



## Food Principles: Ayurvedic Diet

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**“If diet is *Wrong*,  
medicine is of no use.**

If diet is *Correct*,  
medicine is of no need.”

*~Ancient Ayurveda Proverb*



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## How to Pronounce Ayurveda

- **American pronunciation:** “aa-yer-vay-da”

➤ 'aa' as in ma

➤ 'yer' as in purr

➤ 'vay' as in hay

➤ 'da' as in ma

- **British pronunciation:** “aa-yer-vee-da”



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## What is Ayurveda?

- **Ayurveda:** “Science of Life or Life Wisdom”
- Origin in India, over 2,000 BC - Hindu Lord Dhanvantari - “The father of Ayurveda”
- Part of Vedic Tradition – “Science”: Yoga, Meditation, Astrology, & Ayurveda
- “Right Diet” for each specific Mind-body type
- “Right (spiritual) Living” for each specific Mind-body type
- 5 elements: Space, Air, Fire, Water, and Earth - building blocks of all material existence



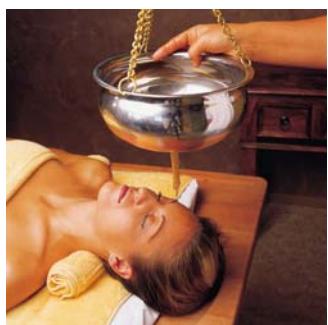
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## 2 Main Principles of Ayurveda

1. Mind/body are connected.

2. The mind has the ultimate power to heal the body.



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## Personalized Approach

Mind/Body Type, or “Dosha”, influences optimal choices:

- Diet
- Exercise
- Supplements
- Lifestyle



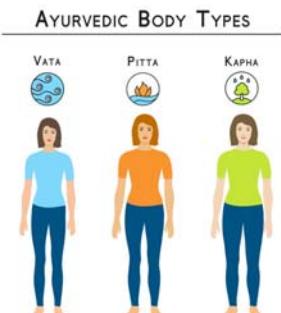
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## Mind-Body Types

- Body shape/size
- Predominant mood
- Bone structure
- Appetite
- Food cravings
- Heat/cold tolerance
- Energy level
- Metabolism



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## 3 Mind-Body Types



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A woman with blonde hair, wearing a light-colored top, is smiling and preparing food in a kitchen. She is stirring a pot on the stove with a wooden spoon. On the counter in front of her are various vegetables like a green bell pepper, a red tomato, and some onions. The background shows a kitchen environment with a window and some kitchenware.

**Elements: Fire and Water**

**Physical Characteristics:**

- Medium build; can gain/lose weight easily
- Height is average
- Can develop muscles easily; athletic
- Facial features sharp/pointed (such as nose, chin, and teeth)
- Energy and activity levels are high
- Appetite is strong; can eat large quantities of food
- Bowel movements are regular; occasionally has diarrhea
- Perspires quite easily
- Skin is oily and has a reddish tone
- Eyes are penetrating
- Prefers cooler weather and becomes irritable in hot weather

**Psychological Characteristics:**

- Goal oriented; achiever
- Good sense of humor
- Strong intellect; enjoys learning
- Natural leader
- Perfectionistic
- Can be irritable, impatient, or angry
- Critical of self/others
- Stubborn
- Irritable if doesn't eat regularly
- Enjoys competition

**Elements: Water and Earth**

**Physical Characteristics:**

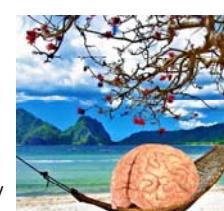
- Strong frame; stocky body build
- Excellent stamina
- Gains weight easily
- Retains fluid easily
- Sound sleeper
- Regular digestion
- Sensitive to cold and damp
- Thick hair, radiant skin (can be oily)
- Large, soft eyes



## Kapha

### Psychological Characteristics:

- Generous, giving; positive focus
- Calm nature; slow to anger
- Prefers a slow, relaxed lifestyle
- Sentimental; often thinks about the past
- Methodical; deliberate
- Highly protective of self and family
- Usually lets others take the lead
- Natural listener; empathetic
- Doesn't learn quickly; but excellent long-term memory
- Allows negative emotions to build up rather than addressing them



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## Prakruti: Your Individual Constitution



