

Balancing Vata Dosha Diet:

Ayurvedic texts recommend the principle of opposites for reducing the level of a dosha that has become aggravated. Since the characteristics of Vata includes dryness, coolness roughness, lightness and constant motion, qualities the are opposites to these in diet and lifestyle help restore balance to Vata dosha.

Dietary recommendations:

The following guidelines are to be utilized as a general indication of a proper diet according to your specific doshic balance. These guidelines may be adjusted to suit your individual needs as determined during your initial consultation. Other factors are seasonal, food allergies, and specific doshic imbalances that must be corrected by diet.

Include foods that are liquid or unctuous in your daily diet to balance dryness, some “heavy” foods offer substance and sustained nourishment, foods that are smooth in texture to offset roughness and foods that are warm or hot to balance the cool nature of Vata. So what exactly does this mean in terms of foods you should choose and foods that you should stay away from? Here are some specific dietary tips:

- 1) If you need to balance Vata, a fat-free diet is not for you. Cook foods with a little ghee, (clarified butter available at Indian grocery stores), or include some olive oil in your diet everyday. Olive oil cannot be heated to high temperatures without destroying its healing value, so drizzle olive oil over fresh soft flatbreads, cooked grains, or warm vegetable dishes. Ghee can be heated to moderately high temperatures without effecting its nourishing, healing qualities, (don't let the Ghee burn or smoke), so use ghee to saute vegetables, spices or other foods. You can even season dishes like soups with 1/4 teaspoon of Ghee while serving. Avoid too many dry foods such as crackers, dry cold cereal, etc.
- 2) Cooked foods, served hot or warm, are ideal for balancing Vata. Pureed soups, cooked fruit, hot cereal rice pudding and hot nourishing beverages such as nut milks or warm milk are excellent “comfort” foods and help pacify aggravated Vata. Avoid or minimize raw foods such as salads and raw sprouts.
- 3) The three Ayurvedic tastes that help balance Vata are sweet, sour and salty, so include more of these tastes in your daily diet. Milk, citrus fruits, or salted toasted sunflower or pumpkin seeds make good snack choices. Eat less of the bitter, pungent and astringent tastes.
- 4) Nuts are wonderful Vata-pacifiers. Soak ten almonds overnight. Blanch and eat in the early morning for a healthy burst of energy. Walnuts, hazelnuts, and cashews make good Vata-pacifying snacks.
- 5) Carrots, asparagus, tender leafy greens, beets, sweet potatoes and summer squash such as zucchini and lauki squash, (Indian vegetable), are the best vegetable choices. They become more digestible when chopped or cooked with Vata-pacifying spices. Vegetables can be combined with grains or mung beans for satisfying one-dish meals. Avoid nightshades, (such as tomato, white potato, eggplant and bell pepper). and larger beans.
- 6) Basmati rice is ideal for balancing Vata. Cook it with a little salt and ghee for added flavor. Wheat is also good; fresh flatbreads made with whole wheat flour, (called Aatta or chapatti flour and available at Indian grocery stores), and drizzled with a little melted ghee are delicious. These combine well with cooked vegetables or Vata-balancing chutneys, (see list below).

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7) Most spices are warming and enhance digestion, so cook with a combination of spices that appeal to your taste buds and is appropriate for the dish you are making. Always cook lentils or beans until tender, seasoning with spices from the “Foods to Favor” list below, and serve warm. Once soaked, dried beans are preferred. Soak beans at least two hours in hot water- soaking overnight is best. Once your beans are done soaking, discard the water. If you must use canned beans, rinse thoroughly. Ayurvedic spices such as small quantities of tumeric, cumin, coriander, fresh ginger, black pepper and saffron offer flavor, aroma and healing wisdom.

8) Drink lots of warm water throughout the day.

Food Guidelines For Balancing Vata Dosha:

Foods to Favor	Foods to have in Moderation	Foods to Avoid
Grains (Cooked Until Tender)		
Oats	Amaranth	Bread with Yeast
Quinoa	Pasta	Buckwheat
Rice (all kinds)	Polenta	Cereals (Cold, Dry or Puffed)
Seitan	Cous-Cous	Barley
Sprouted Wheat Bread (Essence)	Rice Cakes	Corn
Wheat		Crackers
Durham Flour (Indian Wheat Flour)		Granola
Pancakes		Millet
		Museli
		Oat Bran
		Oats (Dry)
		Rye
		Sago (Tapioca product)
		Spelt
		Tapioca
		Wheat Bran

