

## Overview of Ayurveda

Ayurveda is the world's oldest recorded system of healing, 5,000 years old. Literally translated, it means the "science of life". The goal of Ayurveda is to achieve health by working toward balance and harmony. Its focus is on treating the person through all five senses, to achieve a state of optimal health. This is done by determining your individual constitution and your state of imbalance and making adjustments so that you are living in greater harmony with your true nature.

Ayurveda recognizes that everything is made up of five elements or building blocks: earth, water, fire, air and ether. According to the five-element theory, the human being is a small model of the universe. What makes up the universe also makes up the individual.

Qualities of the five elements:

Ether: the space in which everything happens, the distance between matter.

Qualities are mobile, light, rough, dry.

Air: cold, dry, light, mobile, sharp.

Fire: hot, dry, light, mobile, flowing.

Water: cold, wet, heavy, flowing

Earth: cold, dry, heavy, hard.

The Three Doshas

According to Ayurvedic philosophy, the five elements combine in pairs to form three vital energies called doshas. These are Vata, Pitta and Kapha. In the individual, these three doshas combine to form your individual constitution. When they are out of balance they can cause ill health. Each person contains all three doshas. The unique combinations of the doshas in an individual are what determine that person's constitution and state of imbalance.

The doshas are made up of a combination of the following elements:

Vata: air and ether.

Pitta: fire and water.

Kapha: earth and water

Each dosha will have the qualities of the elements that make it up.