

AYURVEDIC DOSHA CLOCK: AN OVERVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda literally means "science of life", and it represents the oldest complex medical system about healthy lifestyle principles. *Ayurveda* represents a holistic and simple form of healing approach. It aims to know oneself and to reveal deeper causes of one's health conditions. Every human being is born with a unique proportion of biologic principles (*doshas*) – *vata*, *pitta*, *kapha*, representing the individual genetic code which takes part in the forming of our mental and physical characteristics. During the course of life, the *dosha* proportions deviate (*vikruti*) from its original state (*prakruti*) for various reasons and subsequently, it has an impact on our mental and physical health condition. *Ayurvedic* Clock = Biological Clock

+Mother Nature's Clock. The *Ayurvedic* Clock is essentially what modern science now calls our biological clock, or body clock, and is linked to how our genes and hormones operate. *Ayurveda* prescribes optimal times for eating, sleeping and working (along with many other activities) by illustrating the link between our body's energy and the energy of the *doshas* (elements) that are primary during one of six blocks of time per 24-hour cycle. The more closely we align our daily rhythms with the rhythms of nature, the more we support our well-being. When we go against the natural daily cycles of energy, we disrupt our health..

KEYWORDS: *Ayurvedic dosha* clock, *Vata*, *Pitta*, *Kapha*, *Prakruti*, *Vikruti*.

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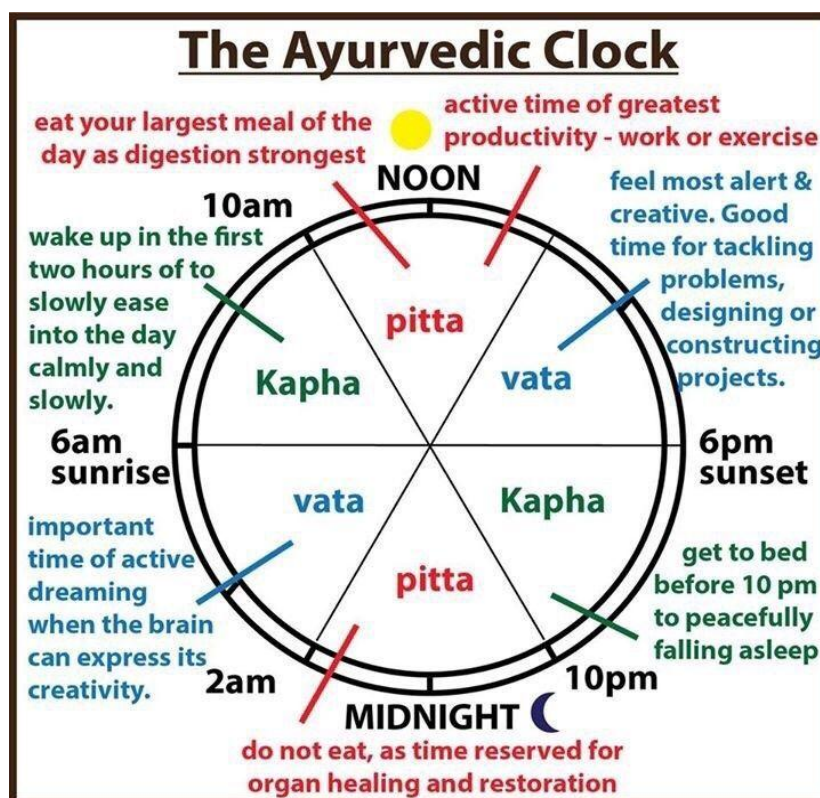
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INTRODUCTION

