

Cultivation of the Qi of Five Organs, Part II

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The qi of the five organs is very essential to one's health, as was described in Part I. Qi can also be cultivated through diet, exercise, emotional management and herbal remedies.

Diet

There are five elements of flavor in food. They are sour, bitter, sweet, spicy, and salty. Each of these flavors has a close relationship with one of the five organs. Generally speaking, sour flavors regulate the qi of the liver. Sour foods like vinegar, black plum and lemons may help control or lessen mood swings caused by imbalances of the liver. Bitter flavors neutralize inner fire, characterized by anxiety, heart palpitations, irritability, and strong odors in the mouth. Controlling inner fire can improve the function of the heart. Choosing bitter foods, such as bitter melon, grape fruit, and rhubarb, aids in regulating heart qi. Sweetness can nourish the spleen, reduce spasms, and regulate digestion. Honey, fructose, licorice, and dates all have sweet flavors that alleviate with deficiencies of spleen qi. Eating red pepper, ginger, scallions, black pepper, mustard is advantageous for people who get sick easily and have a tendency to be cold. Spicy flavors alleviate deficiency of lung qi. Chinese medicine believes that spiciness has the effect of increasing energy and blood circulation, dispelling coldness and strengthening yang energy. Seaweed, carp, seafood and other salty foods are used to reinforce kidney qi and also to reduce size of masses.

In conclusion, sour flavors cultivate the liver, bitterness cultivates the heart, sweetness cultivates the spleen, spiciness cultivates the lungs and saltiness cultivates the kidneys. However, one must not take in too much of any one flavor to avoid damaging the organs. Eating too much sweets will slow digestion and metabolism, weaken spleen functions, cause water retention or obesity. Too much spicy foods will irritate the lungs, causing chronic coughing. Excessive salty foods increase the burden on the kidneys, possibly causing swelling.

Exercise

According to Chinese medical teachings, the liver controls ligaments, the heart controls blood vessels, the spleen controls the muscles, the lungs control skin, and the kidneys control bones. Regular exercise such as jogging, walking, aerobics, tai chi and yoga can enhance the functions of the liver, kidneys, heart and spleen.

Skin exercises are an effective way of strengthening and increasing the capacity of the lungs, and improving the body's defense mechanisms. There are two simple methods of doing skin exercises. One is to take cold water showers regularly and another is to practice a combination of lung and skin breathing exercises. When you inhale, try to visualize the pores of your skin opening. Visualize that air does not only enter your body through the respiratory system, but also through your skin. When you exhale, visualize the pores closing. Do this exercise regularly, especially in the winter and the spring.

Emotion Management

Chinese medical teachings state that anger impairs the liver, anxiety impairs the heart, worry impairs the spleen, sadness impairs the lungs, and fear impairs the kidneys. Reducing anger and controlling the temper is helpful to prevent some illnesses related to the liver. Common medical conditions like depression, caused by stagnation of liver qi, and hypertension, caused by excessive liver yang, can be relieved by controlling emotions of anger. Reducing anxiety, keeping a calm and peaceful mind can prevent heart problems. Many conditions related to the heart, such as heart attacks and arrhythmia, are all caused by excessive anxiety. Over worrying and over thinking can slow the metabolism, weaken the spleen functions, and cause digestive disorders or fatigue. Fear impairs kidney energy. Some kidney related conditions from Chinese medicine are sexual dysfunction, infertility, frequent urination and night wetting. These can all result directly from excessive fear.

Herbal Remedies

Chinese herbal remedies have been a part of Traditional Chinese Medicine for over 4,000 years. They have played an important role in preventing and treating diseases, enhancing body functions and promoting health. Chinese herbal remedies are commonly used in carefully prepared combinations. There are three ways to beneficially use combinations of herbs.

1. A combination of two or more herbs in one prescription creates a stronger effect.
2. Certain herbs are used to reduce or eliminate side effects of other herbs.
3. Each herb influences different parts of the body or different organs. Remedies are used to create more balance in the body.

The most popular classical formulas for cultivation of each of the five organs are:

Calming Essence for Liver

Indication: For stagnation of the liver Qi with deficiency of blood, manifested as depression, mood swings, irritability, headache, dizziness, mental weariness, distention in the breast, irregular menstruation, or PMS.

For PMS take 10 days before menstruation and throughout the cycle.

For mood swings, take for 1 week at a time, and for depression take for about 3 months.

