

# Ayurveda the Science of Self Healing

## by Dr Vasant Lad

### Chapter VI - Diagnosis

In the West, the term diagnosis generally refers to identification of the disease after it has manifested. However, in Ayurveda, the concept of diagnosis implies a moment-to-moment monitoring of the interactions between order (health) and disorder (disease) in the body. The disease process is a reaction between the bodily humors and the tissues. The symptoms of disease are always related to derangement of the balance of the tridosha. Once we understand the nature of the imbalance, balance may be reestablished through treatment.

Ayurveda teaches very precise methods for understanding the disease process before any overt signs of the disease have manifested. By detecting early symptoms of imbalance and disease reaction in the body, one can determine the nature of future bodily reactions. Day-to-day observation of the pulse, tongue, face, eyes, nails and lips provide subtle indicators. Through these, the student of Ayurveda can learn what pathological processes are occurring in the body, which organs are impaired and where dosha and toxins have accumulated. Thus, by checking the body's indicators regularly, pathological symptoms can be detected early and preventative measures taken. Ayurveda teaches that the patient is a living book and, for understanding and physical well-being, he or she must be read daily.

#### EXAMINATION OF THE RADIAL PULSE

As the diagram shows, the radial pulse is felt with the first three fingers: the index, middle and ring fingers. To make a complete examination of the pulse, the doctor faces the patient and takes the pulse of each of his patient's wrists. The indicators of the pulse vary from the left to right side, so it is best to check the pulse on both sides of the body. The pulse should not be taken after exertion, massage, eating, bathing or sex. The pulse will also be affected by sitting near heat or by taking strenuous exercise. The pulse may be taken at other points on the body as well. (See pulse points diagram.)

To check your own pulse, keep your arm and wrist slightly flexed. Place your three fingers lightly on the wrist just below the radial bone (wrist bone) and feel the throbbing of the pulse. Then decrease the pressure of your fingers slightly to sense varying movements of the pulse.

The position of the index finger denotes the place of the vata dosha. When vata is predominant in the constitution, the index finger will feel the pulse strongly. It will be irregular and thin, moving in waves like the motion of a serpent. This type of pulse is therefore called the "snake" pulse and it indicates aggravated vata in the body.

The resting place of the middle finger denotes the pulse of the pitta dosha. When pitta is predominant in the constitution, the pulse will be stronger under the middle finger. It will feel active and excited and will move like the jumping of a frog. Hence, it is called the "frog" pulse. This pulse denotes aggravated pitta.

When kapha is predominant, the throbbing of the pulse under the ring finger is most noticeable. The pulse feels strong and its movement resembles the floating of a swan. It is called the "swan" pulse.

Not only the constitution, but also the status of the body's organs can be determined by examination of the superficial and deep pulsations. The beats of the pulse not only correspond to the heartbeat, but they also reveal something about the important meridians that are connecting pranic currents of energy in the body. These currents circulate through the blood, passing through the vital organs such as the liver, kidney, heart and brain. By feeling the superficial and deep pulsations, the sensitive examiner can detect the conditions of these various organs. Each finger rests on a meridian of the element associated with the dosha of that place. (See hand chart.) For example, the index finger which rests on the vata dosha detects bodily air; the middle finger which touches on pitta detects fire; and the ring finger which feels the kapha pulse, water.

The index finger rests on the patient's right wrist at the site for feeling the activity of the large intestine with a superficial touch; firmer, deeper pressure is applied, the activity of the lungs may be sensed. If very prominent

Diagram 2 (*Nadi*) Pulse Diagnosis



**EXAMINATION OF PULSE**

Keep the arm slightly bent, and flex the wrist slightly. Place the three fingers superficially to feel the throbbings of the pulse. Slightly loosen the fingers to feel different movements of the pulse.

## Diagram 2 A - IDENTIFICATION OF THE PULSE



Fast, Narrow, Feeble, Cool, Irregular.

Rate is 80-100 beats per minute.



1) The placement of the index finger denotes the pulse of Vata. When this pulse predominates, the index finger feels the throbbing more strongly. Also, the pulse feels like the movement of a snake, quick and slithery.



Jumping, Excited, Prominent, Hot, Moderate, Regular.

Rate is 70-80 beats per minute.



2) The placement of the middle finger denotes the pulse of Pitta. When this pulse predominates, the middle finger is strongest. It is active and jumpy like the movement of a frog.