The *Ayurvedic* clock is a type of clock, the same as a traditional clock – but here we will view it through the lens of *Ayurveda*. The day has its natural rhythms, and the closer you can follow them, the more vitality and less stressed you will feel. Likewise, the further you wander from them, the more your health will suffer. *Ayurveda* gives us the clarification of energies which relate to specific times of the day. Keep in mind that you most likely already break your day into work time, personal time and sleep time. But the *Ayurvedic* clock views the times of day quite differently. The *Ayurvedic* clock divides the day into six periods. Each day has two phases. Day and night. In other words, there are two revolutions of *doshas* every twenty-four hours. The first phase takes place from sunrise to sunset. The second phase takes place from sunset to sunrise. Health is an optimal state of harmonious body functioning. It represents the balance between three biological principles (*vata*, *pitta*, *kapha*) according to the original condition (*vikruti*), bodily tissues and their functions, sensory organs, the mind and psychic consciousness. *Ayurvedic* Clock = Biological Clock + Mother Nature's Clock. The clock is split into four-hour cycles based on the type of energy that is predominant in our bodies and in nature during each four-hour window. Every day we cycle through the three *doshas* — *vata*, *kapha* and *pitta* — twice.



Ayurvedic Clock Time Blocks

Vata time: 2 to 6 am and pm

Kapha time: 6 to 10 am and pm

Pitta time: 10 to 2 am and pm

Most of us break the day into work time, our time, and sleep time, with work time generally allotted the most number of hours. *Ayurveda* sees the day differently, breaking it into six four-hour zones—one day zone and one night zone for each of the three *doshas*. To live a balanced life—and enjoy the good health it brings—we need to keep our daily rhythms set to the age-old *ayurvedic* clock. According to this symbolic timepiece, the day starts at sunrise, with the cool, heavy, earthy *kapha dosha* holding sway from 6 a.m. to 10 a.m. The middle of the day—from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.—belongs to *pitta*, the hot, sharp, and fiery “king of digestion” *dosha*. And light, dry, airy *vata* rules the afternoon, from 2 p.m. until 6 p.m., after which the cycle begins again.

Rise and Shine

To stay in sync, you should wake up before sunrise, when *vata* is transcendent. Once the sun is up, we begin to fall under *kapha*’s earth- and water-like spell. Hitting snooze when the alarm goes off at 6 a.m. may feel delicious, but if you don’t get up ’til 7, the dense, dull, heaviness of *kapha* will have started to color your physical and mental experience. So, waking at dawn, just before the birds, is ideal (traditionally 5:30 a.m.; maybe 6 in your time zone). That way you will start off the day in rhythm with nature’s light and will benefit from *vata*’s mobile, clear, ether-like qualities, which, serendipitously, support your meditation practice.

Eat a Midday Dinner

Ayurveda also encourages us to eat our primary meal in the middle of the day, when the fire of *pitta* dominates. *Pitta* supports our ability to digest all things—food, thoughts, and feelings. The metabolic aspect of digestion, our *agni*, does its best work midday. Eat later in the day, and your body will have more difficulty processing your meal. The same holds true for eating a big meal in the evening. *Ayurveda* recommends a light supper instead so your body can finish digesting your food long before bedtime, and you’ll be able to transition from being awake to a more restful state (what *ayurveda* calls “light sleep”), necessary for sandman success.

Wind Down Slowly

At about 6 in the evening, we move again from *vata* to *kapha dosha*. The same *kapha* energy—dull, slow, stable, heavy—that makes it difficult to wake up with ease after sunrise now supports our move into sleep. (*Kapha* types generally like to go to bed early.) If you tune in, you will start to feel the body and mind's fatigue and recognize your desire for a good night's sleep.

Resist that Second Wind

At about 10 p.m., the midnight oil lamp of *pitta* takes over from drowsy *kapha*. The body uses this four-hour period (from 10 p.m. to 2 a.m.) to digest experiences, emotions, and any remaining food from earlier in the day, and to repair and renew itself. Because *pitta* is fiery and hot, if you fight through the drowsiness of *kapha* time and stay up too late, you'll catch a second wind that can keep you up to all hours—and you can kiss any hope of a good night's sleep good-bye. When you finally do doze off, staying asleep can be challenging because, as *pitta* time gives way to *vata* time, the doshic qualities become lighter, subtler, and more filled with movement. In fact, according to the *ayurvedic* clock, we start the process of “rising” around 2 a.m. If we continue with restlessness until dawn, we miss the benefits of sleep that support body, mind, and *ojas*, our deep vitality. Aligning our hectic modern-day lives to the *ayurvedic* clock can prove challenging to say the least, but making the effort can lead to a big payoff. Many of today's health problems—insomnia, heartburn, anxiety, and depression—are directly linked to the lack of balance in our lives. Matching our mealtimes, wake/sleep cycle, and general activities to the cycle of *doshas* will help restore that balance—and our good health.

