

Sapta Dhātu (The Seven Tissues)

Āyurveda teaches that the body is comprised of Sapta Dhātu (seven tissues). It is said that when food is digested, the digested nutrients nourish each dhātu in turn: first rasa, then rakta, then, māmsa, then meda, then majjā, then śukra / ārthava. When there are sufficient nutrients absorbed from properly digested food, strong healthy dhātus are built from the nutrients. From the intake of food, it takes about 5 days for each of the seven dhātus to be nourished one in succession. This whole process takes about 35 days for a healthy individual. Once rasa dhātus has been nourished, 5 days later the remaining nutrients will be used to nourish rakta, and then each of the other dhātus in order until the nutrients are all utilized. Many anorexic women suffer from infertility and other reproductive tissue problems, because ārthava dhātu is the last to be nourished and therefore the first to be depleted when there is a lack of nutrients. When all seven dhātus have been nourished, if there are remaining nutrients available, these nutrients are used by the body to create ojas which gives immunity, strength, and a sattvic mind suitable for higher the spiritual practices of yoga.

Each of the dhātus is responsible for certain aspects of the physiological structure of the body and certain functions of the body. Each dhātu produces Upadhātus (or by-products) and mālas (or waste products).

Dhātu (Tissue)	Western Counterpart	Functions	By-products
Rasa Dhātu	Plasma, serum, white blood cells, lymphatic system	Nourishment, perception, clarity, love, faith, it is the essence of the body, it gives the sense of taste.	Upadhātus: Top layer of the skin, lactation, menstruation, taste Mala: poṣaka kapha (nourishment of kapha).
Rakta Dhātu	Red blood cells	Red blood cell activity, transporting prāṇa / oxygen to the body.	Upadhātus: Blood vessels, and small tendons and sinews (like the hamstrings) Mala: bile, and poṣaka pitta (nourishment of pitta)
Māmsa Dhātu	Muscle	Muscle support, moves bodily fluids, heart, and skeleton.	Upadhātus: skin (except for the top layer) and subcutaneous (superficial) fat Mala: nasal crust, earwax, teeth tartar, fatty secretions, and smegma.
Meda Dhātu	Fat	Provides padding (fat), controls cholesterol, lipids, forms cell membranes and other cell structures.	Upadhātu: snāyu (flat muscles, tendons, and ligaments) Mala: sweat
Asthi Dhātu	Bone	Structure, support, protects vital organs, stores memory.	Upadhātus: Teeth and cartilage Malas: hair and nails
Majjā Dhātu	Nerves, marrow, connective tissue	Governs communication, responses to stimuli, and assimilation of experiences, emotional release, dreams,	Upadhātu: Tears Mala: oily secretions from the eyes
Śhukra / Ārthava Dhātu	Male (śukra) and Female (ārthava) reproductive tissue	Govern procreation	Upadhātu: ojas (strength, immunity, vitality) Mala: none (other say pubic hairs)