

Know your dental dosha

My dear friends Michelle Hurlbutt, RDH, and Kristy Menage Bernie, RDH, from California and I have studied and developed courses on the mind, body, and spirit. One of our favorites is "Know Your Dental Dosha." Our goal for the course and this column is for you to discover your dosha and understand how it can affect the dynamics and interpersonal communications in your dental workplace.

Ayurveda is India's 5,000-year-old "Science of Life." Simply put, it is the art of living in harmony with nature. The Ayurveda studies people's physical and psychic behavior and prescribes ways for them to synchronize with their environment to live happy, healthy, and inspired lives. Much emphasis in Ayurveda is on diet, following the cycles of the seasons, getting up before dawn, massage, and other practices. Your dosha is your mind and body type. There are three doshas in Ayurveda: Vata, Pitta, and Kapha. (No, not the Nina, Pinta, and Santa Maria as my friend calls them.) Everyone has all three doshas in their physiology in different proportions, so each person's dosha is unique, similar to a fingerprint. When I began studying the three doshas, my skeptical self concluded they were skinny, fatty, and "I don't give a rip."

Vata

Vata-type people are generally thin and find it hard to gain weight. Because of this, Vatas have very little energy reserve, tire easily, and get out of balance. Vatas need to get sufficient rest, not overdo things, stay warm, and keep a regular lifestyle routine.

The Vata dosha controls all movement in the body, including breathing, digestion, and nerve impulses from the brain. When Vata is out of balance, anxiety and other nervous



disorders may be present. Digestive problems, constipation, cramps, and even premenstrual pain are usually attributed to a Vata imbalance.

The most important thing to know about Vata is that it leads the other doshas. It is the key dosha. Without Vata, the other doshas cannot move. Vata brings the air or wind beneath their wings. Vata usually gets out of balance first, which causes the early stages of disease. More than half of all illnesses are Vata disorders. Balancing Vata is important for everyone, because when Vata is in balance, Pitta and Kapha are generally in balance as well.

Pitta

Pitta-type people are usually of medium size and well proportioned. They have a medium amount of physical energy and stamina. They also tend to be intelligent and have a sharp wit and a good ability to concentrate. Fire is a characteristic of Pitta, whether it shows up as fiery red hair or a short temper. Since Pittas' body temperature is generally warm, Pitta types can get out of balance with overexposure to the sun. Their eyes are sensitive to light. They are ambitious by nature but can also be demanding and abrasive.

Pitta types are known for their strong digestion but should be careful not to abuse it. Their heat makes them particularly thirsty, and they should take caution not to douse their *agni*, or digestive fire, with too much liquid

during meals. Pitta dosha leads us to crave moderation and purity. We rely on Pitta to regulate our intake of food, water, and air. Any toxins, such as alcohol or tobacco, show up as a Pitta imbalance. Toxic emotions such as jealousy, intolerance, and hatred also should be avoided to keep Pitta in balance for optimum health.

Kapha

Kapha-type people tend to have sturdy, heavy frames, which provide a good reserve of physical strength and stamina. Those of you who know me or have heard me speak can guess this is my dosha. Shall I repeat the heavy frame part? Thank you to Grandma Edna and my Czechoslovakian heritage. This strength gives Kaphas a natural resistance to disease and a generally positive outlook on life. The Kapha dosha is slow, and Kapha types tend to be slow eaters with slow digestion. They also speak slowly. They are calm and affectionate but, when out of balance, they become stubborn and lazy. They learn slowly, with a methodical approach, but also retain information well and understand it.

Kapha dosha controls the moist tissues of the body, so a Kapha imbalance may show up as a cold, allergies, or asthma. This is worse in Kapha season, which is March through June. Cold and wet weather aggravates Kapha. Kaphas should not dwell in the past or resist change. They need lots of

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exercise and should be careful not to overeat. Kaphas need stimulation to bring out their vitality. Kapha dosha teaches steadiness and a sense of well-being.

There is much more to understanding your dosha. To learn about your dosha and more about the Ayurvedic medicine, I recommend the book *Know Your Dosha, Baby!* by Lisa Marie Coffey.

Dosha self-test

The dosha test below is very simple and will give you an

idea of your determined dosha. Check the choice below that best describes you. If you have characteristics from more than one section, circle both. Base your answers according to your total life experiences, not just how you have felt the past few weeks, months, or year. Then add up each column and mark the total number of qualities you have under each section.

