

Balance Point Acupuncture and Integrative Medicine

TCM Diet Therapy

Spleen Qi Deficiency

Dietary Recommendations for Spleen Qi Deficiency

In Traditional Chinese Medicine the Spleen does not represent exactly the physical spleen but set of functions in the body that include the digestive system, immune system, energy and metabolism, fluid metabolism, and certain aspects of the blood and circulatory system and muscular system. Symptoms of a Spleen Qi deficiency could potentially include low energy, slow or weak digestion, loose bowel movements, prolapse, excess weight gain for no reason, holding water, low motivation, spotting periods.

The Spleen system which is largely represented by the stomach and digestive system prefers a warm and dry environment. The metaphor for the digestive system is a pot sitting on a stove which “cooks” the food that people eat. One should therefore eat warm slightly cooked whole foods and avoid too much raw, cold, overly rich and greasy or overly sweet foods. Pungent foods such as cinnamon, basil, garlic, nutmeg, onions, spring onions, etc are also helpful in stimulating digestion and assisting the spleen function.

Some of the phrases commonly referencing the heart in TCM include:

"the Spleen pertains to Earth"
"The Spleen governs movement and transformation"
"The Spleen governs muscles and flesh"
"the emotion of the Spleen is contemplation"
"The colour Yellow pertains to the Spleen"

Recommendations

Macronutrients should be composed of 40-60% whole grains and starchy root vegetables, 30-40% cooked vegetables, and 10-20%. This is meant to be a tonifying diet and should be hearty though not overly rich and greasy. We generally advise people to eat as they would if they had been doing hard, physical labour outside in cold weather for 12 hours a day.

Specific foods for Spleen Qi deficiency

rice, spelt, oats, millet, barley, wheat germ, tef, quinoa, amaranth,
carrots , sweet potato, yams, squash, turnips, peas
aduki beans, black beans, chick peas, fave beans
beans, mung beans, kidney beans, fave beans, black sesame seeds, goji berries
lean cuts of pork, beef, chicken, lamb, grass fed when possible
fish
chilies, cinnamon, garlic, ginger, onions, shallots, leeks, basil, cloves, wasabi
virtually all vegetables especially the starchy and/or green ones
virtually all fruit but not in excess

Foods to restrict or avoid

salads and raw vegetables, cold foods, overly rich, greasy, or sweet foods, iced drinks including iced water especially with meals, dairy, nut butters, smoothies, ice cream

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.

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