

# Acu News

"He who has health, has hope; and he who has hope, has everything".-Thomas Carlyle

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## Healthy Eating for Summer

Traditional Chinese Medicine is a medical system thousands of years old and incorporates many different modalities. TCM theory emphasizes Mother Nature provides the right kind of food for the right kind of environment. For instance, if the weather is cold, then warming, nutrient-dense foods are best for the body. Likewise, when summer rolls around, it is best to partake of cooling foods and foods that are abundant during this season.

Summer is a time of great abundance. Or as the Chinese refer to it, the time of utmost yang. The days are longer and warmer. And everything and everybody seems to be more active. The warmth of the summer sun encourages growth and maturation. In TCM, summer relates to the element of fire and the heart and small intestine energetic pathways or meridians. Because summer is a time of growth, many fruits and vegetables become abundant during the season. And because the season tends to be the warmest, it is important to stay cool and hydrated.

The body is thought to contain a substance the Chinese call Qi (pronounced "chee"). This Qi is frequently translated into the term energy in English. When a person's Qi is low, then a deficiency develops. Conversely, when there is an excess of Qi, problems may arise indicative of this. Sweat is the fluid of the heart. When a person sweats excessively, the Qi of the heart becomes scattered and weak. This can weaken the mind and cause symptoms like depression, restlessness, insomnia and irritability. But this can be countered by eating foods salty and sour in nature. This includes foods such as miso, pickles, lemons, limes and sour plums.

The summer months are generally hot and therefore the body needs to be kept cool. This is the perfect time to eat more raw foods that clear heat. But as with anything, don't overdo it. Too much cold or raw foods can wreak havoc on the digestive tract causing spasms, tightness and contractions. This will make the body work harder to warm the food being eaten, which can then deplete the Qi of the spleen and stomach meridians. Therefore cooked foods and even soups are still recommended during the warm summer months. They are usually made with seasonally-available foods or eaten at room temperature to avoid any digestive conflict.

It is best to avoid heavy, greasy and fried foods during the summer months, as they can clog up the digestive system. They can also create excess phlegm in the lungs leading to respiratory problems. And when cooking during the season of summer, it is best to create meals quickly and simply by grilling or stir frying.

Examples of foods beneficial for the summer months include peppers, eggplant, cabbage, kale, broccoli, spinach, melons of all kinds, beets, berries, pineapple, cucumbers, grapefruit and mushrooms. If you need more help understanding or designing a proper seasonal-eating plan, contact your local acupuncturist or TCM practitioner. They will definitely be able to help you identify what plan works best for you.

## Herbal Poultices for Skin Conditions

Herbal poultices are a great way to provide quick relief to a variety of ailments that could affect your body. Technically, a "poultice" simply means to apply a moist combination of herbs directly to your skin. There are many different kinds of herbal poultices and some differ greatly from the next. Certain poultices may combine multiple herbs with different liquids, and some could only contain one type of herb and one type of binding liquid, such as distilled water. In addition, poultices can be applied with a thin cloth or bandage, instead of directly to the skin.



Here are two herbal poultices you can make at home to use for certain ailments. When creating these poultices you can decide whether you wish to apply directly to your skin, or to use a thin cloth, adhesive or bandage. To create poultices it is important to have a pestle and mortar to crush and combine your herbs.

**Insect Bites** - Try your hand at making a plantain poultice. You can place this poultice directly on the skin without any type of cloth or bandage to contain it together. You can mash fresh or dried plantain and combine with a bit of distilled water in order to create this poultice. This poultice is also known to be helpful at treating boils.

**Inflammation or Infection** - Create a mustard poultice, mash mustard seeds and then mix with clean distilled water or a natural oil, and apply. For this poultice, it is recommended to put the created paste in a thin cloth, which you will then place on your skin. Mustard poultices have been known to burn the skin if they make direct contact, so make sure to use a thin cloth or adhesive. Mustard poultices can help heal inflammation, infection and abscesses.

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