

A Chinese Medicine Perspective on Diet & Lifestyle for the Spring

In preparing for Spring it is important to begin with an understanding of how each season affects every other. Our sense of balance, as we go into the Spring, is intricately connected to whether or not we took the time to rest in the winter (restore, be still, and go inward).

Spring is associated with new growth and expansion--the time when the seeds begin to sprout and push upward to the sun with force. Likewise, there may be escalated agitation in individuals as the springtime inspires the urge to move forward and grow after the encapsulation of winter.

New growth is dependent upon the rejuvenation of our deeper sources that occurred in the winter. Spring is associated with the liver in Chinese Medicine and with the emotion anger. The liver energy, when balanced, smooths our emotional energy. The autumn is the time of letting go. If a person was not able to let go of outmoded beliefs or emotions in the Fall it can show up in the Spring as congestion.

This may be expressed as emotional outbursts, increased agitation, or emotional stagnation. The growth that occurs in the Spring effects summer and late summer in the same way that a plant grows and produces fruits, flowers and seed. Likewise, a person is able to bring the budding energies that arise in the Spring to their full potential by living in harmony with the seasons.

Spring Lifestyle

The energy of Spring is expansive and outward moving. It is time to start exercising and sweating more. Begin cooking and eating lighter meals. In wintertime we would tend to bake our food to more deeply warm our bodies. In the Spring steaming and stir-frying is more appropriate. It is beneficial to eat more leafy greens (kale, dandelion, collards, mint).

The sour flavor incorporated into the diet will help to balance the liver energy. Try to be conscious to include good oils into your meals (flax oil, sesame oil, olive oil). It is best to add these oils to already cooked food to preserve the quality. Eat what is locally grown and in season, as much as possible. It is important to be emotionally calm when eating, as well as to breathe deeply and thoroughly chewing our food. Drink lots of fluids (lemon can be added to water). The Spring is a great time of year to receive bodywork or acupuncture, in order to to facilitate the body in opening and relaxing.

Do your best to avoid toxicity in your foods and environment. Some things to avoid are: chemicals, drugs and alcohol; as well as refined sugars, processed foods, caffeine, large portions of meat, greasy and rich foods. Avoid stress! All of these are toxicities can impact and congest the liver.

Liver Patterns

When the liver energy is in balance we are able to make decisions and follow through with our creative visions. This is a great time of year to begin new projects. When the liver energy is deficient we may lack the ability to make decisions or follow through with them. On the contrary, when this energy is excessive we may become "work-aholics," so determined to accomplish our goals that we neglect our needs or our personal relationships.

Physically, this is a time to assess the health of our nails, tendons and eyes. Nails should be strong and smooth with good color; not brittle or grooved. Tendons should be supple, flexible and strong. The eyes should be clear and bright, without yellow or red in the whites. Emotionally we can assess our health by witnessing if we are able to express our emotions in a healthy way, especially anger.

Spring Treatment

When spring arises, if you begin to feel out of balance, it may be a good time to seek a Chinese Medicine treatment. A person may experience a variety of symptoms, such as: foggy thinking or forgetfulness; tendon tightness; blurry, red, or dry eyes; lethargy; dry skin, skin itch, or rash. In addition, a person can have rib-side pain (especially after eating while emotional), abdomen distention, diarrhea, or constipation. Emotionally the imbalance can often come as outbursts of anger or increased frustration.

Through harmonizing with the springs energy we begin to feel energized, light and open. With tendons supple and strong we can move easily through our day. With eyes clear and bright we can appreciate the beauty of spring. Enjoy your health and clarity this spring!

References

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