

Balance Point Acupuncture and Integrative Medicine
BalancePointOkanagan.com
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In TCM theory, Liver Qi is responsible for the free movement of Qi not only through the liver, but also throughout the body. When Liver Qi stagnates it causes a host of symptoms which may include circulation problems to the head and extremities, digestive issues, hormonal issues, women's health issues, emotional symptoms such as depression, anxiety, stress, irritability, and insomnia as well as a host of other symptoms. Liver Qi stagnation is most commonly caused by acute or chronic stress which becomes lodged in the body and disrupts the nervous system causing a chronic state of tension in not only the liver but the entire body.

In general, TCM Diet therapy is aimed at consuming highly nutritious and easily digested foods at regular mealtimes. When diagnosed with liver Qi stagnation one should follow a calming lifestyle with regular "early to bed" sleep patterns and a diet which avoids overly cold, rich, or congesting foods. Increasing aromatic or spicy herbs such as mints, basil, ginger, thyme, turmeric, but not chili is beneficial for releasing tension and promoting the smooth flow of liver Qi.

Because one of the main roles of liver Qi is to promote the smooth flow throughout the body, its stagnation often causes trouble with other organs. The most common organs affected by liver Qi stagnation are the Heart which includes the emotions ("the spirit resides in the heart") and the Spleen (which includes the digestive and immune systems). As a result, Liver Qi stagnation is one of the most common cause of emotional problems such as anxiety, depression, and irritability as well as common digestive problems such as irritable bowel syndrome.

Recommendations

About 40% of your meals should consist largely of easily digested complex carbohydrates like grains and starchy root vegetables. Another 40% of the diet should cooked vegetables and fruit. Proteins can make up the remaining 10 - 20% of the diet. This diet is meant to open and assist movement of a tense and sluggish circulation and should therefore not be overly heavy, rich, and greasy which could worsen stagnation. We generally advise people to eat light regular meals and avoid overeating.

Specific foods for Liver Qi Stagnation

Herbs and Spices: turmeric, basil, mint, ginger, lemon balm, cumin, fennel, horseradish, (no chili)

Drinks: Small amounts of coffee and wine/alcohol, jasmine, chrysanthemum, chamomile, lemon balm, peppermint tea

Vegetables: virtually all vegetables are fine when treating Liver Qi stagnation, but they should be mostly cooked, and mildly spicy ones such as onions, garlic, radishes, chives, etc can assist in resolving Liver Qi stagnation.

The following foods can worsen liver Qi stagnation and should be limited or avoided altogether.

Fatty and greasy foods such as high fat dairy, cheese, pizza, ice cream, deep fried food, pastries, gluten, refined sugars, refined sweets, and processed foods.

Raw vegetables.

Meats: Heavy, greasy meats, gravies, fried food, processed meat.

Excessively cold, chilled foods including iced drinks and iced water should also be avoided.

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Excessively spicy foods and excessive amounts of coffee, alcohol or other stimulating drinks may cause Liver Qi stagnation to worsen into another syndrome called liver fire and therefore should be avoided.

For those interested in learning more about Chinese Diet therapy, you can pick up a great book called "Healing With Whole Foods", by Paul Pitchford usually available at Chapters.