Eating for Pitta

Foods to generally favor and go easy on, by food group

Ayurveda describes Pitta, the dosha of fire and transformation, as hot, sharp and intense. The traditional answer is food that is cooling, mild and satisfying, with less chili, sourness and salt. Sweet, bitter and astringent tastes are favored, though no food is strictly off limits.

FOOD GROUP	GENERALLY FAVOR	GO EASY ON
Grains	Basmati rice, oats, barley, wheat, quinoa.	Fried breads and salty snack crackers.
Vegetables	Cucumber, zucchini, leafy greens, broccoli, cauliflower, asparagus, green beans, sweet potato, fresh cilantro. Raw salads usually suit Pitta.	Raw onion, raw garlic and hot peppers. Pickled vegetables. Tomatoes and tomato sauce, if they bother you.
Fruit	Sweet, ripe fruit: melons, pears, sweet apples, grapes, sweet cherries, pomegranate, coconut.	Sour oranges, underripe pineapple, and sour citrus in large amounts.
Beans and lentils	Most kinds: mung beans, chickpeas, black beans, lentils, tofu.	Bean dishes that are fried or loaded with chili.
Dairy	Milk, ghee, unsalted butter, and fresh soft cheeses such as paneer or cottage cheese.	Sour or aged yogurt, and sharp, aged cheeses.
Nuts, seeds, oils	Soaked, peeled almonds. Coconut. Sunflower and pumpkin seeds. Olive oil and coconut oil.	Salted roasted nuts, and deep-fried or greasy food.
Animal foods if you eat them	Chicken or turkey, freshwater fish, egg whites.	Bacon, ham, salami and other cured meats.
Spices	Coriander, fennel, cardamom, turmeric, mint. Small amounts of cumin and fresh ginger.	Chili, cayenne, hot sauce, mustard, and vinegar-based condiments.
Drinks	Cool or room-temperature water, mint or fennel tea, coconut water.	Alcohol, and a lot of coffee.

Eating habits that help

1. **Do not go long without food.** Pitta is said to do poorly when hungry, so keep a simple snack on hand.
2. **Cook mild and add heat at the table,** so others can add chili to their own plate.
3. **Go easy on salty food,** including many restaurant and packaged meals.
4. **Eat sitting down,** away from work and screens.

Keep in mind

- **Starting points, not rules.** These lists come from Ayurvedic tradition, have not been tested in clinical trials, and are not a diagnosis.
- **"Go easy on" means less often,** not never. Go by how a food actually suits you.
- **Have a medical condition,** are pregnant or take medicines? Discuss changes with your practitioner first, and do not cut out whole food groups.
- **Digestive symptoms that persist,** such as frequent heartburn, deserve a medical check, not only a diet change.

This handout is general information. It is not a substitute for medical advice from your own doctor or practitioner.