



The Ayurvedic Diet: 7 Tips Boost Your Metabolism the Ayurvedic Way

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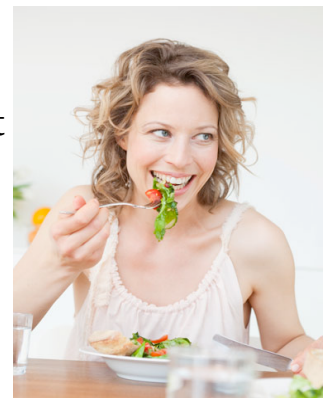
Are you tired of all the fad diets out there that promise drastic results with little regard to your overall health?

Have you tried counting calories and eating artificial meal replacements only to gain the weight all back? Have you experienced yo-yo dieting that only slows down your metabolism in the long run?

If you answered ‘yes’ to any of the above questions, you are probably ready to embrace the sound principles of Ayurvedic eating. The Ayurvedic diet is a refreshing change from all the fad diets out there, because it offers time-tested wisdom based on a holistic understanding of the human being, taking into consideration the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual dimensions of diet.



Eating Ayurvedically means paying attention not just to what we eat, but also when and how we eat. We are not sticking to menus or portions or a specific caloric intake, but actually tuning into the universal principles of energy underlying our digestion/metabolism, and learning to eat in a way that truly nourishes and balances us.



The benefits of following an Ayurvedic diet are felt not only physically, but in your mental and emotional well-being as well.

The Concept of Agni

Ayurveda states that health, balance, and attaining a healthy body weight depends not so much on what we eat, but on our capacity to digest, absorb, assimilate and metabolize what we eat. This capacity is called Agni, which literally means “fire” in Sanskrit.



Western nutrition totally overlooks this concept. Its goal is to fulfill a “recommended daily allowance” of nutrients, which is a standardized list of numbers based on statistics, and simply assumes that the body will be able to efficiently process these nutrients.

Ayurveda differs in that it offers a highly individualized approach to nutrition, and underscores the importance of an efficient and balanced digestive and metabolic system.

Agni is the biological flame that governs metabolism, and it is the key to our health. As a catalytic, transformative principle, *agni* not only governs digestion and metabolism of food, it operates on the subtler level of perception, understanding and “processing” of thoughts and emotions. A healthy, balanced *agni* endows the skin with a glowing complexion and maintains the immune system. Longevity depends on the health of our *agni*.

If you look at traditional cuisines of most countries, most have *agni*-enhancing elements built into them. This is the wisdom of tradition.

The Japanese have miso soup, which is full of enzymes, and green tea at the end of the meal, which helps cleanse the GIT of excessive lipids, as well as various pickles and sunomono, or vegetables in a vinegar-based dressing, which enhances digestion.

The French have wine to go with their crème-rich foods, which cuts their channel-clogging tendency. The Mexicans have salsa and all kinds of *agni*-enhancing relishes to go with their food, which is typically heavy.

But the American diet? Steak and mashed potatoes and gravy? Hamburgers and fries plus ice-cold soda? There is nothing built in to the meal to aid the digestive/metabolic capacity. No wonder we tend to put on weight!

How to Boost Your Metabolism With Ayurveda

Ayurveda, as I mentioned before, is an individualized medicine. Although it is beyond the scope of this article to describe each of the Ayurvedic body types, the following recommendations are beneficial for all types to effectively “reset” your digestive and metabolic fire.

1. Sip hot water.

Start the day with hot water and 1tsp lemon juice. This will help complete digestion from the night before, and cleanse the GIT.

Accompany your meals with hot lemon water.

In fact, sip hot (non-caffeinated) drinks throughout the day to significantly raise your metabolism. Good choices are hot ginger tea, hot water with lemon and honey, or herbal tea of your choice (without milk or sugar).



Avoid all ice-cold drinks! They are detrimental to agni, and will impair your digestion and slow down your metabolism.

2. Pay close attention to your hunger and learn to discern between real hunger and “emotional hunger”.

If you suspect it is emotional hunger, set a timer for 5-10 minutes and practice a deep relaxation technique such as shavasana, conscious slow breathing, or meditation.

Hunger that passes after you’ve relaxed your body and mind is emotional hunger, induced by stress, restlessness or boredom. Make it a habit to eat only when true hunger kicks in. Never eat when you are upset.

3. Rev up your metabolism with Trikatu.

Trikatu means “3 spicy herbs”, and it is a compound of black pepper, dried ginger, and Indian long pepper known as *pippali*.

Taking ½ tsp of *trikatu* with a pinch of rock salt 15-30 minutes before your meal will help kindle your agni, promoting the secretion of essential enzymes and making your digestion efficient.

Another way to take *trikatu* is to boil ½ tsp with 1cup hot water and make a tea, and accompany your meal with this tea.

