



EXPERT NOTES

Alicia Diaz

Ayurveda



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An Ayurvedic Perspective

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Alicia studied with three world masters of Ayurveda in India and in the USA. Her passion is to help women overcome fatigue to create abundant energy and lifelong vibrant health.

I. How Do You View The Problem of Sleep

The body is out of tune with rhythms of nature

We're seamlessly intertwined with nature. Humans are not nocturnal; we need to be hormonally, physically, emotionally connected to those cycles in order to have deep, rejuvenating sleep.

The 5 Elements

There are 5 elements at play in our bodies:

- ether
- air
- fire
- water
- earth

Imbalance of Elements in the Nervous System

When any of the 5 elements are out of balance in the nervous system sleep can be disrupted.

Excess ether or air

Movement; disturbance; the mind is “extra active.”

- Anxiety
- Tension
- Worry
- Stress
- Difficulty falling or staying asleep.

Excess of the fire element

Hot; “spark,” drivenness

- Burn the midnight oil
- May need to read to fall asleep
- Might watch TV or be on the computer till late
- Difficulty going to sleep but will usually sleep well once under

Excess water and earth

Heavy and dense

- Snoring
- Depression
- Sluggish metabolism
- More common in people who gain weight easily

Why is sleep vital?

The Brain

- Rejuvenates
- Undergoes reorganization
- Neurons and brain cells undergo deep changes

Body & Mind

During the night the human body undertakes a very special aspect of “digestion,”* breaking down and assimilating:

- Thoughts
- Feelings
- Emotions
- Blood cells
- Neurons
- Organs

**Your body “goes in” and digests toxicity buildup from the day. The mind goes “in,” too, and digests thoughts and emotions, detoxing the bad, keeping the good.*

In Summary, sleep is:

- Mind/Body Rejuvenating
- Mind/Body Detoxing

Women/Menstrual Cycles

All bodily processes require the time during sleep to refresh, rejuvenate and maintain optimal function, and this includes the woman's monthly menstrual cycle.

Adequate sleep:

- become regular
- stay regular
- are less painful

Inadequate sleep:

- Hormonal imbalance
- PMS*
- painful cramping

**If the body isn't cleansing and being refreshed every day during deep rejuvenating sleep, then during the menstrual flow it will do "a massive cleansing," causing PMS and a more painful process.*

Body, Mind & Emotion

Consequences of Sleep Deprivation

"Sleep is a vital aspect of promoting lifelong health, vitality, longevity and youthfulness." Being sleep deprived will lead to:

- Hormonal imbalance
- PMS and painful menstrual cycle
- Unprocessed/poorly digested food (*and poor digestion is the root cause of almost every other imbalance in the human body*)
- Unprocessed thoughts
- Emotions accumulated causing emotional imbalance
- Immune strength "defeated"
- Depression
- Chronic fatigue syndrome
- Migraines
- Restless leg syndrome
- ...and more...

II. What Symptoms Should One Look For?

Obvious

- cloudy thinking/brain fog
- crankiness
- problems in close relationships
- self-consciousness
- taking things personally

- easily angered or frustrated

Not Obvious

- Constipation
- Worry, fear, anxiety
- Low immune system indicated by increasingly catching colds, etc.
- Requiring coffee or tea to get through the day
- Waking up at the same time every night could mean there's an imbalance in one of the organs
 - e.g., 2am = "the liver time," indicating that the liver is overtaxed

The 3 Body Types

Ayurvedic medicine identifies every person according to the 3 main body types:

- **Vatta:** dominant ether/air elements
- **Pitta:** dominant fire element
- **Kapha:** dominant water/earth elements

Most people are dominant in one or two types; all have some combination of the three.

Vatta

People who are vatta dominant have great creativity.

Symptoms of excess Vatta include:

- Worry
- Tension
- Stress
- Flightiness
- Forgetfulness

- Difficulty concentrating
- Constipation
- Bloating
- Nightmares
- Busy dreams of running, flying or being chased
- Tossing and turning
- Waking up through the night

Pitta

The dominant Pitta is typically the entrepreneur, business professional. They are driven, hard workers.

