



### **WEEK NINE: Diet & Nutrition for Recovery**

Before the advent of prescription medicines, food acted as the primary source of healing. Unfortunately much of what we now consider to be “food” is actually not food at all, but simply another distraction from what our bodies truly need to thrive. Ayurvedic and yogic practice encourage a healing of our relationship to what we ingest, and why we do it.

Within the context of our ayurvedic understanding that addictive behaviours are an imbalance mainly of the Vata-dosha, we can provide our clients with dietary considerations that are specific to this doshic profile, while maintaining the understanding that certain addictive behaviours and patterns can arise in each person as a result not ONLY of vata-imbalance, but also of Kapha and Pitta, and most likely, a combination of all three doshas.

***“When you eat, how you eat and where you eat all directly and indirectly influence your mind, body and spirit.” - Sat Dharam Kaur, ND***

## **PRACTICES FOR HOW TO EAT FOR HEALING**

- Sit down to eat
- Focus only on eating; limit distractions such as watching tv, reading a book or being on your phone. Your body and mind perceive the practice of eating differently when you are not fully engaged and you may not feel satiated, even if you are technically, “full.” Eat with awareness.
- Reduce your portion sizes, it is easier on your digestive system
- Eat only when you are hungry, not out of habit
- Don't eat when you are tired, stressed or emotionally upset; you don't need food during these times, you need rest, meditation and/or pranayama.
- Do your best to leave 3-4 hours between your last meal and your bedtime.

If we take in more food than our bodies can handle, we force our digestion to work harder and accumulate toxicity. We must eat enough to gain the nutrients we need, but not so much that we use excess energy to digest it.

## **THE THREE GUNAS AND FOOD**

Ayurveda provides a special language for understanding the primal forces of Nature and shows us how to work with them on all levels. According to Yoga and Ayurveda, Nature consists of three primal qualities, which are the main powers of Cosmic Intelligence that determine our spiritual growth. These are called gunas in Sanskrit, meaning “what binds” because wrongly understood they keep us in bondage to the external world.

1. SATTVA – INTELLIGENCE, IMPARTS BALANCE

2. RAJAS – ENERGY, CAUSES IMBALANCE

3. TAMAS – SUBSTANCE, CREATES INERTIA

The three gunas are the most subtle qualities of Nature that underlie matter, life and mind. All objects in the universe consist of various combinations of the three gunas. Cosmic evolution consists of their mutual interaction and transformation. The three gunas are one of the prime themes of Ayurvedic thought. They form a deeper level than the three biological humors and help us understand our mental and spiritual nature and how it functions. In relation to food, we can categorize certain foods into Satvic, Rajasic or Tamasic.

## **SATTVA**

Sattva is the quality of intelligence, virtue and goodness and creates harmony, balance and stability. It is light (not heavy) and luminous in nature. It possesses an inward and upward motion and brings about the awakening of the soul. Sattva provides happiness and contentment of a lasting nature. It is the principle of clarity, wideness and peace, the force of love that unites all things together.

**SATVIC FOODS:** fresh, juicy, light, nourishing and sweet, foods that are full of prana (energy). Seasonal foods; fresh ripe fruits, most veg, almonds, dates, ghee

## **RAJAS**

Rajas is the quality of change, activity, and turbulence. It introduces a disequilibrium that upsets an existing balance. Rajas is motivated in its action, ever seeking a goal or an end that gives it power. It possesses outward motion and causes self seeking action that leads to fragmentation and disintegration. While in the short term Rajas is stimulating and provides pleasure, owing to its unbalanced nature it quickly results in pain and suffering. It is the force of passion that causes distress and conflict.

**RAJASIC FOODS:** bitter, sour, salty, spicy, hot and dry. They can give energy for work but also may increase thoughts of sensuality, greed, jealousy, fantasies and egotism. Chocolate, onions, garlic, hot peppers, eggplant, tea, coffee, eggs, spicy food, fried breads, sweets.

## **TAMAS**

Tamas is the quality of dullness, darkness, and inertia and is heavy, veiling or obstructing in its action. It functions as the force of gravity that retards things and holds them in specific limited forms. It possesses a downward motion that causes decay and disintegration. Tamas brings about ignorance and delusion in the mind and promotes insensitivity, sleep and loss of awareness. It is the principle of materiality or unconsciousness that causes consciousness to become veiled.

**TAMASIC FOODS:** Foods to avoid, if possible. Stale, dry, odorous and heavy and can make us slow, confused, pessimistic, lazy, greedy and prone to inertia and decay. Fast-food, packaged and processed foods, canned foods, alcohol, beef and pork.

Below we will get into the specifics of certain foods to avoid during recovery, and certain foods to increase, and why. I'm not a certified nutritionist, and some of you may have more knowledge

on this subject than I do. I do, however, hold some knowledge on what may be considered non-traditional use of super-foods and highly nutritive foods that I have used under the guidance of ND's and nutritionists, and have found particularly helpful on my own journey in recovery. Please keep in mind that these recommendations are for those who are considered in active recovery. There are MANY solid arguments for the ingestion of "sustainable" meats and healthy fats, but I'm not here to get into that in depth. Much of the information I have gathered is taken from a Naturopathic Doctor and Nutritionist who I took an extensive course through.