The chart on the next page gives you a visual understanding of the characteristics of each dosha. Have your office team take the dosha quiz and determine who's who. This will help you develop an understanding of conflict and cohesiveness.

Physical Traits

	Vata	Pitta	Kapha
Body Frame	thin	medium	large
Fingernails	cracking or thin	pink/soft, medium	wide, white, thick
Resting Pulse			
(before 10 a.m. & before meal)	80 to 100	70 to 80	60 to 70
Weight	low or bony	medium or muscular	gains easily
Stool/bowel movements	small, hard, or gas	loose or burns	moderate or solid
Forehead size	small	medium	large
Appetite	variable	strong or sharp	constant or low
Eyes	small or unsteady	reddish or focused	wide or white
Voice	low or weak	high or sharp	slow or silent
Lips	cracking, thin, dry	medium or soft	large or smooth
Which bothers you most?	cold and dry	heat and sun	cold and damp
Body totals	Vata <input type="checkbox"/>	Pitta <input type="checkbox"/>	Kapha <input type="checkbox"/>

Mental Traits

	Vata	Pitta	Kapha
Temperament	nervous or fearful	irritable or impatient	easygoing
Speech	quick or talkative	moderate or argues	slow or silent
Sleep	light	moderate	heavy
Habits	travel or nature	sports or politics	water or flowers
Memory	quickly grasp; soon forgets	sharp or clear	slow to learn; never forgets
Beliefs	radical or changing	leader or goal-oriented	loyal or constant
Dreams	flying or anxious	fighting or in color	few or romantic
Emotions	enthusiastic or worries	warm or angry	calm or attached
Mind	quick or adaptable	penetrating or critical	slow or lethargic
Mind totals	Vata <input type="checkbox"/>	Pitta <input type="checkbox"/>	Kapha <input type="checkbox"/>

xx

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www.rdhmag.com

Ultimately, knowing your dental dosha may shed some light on you and your colleagues. Please let me know how this has affected your understanding of your professional peers. **RDH**

Debra Grant, RDH, CA, manages her own company, Oraspa, Inc. Her continuing education in integrative dentistry and dental hygiene ensures state-of-the-art information for the contemporary dental office. She is the creator of Perioromatherapy, a therapeutic technique used in her dental office. Debra offers educational programs as a speaker and consultant. She can be reached at www.Oraspa.com or debra@Oraspa.com.

Dosha Characteristics

	Vata	Pitta	Kapha
Function:	Controls movement	Controls metabolism	Controls structure
Key word:	Changeable	Intense	Relaxed
Governs:	Colon	Intestines, stomach	Chest
Dominant senses:	Sound, touch	Sight	Taste, smell
Properties:	Cold, dry, light, rough	Hot, light, sharp, moist	Cold, heavy, wet, sticky
Composed of:	Air (and space)	Fire (and water)	Water (and earth)
Aggravated by (avoid):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wind • Caffeine • Traveling • Irregular routine • Irregular meals • Cold, dry weather • Excessive mental work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heat • Alcohol • Smoking • Pressure • Stress • Excessive spicy or salty foods • Excessive activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cold • Damp • Oversleeping • Overeating • Heavy foods • Too little variety in life
Diet — To keep in balance, favor:	Tastes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sweet • Sour • Salty • Warm foods 	Tastes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sweet • Astringent • Bitter • Cool foods (not cold) 	Tastes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bitter • Pungent • Astringent • Warm, light foods
Digestion tends to be:	Variable, delicate	Strong, intense	Slow, heavy
Recommended exercise for balance:	Activities: Low-impact: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yoga • Walking • Dancing 	Activities: Competitive, team sports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baseball • Tennis or cooling sports • Swimming 	Activities: Stimulating, regular exercise: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Body building • Running
Season:	November-February (Cold and dry)	July-October (Hot)	March-June (Cold and wet)
Primary color to balance:	Yellow	Blue	Red
When in balance you are:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enthusiastic • Alert • Flexible • Creative • Talkative • Responsive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loving • Content • Intelligent • Articulate • Courageous 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affectionate • Steady • Methodical • High stamina • Resistant to illnesses
When out of balance you are:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restless • Fatigued • Constipated • Anxious • Underweight 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perfectionist • Frustrated • Angry • Impatient • Irritable • Prematurely gray or have early hair loss 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dull • Prone to oily skin • Prone to allergies • Possessive • Oversleeping • Overweight