A Chinese Medicine Guide to a Healthy Late Summer

Chinese medical principles were founded by observing nature. The external world — seasons, daily rhythms, the interplay of hot and cold — are all related to our internal health. For example, let’s look at late summer, when fruits, which have been ripening during the summer, come to fruition. The Chinese divide the year into five, not four seasons: spring, summer, late summer, autumn and winter. Late summer corresponds to the earth element, with spleen and stomach as the affiliated organs. Stomach and spleen are referred to as “the Official in Charge of Rotting and Ripening” and “the Official of Transportation and Distribution.” This transformation of nutrients occurs on all levels: body, mind and spirit.

Looking at nourishment from a physical level, are you digesting your food properly? If not, you might experience bloating, gas, diarrhea or constipation, low energy, lack of concentration, even cold hands and feet. Now, let’s explore some of the reasons for poor digestion.

Do we have enough food? In our culture, disease is rarely a question of having enough. We are a culture of excess. Look at the soaring rates of obesity.

Are we getting the right balance of foods? Chinese medicine looks for a balance of five flavors — sweet, spicy, salty, sour and bitter — relating to the five seasons, relating to the five organ systems. Too much sweet, the flavor of late summer, is one of the chief reasons for the increase in Type 2 diabetes. Sweet comes not only from pure sugar, but also from too much bread and pasta (which easily break down to simple sugar), from excess wine, and from drinking fruit juice (to say nothing of soda) instead of water.

Too much sweet can lead to accumulation or “dampness.” Since the spleen is in charge of distribution to all organs, dampness can inhibit its effectiveness. This can show up as cysts, lung congestion, cloudy urine, discharge, clogged arteries and heart disease. The brain may also be...
affected. Have you ever been talking with someone who just stares back with a blank look? That’s dampness or fog of the brain. This brings us to the need to nourish on all levels, not just the physical. The mind wants nourishment. Remember how it feels to be fully engaged, to really sink your teeth into a project? If you find a subject fascinating you have no problem devouring the material, chewing on ideas for hours. If you’re bored it may take forever to study or prepare for a presentation.

Turning our attention to the spirit, if all you do is work, never giving time to nourish the soul, your spirit will scream and cry. Unfortunately, people are sometimes so numb they don’t even hear the screams from within. Both obsessive eating and anorexia are often tied to the spirit in crisis. Whatever fulfills you (such as going to church or temple, a walk in the woods, singing in a choir), make it a weekly, if not daily, routine. Earth loves routine. It thrives on rhythms. When earth goes off balance, your internal cycles may suffer. Women’s menstrual cycles are often affected. Sleep can be disturbed. In Chinese medicine, we suggest people go to bed at a regular hour, usually by 10 p.m. It’s good to eat at regular times. Grazing and late-night consumption are not optimal. Having time off from eating, work, even from socializing or caretaking, is essential to the balance of body, mind and spirit.

What does it feel like to have the earth element, often represented as “mother,” in balance? If your earth is happy and properly mothered, you’ll feel secure within yourself, with a sense of belonging, grounding, centeredness. When your earth is off balance, you may feel needy, even compulsive, toward food or attention, seeking sympathy or entertainment. Taking care of your earth allows you to feel your own harvest, to finish projects, and to feel fulfilled, not needing anything more or anything different. With a healthy earth you feel at home in any situation.

So enjoy your home and garden, the fruits of your labors and the space in which to love, relax, and nourish self, family and friends.

Source: by Judy Pruzinsky, coastviewsmag.com

Dear readers,
I regret that a rough draft of the article “Eating Back to Health” was accidentally posted in last month’s newsletter. Please enjoy the revised version.
Sincerely,
Natalia Foster, L.Ac.

Eating Back to Health

“You are what you eat.” This is a saying repeated in various forms by European nutritionists over the last century, but the sentiment is present in Traditional Chinese Medicine as well. Improper diet can lead to disease and food is an important tool to restore and maintain health.