Try an Ayurvedic Bedtime Routine

Aim to get to bed by 10 p.m., if possible. To make that happen:

1. Turn off the TV at least an hour before bed.
2. Resist online anything—shopping, Twitter, Facebook, news gathering, or working.
3. Use that extra hour for self-reflection, journaling, restorative yoga, or meditation.
4. Treat yourself to a foot massage. Rub lavender-scented warm sesame oil on your feet and pull on a pair of old socks.
5. Put on your favorite deep relaxation CD or *yoga nidra* CD (earlier in the day) to help you practice resting and to take the edge off the nervous system. Doing *yoga nidra* too close to bedtime could refresh your energy instead of moving you into deep sleep.

6. Make yourself some warm milk laced with special sleep-inducing herbs. Pour 4 to 6 ounces of milk (organic, from happy cows!) into a saucepan, along with a pinch or two of cinnamon, cardamom, nutmeg, and saffron, and a teaspoon of ghee, and simmer for about three minutes. Remove from the heat and let set for a minute or so. Add raw honey to taste—either more than or less than a teaspoon. Take this warm elixir with you to bed, sip until finished, and settle in for a divine snuggle.^[1]

DISCUSSION

Ayurvedic Clock: Activities for Vata Time

Because *vata dosha* includes the elements of ether and air, the two time blocks with high *vata dosha* tend to be great times to access the ethers and spiritual connection.

In the early morning, between 2:00 and 6:00 am, is an ideal time to meditate because the veil is thin between the physical and spiritual worlds. You can connect more easily to stillness and peace when there is less activity outside you and things are quiet and etheric.

In the afternoon between 2:00 and 6:00 pm, the high *vata* energy makes it a great time to do creative endeavors. The qualities of air and ether that are present during this afternoon cycle of *vata dosha* are naturally more playful and light.

Small shifts you can make to align your habits to *vata* time

- Meditate sometime between 2:00 and 6:00 am, or between 5:00 and 6:00 pm when nature slows down at dusk
- Socialize and share creative conversations between 2:00 and 6:00 pm
- Make lunch a more substantial meal if you are experiencing cravings or low blood sugar during the *vata* afternoon hours

Ayurvedic Clock: Activities for Kapha Time

Kapha dosha consists of earth and water, which by nature are heavy. That means that the energy at this time of the day and evening is heavy, slower, and denser.

In the morning, between 6:00 and 10:00 am, we want to draw *prana* (life force and intelligence that ride on the breath) into the body to nurture and awaken not only the physical body but the other layers of the body as well via the five *koshas* (energetic sheaths).

During the evening *kapha* time, we are best suited to wind down our day and flow with the heavier energy to move us toward sleep. Our bodies naturally have less energy at this time of day precisely because we are getting ready to go into rest and repair mode.

Small shifts you can make to align your habits to *kapha* time

- Exercise in the morning or no later than 7 pm to allow your body to wind down and prepare for bed during the *kapha* evening cycle
- Invite the heavy, sleepy feeling that is natural in the evenings by taking an evening bath or shower and practicing warm oil massage (*Abhyanga*)
- Turn off your screens and reach for a relaxing book before 9:00 pm at the latest
- Go to bed before 10:00 pm

Ayurvedic Clock: Activities for *Pitta* Time

Pitta dosha is made of fire and water.

In the morning, from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm, is the time when our digestive fire is highest. Our body has the most bile to help break down food at this time, so we want to consume our largest meal of the day during this four-hour window.