### In Ayurveda there are 7 main constitutional types:

- 3 in which one Dosha predominates
- 3 which reflect a strong blend of two Doshas
- 1 in which all 3 Doshas exert nearly equal influence on the constitution



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## Vikruti: The State of Imbalance

- Imbalance is brought about in a general sense by an increase in one of the Doshas
- Like INCREASES like
- Whatever you eat, imbibe, look at, think about, smell, or touch is taken into your 'self' either physically or as sensory perceptions
- The Doshas of these things will increase the same Doshas in you



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## Vata Balancing Diet

### Warming, Cooked Foods:

- Favor sweet, sour, and salty tastes
- Avoid bitter, pungent and astringent foods
- All dairy products pacify Vata
- Sweet, sour, heavy fruits: oranges, bananas, avocados, grapes, cherries, peaches, melons, berries, plums, pineapples, mangos, and papayas
- Vegetables should be eaten cooked
- Reduce raw salads
- Beets, carrots, asparagus, and sweet potatoes
- Vata-pacifying spices: cardamom, cumin, ginger, cinnamon, salt, cloves, mustard seed, and black pepper in moderation
- Favors liquids and moist foods vs. dry and warm foods or cold foods



Moong Dal Khichari for Vata Dosha



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## Pitta Balancing Diet

### Cooling, Raw Foods:

- Favor sweet, bitter and astringent tastes
- Sweet foods include rice and bread
- Avoid salty, sour, and hot spicy foods
- Milk, butter, and ghee are all cooling
- Minimize yogurt, sour cream, citrus fruits, and spicy foods like cayenne
- Cucumber, broccoli, zucchini, and asparagus are Pitta-pacifying
- Avoid vegetables with heating properties such as tomatoes, hot peppers, radishes, onions, garlic, and spinach
- Fully-ripe sweet juicy fruits: melons, cherries, grapes
- Cooling spices: fennel, mint, and coriander
- Reduce hot spices: dried ginger and mustard seeds
- Favor liquid vs. dry foods and cool or lukewarm vs.



## Diet for Pitta Dosha

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## Kapha Balancing Diet

### Light, Dry, and Warming Foods:

- Favor pungent, bitter, astringent tastes
- Reduce heavy, oily, cold foods
- Avoid salty, sour, sweet foods
- Fresh fruits, vegetables, legumes
- Reduce all nuts
- Favor lighter fruits: apples, pears
- Reduce heavy or sour fruits: oranges, bananas, pineapples, figs, dates, avocados, coconuts and melons, which increase Kapha
- Honey reduces Kapha; sugar increases Kapha
- All vegetables okay, except tomatoes, cucumbers, sweet potatoes, and zucchini, which all increase Kapha
- All spices okay except for salt, which increases Kapha
- Avoid leftovers



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## **Psycho-Physiological Functions of Tridoshas**

VATA

- Respiration
- Swallowing
- Elimination
- Movement  
(voluntary and  
involuntary)
- Absorption



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DITTA

- Digestion
- Absorption
- Assimilation
- Creation, repair, and maintenance of body tissues

KARHA

- Creation, repair, and maintenance of body tissues
- Nutrition of the tissues
- Strength
- Stamina
- Calmness
- Immunity

# Doshas/Organs

# Agni: Digestive Fire

- “Digestive Fire”
- Strongest at noon
- Acids/enzymes
- Lower stomach & small intestine
- Pitta dosha is strongest
- Overall digestive capacity
- 13 different Agnis governing all metabolic functions of the body
- Digestive Agni is the 2<sup>nd</sup> most important factor (after predominant Dosha) in determining dietary needs

## What Weakens Agni

- Not eating according to Dosha
- Repeatedly eating the same foods
- Overeating
- Eating bland foods
- Eating leftovers
- Drinking water with meals
- Lack of sleep
- Irregular meal times/skipping meals
- Lack of exercise

A stylized illustration of a fire with flames and smoke, symbolizing Agni (digestive fire). The fire is depicted with a cluster of dark, glowing embers surrounded by light-colored, billowing smoke and wisps of flame.