When a patient has been diagnosed and a treatment plan formulated, dietary recommendations will also be given. For example, chronic bronchitis (which affects the lungs), might require foods to help disperse congestion and strengthen the immune system. This would include sweet potatoes, black dates, apricot kernels, seaweed and papaya.

The flavors (sweet, bland, sour, salty, pungent or bitter) and the temperature (warm, hot, cool, cold) of foods are additional considerations. For example, a cold with fever and a sore throat would require foods or herbs that are pungent and cool such as mint, dandelion...
In general, sweet foods tonify and nourish our bodies. This sweet property refers to naturally occurring sugars in foods such as yams, corn and rice. Refined sugars and artificial sweeteners actually damage the organs. After a febrile disease, foods that are sweet in nature will help the patient to recover more quickly. Overconsumption of sweet foods, however, can cause a patient to feel heavy and gain weight. Moderation is important to achieve the appropriate therapeutic effect.

Bland foods like pearl barley can help with edema by promoting urination.

Sour foods, such as lemons or vinegar, are astringent in nature. Astringent foods are appropriate for excessive sweating or leakage. Salty foods such as seaweed can soften nodules and goiters. Pungent foods can promote sweating and disperse a cold. Mint and ginger are frequently employed.

Bitter foods such as kale, chard and rhubarb disperse and clear heat and can be used for edema.

Certain types of foods can have similar properties. In general, seeds have a lubricating quality that can alleviate constipation and moisten dryness. Pumpkin seeds, while moistening, can also treat prostate problems and intestinal parasites. Fruits are generally cool and sweet, but there are exceptions. Blueberries are sour, warm, and can benefit anemia and poor memory.

Eating an apple (cool, sweet and slightly sour) on an empty stomach can help with constipation. The pectin in apples is a good source of fiber. Warming foods can treat cold and cold stagnation in the body. Certain herbs are prepared with wine because it enhances their warming effect. Cooling foods can help when an organ system becomes overheated, as in menopausal hot flashes or summer heat.

Food is an important treatment element in Traditional Chinese Medicine. Food as medicine is an ancient concept that is regaining popularity in modern society. Many health imbalances are caused by diets high in fat and refined sugars. An appropriate diet can help rebuild, reduce or harmonize depending on the patient’s needs. Diet is an essential tool along with acupuncture and herbs to promote overall health and wellness.

By Donna Vega
Edited by Jean Cartier

Meet our interns:

Yo San Clinic has an exceptional and diverse intern team. With various professional and educational backgrounds, our Traditional Chinese Medicine students bring a variety of experience, knowledge and care. In our monthly newsletter, we will introduce you to our new interns and tell you a little bit about what makes them exceptional healers.

Polli Glatleider

Polli is a dedicated and committed Certified Nurse Midwife [CNM]. She has cared for pregnant women, babies and their families for 35 years as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Grenada, a labor nurse and for the past 23 years, as a midwife. Polli continues to work as a midwife with UCLA Nurse-Midwifery practice while studying at Yo San University.

Polli earned a B.A. in Theatre Arts at the University of Minnesota, a B.S.N. from Columbia University, a Master in Nursing at
UCLA and nurse-midwifery education at USC. She has conducted numerous international midwifery/obstetrical clinical trainings and consultations for WHO, ACNM, and various non-governmental organizations.

Throughout her professional career, Polli has incorporated complementary healing modalities including Therapeutic Touch, therapeutic music, Healing Touch, and teaching Mindfulness Based Childbirth and Parenting.

Polli has a deep passion for music and sound healing. Her master’s research studied the effect of music on the perception of pain and pain medication use in labor. Her introduction to Traditional Chinese Medicine and acupuncture was ignited while studying Acutonics - a sound healing approach based on this ancient wisdom.

Polli is thrilled to be a clinic intern: her final chapter before a new journey. She aspires to create an integrative medicine women’s health care service, with both clinic and hospital services - integrating the best of Eastern and Western medicine - caring for women throughout a lifetime.

