

Virility and Vitality

An Ayurvedic Guide to Men's Health



This one is for you—all of you! The macho and the timid, the outgoing and the shy, the providers and the caretakers, the beer lovers and the wine lovers, the jocks and the bookworms, and **everyone in between.**

Sure, women are more likely to see their doctor, attend health seminars and workshops, and read wellness blogs. But, we are becoming more aware of the many mental and physical health challenges that affect men (for instance, 70-89% of sudden cardiac events occur in men¹ and men are astoundingly four times more likely to commit suicide than women²). With this growing awareness, we see an inspiring movement of you all rallying for your health, increasing your presence in yoga studios, writing books and on health blogs, and showing up in the offices of a variety of health care providers.



And what is incredibly impressive is that you care about more than just muscles and sexuality (though these are still exceptionally important and intriguing topics)—your mental wellness and the way you deal with stressors and reach true happiness is also becoming equally important to you.

As it should be! Stress has *a lot* to do with the health challenges you will face as you age, and, contrary to popular belief, the chances of any man encountering some bumps in life due to mental illness (including periods of depression and extreme loneliness) are not slim.^{3,4} **It is awfully important that, as a collective, men change the perception that depression, loneliness, fear, and anxiety (all experienced by men) are weaknesses; it is quite simply a normal part of life that deserves no shame.** We are all human!

Thus, this piece seeks to guide you (both physically and mentally) through your life. It will walk you through each stage (your youth or *kapha* time, your middle age years or *pitta* time, and your senior years or *vata* time), highlighting common interests and themes that are likely to occur during that period.

As we all know, **life is not so linear**. Some of you are catapulted into a pitta phase of life as the providers of your family with the early loss of your father. Some of you enjoy a lifelong exploration of your sexuality and enjoy keeping your body toned and attractive well into your senior years. Or perhaps you face a lot of change and uncertainty in your life and experience fear and anxiety at a very young age. **In all cases, see this guide simply as a model of how to nurture all three of these energies, no matter what your age is.**

- **Build and Strengthen.** Support your kapha with highlights on:
 - [Muscles and Fitness](#)
 - [Healthy Sexuality and Stamina](#)
- **Calm and Soothe.** Support your pitta with highlights on:
 - [Stress and Your Sex Life](#)
 - [Hair Loss](#)
- **Ground and Enlighten.** Support your vata with highlights on:
 - [Healthy Prostate](#)
 - [Healthy Mind](#)



Build and Strengthen



Your Kapha

Endurance. Stamina. Strength. Vitality. Luster. Sturdiness. The heavy, solid, unctuous, and steady qualities of the earth and water elements (coming together to create the kapha energy within all of us) provide you with all of these qualities. As such, you will notice that all of the topics in this section naturally have a *building* element.

In Ayurveda, the basis of such building is called *rasayana* (the deep nourishment of all tissue layers by strengthening your plasma or *rasa*). Rasa is spoken of as “the finest,” the “prime essence,” and the “bodily fluid necessary for nourishment of the entire physique.”⁵ Since the first byproduct of your digestion is plasma, the Ayurvedic classical texts give strong emphasis on *what you eat* and *your ability to digest it*.

Supporting Your Kapha

All of the subjects below will ask for a general approach to supporting your kapha. The key in doing so lies in your food. The majority of the following suggestions address a well-balanced diet.

- **Take part in a regular, seasonal cleanse.** The Ayurvedic classics *always mention cleansing* the body of toxins and boosting the digestive fire (*agni*) *before any building* so that toxins do not further build and accumulate.⁶



- **Start your day with Chyavanprash and a cup of boiled whole milk.** The nourishing and cleansing amla fruit in this mixture is heralded in Ayurveda for its cleansing and rejuvenative effects.
- **Make your plate colorful.** This simple advice helps incorporate a variety of nutrients in each meal. Eat plenty of greens, incorporate some red (beets, red chard, berries), yellow (dal, turmeric, squash), and brown (lentils, beans, often protein sources).
- **Avoid very sour, salty, or spicy foods.**⁷ These tastes are depleting (versus building) in nature and promote aging.
- **Enjoy protein!** Aside from meats and eggs, you can incorporate significant protein sources in your diet with dairy (whole milk, cottage cheese, and yogurt), quinoa, beans and lentils, nuts and seeds, chia and hemp seeds, tofu and tempeh, and even avocados. Kitchari is both easy to digest and is a good source of protein.
- **Drink ample amounts of water!** Think of it as a nutrient, in and of itself.
- **Get plenty of sleep and rest.**⁸ About 7–8 hours nightly is ideal.
- **Cleanse toxins away nightly with Triphala.** For additional rejuvenative effects take this herb with ½ teaspoon of ghee and ½ teaspoon of honey.