## Ayurvedic Practices to Build Agni

- Always eat sitting down
- HeartMath – calm atmosphere when eating
- Eat only when truly hungry – don't snack/graze
- Eat at a moderate pace – chew thoroughly
- Minimize raw foods, which are much harder to digest than cooked ones
- Include all 6 tastes at each meal
- Make lunch the heaviest meal of the day, followed by breakfast, w/dinner the lightest meal
- Drink hot water with ginger throughout the day
- Exercise regularly
- Daily oil massage with an oil that balances your Dosha
- Meditate daily
- "Fire breathing" – Khaphalabati
- Tongue scraping first thing in morning/after meals





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## Herbs to Enhance Agni

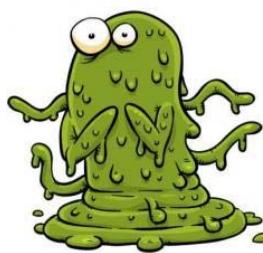
- Triphala
- Ashwagandha
- Guggulu
- Brahmi
- Ginger
- Turmeric
- Neem
- Pippali/pepper



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Ama

- Toxic by-product of poor digestion
- One of the most threatening opponents to good health
- Focus on ridding the body of excess Ama by:
  - Tongue scraping upon rising
  - Sweating/sauna
  - Regular exercise
  - Balanced diet w/plenty of fiber for colon
  - Fasting
  - Drinking cleansing teas
  - Dry brushing of skin
  - Using herbs to enhance Agni



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## Ojas

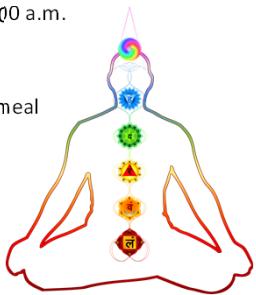
- The end product of perfect digestion and assimilation of food
- High Ojas = good health
- Low Ojas = poor health
- Opposite of Ama
- Ojas can also be increased by:
  - Laughing and smiling
  - Taking time to relax
  - Meditation
  - Spending time in nature
  - Exercising your creativity
  - Offering your gifts to others
  - Following your heart's passion
  - Engaging in physical activity



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## 7 Ayurvedic Principles of Health

1. Sleep from 10:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m.
2. Exercise upon waking
3. Avoid snacking
4. Include all 6 tastes at each meal
5. Eat largest meal at noon
6. Sip hot water or tea throughout the day
7. Practice meditation



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## 1. Sleep from 10:00 pm – 6:00 am Daily

- Insufficient sleep is a contributing factor in weight gain.
- Not only is sufficient rest important, but sleeping in harmony with the sun's rhythms is just as vital.
- According to Ayurveda, the time period that is most supportive of restful sleep is between 10:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m.
- To make the most of nature's rhythms, turn off your screens and begin to wind down by 9:30 p.m. At 10:00 p.m., turn off the lights and get in bed.



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## 2. Exercise Upon Awakening

- The ideal time to exercise is between 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m., when the earth and water elements are high in the environment.
- Earth and water, when combined, create slowness, coolness, dullness, and inertia.
- Exercise counteracts sluggishness, warms the body, brings fresh blood to your brain, and prepares both body and mind for a new day.
- Aim for 45 to 60 minutes of vigorous exercise each morning.



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### 3. No Snacking Between Meals

- When you eat, your body produces insulin to help shuttle sugar into cells and keep your blood sugar balanced. The sugar that enters your cells will fuel average energy needs for about three hours.
- Only after that time will your body begin to burn fat in order to supply its energetic requirements. If you eat every three hours, your body is never given an opportunity to dip into its fat stores.
- Three nourishing, balanced meals each day with no snacks in between will actually stabilize your energy levels more than frequent meals.
- In addition, your fat burning potential will drastically increase.



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#### 4. Include All 6 Tastes at Every Meal

Each taste is associated with certain chemicals the body needs.

In order to feel satisfied after eating, include at least a small portion of each of the 6 tastes in every meal.

1. **Madhura** — sweet; earth + water (cooling); carbs, sugars, fats, amino acids
2. **Amla** — sour; earth + fire (heating); organic acids
3. **Lavana** — salty; water + fire (heating); salts
4. **Tikta** — hot/pungent; fire + air (heating); volatile oils
5. **Katu** — bitter; air + ether (cooling); alkaloids, glycosides
6. **Kashaya** — astringent; air+ earth (cooling); tannins



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## Sweet Foods

- ❖ **Effect of sweet taste:** Comforting, pleasurable, nourishes the tissues, increases ojas (energy), and enhances mood.
- ❖ **In excess:** Sweet creates imbalances such as obesity, diabetes, and depression.

