

# Acu News

"Awake. Be the witness of your thoughts. You are what observes, not what you observe" - Buddha

VOL 6.1

## In Summer, Nourish Your Heart

Summer is a time of abundant energy, long sunshine-filled days and warmth. In Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), summer has many different associations that help define it and therefore help us understand how to stay in balance with the season. The element of summer is fire, the color is red, the emotion is joy and the governing organs are the heart and the small intestine. One way to stay healthy this summer is to adjust your habits to support your heart.

The heart is the main organ associated with the season of summer, and as such it should be paid close attention to and nourished to remain healthy. The heart's main function is to circulate oxygen-rich blood throughout the body. In TCM, mental activity is also associated with the heart. This mental activity is known as Shen in Chinese medicine. The Shen is sometimes compared to our mind, but it is actually much deeper than that. The Shen includes our thought processes, memory, consciousness and emotional well-being.

Summer is the most appropriate time to calm the Shen and provide it with enrichment that will last throughout the whole year. When the fire element is balanced, the mind is calm, sleep is sound and the heart organ is strong and healthy. If the fire element is not balanced, there may be depression or an excess of joy which manifests as mania. Symptoms of an unbalanced fire element include heartburn, insomnia, agitation, nervousness, digestive upset, rashes, palpitations and excessive perspiration.

The small intestine, the second organ associated with summer in TCM, is responsible for separating the pure from the impure, allowing the body to use the pure and dispose of the impure. When the heart is not balanced, the small intestine, the brother to the heart, will not function properly either. For many people, this manifests as digestive upset of some sort: vomiting, nausea, diarrhea, etc.

Going outside and engaging all of your senses is an easy way to nourish the heart.

A technique known as "grounding" has been gaining popularity over the past decade, and science is showing that it can be very beneficial. All one has to do is walk or stand in the grass while barefoot. The energy from the earth is incredible, and it can be very healing. While you're there, take time to listen to the sounds of nature that surround you and enjoy the fragrances of the flowers. Taking in the experience with all your senses can be very grounding and have a calming effect on the mind and body.

Probably the two most important things you can do for heart health during the summer months is drink plenty of **fresh water** and eat **cooling foods**. No matter what season of the year, water is vital. It is recommended we drink at least 64 ounces per day. Cooling foods like fruits are good at keeping fire under control, which is healthy for the whole body. Other foods that are beneficial for the summer months include peppers, eggplant, cabbage, kale, broccoli, spinach, melons of all kinds, beets, radishes, jicama, carrots, berries, pineapple, cucumbers, peaches, peppermint, grapefruit and mushrooms.

If you notice yourself experiencing a heart or fire imbalance, consider adding acupuncture to your routine. Acupuncture is very good at reducing or increasing the body's yang or fire energy, depending upon your individual needs. Ask me if you have any questions about using your acupuncture treatments to support your health this summer.



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