Equally important is the idea that your meals should be fully digestible (by strengthening your digestive fire), so that your body can assimilate the food into all of your body's tissues.

- **Eat three meals a day.** Emphasize your breakfast and lunch. As you become older, your dinner should become smaller.
- **Avoid eating dinner after nightfall.** Our digestive fire sets with the sun.
- **Avoid snacking.**⁹ Preserve your digestive fire so that it is robust during your main meals (when you get your most important nutrients).
- **If you eat meat, try going vegetarian once a week.** Meat can be very heavy and hard to digest. Try this simple trick to jump-start your agni on a weekly basis.
- **Avoid poor food combining.** In particular, avoid cheese and fried foods, mixing dairy and meat, and fruits with any other food.
- **Give a little boost to your agni.** If you find yourself having signs of a sluggish digestive fire (i.e. getting sleepy after meals, having a hard time waking up after adequate sleep, noting a white coating on the tongue, experiencing frequent congestion or coughs) you might need an additional boost. Try **Kapha Digest** 1–2 tablets before meals and **Ginger liquid extract** every morning.

Muscles and Fitness

Fitness is not just an exercise of vanity. It provides you with a certain day-to-day functionality and overall sense of wellness. This is particularly true as you age. Muscles provide *form, movement, support, protection, and cohesiveness*. Recall that every aspect of your physical being also impacts your mental and emotional being; physical strength also gives you a sense of *courage and confidence*.

While this topic might be more prominent in your younger years, having some sort of action towards sustaining healthy musculature and fitness throughout your life will prove to be very beneficial. As the saying goes, “use it or lose it.” Muscles atrophy when they are not used, and more so as you age.



- **Start your day with a nourishing self-massage (abhyanga).** Massage is well known to reinforce tissues and relieve fatigue. The herbs in [Ashwagandha Bala Oil](#) are exceptionally strengthening.
- **Supplement with herbs.** The ideal herbs are [ashwagandha](#) and [vidari](#).¹⁰ Try these in a shake (such as the [one below](#))! These herbs will synergize the effects of your favorite protein shake. Since protein shakes are often hard to digest, for best results, take [Ginger liquid extract](#) or [Kapha Digest](#) a few minutes before your shake.
- **Support your energy level.** [Shilajit](#), taken with either a cup of hot milk, or a teaspoon of ghee or honey, for a couple of months will do the trick and will support healthy tissue regeneration.¹¹ Start with half a tablet a day and work your way up until you find your optimal dosage.
- **Exercise.** Partake in exercises (ideally in the morning and not at night) that target *both endurance* (long vinyasa or flow yoga sequences, repetitive [Sun Salutations](#), and other aerobic exercises) *and strength* (weight-lifting, holding yoga poses). You should feel as though you have pushed your body to its (healthy, pain-free) limit over a sustained period of time (about 45 minutes daily).
- **Preserve your tissue's elasticity.** Facilitate the removal of lactic acid and other impurities. Be sure to stretch and consider a hot bath with Epsom salt after your exercise.

Healthy Sex and Stamina

The Ayurvedic texts describe the vigor of a horse repetitively when speaking about virility and aphrodisiacs.¹² Sex uses a large amount of energy and *ojas* (the essence of vitality and immunity). For this reason, it is no wonder that the classical texts of Ayurveda talk about virility (*vajikarana*) right next to the topic of rejuvenation.

To gain that type of strength, be sure to follow the general supporting kapha recommendations given above. Additionally, these recommendations will help you replenish your *ojas* and gain endurance.