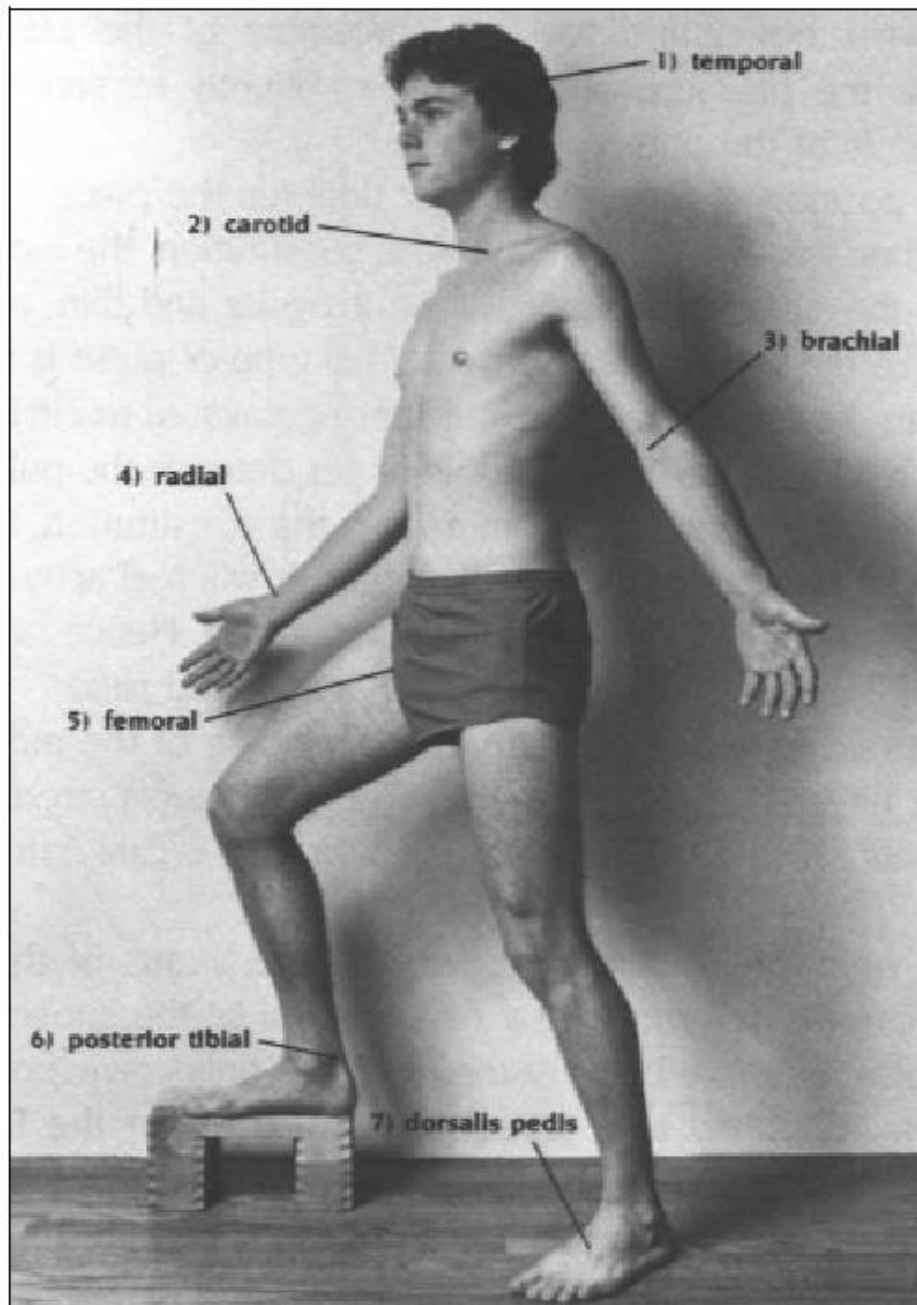
Slow, Strong, Steady, Soft, Broad, Regular, Warm.

Rate is 60-70 beats per minute.



