

Chinese medicine dietary e-book



“Food is medicine, and
medicine is food”

WHAT IS CHINESE MEDICINE DIETARY THERAPY?

Chinese dietary therapy was always seen as the foundations to good health in ancient Chinese times. The Chinese would often alter their diets depending on the season, where they lived, depending on how they were feeling, and current health concerns. In Chinese medicine it is believed that post-natal qi (energy) comes from the food we eat and digest, as well as the air we breathe, therefore any acupuncture or Chinese herbal therapy that you receive from a practitioner can only work effectively if you have a good dietary foundation to support your treatments, otherwise you undo all your practitioners hard work. Foods are therefore used everyday to help rebalance the body, and ensure there isn't any disharmony or disease.

In western society's point of foods they are observed based on their nutritional values, carbohydrates, protein, or how many calories they have. In Chinese medicine dietary therapy it is more complicated and focuses on the 5 flavours, 5 seasons, 5 temperatures, 5 organ systems, and direction of energy that each food contains to send to the body.

Every food has its own energetic properties which then influences the body. This guide provides you with general information on how the ancient Chinese viewed foods as medicine, which organs they treated, how the foods worked energetically on the body, and what season to eat certain foods in. When discussing organs in this book, please be mindful that an organ is seen differently in Chinese medicine, for example if there is an issue with your spleen energy, it doesn't mean there is anything wrong with the actual organ spleen as seen in a western medicine sense for your doctor to investigate. Based on your diagnosis by a traditional Chinese medicine practitioner, they will consider which foods are best for you, as there isn't a one size fits all.

If you would like to know more about what foods are specifically good for you, and your health concerns, please see your local Chinese medicine practitioner.



GENERAL RULES

There are some general do's and don'ts when it comes to eating according to Chinese medicine.

DO'S

- Eat purposely, sit down and enjoy each bite.
- Eat same time each day and regularly.
- Eat when in a calm manner, not too angry or emotional. If you eat when angry or upset, it is believed that this causes stagnation in the digestion, therefore causes issues such as, bloating, reflux and pain.
- Eat as many different flavours (sweet, sour, bitter, pungent, and salty) foods in each serving.
- All foods need to be cooked as this assists the body and digestion in breaking down the foods more easily, and does not have to work so hard in processing the food.
- Avoid too much fluid around and during meal time.
- Eat a hearty breakfast between 7-9am when the digestion is at its peak, a small light dinner, and do not eat after 7pm.
- Sip on room temperature water throughout the day.
- Eat seasonal, fresh, local and organic foods (when possible).
- Eat more foods like your ancestors ate, your gut bacteria is attuned to those foods that have been eaten for generations in your family.
- When doing grocery shopping, buy majority of your foods from the outer aisles, that's where the whole foods are mainly stored.



DONT'S

Do not eat, or reduce the amount of the following foods:

- Processed foods
- Greasy foods
- Excessive amounts of dairy
- Too much sugar
- Alcohol
- Too much raw foods (unless in the peak of summer). Eating too much raw foods, requires the stomach qi to work extra hard to break down the food and convert it into energy (qi).
- Cold or frozen foods, impacts the stomach's warming ability to effectively and quickly break down the food and transport in to where it needs to go.
- Too much at each meal time, as you overwork your digestion.
- Skip breakfast
- Eat too late
- Food that is too dense or heavy in flavour

Stop eating when you are seven tenths full.
-Ancient Chinese saying



HOW IMBALANCES OCCUR

When the body is healthy it is able to fight off any pathogens and stay in harmony and healthy, however disharmony is caused when either an external or internal factor causes an imbalance.

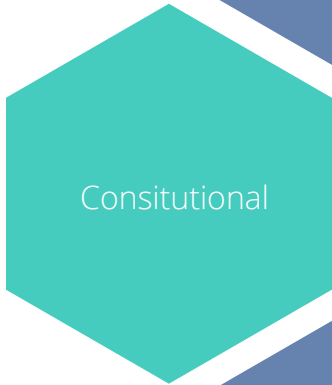
Here is a list of factors both internal and external that may be impacting your health right now.

Factors such as pollution in the air, loud noise geographically where we live, pesticides in our food, types of food available to us, all have an impact on our health. Also the weather whether its wind, cold, damp, heat can all cause imbalances within the body.

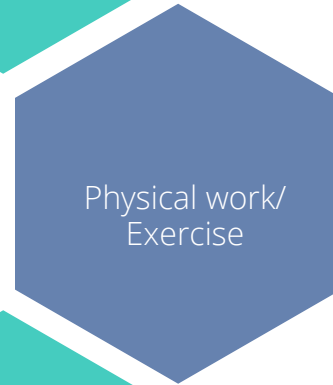


There are seven emotions that correlate to seven organs in the body. Excessive emotions can cause damage and imbalances to different organs in the body, such as anger, but also too much joy.