Comments: This formula has been proven clinically and experimentally to invigorate the spleen, nourish the blood and strengthen the stomach to promote digestion. It has been shown to soothe the liver, combating feelings of depression and tranquilizing the mind

Ingredients: Bupleurum, Chinese Angelica Root, White Peony, Hoelen, White Atractylodes, Roasted Ginger, Mentha, Processed Licorice, Natural Orange Tangerine Flavor.

Source: Prescriptions of Traditional Chinese Medicine

Spirit Essence for Heart

Indication: For deficiency of heart Qi and Yin due to loss of body fluids manifested as general debility, shortness of breath, disinclination to talk, thirst with profuse sweating, or palpitation and fatigue.

Take as needed or for general weakness take periodically for a 2 week period with a 3-5 day rest.

Comments: Clinically and experimentally, it has been proven that this formula is effective for reinforcing the function of the heart, promoting digestion and absorption, strengthening the basic functions, inducing diuresis, arresting sweat, maintaining body fluids, and nourishing the organs to consolidate the constitution

Ingredients: Ginseng, Ophiopogon Root, Schizandra, Natural Raspberry Lemon Flavor.

Source: Prescriptions of Traditional Chinese Medicine

Qi Booster for Spleen

Indication: For deficiency of energy or weak spleen Qi manifested as low energy, weak muscles, lack of concentration, poor memory, loose stool, pale complexion, or low and weak voice.

Take as needed or for general weakness take periodically for a 2 week period with a 3-5 day rest.

Comments: Modern studies have confirmed that this combination is effective for stimulating the central nervous system, facilitating functional activities, promoting metabolism, digestion and absorption, regulating gastrointestinal functions, arresting diarrhea, relieving swelling, and inducing diuresis.

Ingredients: Codonopsis, White Atractylodes, Hoelen, Processed Licorice, Natural Raspberry Lemon flavor.

Source: Prescriptions of Traditional Chinese Medicine

Defense Enhancer for Lungs

Indication: For failure of superficial-qi to protect the body against pathogens marked by spontaneous perspiration, excessive sweating, susceptibility to the common cold, pale complexion, or stable stage of allergies or asthma.

Take periodically for 4 weeks at a time then rest for 1 week.

Comments: Modern research has proven that this formula has the effects of improving blood circulation and the nutrition of skin, regulating the functional activities of the sweat gland, and strengthening immunity. This formula is not suitable for people with night sweat due to interior heat caused by deficiency of yin.

Ingredients: Siler, Astragalus, White Atractylodes, Natural Tangerine Orange Flavor.

Source: Prescriptions of Traditional Chinese Medicine

Vital Energy Tonic for Kidneys

Indication: For people of mature age with deficiency of vital essence and Qi of the kidney manifested as weakness, low sexual energy, soreness of the waist and knees, vertigo, tinnitus, deafness, night sweat, emission, feverish sensation in the palms and soles, dry mouth and throat, hot flashes, vaginal dryness, insomnia, or irritability .

Can be taken for a long period of time.

Comments: Clinically and experimentally, this formula has been proven to have the effects of nourishing the body, consolidating the constitution, inhibiting hypercatabolism, reducing excitement of the brain, adjusting endocrine functions and vegetative nerve functions, lowering blood pressure and blood sugar, inducing diuresis, improving the function of the kidneys, improving the epithelial hyperplasia of the esophagus, and preventing cancer.

Ingredients: Processed Rehmannia, Cornus, Dioscorea, Alisma, Hoelen, Moutan, Natural Orange Tangerine Flavor.

Source: Prescriptions of Traditional Chinese Medicine

In addition to diet, exercise, emotion management and herbal remedies, seasonal cultivation of the organs is also important. Spring is the season of wood. Liver imbalances tend to act up in the spring. Spring is a time when one must be concerned about the liver. Summer is the season of fire. High temperatures can cause excessive inner fire, damaging the heart. Place special attention on the heart in the summer. Mid-summer is the season of earth. Dampness can effect

digestion as the stomach and the spleen are vulnerable at this time. Fall is the season of metal. Fall dryness can weaken the lungs in general. Winter is the season of water. Coldness can damage kidney functions. One must tonify the kidneys in the winter season. Adjustments in one's environment must be reflected in our lives.

The foundations of cultivation of the qi of the five organs are based on this principle of unity between humans and the rest of the universe. This is crucial in order to be in harmony with nature. One must manage emotional changes to maintain inner peace. One must eat and act sensibly to enhance body mechanism and to prevent illnesses. In this way the qi of the five organs can be cultivated, and in this way is the secret to health of Traditional Chinese Medicine.