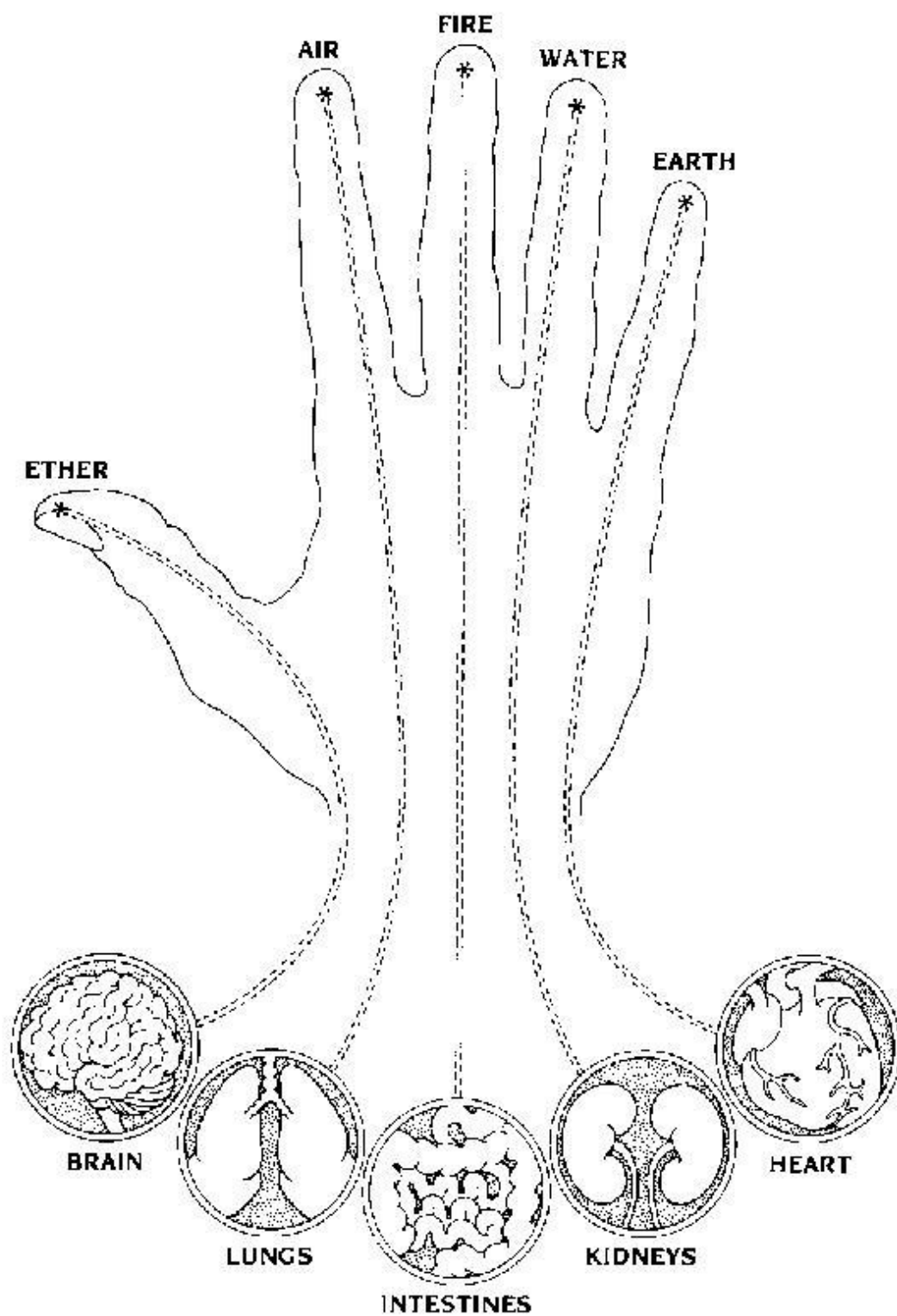
3) The placement of the ring finger denotes the pulse of Kapha. When this pulse predominates, the ring finger feels strongest. This pulse is slow and resembles the floating of a swan.