- **Supplement with herbs.** The primary virility herbs are [ashwagandha](#), [shatavari](#), [kapikacchu](#), [vidari](#), and [licorice](#). The [Men's Support](#) formula has all of these herbs and others to target the herbs to the reproductive channels. Take two tablets three times a day.
- **Eat foods that support virility.** Rice, dates and raisins, almonds, water chestnuts, honey, [ghee](#), and raw sugar all are spoken highly of in the classical texts.¹³
- **Drink high quality milk.** Milk is viewed almost like another herb, and the Ayurvedic writers go to great lengths to describe good quality milk. Try to find milk that is whole, organic, and from grass-fed cows. Incorporate milk in your diet and drink a warm glass of milk (or try the [rice kheer recipe below](#)) after intercourse to replenish your reserves.
- **Mind your vata.** The lightening qualities of vata decrease endurance and stamina. [Keep your vata in check](#) with a solid daily routine, plenty of sleep, and a conscious effort to stay present in the now.
- **Support healthy, downward flow of energy.** [Haritaki](#) is a wonderful rejuvenative as it is an herb that supports the healthy, downward movement of vata, which is necessary for coordinated ejaculation.¹⁴ Take 2 tablets daily.
- **Set the right mood.** Wear clothing and a scent that makes you feel attractive and play music that charges the atmosphere.



Ojas Shake

Ingredients:

- Almonds (raw and peeled), 10
- Whole milk, 2 cups
- Dates, 5
- Ghee, 1 tablespoon
- Saffron, pinch
- Cardamom, pinch
- Dry ginger, pinch



Blend all together. Consider throwing your morning dose of Men's Support (or four tablets if not taking it throughout the day) into the blend for an herb-infused shake!

Rice Kheer

Ingredients:

- Basmati rice, ¼ cup
- Whole milk, 5 cups
- Raisins, 1 tablespoon
- Almond (slivers), 1 tablespoon
- Saffron, pinch
- Cardamom, pinch
- Sukanat, 3 tablespoons



Boil the rice in the milk until the rice is well cooked. Simmer with the cardamom, sugar, saffron, and raisins for five minutes. Sprinkle the almond slivers on top.

Diamond Dates

Ingredients:

- Dates, 15
- Ghee (melted), 1 cup
- Saffron, pinch
- Cinnamon, pinch
- Cardamom, pinch



Fill a jar with the dates. Melt the ghee on the stove, mixing in the saffron, cinnamon and cardamom. Pour the ghee over the dates and store. Enjoy a date every morning.

Calm and Soothe



Your Pitta

Stress. Responsibility. Deadlines. Anger. Competition. Control. Resentment. Talk about mood killers! Truth be told, the fire element of pitta is a huge boon in your life—if used wisely and if kept in balance. Your pitta is what enables you to have vision, discrimination, and persistence to succeed. But far too often, we can get caught up in the endless need to control every situation and outcome and succumb to life’s dramas.

Uncontrolled, pitta can wreak havoc throughout your body and your mind. Let’s focus on its impact on two areas of importance—your sex drive and arousal state and your beloved hair.

Supporting Your Pitta

Before we specifically look at those two topics of interest, it will benefit you to understand a general approach to healthy pitta in your life. Because so much of its impact stems from your mind and emotions, the action steps largely revolve around your breath, your heart, and your mind.

- **Chant.** Although not exclusive to males, men would routinely chant together during the ancient times of Ayurveda. They would gather daily and recite verses with unified intonations and with deep, rhythmic, and powerful voices. The practice unifies the chakras of the heart, throat, and mind; your way of being becomes one of integrity and peace.



- **Supplement with herbs.** Excess heat in the mind will benefit greatly from regular doses of [Mental Clarity](#) and the body will appreciate some overall, daily pacification from [Healthy Pitta](#).
- **Drink solarized water.** Set a *green* glass bottle filled with fresh water in the sun for a day. Drinking this water throughout the day harmonizes and cools the heart center.
- **Pay attention to your diet.** Avoid spicy, sour, and salty foods, all of which increase pitta. Also steer clear of leftover, fermented, and oily foods and nightshades (eggplant and tomatoes), which are all pitta-aggravating.
- **Breathe—into your belly.** As your stress levels rise, your breath becomes accustomed to limiting itself to the upper portions of your lungs (chest breathing). Bring calmness to your nervous system by retraining the breath to deeply inflate even the lower parts of your lungs.¹⁵ Place your hand on your belly and breathe into your hand. If you are experiencing a lot of heat and anger, take a break in your day for just two minutes and do a few [Sheetali](#) pranayama.
- **Find time to exercise.** The physical release of pent up energy can be so enriching to the body and mind. If done with intention and attention, such as in the practice of yoga, it can be even more beneficial. Focus on chest openers and back-bends ([a pitta-pacifying routine](#)) if doing yoga.