- Whole grains
- Dairy
- Meats
- Nuts
- Legumes
- Sweet fruits
- Honey & sweeteners
- Carrots, beets and sweet potatoes
- Spices such as basil, licorice and fennel



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## Sour Foods

- ❖ **Effect of sour taste:** Stimulates appetite, promotes salivation, increases digestion/assimilation, maintains acid balance, and cleanses the tissues. It also sharpens the mind, strengthens the sense organs and the heart.
- ❖ **In excess:** It increases imbalances such as heartburn, acidity, ulcers, irritation, itchiness, blood toxicity, and edema.

- Citrus fruits
- Pickled or fermented foods
- Vinegar
- Yogurt/sour cream/cheeses
- Tamarind
- Tomato product (ketchup, spicy sauces)
- Spices such as caraway and coriander



## Ayurvedic Pickle

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## Salty Foods

- ❖ **Effect of salty taste:** Balances vital minerals and maintains moisture and electrolytes. It promotes salivation and digestion and is a laxative.
- ❖ **In excess:** Contributes to aging skin, graying hair, inflammatory skin diseases, rashes, pimples, peptic ulcers, gout, hypertension, water retention, and obesity.

- Sea salt
- Ocean vegetables
- Seaweed
- Kelp
- Fish



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## Pungent Foods

- ❖ **Effect of pungent taste:** Stimulates appetite, metabolism, and digestive fire. Improves mental clarity, circulation, and reduces congestion and water retention. Pungent facilitates sweating and the elimination of ama (toxins) in the body. It purifies the blood, helps to eliminate blood clots, and kills germs.
- ❖ **In excess:** Excessive pungent can cause heartburn, peptic ulcer, irritation, inflammation, skin diseases, impurities (Pitta), dryness, weakness, weariness, and dizziness (Vata).

- Chile peppers
- Mustard seeds
- Ginger
- Cloves
- Onions
- Garlic
- Radish
- Asafetida (also spelled asafoetida)
- Black pepper/cayenne



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## Bitter Foods

- ❖ **Effect of bitter taste:** Cleanses ama (toxins) from the body, kills germs, and strengthens the immune system. Bitter cools itching, burning skin, cleanses the liver and the blood, promotes digestion, and relieves fever.
- ❖ **In excess:** Excessive bitterness dehydrates the body, reduces bone marrow and semen, increases roughness, dryness, and dizziness, (Vata).

- Bitter melon and gourd
- Japanese eggplant
- Turmeric
- Fenugreek seeds
- Dark leafy greens
- Barley
- Basil

- Nettle
- Jicama
- Lettuce
- Aloe vera
- Coffee
- Cacao
- Rhubarb



Ayurvedic Food Preparation

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## Astringent Foods

- ❖ **Effect of astringent taste:** Decreases water and mucus and is drying to the body. It is anti-inflammatory, reduces sweating, and slows down diarrhea and bleeding.
- ❖ **In excess:** Excessive astringent causes dryness, premature aging and weakens the body. Its drying effect can cause dry mouth, constipation, gas, paralysis, spasms and heart disorders.

- Green tea
- Grapes
- Cranberries
- Apple
- Pomegranate (tastes sour on the tongue but is both astringent and bitter)
- Pear
- Quinoa

- Legumes, beans, lentils, garbanzo beans
- Tofu
- Sprouts
- Okra
- Saffron
- Turmeric (turmeric is both bitter and astringent)
- Unripe banana
- Cruciferous veggies



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## 5. Eat Your Largest Meal at Noon

- Ayurvedic saying: *You are not what you eat, you are what you digest*
- To maximize your digestion, eat your largest meal at lunchtime
- The noon hour is when digestive fire, or Agni, is at its strongest
- Dinner should be light and easily digestible
- Finish dinner 2 to 3 hours prior to bedtime; if you are going to bed by 10:00 p.m. (which is ideal) then dinner needs to be completed by 7:00 p.m.
- Not only will you sleep more soundly, your body will be able to attend to the critical tasks of detoxification and rejuvenation rather than the digestion of food



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## 6. Sip Hot Water Throughout the Day