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Foods to Favor	Foods to have in Moderation	Foods to Avoid
Vegetables (Cooked until tender)		
Snow Peas	Cauliflower	All Frozen, raw or dried vegetables
Asparagus	White Daikon (Radish)	Artichoke
Carrots	Cabbage	Brussels Sprouts
Cilantro	Jerusalem Artichokes	Broccoli
Cucumber	Leafy Greens	Bitter Melon (Gourd)
Green Beans	Lettuce	Burdock Root
Sweet Potatoes	Mustard Greens	Cabbage (raw)
Fennel (Anise)	Parsley	Cauliflower (raw)
Green Peas	Spaghetti Squash	Celery
Garlic	Spinach (Cooked)	Dandelion Greens
Green Chilies	Fresh Spinach (use sparingly)	Eggplant
Leek	Turnip Greens	Kale
Okra	Beet Greens (use sparingly)	Kohlrabi
Olives (Black)	Fresh Corn	Mushrooms
Parsnip	Horseradish (use sparingly)	Olives (Green)
Summer Squash	Tomatoes (Cooked without seeds- use sparingly)	Onions (raw)
Pumpkin	Onions	Green Peas (raw)
Rutabaga	Sprouts	Potatoes
Taro Root		Prickly Pear
Watercress		Radish (raw)
Zucchini		Winter Squash
		Tomatoes (raw)
		Turnip
		Wheat Grass

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Foods to Favor	Foods to have in Moderation	Foods to Avoid
		Sprouts
Fruits		
(Most Sweet Fruits)	Cantelope	Watermelon
Apples (cooked/ stewed or baked)	Honeydew	Cranberries
Apple Sauce	Grapefruit	Dates (dry)
Apricots	Kiwi (small quantities- 1 small Kiwi)	Figs (dry)
Avocado		Pear
Bananas (fully ripened)		Persimmon
Berries (all kinds/sweet)		Pomegranate
Cherries		Raisins (dry)
Coconut		Prunes (dry)
Dates (fresh or dried & cooked)		
Figs (fresh)		
Grapes (sweet)		
Lemon		
Lime		
Mangoes		
Oranges (sweet)		
Peach		
Papaya		
Pineapple (sweet)		
Plums (sweet)		
Prunes (soaked)		
Raisins (soaked or cooked)		
Rhubarb		
Strawberries (sweet)		

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Foods to Favor	Foods to have in Moderation	Foods to Avoid
Tamarind (in small quantities)		
Lentils & Legumes (well cooked- until soft)		
(Small Lentils and Beans are preferred)	Lentils (red)	Aduki Beans
Mung Dhal	Soy Milk	Black-Eyed Peas
Mung Beans	Soy Sauce	Black Beans
Tur Dhal	Soy Sausages	Garbonzo Beans (Chickpeas)
Urad Dhal	Tofu (diced, cooked with spices)	Lentils (brown)
	Miso (use sparingly)	Lima Beans
		Navy Beans
		Green Peas (dried)
		Pinto Beans
		Soy Beans
		Soy Flour
		Soy Powder
		Split Peas
		Temphe
		White Beans
Dairy		
Cow's Milk (Whole or 2%)	Cheese (hard)	Powdered Milk
Goat's Milk	Sour Cream	Yoghurt (Frozen or with fruit)
Butter	Ice Cream (small quantities)	
Buttermilk	Yoghurt (plain or vanilla, small quantities- 1/2 cup)	
Cheese (soft, not aged)		
Cottage Cheese		
Ghee		

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Foods to Favor	Foods to have in Moderation	Foods to Avoid
Goat Cheese		
Meat/ Animal Products		
Beef	Chicken (white meat)	Lamb
Buffalo	Shrimp (small quantities)	Pork
Chicken (dark meat)		Turkey (white meat)
Duck		Rabbit
Fish (cooked, freshwater or seawater)		Venison
Turkey (dark meat)		
Salmon		
Sardines		
Seafood (small quantities)		
Tuna fish		
Condiments		
Chutney (sweet or spicy)	Chili Peppers	Horseradish
Dulse	Chocolate	
Gomasio	Sprouts	
Black Pepper	Soy Sauce (small quantities)	
Hijiki		
Kelp		
Ketchup (Use very small quantities)		
Kombu		
Lemon		
Lime		
Mango Pickle		
Lime Pickle		