Stress and Your Sex Life

Having desire, getting aroused, or having an orgasm is difficult when your mind is at work, preoccupied with strained relationships, or worrying about financial difficulties. Sex necessitates a surrendering to the moment.

Sympathetic (stress) dominance of our nervous system decreases sex drive, leading to a diminished libido and erectile dysfunction.¹⁶ This works at a psychological level and a hormonal level, as *the production of more and more cortisol (the stress hormone) steals from the production of testosterone*.¹⁷

Given the fast-paced, highly demanding, overworked nature of today's society, it is no wonder that over 20–30% of men suffer from difficulties with either libido or erection.¹⁸ *If you find yourself with these challenges, you are not alone.*

Be aware that there are many causes of sexual dysfunction (many organic in nature such as endocrine, vascular, or neurological imbalances) that you should be sure to rule-out with your health care provider.

Here are five tips to maintaining a normal balance of your hormones so you can continue to enjoy your sex life well into your prime.

- **Laugh.** Laughter *really is* one of the best medicines. It can decrease stress and cortisol levels and improve your mood.¹⁹ Plus, a good sense of humor is very attractive.
- **Eat healthy fats.** For so long we worried about cholesterol and fats. Not only do they not contribute to heart disease to the extent that we once thought, but they are actually *really* important for many functions in our body, including the production of testosterone.²⁰ Choose butter, avocados, coconut oil, and a source of omega-3 fatty acids.
On the contrary, excess body weight can negatively impact your testosterone levels. *Moderation is still the golden rule.* It's a balance.



- **Sleep.** This most basic form of relaxation can profoundly impact your stress level and also improve your testosterone levels (most testosterone is released at night!).²¹ Sleep 7–8 hours every night. If you are very fatigued, you may need more sleep for some time.
- **Support yourself with herbs.** Herbs that help you adapt to stress and nourish your adrenal glands will serve you well. Your adrenals will love [ashwagandha](#), as well as [licorice](#) and Ginseng. The [7-Herb Energy liquid extract](#) is perfectly suited for this purpose (especially if you couple it with the [Ashwagandha liquid extract](#)), without the stimulating effects of caffeine or other stimulants. Synergize its effects daily with [Chyavanprash](#) and a glass of warm milk every morning.
- **Get healthy.** If you are on medications, visit with your doctor and create a plan together to work your way back to health so that you do not need them. Many medications affect your sex drive, especially antidepressants and antihypertensives.

Note: Be mindful and do not resort to unhealthy coping mechanisms (alcohol, smoking, drug use) that can diminish your overall well-being.

Hair Loss

Ever notice more hair loss during intense or trying times? You can thank stress and excess heat in your head (along with your parents' genes) for hair loss. In addition to all of the recommendations above to calm stress and revitalize your well-being, try these remedies.

- **Massage your head.** Stimulate blood flow to your hair follicles with a relaxing head massage. Pour some [Healthy Hair Oil](#) (or [Bhringaraj Oil](#) if you need more pitta release and relaxation) onto the crown of your head, and massage in circular motions around your head. Leave the oil in overnight (or at least for twenty minutes).
- **Take [Healthy Hair](#).** This herbal supplement contains herbs, like [bhringaraj](#) and [amalaki](#), that are well known in Ayurveda to support hair growth and bolster hair strength and thickness.
- **Use natural hair products.** Many hair products contain chemicals that can damage your hair follicles. Use products with natural ingredients. Try shampooing your hair with a mixture of baking soda and water, and conditioning with apple cider vinegar.
- **Keep your colon clean.** Ayurveda sees the colon as a conduit for getting nutrients to the bone tissue (and your hair is a byproduct of that tissue). It absorbs many of the minerals and nutrients. Make sure you support regular bowel movements and a healthy colon with daily [Triphala](#).
- **Eat nutritiously.** Your hair is largely made up of protein and water. Also include B vitamins, folate, and a good source of omega-3 fatty acids.



