



Glenda Bell, ASM Yoga Therapist
Real People - Real Bodies - Real Yoga

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Pitta presented: 2/9/12

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Pitta



For centuries, healing traditions around the planet have agreed that health is the foundation of all facets of life. Ayurveda, the ancient science of self-healing from India, is the art of maintaining balanced health in the healthy person and alleviating disease and suffering in the afflicted person. In Ayurveda, it is known that perfect health exists when the three fundamental energies (doshas: vata, pitta and kapha), digestive fire and enzymes (agni), waste products (malas), tissues (dhatus), soul (atma) and mind (manas) are in balance. Vasant Lad, acclaimed Ayurvedic Physician, teaches us that healing occurs when we observe conscious living in the

fullness of the present moment.

Now that the pitta season is coming upon us, we will explore the active principles of pitta dosha. It is during summer that pitta dosha, inherently driven by solar force, is most predominant. It is comprised of the fire and water elements. Pitta dosha is the expression of radiant energy, both within our bodies and in the universe. It is this energy that fuels all biochemical activities, including transformation, digestion, metabolism and assimilation. Pitta is responsible for enzymatic and endocrine activity, the regulation of body temperature, pigmentation, vision, intelligence, vitality, ambition, courage and understanding. The key qualities of pitta are hot, sharp, light, liquid, spreading, slightly oily and fleshy smelling. When these attributes build up within the body due to wrong diet and lifestyle, pitta accumulates and begins to manifest various imbalances.

When pitta's key qualities are in a balanced state, the pitta person exudes bliss, joy, truth and robust health. Pitta individuals tend to possess a strong-willed, passionate and fiery disposition. They are the natural leaders in society, being ambitious, organized, bright and disciplined. Pittas favor noble professions and often earn plenty of money to spend on luxurious items. They are the ones who enjoy staying up late at night, burning the midnight oil. The pitta body type is naturally athletic and one of medium height, weight and musculature. Their skin is often freckled, sensitive, oily and warm. Their hair may be straight, silky and oily and their eyes are often sensitive to light. Pittas have intense appetites and thirst. Don't even talk to a pitta person until they have eaten!



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During the summer season, due to the hot quality, pitta people become more susceptible to heat related ailments. Signs of increased pitta in the body include excessive body heat, heartburn, hyperacidity, peptic ulcers, acne, skin rashes, diarrhea and early graying of the hair. The pitta person is prone to a low tolerance for heat, sunshine, or hard physical work. When out of balance emotionally, the sharp quality of pitta arouses aggression, irritability, anger, hatred, judgement, criticism, and jealousy. Special care must be taken in order for them to remain cool, calm and peaceful. In general, to balance pitta, we learn to apply its opposite qualities to any given imbalance. For example, if a person has eaten chili peppers, making their mind sharp and agitated we will treat them with cooling foods, remedies and practices.

Pacifying pitta during the hot summer season requires living in harmony with the inherent rhythms of Nature and observing patience and compassion with ourselves, others and environment. Here are some practical suggestions for balancing the pitta person during the seasonal changes that occur in summer and early fall:

- Upon awakening, do some yoga asanas, including the Moon Salutation, Tree, Boat, Bow, Bride, Locust, Triangle and all abdominal twists. The emphasis throughout your practice can be on surrendering, forgiving, softening and being gentle with yourself.
- Practice cooling pranayama after your asanas. Either Shitali pranayama or left-nostril breathing will cool and calm the hot quality of pitta dosha. Be sure to release any remaining internal heat from within the body before meditation.
- Follow your breathing exercises with some peaceful meditation. A regular meditation practice assists in quieting the active pitta mind, releasing anger and allowing the sense of control to dissipate. Meditation should leave one feeling cool and calm in both mind and heart.
- Give yourself a slow and loving full body massage before taking a shower. As a base, use sunflower or coconut oil, which are cooling and nourishing. Essential oils of rose, sandalwood, jasmine or lavender can be added to further enhance delight and healing.
- Drink a tea of cumin, coriander, fennel and rose to pacify the hot quality, improve digestion and calm the mind.
- Wear clothing of light texture and color. Excellent choices would be cotton, linen and silk of white, blue and green. Red and yellow shades tend to increase the fire that is already present.
- Eat foods that are cooling and calming, sweet, bitter and astringent. Coconut, cucumber, watermelon, steamed greens, mung beans and basmati rice are excellent choices. Sipping cool (not iced) water throughout the day keeps pitta's fires at bay. When the hot and sharp qualities are acute it is best to avoid spicy, salty, oily and sour foods such as chilis, pickles, french fries and citrus fruits respectively. Due to pitta's raging appetite, it is in their best interest that they never miss a meal!
- Enjoy regular, relaxing, peaceful walks in Nature to calm the inherent intensity that a pitta person may experience. Other activities to please pitta's senses include swimming, gardening and walking in the moonlight



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