- Hot water is considered a health elixir in the Vedic tradition
- Ama, or toxins, accumulate within the body from external sources (pollution, pesticides, poor food choices) and internal sources (stress, anxiety, anger)
- Ama is sticky, by nature but can be dissolved with hot water
- The amount of water that you drink is not as important as the frequency with which you sip
- Try to have a few sips of warm water every half an hour
- You can add fresh ginger or dosha-specific herbs and spices to further enhance the beneficial qualities of the hot water



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## 7. Practice Meditation



- Hormones associated with high stress can decrease your ability to lose weight, particularly abdominal weight
- To see results in both your life and your waistline, devote at least 20 minutes a day to meditation
- Sit quietly, relax your body, and focus on your breath
- Let thoughts pass by like floating clouds; remain non-judgmental
- Eventually the mind will quiet, and you will be able to receive all the beneficial effects of a regular meditation practice

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## Use of Oils in Ayurveda

- Cooking
- Massage
- Bathing
- Oil pulling & gargling
- Basti (colon nourishment)
- Nasya (nasal passage nourishment)
- Shirodhara (warm oil on Third Eye Area on forehead)
- Base oils: sesame, coconut, sunflower, almond
- Herbal oils



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## Common Ayurveda Practices



- **Garshana** (dry skin brushing)
- **Panchakarma:** “5 Actions” cleansing protocol:
  - Vamana: therapeutic vomiting or emesis
  - Virechan: purgation; laxatives
  - Basti: colon cleansing/herbal enemas
  - Nasya: nasal passage rinsing/nourishment
  - Rakta Moksha: detoxification of the blood; bloodletting
- **Shirodhara** (warm oil on 3rd Eye Area of forehead)
- Tongue scraping, oil pulling, gargling

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## Tongue Scraping

- Helps clear “Ama” overnight buildup
- Metal tongue scraper
  - Scrape from back to front of tongue
  - Rinse
  - Repeat
- First thing upon arising
- Before drinking any fluids
- Scrape tongue after meals to clean food residues and support digestion
- Can follow up with oil pulling for 20 minutes
- Can scrape again after oil pulling



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# Oil Pulling

- Another method of ridding excess “Ama”
- Oil traps the bacteria and toxins in mouth
- Benefits:
  - Brighten teeth
  - Heal gums
  - Prevent bad breath
  - Curb inflammation
  - Treat systemic conditions
- Sunflower, sesame, coconut oils – any good vegetable oil
- Swish approx. 1 Tbsp for 20 min. upon arising
- Expel oil into trash (can clog sink!)
- Rinse mouth
- Can follow with another tongue scraping



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## Garshana: Dry Skin Brushing

- Removes dead skin layers
- Can use:
  - Silk gloves
  - Soft organic sea sponge
  - Dry natural bristle brush
- Massage entire body, excluding face, chest, heart, and sensitive or inflamed areas
- Circular strokes on the stomach and joints
- Long sweeping strokes on the arms and legs
- Light pressure where the skin is thin (such as the underarms) and harder pressure where the skin is thicker (such as the soles of the feet)
- Direction of the stroke should always be towards heart to drain lymph back to your heart
- Massage from feet upward, continuing up to torso and neck
- Also massage from the hands to the shoulders
- Continue for at least 5 minutes
- Complete the Garshana with a shower
- To enhance the release of toxins, end with a few cycles of hot then cold water to stimulate the blood circulation and further invigorate the skin



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## Nasya

### Helpful for:

- Sinus infections
- Headaches, migraines
- Stiffness of shoulder and neck
- Oral cavity issues, gingivitis
- Loose teeth
- Nasal, ear, and eye disorders
- Facial paralysis, motor neuron disorders, convulsion
- Goiter



### **Administration of treatment through the nasal cavity:**

- Powders
- Juice extracts
- Decoctions
- Herbals
- Oils



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## Ayurveda: “Pros”

- Digestion / detox focus
- Mind-body approach
- Semi-customized protocols by Dosha
- Includes lifestyle recommendations
  - Oil pulling
  - Dry skin brushing
  - Nasal passage cleansing
  - Colon cleansing
- Use of herbs, whole foods, oils
- Incorporates energy principles
- Good for basic wellness



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## Ayurveda “Cons”

- Allows acidic/allergenic foods:
  - Meat
  - Dairy
  - Grains/gluten
  - Sweet fruits and sweeteners
- Can be high-glycemic
- Only 3 basic Doshas
- Client may be a combination of Doshas
- Best for general wellness – complicated cases might need more
- Lab values generally not considered in creating protocols



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