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Foods to Favor	Foods to have in Moderation	Foods to Avoid
Mayonaisse (very small quantities)		
Mustard		
Miso Broth		
Scallions		
Salt (small quantities)		
Pickles (small quantities, 1 or 2 pickles)		
Tamari		
Vinegar		
Vegetable Bullion		
Nuts		
All nuts in small quantities, 2 or 3 tablespoons		
Almonds (soaked, blanched)		
Walnuts (soaked)		
Pecans (soaked)		
Brazil Nuts		
Cashews		
Pistachios		
Hazelnuts		
Coconut		
Fiberts		
Macadamia Nuts		
Pine Nuts		
Peanuts		
Seeds		

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Foods to Favor	Foods to have in Moderation	Foods to Avoid
Chia	Popcorn (battered, small quantities)	Psyllium
Sesame (black)		
Sunflower		
Tahini		
Flax		
Pumpkin		
Oils		
Sesame	Coconut	
Ghee		
Olive		
Cold Press Nut Oils (Walnut, etc.)		
Flax seed		
Beverages		
Almond Milk	Alcohol (Beer, White Wine)	Caffeinated Beverages
Apple Cider	Prune Juice (small quantities)	Carbonated Drinks
Apple Juice	Tomato Juice (small quantities)	Coffee
Apricot Juice	Carob	Cold Dairy Drinks
Berry Juice (Except Cranberry)	Black Tea (small quantities)	Cranberry Juice
Carrot Juice		Iced Tea
Chai		Icy-Cold Drinks
Cherry Juice		Pear Juice
Grape Juice		Pomegranate Juice
Lemonade (small quantities)		Soy Milk (cold)
Mango Juice		V8 Juice
Miso Broth		

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Foods to Favor	Foods to have in Moderation	Foods to Avoid
Sweet Orange Juice		
Papaya Juice		
Peach Nectar		
Pineapple Juice		
Rice Milk		
Soy Milk (hot, and well spiced)		
Aloe Vera Juice		
Herbal Teas		
Ginger (fresh)	Orange Peel	Burdock
Bancha	Chicory	Corn Silk
Fennel	Chrysanthemum Flower	Dandelion
Cumin	Kukicha	Hibiscus
Chamomile	Peppermint	Mormon
Clove	Raspberry	Yarrow
Comfrey	Strawberry	Ginseng
Elder Flower	Wintergreen	
Eucalyptus	Alfalfa	
Fenugreek	Barley	
Hawthorne	Basil	
Juniper Berry	Borage	
Lavender	Cinnamon	
Lemon Grass	Lemon Balm	
Licorice	Nettle	
Marshmallow	Passion Flower	
Oat Straw	Red Clover	
Pennyroyal	Red Zinger	
Rose Hips	Violet	

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Foods to Favor	Foods to have in Moderation	Foods to Avoid
Saffron	Yerba Mate	
Sage	Jasmine	
Sarsaparilla		
Sassafras		
Spearmint		
Spices		
Ajwain (Indian Spice)	Cayenne Pepper	
Allspice	Asafortida (Hing- Indian spice)	
Anise	Fenugreek	
Basil		
Bay Leaf		
Black Pepper		
Caraway		
Cardamom		
Cinnamon		
Cloves		
Coriander		
Cumin		
Dill		
Fennel		
Garlic		
Ginger (fresh)		
Marjoram		
Mint		
Mustard Seeds		
Nutmeg		
Lemon Peel		

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Foods to Favor	Foods to have in Moderation	Foods to Avoid
Orange Peel		
Oregano		
Paprika		
Parsley		
Peppermint		
Pippali (Indian spice)		
Pomegranate Seeds		
Dried Mango Powder (Amchurna, Indian spice)		
Poppy Seeds		
Rosemary		
Saffron		
Salt (Rock, Sea Salt or Black Salt- small quantities)		
Savory		
Spearmint		
Star Anise		
Tarragon		
Thyme		
Turmeric		
Vanilla		
Wintergreen		
Sweeteners		
Barley Malt	Maple Syrup	White Sugar
Fruit Juice Concentrates		High Fructose Corn Syrup
Honey		
Jaggery		

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Foods to Favor	Foods to have in Moderation	Foods to Avoid
Turbinado (Raw Sugar, "Sugar in the Raw")		
Sugar Cane Juice (dried or fresh)		
Molasses		
Rice Syrup		
Food Supplements		
Bee Pollen		Barley Green
Royal Jelly		Brewer's Yeast
Spirulina		
Blue Green Algae		
Amino Acids		