

What is Ayurveda?

Thousands of years before modern medicine provided scientific evidence for the mind-body connection, the sages of India developed Ayurveda, which continues to be one of the world's most sophisticated and effective mind-body health systems. Ayurveda is a science of life (*ayus* = life, *veda* = science or knowledge).

It offers a body of wisdom designed to help people stay vibrant and healthy while realizing their full human potential.

Ayurveda teaches us that in order to be truly healthy, we cannot just take care of the physical body—we need to address the health of the mind, body, spirit, and environment so that we can experience a state of wholeness

The guiding principle of Ayurveda is the interconnection of all things. We aren't isolated collections of atoms and molecules; we are inseparable parts of the infinite field of intelligence. From this holistic perspective, health isn't merely the absence of illness or symptoms—it is a higher state of consciousness that allows vitality, well-being, creativity, and joy to flow into our experiences. In contrast, illness is a disruption, a blockage in the flow of energy and

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information that creates a sense of separation or alienation from the field of intelligence. Ayurveda describes disease as the final expression of toxic accumulations in the mind-body physiology. Symptoms and sickness are the body's signal that we need to restore balance, eliminate whatever is causing the blockages, and reestablish the healthy flow of energy and information.

Ayurveda offers practices that help us to return to balance and experience our natural state of health and well-being. In contrast with conventional medicine, which has devoted a lot of effort to isolating the differences among various diseases, Ayurveda focuses on the unique qualities of individuals, pointing out that diseases differ mainly because people are so different.

Ayurveda teaches that all health-related measures—whether an exercise program, dietary plan, or herbal supplement—must be based on an understanding of an individual's unique mind-body constitution or *dosha*.

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In addition, while Western medicine has tended to treat the symptoms of disease, Ayurveda seeks to eliminate illness by treating the underlying cause. For example, for a patient suffering from depression, an allopathic physician would likely prescribe a standard course of antidepressants and, perhaps, therapy. An Ayurvedic doctor, on the other hand, would seek to understand the root imbalances contributing to the depression. The doctor would look at the patient as a whole, including the individual's mind, body, spirit, and environment. The doctor would consider the patient's lifestyle, activities, diet, recent stressful events, beliefs, and mind-body constitution, and recommend a treatment plan taking all of these factors into account.

It's important to keep in mind that Ayurveda doesn't reject the use of antidepressants and other prescription medications; in fact, Ayurveda's central principle is that we should make use of whatever healing modalities will restore health and balance to the body, including herbal remedies, dietary changes, pharmaceutical medications, surgery, meditation, exercise, and psychotherapy.

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In short, Ayurveda encompasses a perspective that allows us to integrate the wisdom of the ancient healing traditions with the best in modern medicine so that we can experience optimal health and well-being.