

# The Seven Dhatus Part IV: Medas Dhatu

## Advanced Ayurvedic Theory

Medas dhatu refers to the fatty tissues of the body. While the term can literally be translated to mean fat, conceptually it means the concentrated waters of the body. In the physical body, in addition to body fat the medas dhatu relates to sebum (skin oil) and the greater and lesser omentums which are its updhatu. These tissues are the primary storage sites for excess body fat in the abdomen. Medas dhatu is formed as posaka mamsa dhatu flows into the medo dhara kala and is digested by the medagni. The waste products produced by the formation of medas dhatu are the skin secretions of sweat and sebum (oil).

Medas dhatu is built primarily from the water element and secondarily from earth. The presence of water reveals the nourishing nature of fatty tissue. The presence of earth reveals its role in stabilizing the functions of the body and mind. Medas dhatu has a counterproductive relationship with the remaining elements. As it fills the empty space of ether it reduces inspiration. In excess, this results in a closed mind. It also acts as an obstacle to air slowing down the movements of the body. In excess, it creates lethargy. And it suppresses fire reducing metabolic activity. In excess, digestion becomes sluggish and all dhatus begin to increase. However, for these same reasons it is protective against conditions of excess ether, air and fire.

In order to produce healthy medas dhatu, adequate earth and water must be consumed through the diet. Consumption alone does not guarantee that healthy medas will be formed. The two elements must be properly digested so that their qualities can be used to build body fat. Thus, jatharagni (main digestive fire) must be healthy. If it is not healthy, rather than forming healthy medas dhatu, these same foods will produce ama and toxify the body and mind.

### Pathology and the Medas Dhatu

When kapha vitiates the medovaha srota and medo dhara kala, the medagni becomes low. As a result, the qualities of earth and water taken into the body are digested slowly causing a greater amount of fatty tissue to form. The tissue formed is of low quality. While the excess quantity produces weight gain, the low quality clogs the channels of the body, obstructs body motion, stagnates circulation and leads to greater emotional attachments.

When pitta vitiates the medovaha srota and medo dhara kala, the medagni becomes too high. As a result, the qualities of earth and water are burned up quickly leading to little medas production. The medas that is produced is of high quality but there is simply not enough to provide protection, stability and deep nourishment. This results in weight loss and the body and mind becomes dry, fragile, hard and depleted.

When vata vitiates the medovaha srota and medo dhara kala, the medagni becomes variable. The qualities of earth and water that have been consumed are irregularly digested. Less medas dhatu is produced and it is of poor quality. Once again there is weight loss and the body becomes dry, fragile, hard and depleted. The poor quality of the tissue produced contributes to irregular deposits of fat with the walls of the arteries and the body and mind become hard.

### Psychology and the Medas Dhatu

Medas dhatu is more than the fatty and oily tissues of the body. It plays an important role in our capacity to love and be loved. You may recall that the health of the rasa dhatu plays an important role in the capacity of a person to feel satisfied. This satisfaction however is fragile and dependent upon being constantly fed. For this reason it is often short lived. The medas dhatu being a concentrated form of rasa deepens and stabilizes this feeling. When the medas dhatu is healthy, there is a deeper and longer lasting satisfaction that is less easily disturbed providing a solid

foundation for love.

The psychological aspect of medas dhatu is closely related to the functions of the majjavaha and samjnavaha srotas. The role of medas dhatu within the majjavaha srota is to protect the nervous system from excessive stimulation and in doing so keep the body calm. In the samjnavaha srota, a subtle channel located in the heart that connects individualized consciousness with the divine, a much more subtle form of medas protects consciousness from the intensity of the light of pure awareness.

As medas dhatu and kapha dosha increase, the majjavaha srota becomes sluggish and less responsive. As neurological responses slow so too does thought and the mind appears dull. The samjnavaha srota becomes cloudy reducing awareness. As a result, the mind gets wrapped up in the dramas of attachment such as dependency, clinging and desire. Love becomes conditional and takes the form of deep attachment.

As medas dhatu and kapha dosha decrease, the majjavaha srota becomes excessively excitable. The samjnavaha srota (channel of consciousness) becomes extraordinarily clear but also fragile and the light of pure awareness becomes irritating and agitating. This occurs as vata or pitta doshas reduced medas dhatu. As a result, the mind gets wrapped up in fear, anxiety or anger. Love becomes difficult to feel and when it is experienced, it is intense but fragile. In this state, the emotional heart is easily hurt and it is difficult to recover from feelings of betrayal or the grief of loss.

In the subtle body, the health of the medas dhatu is directly dependent upon the flow of prana through muladhara and svadhistana chakras. Through muladhara chakra, prana carries the qualities of the earth element throughout the subtle body creating the feeling of being grounded and stable. Through svadhistana chakra, prana carries the qualities of water affecting our capacity to desire and experience pleasure through the senses. Thus medas dhatu, related to the flow of water is the physical manifestation of sensory desire. Strong sensory desire brings about increased medas dhatu (body fat).

