



# Ayurvedic Healing

3121 Park Ave. Ste D, Soquel, Ca 95003 phone 831.462.3776 fax 831.462.3706 [www.ayurvedichealing.net](http://www.ayurvedichealing.net)

## Agni-The Digestive Fire

The ancient science of Ayurveda describes digestion as a sacred fire. Personified in the Indian tradition as the god Agni, the digestive fire in the belly consumes our food and transmutes it into the elements of the body, mind and spirit.

When we feel hunger, this is a sign that the digestive fire is blazing. When our hunger flags, and the fire weakens, then our digestion suffers, food is not assimilated and toxins accumulate in the body. According to Ayurveda, the condition of the digestive fire determines the health of our entire being.

How do we make sure that Agni, this sacred fire, stays strong and healthy? First, we supply just the right amount of fuel. If we overload our stomach by overeating, or if we drown it by drinking too much at meals, then the digestive fire goes out and it takes a long time to recover.

Keeping in mind that hunger is the sign of a healthy digestive fire, rather than constantly snacking, we can wait to eat until the level of hunger is high, but not too high. We can wait until mealtimes, and only then make our offering to the flames.

In India, as in many traditional cultures, meals are a time of sacred offering. Prior to eating, the food is offered to the divine power with humility, reverence and gratitude. The food itself is considered sacred and is prepared, handled and served as a precious gift. Many traditional cultures attach rituals to the act of eating to acknowledge its divine nature. This religious practice nourishes the soul as well as the body.

In many parts of the Western culture, however, this reverence for food and eating has faded, or been lost entirely. Grace may still be said at the dinner table, but for the most part, food is eaten with very little thought of where it came from and an absence of sensitivity to the condition of the digestive fire. Who among us takes a moment of reverential silence before biting into food when we are dashboard dining? And, with oversized portions being the norm, how often do we force ourselves to finish every bite, regardless of feeling unwell afterwards?

The consequences of eating in this unconscious fashion, year after year, are devastating, and explain, in part, why Western people suffer so much from obesity, heart disease, high blood pressure and other life-threatening conditions. These are all diet-related problems and the solution, the way to prevent them, is also related to the diet-what we eat and how we eat it.

Simply stated, when our digestive fire is strong, we thrive. When it is weak, we suffer.

- The next time you sit down to eat, take a few seconds to become aware of your digestive fire. Assess the level of hunger. Can you feel your digestive fire blazing? Can you sense that the digestive fire is ready to accept your offering of food?



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- Look at the food you are offering. Is it pleasing? Is it also wholesome? Will it leave you feeling satisfied, light and energetic?
- Are you in a quiet and reverential state of mind, undistracted, focused on the amazing, alchemical act of nourishing yourself?
- Pause for a moment to center yourself in this awareness. Take a deep breath and enjoy.