Symptoms of excess Pitta include:

- Easily frustrated or angry
- Acidity in the body
- Acid reflux
- Burping
- Heartburn
- Feeling hot
- 2 am wakeup
- Difficulty falling asleep
- Need of an activity to fall asleep, but hard to stay asleep
- Hard to sleep with any light in the room.

Kapha

The dominant Kapha is more calm and laid back. They are consistent and reliable.

Symptoms of excess Kapha include:

- Obesity
- Gains weight easily

- Difficulty losing weight
- Sleep apnea
- Snoring
- Frequent upper respiratory infections
- Phlegm
- Sinus stuffiness
- Falls asleep easy but wakes up pre-dawn and feels restless

III. What Aggravates the Problem?

Indigestion

- consuming foods that are difficult for your body type to digest
- eating too late at night*

**Enzyme activity is highest during daylight hours. After sunset and every minute after it darkens the body drops DRASTICALLY its ability to produce enzymes that will digest, absorb and assimilate nutrients. So eating late at night will always aggravate sleep.*

Caffeine

- Any use of caffeine from any source will aggravate sleep, especially pitta and vatta
- Coffee aggravates the fire element massively

Exercise

- Too much strenuous activity in general for your body type or before bed, OR
- Or a lack/being completely sedentary
- Know how much exercise is appropriate for you

Napping

- Contributes to poor sleep at night.

Pain

Sleep Apnea

Stress, Anxiety & Worry

- Too much constantly on the mind
- Trouble putting things to rest and enjoying sleep

City Life

Everything that comes into our five senses will affect our sleep.

- constant bombardment of sensory stimulus constantly
- loud music
- TV
- phone
- cars and trucks and street noise
- outdoors artificial lighting

Natural/Synthetic Light

- Lack of natural light through the day will throw off your circadian rhythm, also disrupting the endocrine system and causing hormonal imbalance
- [Blue light](#) exposure throughout the day
- WHEREAS natural light, such as candle light and sunlight, help to balance these

By Body Type

Vatta

- Cold temperatures
- Traveling a lot
- Excess noise or light
- Excessive exercise

- Wind (worse in the Fall)
- Dry climates (get a humidifier)
- Excessive raw foods
- Airy foods like leafy greens or beans
- Too much sexual activity

Pitta

- Anything promoting acidity such as sour, spicy, or hot foods
- Room too hot
- Coffee
- Hard liquor
- Red wine
- Summertime
- Excess citrus foods
- Staying up late at night

Kapha

Kapha people might feel like they sleep well. They love their sleep and to sleep in, but sleep quality may be low.

- Overeating
- Sleep apnea

IV. How Would You Treat The Problem?

Treatment depends on the individual body type. The person must first of all know their unique body type, and then assess the root cause.

General Advice

“Ride the wave” of the energy of the sun according to its rhythm.

- **Get to bed as close as 10pm as possible**, on average, for most people. After 10:00 the body tends to go into its detox.



- **Wake up with the sun.**
- **Go for a walk first thing in the morning.**
- **Exercise** routine suitable to your body type.
- **Oil treatment-** put drops into the nose, infused with herbs that go right to nervous system and make you feel bright and awake and alive.
- **Oil massage** assists the body in “practicing” how to relax the muscles completely.
 - *technique:* just massaging feet and scalp before bed
- Two kinds of oils called bhringraj and brahmi oil:
 - herb infused oils that you massage into the feet and certain points on the head that help induce deep sleep
 - OR, you can use cold pressed organic raw sesame oil (food grade). Warm it up and massage the bottom of your feet and a little on the scalp. Activates “sleep points” in the body.
- **Marma Therapy**
- **Deep breathing; yoga; meditation; relaxation exercises.**
- **Reduce artificial lighting** after sunset, turn off artificial lighting an hour before bedtime; brush your teeth by candlelight; read, etc; but by natural light.
- **Drink warm tea or warm milk** before bed. If dairy, must be organic, grass-fed, RAW.
- **Or use almond milk**, almonds also have a grounding/calming effect on the nervous system.
- **Eye mask and earplugs** to help turn the senses inward and promotes a peaceful mind.
- **Room layout**/the way energy flows through the room may need to be adjusted. Feet shouldn't point to a doorway or mirror; or be sleeping under jagged beams overhead; head face east, or sleeping east-west instead of north-south will improve sleep.