**Megan O’Connor**

Megan joined the Army in 1996, serving as a Medic and X-Ray Technician. She tremendously enjoyed taking care of her fellow soldiers. She then earned her BA in Psychology from Rutgers University and attended The Army Officer Candidate School, graduating first in her class and went on to become a Medical Service Corps and Civil Affairs officer. Following Sept 11, 2001, Megan spent two consecutive years in Iraq serving in a medical capacity and working to establish Iraqi Army medical capabilities. While still in Iraq, Megan discovered Yo San University’s website. She decided that upon her return to the US, she would leave the full time Army and pursue her Master’s at Yo San. Megan had a strong desire to learn a medicine that would enable her to treat not only the physical maladies but the mental and emotional wounds of service members, veterans and the general population alike. Though Megan has had to take multiple terms off school due to Army Reserve requirements and took time off mid-program to spend a year in Afghanistan, she will finally be completing her Master’s degree this December. While leading a very physically active and philanthropic life outside of Yo San, Megan has been a Dean’s List student. As a clinic intern Megan enjoys treating all conditions, but has a special interest in mental and emotional conditions and pain management.

To book an appointment with Polli or Megan, call us at (310) 577-3006.

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**Meet our Doctoral Candidate:**

**Lisa Nelson, M.S., L. Ac., Dipl. O.M.**

Lisa received her Masters of Science in Oriental Medicine from Yo San University in California. Upon graduation, Lisa went on to study orthopedic acupuncture at Cedars-Sinai in Los Angeles CA, while at the same time also maintaining a practice for orthopedic doctors in southern California specializing in...
orthopedic acupuncture, and pain management. Furthering her studies in Traditional Chinese Medicine, she holds a certificate of completion from the Academy of Internal Medicine in Chung du China.
Lisa also worked on board luxury cruise ships for over 3 years where she ran and managed acupuncture clinics, as well as holding weekly educational seminars on board. Currently Lisa is enrolled as a doctoral candidate specializing in Healthy Aging and Longevity. Lisa is currently nationally accredited by the NCCAOM in Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine and is state licensed in California.
Trained to view the body holistically and focusing on the root cause of a person’s disorder, Lisa believes that everyone has the ability to heal from within when given proper guidance and support. She is skilled at treating a wide range of ailments with Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine, often incorporating herbs. As a certified clinical nutritionist, diet and lifestyle suggestions are often incorporated with treatment.

Yo San Externship highlighted in "Acupuncture Today"
Being Alive is a 1,200-member non-profit HIV/AIDS organization that for nearly 15 years has been offering acupuncture, along with other alternative treatments, to help people living with HIV/AIDS in Los Angeles. A narrow hall, a paneled patient area and therapy room house Being Alive’s twice-weekly acupuncture clinic where volunteer therapists and interns treat up to 60 members a week. The volunteer therapists include instructors and interns from Yo San University in Santa Monica, Calif. Since its introduction, acupuncture has been one of Being Alive’s more popular programs, with countless members on its waiting list to fill slots of limited appointments.

Yo San’s Doctoral Students are Blazing Paths for Acupuncture Research:
In March of 2012 Yo San graduated its first Doctoral Cohort. Each student submitted a capstone project presenting initial research on a particular women’s health issue and the effects of acupuncture and Chinese Herbs. These capstone projects are available here and our newsletters will feature abstracts for you to enjoy.

Effects of Traditional Chinese Medicine on Sperm Parameters with a Focus on DNA Fragmentation: A Literature Synthesis By Virginia C. Prior, MATCM, L.Ac., Dipl.O.M.
This project is a literature synthesis of research done on the possible effects of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) on sperm parameters with a focus on DNA Fragmentation Index (DFI) in an effort to treat male
infertility. Research studies and articles were gathered, summarized and qualitative data were extracted for analysis in order to investigate how acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine may affect sperm, DFI and male infertility. Background and etiologies of DNA fragmentation, poor sperm quality and male infertility were examined. TCM was found to have a positive effect on semen parameters, hormone levels, immune markers and antioxidant levels, potentially facilitating fertilization, pregnancy and live birth rates in both natural conception as well as with the use of Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART). Larger, more controlled studies need to be done. Currently, there are no studies published on the potential effect of TCM on DFI, which might be a valuable investigation to pursue.

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