

# VEGETARIANISM & FASTING

Vegetarianism and fasting in Ayurveda

## Vegetarianism

Although Indian culture is often associated with vegetarianism, Ayurveda is not wholly vegetarian. Ayurveda is a science in pursuit of health. It is not a moralistic system, although morality does creep into its practices. If someone's health can benefit from the properties of eating some animal meat, then this is recommended. Ayurveda would understand that there is some karma, or effect, from using animal products, but argues that the health of the individual is paramount. That being said it does recommend a primarily vegetarian diet that is easy to digest. In accordance with Ayurvedic principles it would also encourage an awareness of one's actions and there is little doubt that the massive impact of the meat industry on the environment, economy and health of society would influence the opinion of the original propounders of Ayurveda.

Environmentally vegetarianism is more sustainable. One quarter of the earth's surface is now pastureland to support livestock!

Economically vegetarianism costs the world less. As demand grows, intensification practices rush to support the market. This means that many animals are kept in conditions that increase the risk of disease, requiring persistent treatment with anti-biotics.

Vegetarians have been shown to have longer and healthier lives than meat eaters as well as less cancer, obesity and heart disease.

Whatever your dietary predilection Ayurveda would recommend eating with awareness!

## Fasting

Fasting is a very effective way to help the body rest and to detoxify any accumulated matter. Fasting clears toxic ama. It also helps the mind to be at ease and become peaceful. It helps the digestive system to rest and to let go of attachments to food. A successful fast leaves you feeling lighter, refreshed, energised, with clear skin, fresh taste and sparkling eyes.

There are all types of fasts; water fasts, fruit juice fasts, rice fasts, soup fasts, kicharee fasts. What is important is choosing a fast that suits you individually.

**Important things to remember during a fast:**

- Drink lots of warm water
- Take spicy teas to help burn toxins
- Rest
- Sleep
- Avoid all over stimulation; news, radio, newspapers.
- Break your fast slowly; one day in fast requires one day of re-introduction.

**Vata** types have difficulty holding onto energy, have too little body weight and have a tendency to be ungrounded. Hence fasting must be undertaken with caution. They should only fast for a short time of between one to three days. Their fast should always contain some nourishment and could be a mono fast of rice, moong soup or kicharee.

**Pitta** types are good at managing energy, have balanced weight but build up inflammatory heat toxins. They benefit from a fast from one to three days and can manage on appropriate fruit or vegetable juices.

**Kapha** types store energy, tend to overweight and have a tendency to be too static. They can tolerate longer fasts and benefit the most from them. Their fasts can be more light soup based or just hot water and spicy teas.