In the evening, we want to be in bed by the end of *kapha* time, 10 pm, so that as the fire of our body's repair system begins to ignite, we are asleep and can allow for full processing of the day to occur on an involuntary and cellular level.

Small shifts you can make to align your habits to *pitta* time

- Eat your largest meal of the day during afternoon *pitta* time
- Eat an earlier, lighter dinner to allow the evening fire of *pitta* to digest primarily mental information, focus on cell repair and not be taxed with digesting heavy food
- Schedule your most physical or analytical tasks during the *pitta* daylight hours²

How to work with the clock

Ayurveda understands that:

Like increases like. Opposites balance

During the seasons, time of day, or time of life, the indicated *dosha* is more predominant and more easily pushed out of balance. With this in mind, we can organize our day so that our

activities and practices take place at an ideal time. Here are some things to consider when organizing your day to be in alignment with the *Ayurvedic* clock.

Food Practices

- Aim to eat your biggest meal of the day for lunch, when digestive fire is strongest. Landing this meal between 10a-2p is ideal as this is when the body is most ready to digest and assimilate.

Wake/Sleep Times

- Rising by 6a helps to start your day off right. If oversleeping occurs, it becomes much more difficult to wake, as you are now trying to wake up during the heavy, dull time of *Kapha*. Waking with clarity and lightness helps to get you started on the right foot.
- Go to sleep by 10p. Around 10p we transition from *Kapha* time to *Pitta* time. If we aren't mindful of following the wave of *Kapha* to bed, we may begin to use the fiery energy of *Pitta* externally (organize the closet! achieve inbox zero!) instead of the internal detoxification and healing work that night time *Pitta* is meant to do.

Hygiene + Wellness Practices

- Consider tongue scraping, eye washing, or oil pulling as part of your morning rituals.
- Prayer, asana, *pranayama*, meditation can serve to anchor you throughout your day. Try to land these practices early in the morning during *Vata* time of day for most benefit.
- *Nasya* is a great precursor to any breath work or when the mind needs grounding.
- Establish regular meal times.
- Spend time in nature.
- Practice *abhyanga*.^[3]

The *Ayurvedic* clock serves as a tool to help us build a healthy relationship between our internal environment, and that of the outside world. It serves as a mechanism to inform us on our activities and practices throughout each day, time of year, and time of life. It's purpose as a way to inform us and remind us of how to stay in balance is both invaluable and timeless. I know you strive to practice different techniques that will bring you better health. Yet, very few of us follow the natural rhythms of the day since electricity transformed our lives. Our ancestors lived their lives in tune with nature. They woke up with the sun, and went to bed when it got dark. According to *Ayurveda*, the more you sync with the *Ayurvedic* clock, the better you will feel.

New Routines Requires You To Change

The key factor to remember is that new routines always require you to alter how you're existing now. That's the key to anything in life, really. If you want different results, you'll need to make new and fresh changes. There isn't much in life that's impossible for success if you alter your current routines with determination. We are the way we are because of our daily routines.

CONCLUSION

How the *Ayurvedic* clock supports your wellness

Much of *Ayurveda* is bringing our own internal, micro-environment into balance with the external, macro-environment we call Nature. One of the most profound ways that we do this is by aligning our own circadian rhythms and biological clocks with that of Nature. Wake/sleep times, meal times, times of activities, and the *gunas*, or qualities, that will most influence us will all be informed by the *doshic* influence of the *Ayurvedic* clock. Developing and practicing a *dincharya*, or daily routine, helps to regularize the circadian rhythm, aid digestion, absorption, assimilation, hormone production, immune function; and generates self-esteem, discipline, peace, and longevity. This is where the *Ayurvedic* clock comes in handy.

