

# HEALTHY EATING GUIDELINES

1. **EAT FOOD PREPARED BY LOVING HANDS IN A LOVING WAY** - When food is prepared by loving hands, food sadhana occurs, bringing the energy of the sacred into it. When food is prepared with love & awareness, there is prana, positive life force energy within. The end result is a sattvic or harmonious meal to be enjoyed.
2. **SAY GRACE BEFORE MEALS** - You do not have to be religious to incorporate this. One can simply sit before eating any food, take 3 deep belly breaths, thank the food for its presence and ability to nourish your body.
3. **FOOD SHOULD BE TAKEN IN THE PROPER PLACE** - Ayurveda recommends for proper, healthy digestion, that the environment in which one eats be calm, peaceful, & pleasant, free from emotional stress, conflict, debate.
4. **FOOD SHOULD BE EATEN WITHOUT DISTRACTION** - Being distracted when eating takes away from the sacredness of the meal itself. Food is a gift. We must eat with respect & reverence for the plants & minerals that make up our meals. Try to eat at a dinner table or outside in nature. Start with one meal a day and then another, then all meals. Take small steps & you will be successful!
5. **FOOD SHOULD BE TAKEN WITH A PROPER FRAME OF MIND** - The mind should be peaceful. If you are feeling angry, overwhelmed, anxious, or melancholy, meditate before your meal to settle into a balanced headspace.
6. **FOOD SHOULD BE WARM** - Warm digests easier than cold. Warm foods also help stimulate our AGNIs or digestive fires. An exception to this rule is PITTA season (SUMMER) or locations contributing to this season (LIKE THIS RETREAT). When Agni is strong, cold foods can be consumed in order to cool & detoxify the body.
7. **FOOD SHOULD BE TAKEN THAT IS OILY OR MOIST** - From the ancient Ayurvedic text, the Charaka Samhita, "One should take unctuous food; unctuous food is delicious; after intake, it provides the subdued power of digestion, it gets digested quickly, it helps the downward movement of VATA, it increases plumpness of the body, strengthens the sense faculties, promotes strength & brightens complexion. "
8. **AVOID COLD DRINKS** - right before or during meals as this weakens agni, which is needed for proper digestion. As a rule, I do not consume ice unless in the hot summer sun.
9. **A SMALL AMOUNT OF LIQUIDS TAKEN WITH MEALS** - Do not drink large quantities of liquid during meals, as this also weakens the digestive fire. A half-cup of room temperature water is about right, on the average. Dry meals may require more, moist meals-like soup-require none at all.
10. **FOOD SHOULD NOT HAVE OPPOSITE POTENCIES** For example, combining hot & cold foods is contraindicated in Ayurveda as well as combining fresh fruit with other foods. Ayurveda believes that fruit should be consumed away from meal times, on its own as a snack. The reasoning behind this is that combinations such as these will be difficult to digest & will result in ama or toxins to build up within the body.

**11. Food Should Be Taken with Confidence** - Feel good about yourself & what you are eating & putting into your body. According to Ayurveda, self-confidence affects the internal forces of the body & helps to aid in proper digestion. A lack of self-confidence can actually stimulate the nervous system in the form of anxiousness & overwhelm which can directly impact the digestive system. When digestion or agni is not performing optimally, it can lead to ama or toxic build-up.

**12. Chew Food to an Even Consistency** - It is easy to chew on your food only a couple of times and then send it down into the stomach; however, if you chew your food to an even consistency, it will help aid in the absorption of nutrients and make digestion easier for the belly.

**13. Eat Until You are 75% Full** - Ayurveda explains that the surest way to extend life is to eat less. There is a tendency in our society to eat mindlessly, without chewing our food to an even consistency which leads to overeating, an increase in kapha dosha, feeling uncomfortable & too full. After eating a meal, there should not be a heavy, bloated or tired sensation. Instead, if we eat until we are only 75% full, we will feel satisfied, light & awake. In this way, we ensure proper digestion & longevity.

**14. Take Time to Rest After Meals** - Ideally, Ayurveda recommends taking an hour after meals to rest & digest. One could lay on the left side to aid in digestion, take a stroll or read a book. If you are in a time crunch, before rising up from the table, take at least 3 deep belly breaths to signify the end of your food sadhana.

**15. Allow at least 3 Hours Between Meals for Food to Digest** - It takes on average 3 hours for a meal to completely digest in the human body, depending on your dosha; thus, waiting 3 hours until the next meal is recommended in order to keep agni (digestion) strong & the doshas in balance. If one becomes hungry quickly after the previous meal, scan the body and check in. The body may be craving hydration, water should preferably be consumed rather than diving into another meal. Also, the desire to eat again too quickly can come up from an emotional desire rather than true hunger. Many times, thirst masquerades as hunger.

The Ayurvedic Guidelines for Healthy Eating are not meant to be rigid. Instead, they are meant to bring us all back to the sacredness and joy of eating. Food sadhana is something quickly forgotten in this age of television, smartphones, tablets and constant distraction; yet, it can be the answer to harnessing awareness and the experience of proper digestion, thus optimal health and a happy life.



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