematical minded I have also included a percentage indication to show the percentage of use that is beneficial for any given type. This would mean that a food in the ‘Best’ column could be used 100% of the time by the person corresponding to the chart. By the same token a person choosing

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a food in the 'Rarely' column would use the food only 20% percent of the time.

The following chart will clarify the percentage idea. However, I have adjusted the number of times per week to correspond to the amount needed to aggravate a person. Hence, 20% is 1-2 times per week instead of four as eating a lemon four times a week is enough to aggravate a Pitta type, but not 1 or 2 times. The following chart can give you an idea as to the amount needed to disturb you. Note that almost no food is listed as 100% because it is possible to overeat or consume any food to the point of aggravation. Also note that almost no food is listed as 'Worst' or 0% because in most cases eating a food once per week will not aggravate your constitution. Therefore, we see that the majority of foods fall into a general use area for all of the constitutions.

100%	21	times in the week
80%	16-18	times in the week
60%	8-10	times in the week
40%	3-4	times in the week
20%	1-2	times in the week
0%	0	times in the week

It should be pointed out that a variety of foods need to be eaten in a week's time. If you eat a certain kind of food every day, day in and day out, it will have greater power to disturb you and cause disruption in your metabolism. It is far better to eat a variety of foods during the week.

**The Vata type of person** will tend to have a variable digestive capacity. This means that foods that are concentrated and hard to digest should be avoided or taken in small amounts. The Vata type is also sensitive to gas forming foods and foods that deplete the moisture content in the body. The astringency of some foods has a drying effect on the tissues and can deplete moisture content in tissues. The Vata type is the most prone to have food allergies due to their variable enzyme function. These people tend to binge and have both a variable appetite and digestion. Hence, they should consume food in moderate amounts and at regular intervals.

In the table below a summery is given on the effects of food groups on the Vata type of person. This is a general guide to show how groups of foods affect these people. The foods are grouped according to their general action on the metabolism of the Vata type and judge nutritional value accordingly.

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### Summary of Vata Type Food Groups

TYPE OF FOOD	Effect of food on constitution					
	100%	80%	60%	40%	20%	0%
Percentage	Best	Medium	Mixed	Some-times	Rarely	Worst
Fruits			X			
Vegetables			X			
Grains		X				
Beans					X	
Nuts & Seeds		X				
Dairy		X				
Oils		X				
Animal Products			X			
Sweeteners			X			
Spices		X				
Beverages		X				
Vitamins & Minerals				X		