

Acu News

"Life is either a great adventure or nothing" - Helen Keller

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What Should I Eat? Winter Food Suggestions



Traditional Chinese Medicine views things differently than other medical systems. In TCM, there are guidelines that are considered very logical when it comes to the seasons. These guidelines lay out what foods and activities are best for each season of the year. Chinese medicine teaches us to live in harmony with the seasons. In TCM, there are actually five seasons – summer, late summer, fall, winter and spring. Every season has many associations which help guide people to create a more balanced life. When TCM was being developed, people lived in harmony with nature and they lived healthy, balanced lives. In modern society, we have gotten away from our connection with nature and we have many more distractions that have ultimately led us to become unbalanced and unhealthy.

Winter represents the most yin aspect of Chinese medicine. The properties associated with yin include darkness, cold, slow movement and inward energy. Winter is associated with the kidneys in TCM. The kidneys hold the body's fundamental energy or Qi. By balancing ourselves with the corresponding seasons, we can prevent disease and stay healthy. So for the season of winter, we should take note of what happens in nature and do the same. To keep the kidneys strong, we must rest. This is why many animals hibernate during the winter. It is also a time to reflect inward and perform activities such as meditation, tai chi and qigong. These are the kinds of practices that help us connect with our inner selves and also support kidney energy.

When it comes to foods most beneficial for the body during the winter months, there are many to choose from. These should also be ones that naturally grow during this season. Items such as squash, potatoes, pumpkin, sweet potato, cinnamon, nutmeg, cardamom, beets, greens, carrots, mushrooms, apples,

pears and cabbage. During the winter months, cold foods like salads and raw foods should be avoided as they will deplete the immune system. Instead, our bodies need warming foods like soups made with hearty vegetables. Bone broth is also very beneficial and becoming more mainstream. There are also foods that specifically target and nourish the kidneys. These include kidney beans, beef, goose, duck, black beans, lamb, chicken, dark leafy greens, garlic, ginger, walnuts, watercress and turnips. Sea salt is also helpful. Salty is the taste associated with the kidneys. But as with anything, moderation is key. Too much salt can actually tax the heart, which then causes the kidneys to work overtime.

You should cook for longer periods of time and on low heat with less water, so things like stews are perfect for this time of year. The longer cooking times will infuse the foods with more heat, which will help keep the body warm. It is recommended to bake, roast, stew and slow cook foods in the winter. Hearty soups, roasted nuts and whole grains should be consumed when possible because they offer nourishment that feeds the body as well as the kidneys specifically.

By taking cues from nature and ancient healing practices, better balance can be achieved and health can be maintained. Those that went before us may not have known everything, but they did know how to survive or we would not be here today. Trusting the teachings of our ancestors will allow us to continue to survive also.



Kidney 3 - Point of the Month

Kidney 3, also known as the Great Valley is a superstar acupoint for many reasons. Located on the inside of the ankle, in the depression between the medial malleolus and the tendo calcaneus, this point is aptly named because it is located in the valley between the achilles tendon and the malleolus. The tibial artery can even be considered a "stream" running through the valley.

Kidneys would include the kidney-urinary system, as well as the endocrine system. The kidneys would also be where you would find the adrenals. In Traditional Chinese Medicine, the kidneys are also the storehouses of our Qi and have a direct relationship to reproduction and aging.

Locally this point can be used for heel and ankle pain, including plantar fasciitis. For reproduction, the kidneys are essential for sperm and egg health and Kidney 3 can help with impotence as well as irregular menstruation and endometriosis. For urinary health it can treat nighttime urination issues, as well as incontinence, chronic cystitis, frequent urination and even dry stools!

The kidney is related to the lungs and Kidney 3 can work for certain types of asthma, especially when there are issues taking deep breaths. It can help alleviate coughing as well as reduce wheezing. The kidney meridian has an internal branch that goes to the throat and Kidney 3 can be indicated for sore throats, dry mouth, throat, cough and laryngitis.

On a more emotional and spiritual level, Kidney 3 can help when there is an imbalance between the kidney and heart in cases of anxiety, insomnia, dream-disturbed sleep and forgetfulness. For imbalances with the liver and kidney yin, this point can help with irritability. For people who need to be grounded, Kidney 3 can be combined with Stomach 36 for a very calming effect.

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