

7 AYURVEDA TIPS FOR SUMMER

In Ayurveda, every season is governed by a unique element and its associated dosha. The warm days of summer are associated with the element of fire and the dosha its associated with—Pitta. The symptoms of Pitta (fire and heat) imbalances include:

- Feeling overheated and irritable
- A tendency to get impatient or angry
- Red skin or eye conditions
- Burning indigestion (heartburn, diarrhea)

Balance in Ayurveda rests on the principle that like increases like and opposites decrease each other. Here are 7 ways you can stay cool during the warmer days of summer.

1. Food

To find balance during the hot summer (Pitta) days, counteract the warm weather by including more of what Ayurveda considers “cooling” foods in your diet, while limiting or avoiding “heating” foods.

Examples of cooling foods in your summer diet include:

- Vegetables: Cucumber, summer squashes (zucchini), celery, asparagus, broccoli, cauliflower, and all leafy greens (spinach, kale, chard, etc.)
- Grains: Basmati rice (white), quinoa, and oats
- Herbs: Cilantro, mint, and dill
- Fruits: Melons, grapes, berries, and stone fruits such as peaches and pears

Examples of heating foods that you should eat less of or avoid during summer include:

- Alcohol
- Hot spices or excessive use of spices
- Fried foods
- Vinegar

2. Aromatherapy and Essential Oils

Bring fresh-cut flowers into your home and office for a whiff of sweetness. Essential oils can help balance Pitta.

3. Color/Nature Therapy

Colors of nature that are calming and cooling include the blues and greens of water and the cool green of a forest trail or the countryside. Spending time in nature is a great way to get your daily dose of Pitta-pacifying color therapy. (Remember to avoid being out in the direct sun when it is at its strongest, generally from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.)

4. Sounds

- *Nature*: Sounds of nature (ocean waves, the gentle summer breeze, chirping birds, crickets on a lazy summer evening) can be refreshing, soothing, and calming.
- *Music*: Listening to calming and soft music—stringed instruments like harp, dulcimer, and flute can pacify Pitta. Ambient music with a soothing rhythm is also balancing for Pitta.

- **Mantra:** Consider a mantra, or energized sound, like a yoga posture for the mind. Mantras that are calming and soothing are a good option to counter Pitta. When paired with a visualization of soothing images like a lake, flowing stream, or a deep blue sky, slowly repeating a mantra such as “Om” in a relaxed manner, can help to decrease a Pitta imbalance. Silently or mentally repeating the mantra may be even more helpful for Pitta when emotions like anger, frustration or impatience get elevated.

5. Touch

- *Clothing:* Wear loose, breathable, light, and natural fabrics to stay cool.
- *Skin care:* Use natural products that have rose, cucumber, or aloe in them, as well as a cooling moisturizer like coconut oil.
- *Self-abhyanga (massage):* In your self-massage practice, opt for cooler oils like coconut and sunflower during the warm summer months.

6. Cooling Pranayama (Breathwork)

“Shitali” breath is a cooling breath and a great practice for summer. Among its benefits, this short breath practice can assist with clearing heat from the head and cooling the emotions. Think of it as your own portable internal air conditioning system!

- Sit in a comfortable position
- Stick out your tongue and curl up the sides as if you were creating a tube or straw
- Inhale slowly through the tongue, as if you were drawing water up through a straw
- The sensation of air passing over the moisture of the tongue will create a distinctly cooling effect. Allow your belly to relax as you fill with air.
- Pause briefly
- Slowly exhale out through the nostrils

7. Other Practices

Here are a few more ways to help balance Pitta and keep cool and calm during the summer. Try to get your exercise in the early morning hours (before 10 a.m.).

- Do a gentle/restorative yoga class 1–2 times per week to stay centered and calm
- Meditate for at least 5–10 minutes, 1–2 times a day
- Spend time in nature