



# ayurveda: knowledge of life

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## the 'eat right' mantra for summer

Summer is the season when, according to Ayurveda, the Pitta Dosha starts accumulating in the body. Pitta is the body energy responsible for fuelling all biochemical activities, including transformation, digestion, metabolism and assimilation. It is also responsible for enzymatic and endocrine activity, regulation of body temperature, pigmentation, vision, intelligence, and vitality. When Pitta starts accumulating in our body, it begins to manifest in the form of various imbalances in digestive, metabolic and endocrinal systems. This is why problems such as hyperacidity, dyspepsia, ulcers, anemia, and skin diseases attack us so easily in this season.

But, we fail to recognize that the main reason behind all these problems is the wrong diet choices we make. To keep your Pitta Dosha in check and stay away from diseases this summer, you need to take care of what you eat! Remember, foods that are pungent (spicy and oily), salty and sour in taste will increase Pitta – so stay away from them. On the other hand, bitter, sweet and astringent tastes reduce Pitta; so, focus more on herbs and food that contain these three tastes.

### the pitta diet chart

You're never too old to change your diet habits. Maintaining good health is not that difficult after all! Here's a simple daily diet routine that will help you ward off Pitta accumulation and also enhance overall wellbeing.

#### breakfast

Start your day with a cup of herbal tea (coriander and fennel), preferably without milk. For breakfast, choose from one of these options – oats, porridge, semolina, whole wheat bread, buckwheat or cooked rice. You can also include buttermilk in breakfast. These food items are low in fat content and easy to digest and therefore make the perfect pick to start your day. If you want to have fruits, go for apples, bananas or grapes but do not mix fruits with grains. Eat fruits separately. Soaked nuts and dry fruits (almonds, raisins, dates, figs etc.) can be taken in small quantity.

#### morning snacks

Eat fresh fruits such as sweet oranges, apples, dates, melons, water melon, and pomegranate. You can also have pumpkin and sunflower seeds in between meals.

#### lunch

Try to have your lunch between 12 noon and 2pm. You can have lentils with boiled rice or chapattis (Indian bread) and cooked vegetables including cabbage, cauliflower, mushroom, peas, potato, squash and zucchini. Also, take a lot of salads including celery and lettuce. Buttermilk is a good drink to be taken with lunch. Chew on fennel seeds after meals to cool down acid in the stomach.

#### evening snacks

If you feel hungry in the evenings, have roasted chickpeas or a handful of soaked and peeled almonds. You can also have a tea of licorice, coriander and fennel to pacify the heat in your body and improve digestion.

#### dinner

Vegetable soups, boiled/cooked vegetables and salads are highly recommended for dinner. Chapattis or whole wheat bread can be taken. Make sure that your dinner is not very heavy and is easy to digest, and is taken at least two hours before going to bed. You can also take half a cup of skimmed milk with a pinch of turmeric powder mixed in it before going off to sleep.

**Important Tip:** Pitta people should not take food that is too hot or cooked with too much oil, salt or hot spices. Eat fresh foods as they provide the maximum amount of energy; leftovers or processed foods are strongly discouraged. Eat only when you are hungry; eat small meals at regular intervals and never skip a meal. Also, sipping cool (not iced) water throughout the day keeps Pitta fire at bay. Drink 2-3 liters of water daily.

During summer one should avoid black tea, coffee, alcohol, smoking, red meat, hot spices, chillies, pickles, fried and acidic foods as they increase heat in the body.



### how to cook a pitta-pacifying meal

With the right foods, spices and preparation, you can maintain balance in the influence of Pitta on your body. When cooking for Pitta people, use olive, sunflower or coconut oil. Reduce the use of sesame, almond and corn oil as they are a bit heating. Also, make use of cooling spices such as cardamom, coriander, fennel, and turmeric and cumin. Avoid chillies, black pepper, ginger, garlic and hot spices. According to Ayurvedic cooking principles, Pittas should be given properly cooked or boiled vegetables. Cooking makes food easily digestible (as opposed to raw food) and steaming makes it soft and enhances the nutritive value of the vegetable.

Ayurveda says one of the most important things that make food nutritious is the amount of love with which it is cooked. So, whenever you cook for someone, do so with love and joy in your heart, and the meal is sure to benefit the health of the consumer.

Dr. Partap Chauhan is an author, public speaker, TV personality and master Ayurvedic physician. Although based in India he travels extensively giving talks and workshops. As the Director of Jiva Ayurveda he spearheads all its medical and pharmaceutical activities. [www.jiva.com](http://www.jiva.com)