

The Paula Lloyd Therapy Centre

Guidelines for a healthy Ayurvedic Diet (*vata-pitta*)

Foods to avoid:

Heavy to digest foods such as **wheat**, **meat** (esp. red meat) and **refined sugar**. These foods severely decrease the digestive fire (*agni*) and produce mucus and toxins (*aam*). Deep fried foods are also heavy to digest and highly *vata* increasing.

Sour foods such as **tomatoes**, all **sour fruits** (oranges, pineapples, lemons, grapefruits etc.), **vinegar** and hot spices like **chillies**. These foods increase *pitta* and heat in the body and also reduce digestive power (esp. tomatoes).

Fermented or fermentation increasing foods such as **yoghurt**, **alcohol**, **cheese** (esp. old and hard ones) and **yeast** containing foods such as marmite, veggie pates, soy sauce and beer. All fermented foods are sour in nature and therefore have *pitta* increasing qualities. Whenever there is too much *pitta* and heat in the intestines, fermentation is multiplied, thus resulting in gas and decreased digestive capacity.

Raw vegetables, **sprouted beans** and **salads**. They are hard to digest, cooling and *vata* producing. Broad, black-eyed and kidney beans, chickpeas, kohlrabi, Brussels sprouts and cabbage should be avoided even when cooked.

Ice cold foods and **drinks** are immediate 'killers' for the digestive fire. They are best avoided totally, but if taken then not directly before, after or together with meals.

Avoid **ready made**, **tinned** and **microwaved** foods! They are devoid of life force (*prana*), deplete the digestive fire and produce toxins in the body.

Foods to enjoy:

Cooked vegetables such as pumpkin, squashes, marrow, courgette, spinach, asparagus, fennel, swede, sweet corn, onions, carrots, parsnips, beetroot, celery, sweet potatoes, french beans, mange-tout, chicory, kale and leeks. However potatoes, peppers, aubergine, cauliflower and broccoli should only be taken occasionally.

Pulses like mung and split mung beans, *tur dal* and red lentils are easy to digest, balancing and nourishing to the body. To get the full value from pulses they should be eaten together with grains (esp. rice).

Grains including rice, oat, rye, maize, millet, amaranth, quinoa, kamut, spelt, polenta; basically everything other than wheat. Flours made from the above grains and also from potato and buckwheat are excellent substitutes for 'normal' flour. Bread (wheat free!) should only be eaten when toasted as the dry heat stops further fermentation. Porridge made without milk, but with cinnamon and cardamom, coconut flakes, soaked raisins or stewed fruit is an ideal breakfast: easy to digest, highly nutritious, warming and energizing.

Seeds and **nuts** are heavy to digest and *vata* increasing. If taken at all they should be soaked

overnight and made into a paste or milk. The flesh, milk, cream and flakes of coconuts can be used liberally.

All **sweet fruits** such as apples, pears, apricots, grapes, cherries, plums, sweet berries, fresh figs and dates, mangos, papaya and also pomegranate. Bananas are very cold in energy and therefore best eaten when cooked. They should be avoided while having a cough, cold, flu or mucus accumulation in the respiratory tract. Unsulphured dried fruits are okay, but have to be soaked or made into a stew.

Of all **dairy products** *ghee* (clarified butter) is the best – it is like a medicine (highly *pitta* reducing) and can be cooked with and added to practically everything. Normal butter is also good and definitely better than margarines and other such processed spreads! Milk should only be taken warm and preferably spiced with ginger, cardamom, cinnamon or turmeric. Good alternatives to cow's milk are soya and rice milk. Fresh cheeses such as quark, mozzarella, feta and ricotta are easier to digest than hard, old ones and are also less mucus producing. They are best enjoyed with some black pepper to stimulate *agni*.

If **meat** is eaten at all one should stick to white meat only, i.e. chicken and turkey. Fish is hot and *pitta* increasing, but can be enjoyed occasionally. If eaten one should choose fresh water rather than sea fish.

Sweetener: refined sugar should be replaced by *jaggery* (solidified sugar cane juice), raw cane sugar, *rapadura*, date sugar, molasses, rice syrup or honey. Honey is not heat stable and becomes poisonous for the body when heated, cooked or baked.

Drinks: black tea and coffee can be drunk, but herbal teas and decaffeinated coffee are better. Good alternatives to normal coffee are Caro, Barley Cup or dandelion coffee. Ginger tea made from fresh roots is warming, *agni* increasing, removes mucus and toxins and is a number one remedy for coughs and colds. However, if drunk regularly it would be too *pitta* increasing.

Most essential is the use of spices. Cumin, coriander, fennel, and saffron are the best for balancing all *doshas*, increasing *agni* and should be used liberally. Black pepper, turmeric, cinnamon, cardamom, cloves, mustard seeds, nutmeg, and all fresh herbs (particularly fresh coriander) and onions, garlic, and ginger should also be used. Asafoetida, reduces *vata* and should be added when cooking pulses and beans to reduce their gas producing properties.

Generally:

- Cooked is better than raw.
- Warm, sloppy, soupy meals are better than heavy, dry, solid foods.
- Never mix milk with fruit, honey, meat or fish!
- Never heat honey.
- Only eat when hungry and when the last meal has been digested (after 3-4 hours).
- To avoid diluting the digestive juices (*agni*) preferably drink 10 minutes before or half an hour after a meal.
- Try to eat at regular times of the day.
- Don't eat too late at night and leave 1-2 hours before going to sleep.