Ground and Enlighten



Your Vata

Grounded. Centered. Creative. Clairvoyant. Enlightened. What if you could live your golden years with these qualities? What if you could live *your whole life* with these qualities? Your being would exude *wholesomeness, peace, and wisdom.*

Balanced vata (the ether and air elements) provides those traits. Unbalanced, vata's light, dry, mobile, and cold qualities trigger fear, anxiety, and loneliness, along with back and nerve pain, mental dryness, constipation, and other ailments.

In seeking to nurture vata's balanced state in our lives, we will specifically address prostate health and emotions that so many men face particularly in their later years.

Supporting Your Vata

Not only do we want to ground and stabilize vata but we also want to learn to use its light and subtle qualities to nurture creativity and clairvoyance.



- **Have a solid daily routine.** Begin every morning at the same time and fall sleep every night before 10 p.m. A daily **self-massage** (try **Vata Massage Oil** during this time of your life) will calm vata from the day's onset. Also be sure to eat warm, well-cooked meals at regular times every day.
- **Have a bowel movement every morning.** Once a day, at minimum, is the goal. Ideally, your intestines should awaken when you wake up. To give your colon a boost, take **Triphala** and **Haritaki** (two tablets each) every night and drink a glass of hot water after you wake up.
- **Beat drums.** Men of many cultures have found passion in the rhythmic beat of drums. In India, men traditionally chose tablas, while women gravitated to the harmonium or sitar. Whatever it may be for you (whether you play the instrument or just listen), practice with the art of forgetting your self.
- **Meditate.** Meditating gives you the opportunity to shut your mind off and bring a halt to the incessant chatter of the mind that feeds worry and anxiety. Find solace (versus fear and loneliness) in silence and just be in the moment. Try **So-Hum meditation**.
- **Practice pranayama.** Bring ease to the breath and you will bring ease to the mind. If you have time for just one, start with **Nadi Shodhana** pranayama (two sets of ten).
- **Let herbs provide support.** **Healthy Vata** is the perfect combination of herbs to nourish and ground every part of your being.

Healthy Prostate

Few men even think about this little gland that sits right underneath your bladder. That is, until your doctor suddenly wants to begin yearly rectal exams (which, by the way, you should comply with) or when it starts to create issues, usually in the later years of your life. It is a walnut-shaped gland that measures just 2-4 centimeters in diameter and weighs less than an ounce! Such a small piece of tissue can cause significant challenges when it becomes congested and stagnant.

The prostate is what gives volume to your semen with an alkaline secretion that protects your sperm in the acidic environment of the vagina. Like most glands in the body, *the prostate's health depends on strong metabolism of the gland and ensuring good flow through healthy circulation and preventing the secretions from becoming too dry and viscous.*²²

The pitta years may create excess heat in the body that does not find its way out of the prostate gland, resulting in prostatitis. The vata years are dominated by dryness, coldness that kills the metabolism (agni) of the gland, and lightness that prevents the proper down and out flow of its secretions. This results in benign prostate hypertrophy (BPH) that so many men experience.

The general vata recommendations are therefore very important for maintaining a healthy prostate. Here are a few more specific to the prostate.

- **Move!** A lack of movement promotes stagnation. Our overly sedentary lifestyle in this country certainly does not help the cause. Bringing movement to the lower half of the body (with daily thirty minute walks or yoga with hip-openers) will increase circulation to that part of the body.