In the sattvic individual, kapha is in a balanced state with agni and only a healthy amount of high quality medas is produced and stored. In addition, there is proper flow of prana through the muladhara and svadhistana chakras. Earth and water are balanced for the constitution<sup>[1]</sup>. Psychologically, the unencumbered heart sees clearly by the divine light without being blinded or agitated by it. The foundation for love is not only established, it becomes unconditional. Excessive or deficient medas dhatu is a consequence of a rajas or tamasic consciousness leading the mind into the dramas of samsara (worldly existence) and away from the doorstep of unconditional love

### Evaluating the Medas Dhatu

In order to evaluate the health of the medas dhatu visual examination of the physical body is necessary. When medas dhatu is healthy, the body has an appropriate amount of body fat, the skin and hair are neither too oily nor dry and the voice is melodious and soft. Excessive medas dhatu reveals itself as excessive soft tissue, particularly in the abdomen. In addition, the skin and hair will be excessively moist and oily and the voice may become obstructed by oily phlegm. Deficient medas dhatu is observed as minimal body fat exposing the articulations of the body and the ribs. The face may appear gaunt. In addition, the skin and hair will be dry and there may be deep cracks over the lips and on the tongue. The voice may crack often or become piercing, whiney or high pitched.

### Proper Treatment of the Medas Dhatu

Healing the medas dhatu means restoring the proper quantity and quality of water and earth in the body and normalizing the flow of these qualities through the chakras. The proper quantity varies with the constitution of the individual. Those with more kapha in their constitution will naturally have more medas dhatu. This makes depletion less likely and excess more likely. Those with more of a vata constitution tend to have a naturally lower amount of medas dhatu and are the most susceptible to depletion. Those with a pitta nature tend to have a moderate quantity of medas dhatu and are prone to depletion only when exposed to excessive heat or when affected by a vata imbalance.

## The Seven Dhatus Part IV: Medas Dhatu

Published on CA College of Ayurveda (<http://www.ayurvedacollege.com>)

---

When kapha has entered the medas dhatu and medovaha srota, the best treatment is reducing the quantity of heavy foods and increasing agni in order to enhance fat metabolism. Fatty foods such as nuts and fatty meats should be minimized and lighter foods such as vegetables and seeds should be increased. The pungent and bitter tastes reduce medas dhatu. Of the two, the pungent taste is best as it also increases agni. Thus, foods should be prepared accordingly and oral supplementation with hot spicy herbs such as the trikatu combination is helpful. Exercise including vinyasa-type yoga practice along with exposure to the sun and saunas increases medagni and reduces the medas dhatu. Heating pranayamas such as kapalabhati and surya bhedana also reduce the medas dhatu. Bija mantras such as ham, yam and ram are beneficial as they increase the dry and light qualities that reduce medas. Patients should also avoid excessive sleep.

When pitta has entered the mamsa dhatu and mamsavaha srota, the best treatment is to reduce the strength of jatharagni and medagni. Jatharagni is reduced through the intake of cooling foods such as milk, butter, bitter vegetables, wheat and oats. The best taste for a quick effect is the bitter taste. The bitter taste is very reducing and ideal when there is infection. Bitter herbs are stronger than foods and include kutki, gentian and neem. However, because the bitter taste is reducing it will lower the quantity of medas in the body. Thus, if the patient is in a state of depletion the sweet taste is best as it is both cool and nourishing. Sweet herbs that reduce agni include shatavari, slippery elm and licorice. The bija mantra vam is best as it cools and increases the qualities of the water element.

When vata has entered the medas dhatu and medovaha srota, the best treatment is to stabilize jatharagni and medagni and then slowly increase the intake of the water and earth elements as agni becomes stronger and more stable. Stabilization is accomplished through developing regular daily routines - particularly those surrounding eating and sleeping. Earth element is increased through the intake of heavier foods such as grains, meats, nuts and legumes. In order to support and stabilize agni, warm spices should be taken but not those that are very hot. Examples include fennel, fresh ginger and fenugreek. The best taste is the sour taste as it increases and stabilizes the fire while nourishing the body. The sweet taste builds medas dhatu but should be taken with warm spices to assure that agni is strong enough to digest it. For example, when sweet herbs such as ashwagandha, shatavari, licorice and slippery elm are used, they should be mixed with warmer spices such as ginger, cumin or cinnamon. Exercise should be minimized in the depleted patient. Pranayama may be practiced in proportion to the patient's state of ojas. Alternate nostril breathing is best. Yoga asana may also be practiced but should be restorative to the physical and energetic systems of the body. The best bija mantras to chant are lam and vam which increase the qualities of earth and water respectively. Patients should be supported to sleep well and if necessary a little longer than usual until balance is restored.

In summary, a healthy medas dhatu is lead to a body that acts like a well oiled machine and a heart that is capable of love and devotion. In order to keep it healthy, it is important to know one's prakruti and vikruti and then to take the appropriate actions to restore balance.

**Source URL:** <http://www.ayurvedacollege.com/articles/drhalpern/Medas%20Dhatu>

### Links:

[1] <http://www.ayurvedacollege.com/glossary/term/15>