

## **PRAKRUTI: The Body Constitution**

Ayurveda is a combination of two words Ayu (life) and Veda (knowledge). The literal translation is "knowledge of life". Those who wish to live happy, healthy and inspired lives can benefit from the wisdom Ayurveda holds. According to this science, every individual is both a unique phenomenon, a unique personality. Ayurveda teaches that we all have a constitution, which is our individual psychobiological makeup. From the moment of conception, this individual constitution is created by the universal energies of Space, Air, Fire, water and Earth. These five elements combine into the three fundamental energies or the "Doshas".

Ether and air constitute Vata, the energy of movement. Fire and water constitute Pitta, the principle of digestion or metabolism and Water and earth constitute Kapha the energy of structure and lubrication.

Through these doshas we accept the environmental changes and receive energy from food. Any disturbance in one dosha immediately creates an imbalance in the body and interrupts the discharge of waste material. A harmonious balance of all three doshas is essential for the maintenance of physical and mental well-being.

At the time of conception the predominant doshas in both the male seed (sperm) and female egg (ovum) determine an individual's doshic constitution (Prakruti). Prakruti encompasses one's mental and physical nature, it governs our behavior and our response to internal and external challenges. We call this today as the blue print of an individual , from ancient times Ayurveda has called it as" Prakruti" or individual constitution , a constant factor that does not change thought life.

It is our unique pattern of energy, our combination of physical, mental and emotional characteristics and predisposition. Without understanding our particular constitution, we fall into poor health and disease. No standardized medicine can adequately deal with all our individual variations. Only a system that can discern our different constitutional types has this capacity. Ayurveda contains such a well-developed science of individual types as its core wisdom. One of the great beauty of Ayurveda is that it so clearly helps us understand all our individual variations and special abilities and idiosyncrasies.

Seven types of constitution can be formed based upon the permutation and combinations of the three doshas; these types are classified by their predominance.

- Monodoshic prakruti- primarily vata, pitta or kapha
- Dualdoshic prakurti - primarily vata-pitta, pitta-kapha, vata-kapha
- Triple doshic prakruti- equal combination of vata, pitta and kapha.

As the quality and quantity of doshas differ from person to person, there are innumerable prakrutis. As many human beings as exist, that many prakrutis are found. This is one of the most beautiful contributions of Ayurveda in understanding of health and medicine in

the modern world- that every person is unique. Ayurveda is not a “one size fits all” health care system. Knowing ones prakruti is extremely important to maintain good health as well as for understanding self. It helps us understand an appropriate dietary and lifestyle choices, proper yoga postures, breathing exercises (pranayam) and herbal supplements for detoxification and healing.

Prakruti determines one’s disease proneness. Vata predominant personalities usually have predilection towards vata diseases such as Arthritis, Osteoporosis, Sciatica, and emaciation and are susceptible to constipation, insomnia, nervousness, anxiety fear and insecurity.

- Pitta predominant personalities tend towards hyperacidity, diarrhea, inflammatory changes such as colitis, bronchitis, gastritis and may become angry, agitated, critical or perfectionist.
- Kapha predominance has tendencies towards congestion, cough, slow metabolism, weight gain, diabetes and tends to become lethargic, greedy, possessive and attached.

To maintain health and balance we have to juggle with the three doshas, taking action to increase or decrease Vata, Pitta or Kapha as condition demands,. This requires moment-to-moment awareness, moment-to-moment consciousness and moment-to-moment healing.

Ayurveda teaches an individual to take responsibility of own health through diet, lifestyle adjustments, changing the lifestyles as per seasons demands, following the ethical regimen, our relationships, responsibilities and simple actions we can take for prevention of imbalances.

Whatever one’s constitution, one must strive to keep it in balance and if one makes the proper adjustments, optimal health can be maintained.

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