- **Practice Vajroli mudra.** This gentle posture tones, cleanses, and supports circulation to the reproductive organs.²³ Sit in an upright posture. Draw the urethra upward (as if you are holding back the urge to urinate). Bending forward can help you isolate the right muscles. Begin with three contractions and slowly increase up to ten. You may do this practice a few times a day.
- **Use herbs.** **Men's Support** will support a healthy male reproductive system, including the prostate. Shilajit and gokshura are both herbs that have an affinity to the prostate and urinary channel. Guggulu adds a cleansing nature to the herbs. Take both **Shilajit** and **Gokshuradi Guggulu**, particularly if you are feeling stagnation.²⁴
- **Massage with Castor Oil.** **Castor oil** is cleansing and heating (making it beneficial for the tissue's agni). Coat your finger with castor oil and gently massage your perineum (between the anus and testicles) in small circular motions.
- **Do not suppress natural urges.** The proper flow of vata relies on an uninhibited down and out flow. Use the restroom when nature calls. Enjoy sex when your body wants it (but not excessively, which can worsen vata imbalances). Ejaculation directly stimulates the prostate muscles and releases its flow.
- **Drink plenty of fluids.** Maintain the secretions' fluidity with good hydration. As the prostate gland is part of the urinary channel, urinating at least 4-5 times a day also keeps the prostate channels clean. **CCF Tea** (made with equal parts **cumin**, **coriander**, and **fennel**) is very nourishing to the urinary tract.
- **Tend to your agni.** **Keeping your central digestive fire strong** will feed the healthy metabolic fire of the prostate.
- **Keep pitta in balance.** Follow the suggestions offered in the Calm and Soothe section for pitta and take your herbs with a tablespoon of aloe vera gel. You may also pacify heat in the prostate area directly with sitz baths (sit in 2-3 inches of luke-warm water).²⁵ The bioflavanoid, quercetin (found in capers, radish, dill, chilantro, and onions), also soothes heat in the prostate gland.²⁶

Healthy Mind

While many men take pride in living an independent life, an alarming number struggle with fear, loneliness, and anxiety, especially in their senior years. As old friends and spouses that supported them the majority of their life pass on to the after life, a huge vacuum of emptiness remains. This often becomes very hard to deal with, particularly for those who are unaccustomed to sharing or even recognizing and handling their feelings.

These recommendations (along with the general vata recommendations above) are sure to bring some ease to your being.

- **Revisit the man cave.** Let's think beyond the 108-inch screen to play this season's football games. Envision a place where you can find comfort and solace. Perhaps it is a room you set up as a library. Maybe it is a fire-pit in your backyard around which and your friends can tell stories or you can reflect on your own.
- **Enjoy satsang.** In India, you will find people gather on a regular basis to chant or listen to an enlightened being give a discourse on a spiritual topic. Such gatherings are called *satsang* in Sanskrit (or "true company"). Find a group of like-minded friends that you can elevate your being with. You will find yourself closer to true happiness, while enjoying the journey with sweet company.



- **Soothe the mind with herbs and oils.** If you struggle with a chattering mind, try [Tranquil Mind](#). You can pair this with [I Sleep Soundly](#) if sleep is also a challenge. Rub your head and soles of your feet with [Sleep Easy Oil](#) right before you sleep for an added bonus.
- **Make your bucket list.** And do it! Fill the void with enriching experiences.
- **Make peace with your past.** Much of the fear, anxiety, and worry stems from unresolved experiences in the past. Forgive those who have hurt you and ask for forgiveness from those whom you have hurt. See everything that has happened as a part of a higher order. Bring meaning to each experience by recognizing the profound lessons that each one has taught you.

Man Up!

As we, as a society, keep broadening our definition of what it means to be a man and grey out the lines that put limiting restrictions to your self-expression, we will continue to see you thrive and climb to higher peaks of health and happiness.

Open the doors to your inner workings. As you clean out the clutter, you will find many gems that you have to offer to yourself and to the world. Utilize your courage to work internally just as much as you use courage externally in your day-to-day life.

Nurture each dosha—vata, pitta, and kapha— to bring wholesomeness to your physical, emotional, and spiritual being. Bring balance.

Be creative, yet centered.

Be courageous, with discrimination.

Be compassionate, without attachment.

In doing so, honor yourself and the opportunity to achieve your optimal state of being that Ayurveda has given us all.



There are many aspects of your health that are not covered in this specific guide for men. Peruse through our many other guides (the following may be of particular interest) for more information that can greatly enhance your well-being!

[Preparing for Pregnancy: A Couple's Ayurvedic Guide to Preconception Care](#)

[Vibrant Heart: An Ayurvedic Guide to Heart Health](#)

[An Ayurvedic Guide to Stress Management](#)

[An Ayurvedic Guide to Balanced Sleep](#)

[Cleansing Guides](#)

[The Importance of Healthy Digestion](#)



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