

# What Ayurveda Recommends To Eat In Times of Stress

Ayurveda at any given time looks to balance the body and spirit. Generally, we all are trying to maintain and even strengthen our capacity. When we are weak or in challenging situations, we need to work even harder at balancing ourselves. These difficult times can be brought on by overwork, travel, traumas, grief, illness, overthinking and even by the change of seasons. We will start to feel rundown, tired and stressed out during these times.

The goal during the stress is to recognize that our bodies have already spent their energy and we need to incorporate lifestyle habits that are easy on the body. Digestion is one of the pillars of health in Ayurveda. Food, when properly digested, nourishes the physical body and gives it fuel. The seemingly simple task of digesting food can be hard for a body that is already depleted. When food is not digested properly, the body does not receive nourishment. Further, some food can even remain undigested in the body. This undigested food can lead to toxins (also known as “ama” in Ayurveda) accumulating in the body which will weaken us even more.

When we are off balance, we tend to have a harder time doing what is right for our bodies. In Ayurveda this is known as “pragya aparad,” mistake of intellect. In modern science, body stress and weakness will impair the part of the brain known as the prefrontal cortex, which governs our decision making ability. Therefore, as human beings we tend to rely on unhealthy habits to get us through rough times. We may drink way too much coffee to keep us going or choose a doughnut or chocolate bar to give us a quick energy fix. It is important to remember that the food we eat can either nourish and strengthen us in our stress or harm us even more.

## Here are a few eating tips to guide you during the rough periods in your life:

- Avoid highly processed packaged foods and choose whole food that is fresh and pure.
- Use spices in your food to aid digestion and provide anti-inflammatory and antioxidant protection. Good spices to use include fresh ginger, turmeric and black pepper.
- Vegetable soups that are not cream or tomato based provide a soothing meal that is easy to digest.
- Grains like rice, quinoa and millet are nourishing especially if eaten with lightly stir fried vegetables.
- Avoid eating too much wheat, even whole wheat, because it is heavy and hard to digest. It is also a food that is eaten many times daily, and variety is healthy.
- Warm or room temperature beverages are easier to digest and more helpful to the body than iced cold drinks. The beverage should be a natural tea not sugar filled juices or teas blended with artificial sweeteners.
- Triphala, a traditional Ayurvedic herbal remedy, that promotes digestion by strengthening food assimilation and gentle detoxification, is helpful.
- Eating the right foods during stress can help your body maintain itself.

Hopefully, the stress is short term so that other lifestyle habits like sleep, relaxation and exercise can be used to help our bodies recover with the goal of becoming vibrant and strong.

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