This is in relation to a person's genetic make up that was passed to us from our parents at the time of conception.



Factors that impact your health

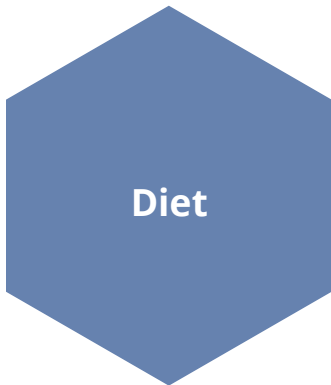


Working or exercising too hard for too long, damages your kidney qi and imbalances yin and yang.

Stress stagnates the qi, especially in the liver energy, this stops qi and blood to circulate smoothly through the whole body.



Sleep time is considered yin time of the day. If we are not resting we are not allowing the body to recharge its energy and replenish its yin energy.



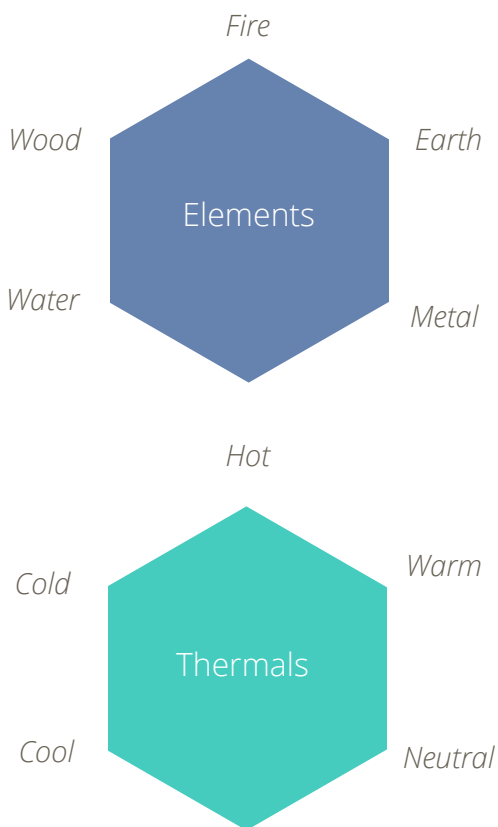
And of course diet is a big one. You cannot expect great health, if your diet isn't working for you. Finding the right balance and adapting your diet based on your continual changing needs cannot be over emphasised how vital it is.



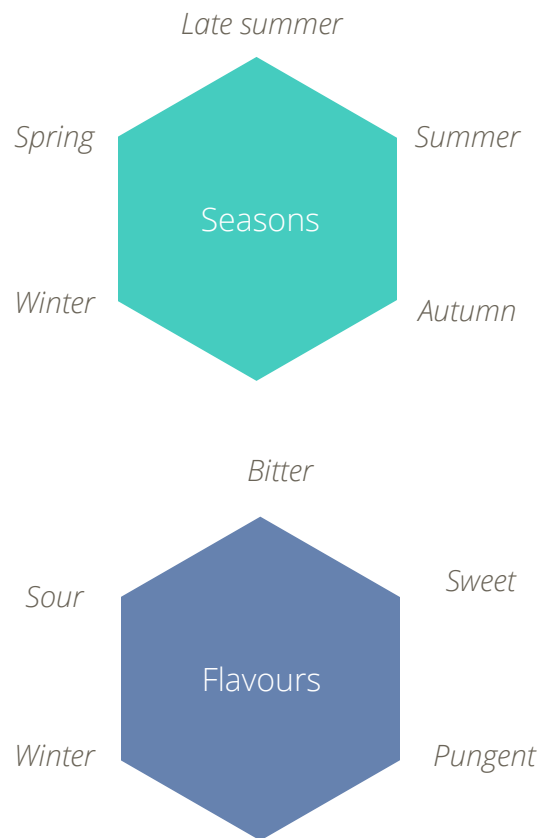
ENERGETIC NATURE OF FOOD

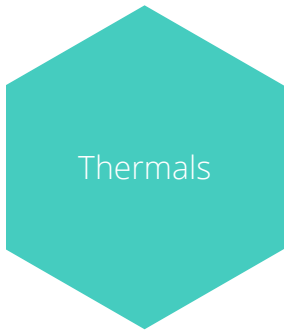
Chinese medicine classifies foods into a number of different categories such as their thermal energies, flavours, elements, and seasons.

Below are 4 food classifications that we will discuss in more detail and list how foods fit into each of these classifications.