**Decrease/Eliminate :: Processed Meat, Factory-Farmed Meat:** Meat takes much longer to digest in our bodies than anything else we ingest, up to 3 days in fact and residues can last even longer in the intestines. Meat is the most acid-producing food, creating a build-up of uric acid in the bloodstream, leading to toxicity. Consider that factory-farmed meat is a controversial choice for every living being as well as the state of the planet, but also that the same toxic chemicals and hormones that are used in livestock production are ingested by meat-eaters. Most of you will know this already, but many of your clients won't have this information, nor will they be in a financial position to consider other options. Cutting meat out during the recovery process is the most accessible option and providing your clients with vegetarian sources of protein is an important aspect. (sources below)

**Increase/Include :: Consume Approximately 40-80 grams of Protein Daily**

Protein ingestion should be sufficient but not excessive and needs to be consumed with quality oils for optimum health. The average adult requires approximately 40-50 grams of protein per day, but more may be initially needed while in recovery.

**Adequate Vegetarian Protein Examples:**

2-3 servings per day of either:

- 1 cup of cooked legumes
- 1/3 cup of cottage cheese or yoghurt
- 1/2 cup of tofu
- 1 1/2 cups of soy milk
- 1 tbsp nut butter
- 2 tsps nuts or seeds.
- 1 cooked egg

Protein rich legumes include kidney beans, soybeans, chickpeas, split peas and lentils. Protein is more difficult to digest than other foods, so eating in excess can place a burden on the digestive system and create toxicity in the bloodstream.

### **Decrease/Eliminate :: Caffeine:**

Coffee, black tea, chocolate and soda's/energy drinks are high in caffeine and are considered addictive substances that disrupt the brain's chemistry. Caffeine is a stimulant that chemically induces a flight or flight response in the body and depletes it of Vitamin B and Calcium. It can adversely affect your natural pattern of sleep as well as depleting kidney function and adrenal vitality.

### **Increase/Include :: Water**

Well, duh, you might be thinking. But really, most folks don't seem to get enough of the good ol' H<sub>2</sub>O that our bodies very much need, especially during recovery. Through water, nutrients are transported to cells and wastes are removed. It aids effective digestion and helps to balance the nervous system and emotions. Advise drinking 2-3 litres of water per day (6-8 glasses), and drink at least one litre in the morning to help eliminate waste that the kidneys have filtered from the night before.

### **Decrease/Eliminate :: Sugar and Sweeteners**

This includes honey, maple syrup, rice syrup, soft drinks, juice "flavoured" drinks, candy, chocolate bars, granola bars, donuts, and cookies. Ya, and EVERYTHING in between that has sugar and sweeteners in it. Replace with fruit, frozen fruit desserts, stevia as a sweetener, and sugar-free natural fruit jams. Sugar is a highly refined carbohydrate with no fiber, vitamins, minerals or starch in it.. It is high in calories but provides no nutritional value and depletes the body of B vitamins. Eating foods high in sugars causes your blood sugar level to elevate, giving you a temporary boost of energy, which stimulates the pancreas to produce insulin. Many people, particularly those with substance abuse issues, have an over-reactive pancreas, producing too much insulin, which means the blood sugar levels drop to a point much lower than before. Consequently, we may experience levels of irritability, depression, nausea, anxiety, dizziness and cravings for more sugar.

### **Increase/Include :: Alkaline Diet**

Alkaline minerals are calcium, magnesium, sodium and potassium. Foods high in these minerals have a positive impact on our nervous systems, and help to build and tone the organs, nerves and glands. At least 75% of foods ingested should be alkaline.

*Foods High in Alkaline Minerals:* fruits, veggies, seaweeds, millet, milk, yogurt, cheese, almonds, sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds, mung beans, azuki beans, soy beans and tofu.

On the flip side, foods high in acid create a build-up of acidic waste in the body. Acidic foods give us energy but allowing too much of them in your diet can make us more susceptible to chronic diseases.

*Foods High in Acid:* meat, fish, eggs, most grains (except millet), coffee, sweets, alcohol, butter, fried food, saturated fats, peanuts, pecans, walnuts, coconut, cashews, Brazil nuts and certain beans - black beans, chickpeas, fava beans, pinto beans and lentils.

### **Decrease/Eliminate :: Simple Carbohydrates**

Simple carbs have a “high glycemic index”, which means our bodies quickly convert them into sugar, therefore the body’s reaction to such foods is similar to that of sugar.

*Foods High in Simple Carbs:* white flour, white rice, refined sugar, sugar-coated cereals, processed fruit products and over-cooked veggies.

### **Increase/Include :: High Fiber Foods**

It is recommended to consume 45-60 grams of dietary fibre, daily. A high-fiber diet has a lower content of fat and a higher content of antioxidant vitamins, which protect us from chronic disease and premature aging. A high fiber diets also modifies the composition of flora in the bowel, promoting more of the good bacteria that create a strong immune system, improve mineral absorption and decrease osteoporosis risk.

### **MORE Food to Increase/Include:**

- Fruits & Veggies - according to the doshic profile, as best possible and according to season, and location.
- Healthy Fats: Omega 3 fatty acids, found primarily in flaxseed oil, purslane, black currant seed oil, cold water fish oils reduce inflammation, pain and arthritis, reduce PMS and symptoms of endometriosis, improve mental health function and memory; help to prevent diabetes; decrease heart disease risk and help balance our glands.
- Nuts & Seeds
- Fresh Juices
- Legumes