Sync with the *Ayurvedic* Clock to Prevent Disease

Keeping our daily habits in sync with the 24-hour circadian rhythm of our bodies is of paramount importance for our health and longevity. It's so important in fact that 3 scientists were awarded the Nobel Prize in 2017 for their body clock studies. According to The New York Times, their research indicated that "the misalignment between a person's lifestyle and the rhythm dictated by an inner timekeeper — jet lag after a transatlantic flight, for example — could affect well-being and over time could contribute to the risks for various diseases." This knowledge has been around for thousands of years and passed down through the sciences of *yoga* and *Ayurveda*. However, our modern lifestyle has made it easier to ignore these natural rhythms. Our cultural norms press us to push beyond what is healthy for our bodies in a quest for perceived rewards. Once we step back and see that operating like a machine could take years off of your life and make the years you do have less productive and enjoyable, you'll start to look for ways to get back in sync with your body and nature. That's what thriving is all about. Remember the key in abiding to your *Ayurvedic* clock is knowing the times your body transitions into each *doshic* cycle. It's up to you on how well you pay

attention to the *Ayurvedic* clock. If you sync your natural biological rhythms with mother nature, she will reward you with a healthy body and mind. Nature works through rhythms in time. Our bodies thrive when we synchronize them with the seasonal, lunar, daily and time of life rhythms. Researchers and ancient medical systems like *Ayurveda* have long described biological clocks and Nobel Prize-winning researchers into circadian medicine now understand exactly how they work. The *Ayurvedic* clock takes us through 4 hour intervals throughout the day, with digestive strength being greater at midday and detox activity being greater at night. When we pay attention to these rhythm changes and organize our activities to flow with them, we invite more potential and more ease into our lives. Notice how at the end of the day your body starts to slow down, your eyelids begin to feel heavy and you feel less like getting deep into conversation or difficult discussions, this is your body naturally tapping into *kapha* energy. Slow, sticky and delicious! This is your body signaling that it wants to wind down and get ready for deep rest. We can experience the same slow, sticky *kapha* energy in the morning when we wake up, particularly if we sleep too long or too late. The energies of *vata*, *pitta* and *kapha* are constantly fluctuating throughout the day and there is mounting evidence that we may be more sensitive to these timing cues than scientists ever imagined. *Ayurveda* is founded on this very principle. If waking up ready for the day feels like a foreign concept, midday crashes a regular occurrence and restlessness at bedtime a trend, it may be time to reset your body clock. According to *Ayurveda* one of the keys to good health is living in tune with nature's cycles, most importantly the daily rhythm that governs your physiology. Known as *circadian rhythm* this 24-hour biological cycle governs the optimal time to fall asleep and wake up as well as other essential bodily functions like hormone release, digestion and body temperature. According to *Ayurveda*, your body is completely aligned with the times of day in regards to your vital organs.

| Ayurvedic Body Clock | | | | |
|----------------------|--------------------------|-------|---|---------------------------------------|
| Time | Organ | Dosha | Emotion | Activities |
| 12-2am | Heart | Pitta | Joy; All deep rooted, unresolved emotions | Sleep |
| 2-4am | Spleen | Vata | Anger | Sleep |
| 4-6am | Colon, Bladder | Vata | Anxiety | Bowel Movement, Meditation |
| 6-8am | Lungs | Kapha | Grief, Sadness | Mild exercise, gentle Yoga or walking |
| 8-10am | Pancreas | Kapha | Attachment | 8am: Breakfast 9-10am: Digest |
| 10am-12pm | Small Intestine, Stomach | Pitta | Anger, Anxiety | Digest |
| 12-2pm | Heart | Pitta | Joy; All deep rooted, unresolved emotions | 12pm: Lunch 1-2: Digest |
| 2-4pm | Liver, Gallbladder | Vata | Anger, Hate, Resentment | Digest |
| 4-6pm | Colon, Kidney | Vata | Anxiety, Fear | Dinner |
| 6-8pm | Lungs | Kapha | Grief, Sadness | 6pm: Walk |
| 8-10pm | Pancreas | Kapha | Attachment | Rest and Digest |
| 10-12pm | Small Intestine, Stomach | Pitta | Anger, Anxiety | 10pm: Sleep |

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