## Diagram 3 - PULSE POINTS

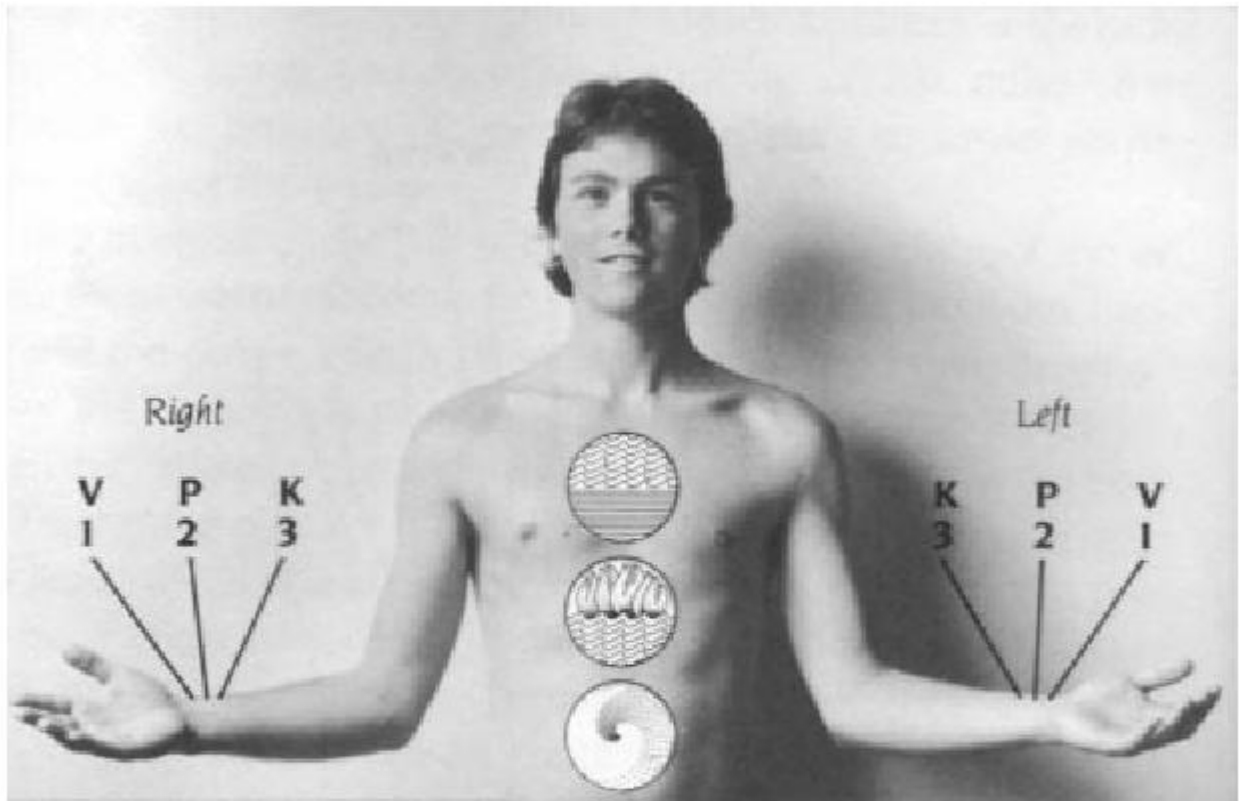


**THE PULSE MAY BE CHECKED:** 1) At the temporal artery, just above the temple on the side of the head. 2) At the carotid artery, on the side of the neck above the clavicle. 3) At the brachial artery, on the inside of the arm above the elbow. 4) At the radial artery, on the wrist. 5) At the femoral artery, on the inside front of the leg where it joins the pelvis. 6) At the posterior tibial artery, on the foot behind the ankle. 7) At the dorsalis pedis artery, on the top of the foot.

Diagram 4  
**The Meridians and  
The Basic Five Elements**



## Diagram 5 - The Pulse and the Organs



**SUPERFICIAL TOUCH:** 1) Large Intestine, 2) Gall Bladder, 3) Pericardium. **DEEP TOUCH:** 1) Lung, 2) Liver, 3) *Vata-Pitta-Kapha*.

**SUPERFICIAL TOUCH:** 1) Small Intestine, 2) Stomach, 3) Bladder. **DEEPTOUCH:** 1) Heart, 2) Spleen, 3) Kidney.

**PULSE SHOULD NOT BE CHECKED:** 1) After Massage, 2) After Taking Food or Alcohol, 3) After Sunbathing, 4) After Sitting Close to a Fire 5) After Hard Physical Labor, 6) After Sex, 7) While Hungry, 8) While Taking a Bath.

**PULSE RATE IN RELATION TO AGE:** 1) Baby in the Womb – 160, 2) Baby after Birth – 140, 3) Birth to One Year – 130, 4) One to Two Years – 100, 5) Three to Seven Years – 95, 6) Eight to Fourteen Years – 80, 7) Adult Average – 72, 8) Old Age – 65, 9) Sickness – 120, 10) Time of death – 160.

Throbbing is felt when the index finger on the right side is applied superficially, then vata is aggravated in the large intestine: if the deep pulse is strong and throbbing, there is congestion in the lungs. The middle finger resting on the right wrist can detect the status of the gallbladder with superficial touch and the liver with deeper pressure. The ring finger senses the pericardium (outer covering of the heart) when applied superficially; and, with a deep touch, the harmonious relationship of vata-pitta-kapha is detected.

The index finger resting superficially on the patient's left wrist monitors the activity of the small intestine, while the heart is monitored by deep pressure. With superficial pressure of the middle finger, the activity of the stomach is observed; and deep pressure reveals the status of the spleen. The ring finger applied superficially reveals the

condition of the bladder while deep pressure checks the functioning of the kidneys. To learn this technique of examination of the pulse requires attention and day-to-day practice.

You can feel the variations in your pulse at different times of the day. You can also note changes in the pulse after urination, when you are hungry or when you feel anger. Observing such changes, you will begin to learn how to read the pulse.

Source: AYURVEDA The Science of Self-Healing by Dr. Vasant Lad