

Summer & Chinese Medicine

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Summer is the season of **Yang**, a time for expansion with energy moving up and out with brightness. Making the most of the warm weather and long days can be done by eating foods that promote energy and activity, and by balancing summer heat with cooling foods. Consuming a **varied diet** in the Summer is what nature intended and is it the perfect time for spices, flowers and leaves that have a floating or outward effect.

The organs that relate to summer are the heart and small intestine and later in the season, the spleen and stomach. The hearts physical function is **controlling blood circulation** and the **blood vessels**, however, it plays central roles on other levels too. The heart **controls consciousness, sleep and memory and provides a haven for the spirit or shen**.

Heat in the environment and in the body has a drying nature and naturally we seek for sources of cold to cool us down. Some signs of **excessive heat include a red face or red eyes or a bright red tongue, fever, high blood pressure, nosebleeds, constipation, thick or yellow mucus, excessive sweating, shortness of breath and wheezing**.

Yang energy is warm, stimulating, expansive and rising.

Element: Fire.

Colour: Red.

Nature: Yang.

Organs: Heart & Small Intestine.

Emotion: Joy

Heat can also affect the Stomach Qi by forcing it up (naturally, stomach qi flows down).

TCM teaches us that **summer belongs to fire**, one of the five elements. Fire is symbolic of maximum activity or greatest yang, which means that it is a time of **heat, outgoingness, and moving outward in nature and in our lives**. In human anatomy, the heart, mind, and spirit are ruled by the fire element. Thus, top priority should be given to the heart, mind, and spirit for staying healthy in summer.

The main function of the heart is to pump oxygen-rich blood through the body. In Chinese medicine, **mental activity is associated with the heart and therefore our memory, thought processes, emotional well-being, and consciousness are also attributed to the heart and fire element.** This is a time to nourish and pacify our spirits, and to realize our life's greatest potential as we find joy in our hot summer days and warm summer nights.

When the fire element is in balance, the heart is **strong and healthy, the mind is calm and sleep is sound.**

When the fire element is imbalanced, we may either **lack joy (depression)** or have **an excess of joy (mania).** Indicators of an imbalance in the fire element include **agitation, nervousness, heartburn, and insomnia.**

Tips for Summer Health

To prevent summer ills and remain in harmony with the environment of summer, ancient Chinese physicians advised:

- Awaken earlier in the morning
- Go to bed later in the evening
- Rest at midday
- Drink plenty of fluids
- Add pungent flavors to your diet
- Refrain from anger; keep calm and even-tempered
- Salad Days: Eating Under the Sun

In summer, indigestion can easily occur, so a **light and less-greasy diet** is strongly recommended. It is the perfect season to introduce some **cool, yin foods** into your diet. Chinese nutrition classifies food according to its energetic qualities of temperature, taste, and ability to moisten and strengthen the body. Food with cool and cold properties can clear heat, reduce toxins, and generate body fluids.

In general, **cooling foods tend towards the green end of the spectrum – lettuce, cucumbers, and watercress are some of the coolest. Few vegetables are warming. Fish and seafood are also cooling, while most meats are warming.**

Here are some suggestions to keep you cool and balanced all summer long. These fruits and vegetables will help your body adjust its temperature and protect you during the long, hot summer days:

Watermelon, Apricot, Cantaloupe, Lemon, Peach, Orange, Asparagus, Sprouts, Bamboo, Bok choy

Broccoli, Chinese cabbage, Corn, Cucumber, White mushroom, Snow peas, Spinach, Summer squash

Watercress, Seaweed, Mung beans, Cilantro, Mint, Dill.

Other helpful tips for the summer season

- Keep a pitcher of water with slices of lemon and cucumber with you and sip it throughout the day.
- Eat in moderation. Over consumption of any food, especially cooling foods, can lead to indigestion, sluggishness and possibly diarrhoea.
- Do not leave your food out for too long. The hot weather tends to increase food spoilage.
- Stay away from dairy, heavy, greasy, and fried foods.

Acupuncture has been found to be helpful with all types of emotional and mental disorders, from stress and anxiety to schizophrenia. Often used for such treatments is Yintang, a point located between the eyebrows – sometimes referred to as "the third eye."

The Chinese translation for the acupuncture point, Yintang, is "hall of impression". "Hall" is defined as a corridor or passageway, or the large entrance room of a house. An "impression" is defined as a strong effect produced on the intellect, emotions, or conscience. Thus, Yintang is the entrance or passageway to the mind.

"Hall of impression" is an appropriate name for this powerful point, which is used to calm the mind, enhance one's ability to focus, soothe emotions, promote sleep, and relieve depression. You can press on this point yourself for an instant calming effect.