Food classifications according to traditional Chinese medicine





“Foods that are blue, green and purple tend to have cooler thermal energy than foods that are red, orange, and yellow colours”

The thermal energy of the food is not what temperature it is, but how it impact and affects the body, for example does it warm the body up, and make you sweat, or does it cool you down. Here is a list of foods and their thermal nature according to traditional Chinese medicine.

HOT FOODS



Hot foods speed up qi, make you warmer, moves qi up the body and makes you sweat, and can also assist when fighting a cold. Some examples are: lamb, alcohol, pepper, chilli, garlic, horseradish, wasabi, wine, spirits

WARM FOODS



Warm foods warm up the body, and benefits the digestion to help it work more efficiently. Warm foods are beef, chicken, salmon, prawns, onion, leek, corn, pumpkin, sweet potato, coffee, chocolate

NEUTRAL FOODS



Neutral foods builds up your qi, promotes fluid retention, and harmonises the body. Examples of neutral foods are pork, chicken egg, carrot, green bean, potato, rice, lentil, spelt, millet, oats, cow's milk and cheese, chamomile tea, almonds

COOL FOODS



Cool foods, slows qi down, clears heat, provides more fluid to a dry body Broccoli, mushrooms, yoghurt, peppermint tea, fruit tea, beer, coconut oil are all considered cool.

COLD FOODS



Cold food cools the body down especially when there is lots of heat. Most seafood (especially deep sea), watermelon, banana, orange, tomato, celery, spinach, cucumber, lettuce, wheat, barley, tofu, and water are all cold in nature.

TIP

It was observed that plants that took longer to grow like carrots and ginseng are more warming the the quicker growing plants such as cucumber and lettuce which are cooler in nature.

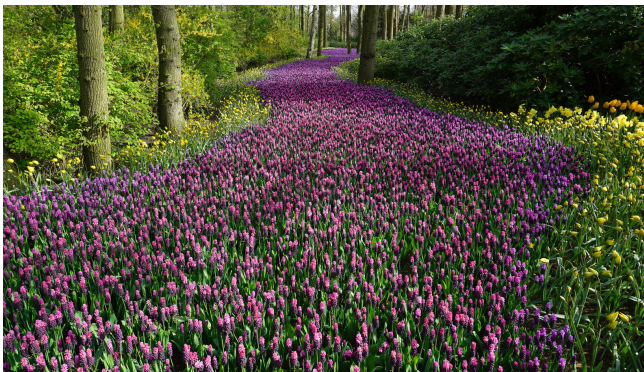


In Chinese medicine they believe there are five seasons in a year, not four, and that everyone should be eating seasonally as nature knows what types of food you need and provides it for us, at certain times of the year. For example it is widely known not to eat salads or frozen smoothies in the middle of winter. Slow cooked warm stews and bone broths are required during winter, with winter root vegetables, and warming spices to warm up the body.

YANG SEASONS

Spring. Spring is the time for the liver energy to be heightened. Liver's job is to detox the body of waste it doesn't require, and allow the smooth flow of blood throughout the body. If the digestion is not working properly this impacts the liver, and if the liver is not working properly then the heart cannot govern where the blood goes, and so the whole body is out of balance. Liver energy is easily disrupted by our emotions, in particular anger and frustration. If you find yourself waking up every night between 1- 3am, this is a hint that the liver energy is not happy.

Sour and green coloured foods are eaten during springtime as they are seen to benefit the liver. They help to control and allow the smooth flow and movement of qi and blood throughout the body, and generally have a cooling and detox nature as we transition from the cold/ yin seasons, to yang/ warmer months of the year. Foods that should be eaten during spring are: mint, parsley, green leafy vegetables, lemon in warm water first thing, and green tea.



YANG SEASONS



China uses about 45 million pairs of chopsticks every year.

Summer. The heart energy is strongest during the summer months. The heart's role is to govern the blood and blood vessels about where blood should be directed in the body. Heart is also responsible for the spirit of the person, having a joyful life and sleeping well.

During the summer months bitter foods are eaten, as they are seen as having a calming effect and drying effect on the body, which is what we need to cool us down, and clear fluid retention. The best summer foods include: most summer fruits, cucumber, spinach, kale, tomato, green tea, and lots of water. Avoid any foods that are in the hot in nature such as: coffee, alcohol, chilli and other hot spices. Too much cold and raw foods such as, ice cream and ice-cold drinks can disrupt the digestion for working at its most effective way, so best not to have too much.

Late Summer. There is a fifth season in Chinese medicine and that is late summer, which only lasts for around 6 weeks (approximately mid February to end of March). It is defined when the last of the summer heat is still lingering during the day but there is also a crispness in the mornings and night creeping in.

This is the time of year when the digestion organs (spleen and stomach) are most effective and sensitive. The stomach is responsible for breaking down food, discarding waste, and sending the rest to the spleen. The spleen's role is then to transform and transport the nutrition/ energy of the food to other organs throughout the body. Cold and raw foods stagnates the digestion's ability to process and transport the food efficiently, which then causes bloating, indigestion, diarrhea or undigested foods in the bowel moments.

