

The Seven Original Body Types

Originally, Ayurveda defined seven body types. These were Vata, Pitta, Kapha, Sama, Vata-Kapha, Vata-Pitta, and Pitta-Kapha. The first three types occur in their pure form very rarely, so seldom is it that anyone is primarily influenced by one dosha alone. Even more infrequent is the Sama dosha, also called tridosha, both names referring to the equal distribution of all three doshas, i.e., Vata, Pitta and Kapha. By far the more common are the combination body types, referred to as dual prakriti, i.e., Vata-Kapha, Vata-Pitta, and Pitta-Kapha. In more recent times, these three dual types have been expanded to include six dual types, by reversing the two doshas within each dual type and considering it a separate type, i.e., Kapha-Vata, Pitta-Vata, and Kapha-Pitta. A person who has both Vata and Pitta dominant may, therefore, be either a Vata-Pitta or Pitta-Vata type, depending on which of the two doshas is more dominant.

Note: Because so many disorders do not confine themselves to a specific body type, most of the therapies described in this book are directed to those disorders belonging to the Vata, Pitta, or Kapha dosha, rather than to a specific body type. In this way, the primary emphasis is kept on the nature of the disorder itself. Where applicable, therapies are identified by both body type and disorder. Dietary and activity recommendations are directed to both the individual therapy and body type. For the purpose of simplicity, references to body type in the therapy, formula and recipe sections are confined to three: Vata, to include Vata-Pitta, Vata-Kapha, and Vata; Pitta, to include Pitta-Vata, Pitta-Kapha, and Pitta; and Kapha, to include Kapha-Vata, Kapha-Pitta, and Kapha.

Because the body types are the basis from which all Ayurvedic diagnosis begins, they are explained here in some detail. This explanation is also intended to help you better understand your own personal constitution.

Elemental Source of Body Types

Rare Body Types

- | | |
|----------|-----------------------------|
| 1) Vata | air/space |
| 2) Pitta | fire/water |
| 3) Kapha | water/earth |
| 4) Sama | balance of all three doshas |

Dual Body Types (original classification)

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| 1) Vata/Pitta | air/space main; fire/water subordinate |
| 2) Vata/Kapha | air/space main; water/earth subordinate |
| 3) Pitta/Kapha | fire/water main; water/earth subordinate |

Additional Dual Body Types (recognized by contemporary practitioners)

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| 1) Pitta/Vata | fire/water main; air/space subordinate |
| 2) Kapha/Vata | water/earth main; air/space subordinate |
| 3) Kapha/Pitta | water/earth main; fire/water subordinate |

Body Type Qualities

VATA (like wind)	KAPHA (like water)	PITTA (like fire)
dry	oily	hot
cold	cool	oily
light	heavy	light
mobile	stable	intense
erratic	dense	fluid
rough	smooth	fetid
bitter	sweet	sour
astringent	sour	pungent
pungent	salty	salty

Nurturing Requirements

VATA: Nurtured by the elements fire, water, and earth

moist	sweet
heavy	salty
smooth	sour
hot	

PITTA: Nurtured by the elements water, air, space, and earth

cool	sweet
substantial	bitter
aromatic	astringent
calming	

KAPHA: Nurtured by the elements fire, air, and space

dry	pungent
warm	bitter
light	astringent
uncloying	

Determining Your Ayurvedic Body Type

Generally, everyone possesses characteristics from all three categories of body type, although one or two will usually predominate. Approach the chart below honestly. Remember that your evaluation will be colored by the qualities of your present lifestyle. Six months after making the necessary changes in your diet and daily activities and doing the cleansing sadhanas regularly, re-do the Body Type chart. The latter response will be more in keeping with your true constitutional nature.

Directions: Move horizontally across each of the sections set out in the chart below and circle the attributes that you feel most accurately reflect you. Choose at least one from each section. Ask a spouse, parent, or friend to assist you with the Emotional Characteristics portion of the assessment so that your choices will be as objective as possible. Men are advised to seek the assistance of a woman—