

Pongal Mono-Fast for Cleansing

A mono-fast on an easily digested food like pongal is often much more effective to strengthen digestion and remove toxins than herbal treatments, because it gets to the root of the problem by restoring the digestive fire. Without proper eating habits, it is not possible for herbs to be effective because the work of the herbs is continually undone by the wrong foods. A mono-fast is a very simple and powerful means of restoring digestion and removing toxins. During a mono-fast other foods and drinks are avoided. It is especially important to strictly avoid heavy foods like meat, eggs, fish, beans, nuts, excess oils, dairy, sugar, or sweets, and stimulants and drugs like coffee, tea, mate, cigarettes, alcohol, narcotics, or medications.

Many Western nutritionists recommend intense fasting routines requiring abstaining from all food for many days or months. Āyurveda advises against such extreme patterns of fasting because they aggravate **vāta and snuff the digestive fire. It is usually not recommended by Āyurveda** that anyone fast from all food for more than a couple of days at a time. Even a few-day fast is considered too intense when there is weakness or **vāta imbalance. Instead** Āyurveda recommends a mono-fast, eating one easily digestible food. Pongal is perfect for fasting because it is easily digested and it provides protein and essential nutrients, so it nourishes while it cleanses and strengthens the digestion. Almost all people would benefit from observing such a mono-fast at least one day in a month. Mono-fasts are generally safe for all the doshas even when practiced for longer times like a week or a month. Just to be safe, people who are weak or suffering from serious health conditions should seek the advice of a qualified Āyurvedic practitioner before taking up a fast for more than a few days.

Pongal (for fasting) (Serves 4) VKP=

1 cup rice	1/4 tsp cracked black pepper corns
¼ c mung dal	½ tsp mung dal
½ tsp turmeric	1 tsp cumin seeds
1 tsp coriander powder	7 curry leaves ripped in half
1 ½ tsp saindav salt	½ tsp grated ginger
2 tsp ghee or oil	2 TBS fresh cilantro chopped
1 pinch hing	

Make sure all ingredient are prepared before cooking because cooking of the spices happens very quickly over medium high heat.

Dry-roast the mung dal in a pan over medium heat. Stir constantly until fragrant. Cool the roasted dal and place in a bowl with the rice. Rinse the rice and the dal with water until the water runs clear. Drain rice / dal and place in a rice cooker (or pan) along with the turmeric, coriander, salt, and 6 cups of water. Start the rice cooker (or simmer in a pan stirring occasionally for 20-30 minutes until the water is absorbed).

Meanwhile, melt the ghee in a pan over medium high heat and add the hing and pepper corns. Cover the pan and roast until the pepper corns pop. Add the ½ tsp mung dal and cook stirring until the dal becomes golden brown. Add the ginger and cook stirring for a few seconds. Add the cumin and curry leave and cook stirring for a few seconds. Pour the spices immediately into the rice / dal.

When the dish is finished cooking, stir in the cilantro.

Note: This recipe is more or less balancing to the three doshas but can be made even better for pitta by omitting the black pepper and increasing the cilantro to 4 TBS.