The best foods to eat this time of year is naturally over ripen fruits and vegetables that are readily available at this time of year. Sweet foods are warming, harmonising, and helps with fluid retention in the body after a long hot summer, as well as digestion. Other foods include: barley, rice, and oats. However too much sweetness can also be damaging, and can cause damp problems once the weather turns cold.



YIN SEASONS



Autumn. Pungent foods are generally eaten in autumn to benefit and move the lung qi, opens the pores (when suffering from a cold, oedema, or damp issues), and produces sweat. As the weather starts to cool down and become dry, we need to focus on pungent flavours to expel any pathogens or viruses and the last of the summer heat, this is when we start eating more warming foods in preparation for the transition of the cooler/ yin months.

Foods that benefit this time of year are: onion, garlic, fennel, leeks, radishes, beef, lamb, rice, oats, pungent spices such as turmeric, foods to avoid this time of year is dairy as they cause phlegm in the lungs.



Winter. Salty foods are generally eaten in the winter months and benefit the kidney energy. The kidneys role in that they are the foundation of yin and yang, and where our source of our pre-natal (from conception) and post-natal (from air, food, and water) energy comes from.

Salty foods can assist in urination and removes waste accumulation, dries up fluid and oedema. Warming and hot foods are needed now to combat the cold weather. Suggestions of foods are: red meat, black beans and sesame seeds, black tea, miso, shellfish, bone broths, pungent and hot spices. All meals and drinks in winter must be cooked or consumed warm to hot. No cold or raw foods unless you are dealing with a heat condition.



COOKING PROCESS

Different cooking methods change the thermal temperature of the food. Grilling, frying, baking, smoking, BBQ are warm cooking methods and make the food warmer. Steam, boiling, and raw are cooling methods, and nourish and moisten the body.

Chinese medicine prefers that foods are cooked in some way, to assist in the digestion of food, therefore the stomach and spleen do not have to work so hard to digest them. It is only in the height of summer when raw foods (fruits and salads) are allowed in moderation.

In the cooler climate of northern China they mostly eat wheat products such as dumplings and steamed buns. In the south, they eat bowls of rice and rice noodles with every meal.

TIME OF DAY

Start the day right by providing it with lots of energy, it is believed that the stomach and spleen energy are strongest between 7- 11am, so take advantage of that. Stop eating after 7pm, as the digestion has slowed down and the body is ready to go to sleep and begin the detox process. Eating late at night, impacts a person's ability to get to a deep sleep as the digestion is still working and processing foods.

General rules are eat a hearty breakfast, medium lunch and a small meal for dinner, with small snacks if required. Drink fluids away from foods, and sip throughout the day.

**“Eat breakfast like a king,
lunch like a prince, and
dinner like a pauper”.**
Chinese proverb

ABOUT KAROLINA CASS

Karolina is a qualified Chinese medicine practitioner and registered Acupuncturist. She also holds a degree in Bachelor of Science (Psychology). Previously Karolina spent many years working in a busy corporate environment. This gave her the opportunity to understand and experience the daily pressures and stress due to work related issues. This inspired her to change her career and find a better way to manage her wellbeing through natural medicine. Karolina currently has two clinic rooms where she runs her own practice. She is passionate with assisting you getting back your health to a state where you can live the life you always wanted. Whether the goal is physical, emotional, or spiritual, Dr. Karolina Cass is here for you. She has a keen interest in fertility and pregnancy, autoimmune issues, cosmetic acupuncture, and overall health wellbeing.

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"My aim is to assist my patients in getting their health back so they can start doing again the things that enjoy. Whether the goal is physical, emotional, or spiritual, I'm here to help you. I will provide you with the best care in the most effective, professional and caring way. I want to treat not just the obvious symptoms, but by treating your individual and working on the root cause, to ensure you receive an effective consultation and treatment. I use acupuncture, auricular acupuncture, cupping, moxibustion, and dietary advice to treat a wide range of conditions."

If you want to know more or have a specific tailor made meal suggestions, book in a time with me online.



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While researching information and recipes, a number of books and resources were used as a reference and guide, which I would like to acknowledge and suggest my readers to view.

- The Chinese medicine cookbook. Nourishing recipes to heal and thrive. By Stacey Isaacs.
- Nourishing life the Yang Sheng way. Nutrition and lifestyle advice from Chinese medicine. By Deirdre Courtney.
- Chinese nutrition therapy: Dietetics in Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM)
- Healing with whole foods. Paul Pitchford.
- The Australian health hormone diet. By Michele Chedvalley Hedge with Jennifer Fleming.