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10 Tips for Staying Cool This Summer

Beat the Heat When The Weather's Hot

BY LINDA EGENES



A build-up of heat in the body can lead to rashes, heartburn, and irritability. Maharishi Ayurveda recommends several ways to stay cool in the heat.

Sun, sea, surf. It's all part of the idyllic summer. Yet sunny summer brings its own health challenges. According to Maharishi Ayurveda, the hot, humid weather can cause heat to build in the body, resulting in skin rashes, breakouts, heartburn, itchy eyes, and increased susceptibility to sunburn and insect bites—not to mention hotter emotions such as irritability, frustration, and anger.

The hot Pitta dosha is the mind-body element that governs metabolism and transformation in the body, and the time of year when the sun is stronger—from July to October—is called Pitta Season. Here are ten simple tips to chill and stay healthy this summer.

Cool It

Drink more fresh juices in summer. The four top heat busters: watermelon, lettuce, cucumber, and coconut milk. If you drink one of these several times a day, you'll notice that the heat won't bother you as much. Other cooling Pitta drinks: pomegranate, sweet grape, or sweet pineapple juice at room temperature. Stay away from ice-cold or carbonated drinks, as these stop your digestion. Caffeinated drinks are drying and lead to liver and skin damage.

Between meals, drink cool, milky drinks. Boil the milk first to make it more digestible. Then let it cool to room temperature. Add cardamom or rose water—or blend the milk with dates or fresh mango for flavor that's as appealing as a milkshake, but much more healthy.

Mango Milk: One fresh peeled and sliced ripe sweet mango, 2 cups of milk, raw sugar to taste, 1/4 teaspoon cardamom. Boil milk and allow it to cool to room temperature. Place all ingredients in a blender and blend until smooth. Makes 2 servings.

Summer Tea: Boil two quarts of water for two minutes. Take it off the heat and add 1/4 teaspoon fennel seeds, 2 rose buds, and 1 clove. Before drinking, pour it into a cup and let it cool to room temperature.

And don't forget to drink plenty of pure water—you need it to keep your skin and body hydrated in summer.

Digest It

Summer is a great time to reduce calories—when the heat turns up outside, the body's internal

digestive “furnace” shuts down, so we naturally crave lighter foods. Think light and liquid.

Add cooling foods to your diet: coconut chutney, coconut rice, cous cous salad, baked fennel, fresh dill and cilantro, and any fresh, sweet, juicy fruit. For breakfast, eat an apple boiled with cardamom. Fruits like melons, pears, and grapes, vegetables like broccoli, cucumber, and zucchini, dairy products like milk and ghee (clarified butter), and grains like rice are all excellent choices. Favor sweet, astringent, and bitter foods, as these are cooling. Avoid sour, pungent, and salty foods like sour cream, vinegar, and ketchup, as these are heating.

Summer Spice It

For most of us the word “spice” means “hot.” Yet certain herbs and spices—such as mint, fennel, coriander, anise, licorice, and cardamom—actually cool you down in summer. And adding small amounts of spices such as cumin to your food helps pick up your digestion when the heat has shut it down.

Chill It

In summertime, the livin’ really should be easy. To keep your emotions cool and calm, minimize stress and take plenty of time for rest and leisure. Plan a relaxing summer vacation in a place of natural beauty. Practice meditation to balance mind, body, and emotions.

Smell It

Make a point to walk in cooling gardens and smell the flowers. The sweet scents of summer are cooling to the mind and emotions. Sleep with your windows open to breathe fresh air and enjoy the smells of nature. For aroma therapy indoors, fill your home with fragrant flowers and use cooling rose, jasmine, or sandalwood essential oils.

Soothe It

Slow down, listen to soothing music, chill. If your eyes burn from the heat or long hours at the computer, lie down for 10 minutes with organic rose-water-soaked cotton pads on closed eyes and feel the tension flow away. Splash rose water in your bath, spray your face with rose water spritzer when you feel overheated, and add a drop of rose water to coconut oil for a cooling summer massage. The rose is not only cooling, but it soothes the heart and emotions as well.

Gentle It

Lay off the heavy exercise in summer. Try gentle yoga, walking in the moonlight, and swimming in cool water. Avoid exercising at noon, when the sun is at its peak.

Shade It

Avoid sun exposure, especially at midday. Cover up with sunglasses, wide-brimmed hats, and light-colored organic cotton clothing.

Rest It

If you toss and turn in the summer nights, try going to bed before 10:00 p.m., before the Pitta time of night has started—you’ll be amazed at how deep and peaceful your sleep can be. And you’ll wake up early, when the air is cool and fresh.

Rejuvenate It

Ayurvedic herbs can help transform tired cells that have been depleted by the heat. Amla berry is a legendary herb for balancing Pitta dosha and rejuvenating the mind, body, and emotions. Amla and other ayurvedic herbs—such as arjuna, cabbage rose, ashwgandha, nutmeg, and Indian cardamom—help balance inflamed emotions. And for a deep summer’s sleep, Indian valerian, jatamansi, dwarf morning glory, licorice, pearl, mica, and Indian tinospora are ayurvedic herbs for helping you to fall asleep easily and stay asleep through the night.

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