



## Conscious Nutrition

The physical body (*annamaya kosa*) is made of what you put into it, and your choices about what you eat and how you eat it greatly determine your health, energy, longevity, and sense of well being.

Eat slowly and mindfully, being peaceful and calm. Eat in silence sometimes, and when eating with others, speak of things that nourish awareness and happiness. Chew each bite well, to activate the digestive enzymes. Reduce or eliminate multi-tasking when you eat. Enjoy the selection, preparation, presentation, and eating of each meal. Savor the colors, textures, aromas, and tastes of your food. Love what you eat, and eat what truly nurtures your body.

To support peaceful equanimity, cultivate a quiet physiology. Reduce or eliminate the “Big 5” that the mind may want, the body doesn’t need, and that create physiological agitation: nicotine, alcohol, caffeine, sugar, and chemical additives and preservatives (including artificial sweeteners).

Food reveals our connection to the Earth. Eat close to the bottom of the food chain to maximize your energy and to support your body and the healing of the Earth. Eat organic, with the freshest of vegetables, fruits, and whole grains. As you reduce or eliminate animal and animal by-products, there may be less energy required for digestion. Consider eating vegetarian or vegan, letting go of seafood and dairy, while being careful to get plenty of protein at each meal. Eat more live, raw foods.

The healthy body is composed of 70-75% water, the blood is 90% water, and the brain is 85% water, so drink the freshest, most pure water available. Water carries oxygen to the cells and is the medium through which all cells communicate with each other. Consider drinking room temperature, non-carbonated liquids. Juice fresh vegetables and fruits on a regular basis to maximize nutrients. According to Ayurveda (the ancient health system from India) in order to reduce Ama, the residual impurities deposited in the cells as the result of improper digestion, first thing in the morning drink hot water with fresh lemon juice, and sip hot water through the day.

Chinese medicine suggests keeping the cauldron of digestion burning hot. Have three or four regular meals each day to stoke the fires, with at least three to four hours between eating. To not put out the fires when you eat, hydrate well 20 – 30 minutes before eating, so that you drink only a small amount during the meal. Eating your last meal of the day early allows digestion to be complete before going to bed to support quiet and deep sleep, and to allow digestion to rest for a 10 – 12 hour fast through the night. (If you are hungry before bed, have something that digests quickly such as fruit, and for protein some warm rice, almond, or soy milk.)

The most important food for the body is the breath. Breathe in a way that communicates ease, comfort, and well being. Breathe deeply and well.

Many people in the world are without healthy food and water. Practice compassion for those who are hungry, and gratitude for the fruits of the Earth that nourish you.

*Bon appétit!*