

The Three Doshas-Or Governing Principles-Are Called Vata-Pitta-and Kapha

The three doshas, or governing principles, are called vata, pitta, and kapha. When vata is imbalanced insomnia, dry skin, anxiety, and constipation are the most common imbalances. Too much Pitta results in hives. Kapha imbalances are at the bottom of depression. Ayurveda recognizes five basic elements, or constituents, to be the smallest components to which anything can be reduced. They are air, space, fire, water, and earth. Everything in nature is composed of these five glorious, mysterious, essential components—including humans. Akasha is the Ayurvedic term for the gaseous form of matter. SPACE (sometimes called ether) is the expanse or area in which air is contained and through which it moves. FIRE is the radiant form of matter and is needed for any process of transformation, or "digestion." WATER is used to describe the liquid form of matter. EARTH is the solid form of matter and is responsible for groundedness and solidity. The five elements, in infinite combinations and proportions, are the basis of all life-forms and things, with three forces to keep the elements in the right relationship with one another. The three forces, the doshas, govern all the functions of the body, mind, and universal consciousness. When vata is imbalanced insomnia, dry skin, anxiety, and constipation are the most common imbalances. Too much Pitta results in hives. Kapha imbalances are at the bottom of depression. The three doshas, or governing principles, are called vata, pitta, and kapha. Each dosha has its own set of characteristics, which arise out of the elements from which they are made. This includes the physical and emotional characteristics and personality traits of people, as well as of everything else. For example there are vata, pitta, and kapha kinds of flowers, people, houses, music, foods, trees, birds, and bees, as well as times of day and seasons. Every person (and thing) contains all three doshas. However, the proportion varies according to the individual, and usually one or two doshas predominate. Within each person the doshas are continually interacting with one another and with the doshas in all of nature. This interplay among the fundamental forces and components explains why people can have much in common but also have an endless variety of individual differences in the way they behave and respond to their environment. Ayurveda recognizes that different foods, tastes, colors, and sounds affect the doshas in different ways. For example very hot and pungent spices aggravate pitta; but cold, light foods such as salads calm it down. This ability to affect the doshas is the underlying basis for Ayurvedic practices and therapies. Copyright © Dr. Helen Thomas 2007.

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