V. What Dietary Recommendations Would You Make?

For ALL body types: Canned, frozen and leftover food contribute to poor sleep. Eat fresh, wholesome, vibrant, energy filled foods.

Vatta

Avoid

- Cold or excess raw foods
- Beans
- Leafy greens
- Veggies
- Gluten and flour based foods
- Any processed foods
- Leftover, frozen or canned foods
- Snacking
- Ice water

Favor

- Warm, cooked, well spiced foods
- Freshly prepared food
- Plant based
- Protein*
- Organic meats, *"Hands down, no exceptions. The quality is completely different."*
- One-pot meals, not lots of different types of foods
- As a snack, one fruit at a time rather than a variety
- Warm teas

- Warm milk before bed with a pinch of nutmeg, a sleep-inducing spice
- Healthy oils: coconut, sesame, ghee, etc.

** Vatta's may need more protein but it must be prepared in a way easy to digest (sensitive tummies).*

Pitta

Avoid

- hot and spicy
- sour
- citrus
- stimulants such as coffee, liquor, wine, beer
- limit acid creating meat, dairy and grain

Favor

- anti-inflammatory and alkalizing foods such as leafy greens and raw veggies
- fresh salads with healthy oils
- cooling lime
- fresh herbs like cilantro
- coconut oil (cooling and anti-inflammatory)
- turmeric

Kapha

Avoid/Limit

- fried food
- fatty food
- meat

- dairy
- heavy foods
- cold food

Favor

- raw
- juicing
- spices: think “bright and spicy”
- roughage

**NO ONE should eat COLD food or iced beverages but should be room temperature.*

In Summary

Vatta

Warm, well cooked, easy to digest, healthy spiced, well oiled meals; one pot meals, soups, stews, hot tea

Pitta

Alkalizing, anti-inflammatory foods; fresh veggies, salads, lots of greens, condiments like lime, cilantro, turmeric, coconut

Kapha

light, invigorating, well spiced

Supplements & Herbal Formulas

“It’s all about getting your body tuned back up with the natural world.”

Plants have intelligence that awaken the intelligence inside of your own cells, and remind

them how to do what they already know how to do. But these treatments are always a last resort and never a first defense.

Constraints:

1. Use only for a short amount of time
2. Use in conjunction with changes to diet and lifestyle, or they will not work

Herb Infusions

Some **safe herbs in tea form** that help induce sound sleep at night and help the whole nervous system relax:

- “Nighttime Tea” (Ayurvedic herb company)
- Tagar: *Caution: could be addictive, would only use for a Vatta with an extreme problem.*

VI. What Lifestyle Recommendations Would You Make?

Separate from unique recommendations and by body type, in general:

In The Morning:

- wake up with or before the sunrise
- apply [nasya oil](#)
- go for a walk or do body-type-appropriate exercises
- stretch/do yoga
- drink 8-12oz hot water with lemon to evacuate colon
- avoid caffeine

In The Afternoon

- For mid-afternoon sleepiness try [yoga nidra](#), a 20 minute guided visualization translated as “psychic sleep.” Yoga nidra strips away tension, brings mental and emotional release and rejuvenation without feeling exhausted. (recordings on her website)
- Hot tea

In The Evening

- Have dinner while the sun is up;
- Lunch and dinner should be plant based
- Limit exposure to artificial light

At Night

- no heavy desserts
- gentle music
- TV off
- phone and computer off
- stretching/yoga;
- limit sensory bombardment
- prepare the body for bed with an established routine, which will help cue body in to bedtime
- have some warm tea or milk
- wear an eye mask, ear plugs, etc.

KEY!!!

Don't stress if you can't sleep. Don't let your mind go haywire and control you. You take control of it by watching it.

- watch your breath
- watch your thoughts



- learn breathing techniques
- recondition your mind to be present and expect sound sleep, and eventually it'll happen
- come back to what's real

The only thing that's real is your breath.