People of *Pitta* (fire-water) constitution will need to be careful with this compound, however, because it is quite hot, and may aggravate their already hot constitution. *Pitta* people can use powdered cloves, fennel and cardamom instead of *trikatu*.

4. Make it a goal to have 3 nourishing meals a day, with no snacks.

Remember when and how you eat is as important as what you eat.

Have your largest meal between 11:30am and 1pm, when your agni is at its peak. Keep your breakfast and supper light. The ideal time to have your breakfast is between 7 and 8am. Slowly ease into the habit of having a lighter, earlier dinner. The ideal time is between 6 and 7:30pm.

Many diets advocate eating “mini-meals” as many as 6 to 8 times the day. While this can be a temporary solution for those who tend to get low blood sugar, it is not recommended as a long-term way of life. In fact, it will create irregular appetite and digestion, making you prone to bloating, gas, and indigestion.

5. Always sit down to eat.

This may seem redundant, but I have to emphasize this here because having proper meals is becoming increasingly rare for many people.

Honor eating as a sacred ritual, and have your meals in a pleasant, relaxed social setting. Make sure you are actually tasting the food you eat! Experiencing satiety both physically and emotionally, is important for your sense of well-being.

6. Regulate your sleep time.

Ayurveda states that sleeping during the daytime increases Kapha (water-earth) in your system, contributing to weight gain and slowing of your metabolism.

Make sure you are getting adequate, but not excess, sleep at night. Proper sleep regulates the hormones connected to hunger and satiety.

Getting 6-8 hours of restful sleep is paramount to maintaining a healthy metabolic rate.

7. Get help from Ayurvedic digestive aids.

One way to do this is to use digestion-enhancing culinary herbs such as ginger, garlic, black pepper, cumin, mustard seeds, cloves, etc. in your cooking.



If you tend to suffer from bloating after eating, chew on roasted cumin, fennel and *ajwain* (Indian celery) seeds. You can also purchase the Ayurvedic compound *Hingwashtak* from your local Indian grocery store. It contains asafoetida, which is very helpful.

Take 1 tsp *Triphala* with warm water before bed. *Triphala* is a wonderfully balanced cleanser that is great for all doshic types. It will ensure that your elimination is efficient and smooth, which is very important in regulating your agni, which in turn controls your metabolism.

These are general guidelines you can start experimenting with to regulate your digestion and metabolism. For specific conditions, do consult a qualified Ayurvedic practitioner.

Ayurveda states that faulty digestion is at the root of most diseases. Therefore, it is worth a little effort to adjust your lifestyle and eating habits to boost your *agni*.

You will feel the difference – you will feel more nourished from your meals, leaving you with a sense of lightness in body and mind.

So go ahead, start incorporating the Ayurvedic tips that are easiest for you to implement, and go from there.

Gradual change is the best change. But do start right now, today.

To schedule an Ayurvedic Consultation with Mariko Hirakawa, email mariko.bhakti@gmail.com.

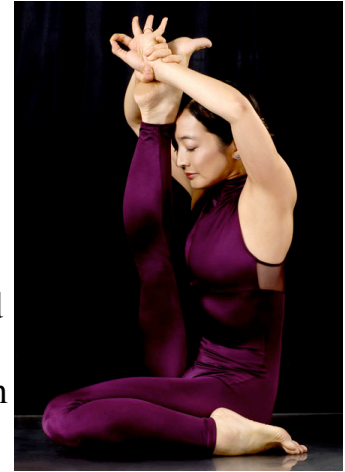
About Mariko:



Mariko Hirakawa, E-R.Y.T., B.A.M.S., is one of the very few non-Indian scholars residing in the West to obtain a degree in Ayurveda from an internationally recognized university in India.

Based in New York City, she holds a B.A. from New York University, and has been teaching Yoga since 1992. Drawing on her background as a professional contemporary dancer, she combines scientific knowledge with an understanding of the body which is intuitive and poetic.

In the late 90's the experience of serving cancer patients led her to study Traditional Chinese Medicine and Ayurveda in search of healing modalities that could complement Yoga in making a difference in people's lives.



In 2003, Mariko received full scholarship from the Government of India to study Ayurveda full-time at Gujarat Ayurved University in the 5 ½-year B.A.M.S. (Bachelor of Ayurvedic Medicine and Surgery Degree) degree program. Studying and living in India equipped her with proficiency in Sanskrit as well as Hindi, giving her access to both the wisdom contained in ancient classical texts and insights into contemporary India.

As a Yoga instructor, Mariko's teaching style is a blend of Classical Hatha and [Vinyasa](#), with strong influences from the Iyengar, Ashtanga Vinyasa, and Anusara styles. Drawing on her extensive studies in the West as well as in India, she offers an approach to the practice which honors the depth of its spiritual context while maintaining a strong emphasis on correct physical alignment.

As a an Ayurvedic physician trained in India and an experienced Yoga instructor, Mariko is uniquely qualified to offer a practice that bridges these two great traditions with depth and authenticity.