

A TRADITIONAL CHINESE APPROACH TO WINTER

It is cold outside, daylight seems to fade shortly after lunch, as the snow falls and the rivers and lakes have frozen...winter is upon us.

Winter is the season of the Water element. It is associated with cold and the color black. The Kidney is the ruling organ of the water along with its paired organ, the Bladder. Deep within, the body is expressing a fundamental principle of winter, to conserve and store. It is natural to stay indoors where it is warm and conserve Qi.

The Kidney Qi is considered, in TCM, to be the source of Qi in the body and very important to optimum health. We can build (or store) Qi through the liquid and food we consume. The Qi we acquire on a daily basis supports all functional activities if we maintain balanced eating habits, a good diet and get adequate rest—we can create surplus Qi that is stored in the Kidneys and can be drawn on in times of need.

Problems of the knees and bones come under control of the kidneys as well as many other age related conditions including menopausal symptoms that can be traced to weak Kidney Qi.

The ears are the sense organ of the Kidneys. Interestingly, the ears are viewed as a microcosmic reflex system of the whole body in TCM. Because the ears can affect and reflect to the whole body they should be protected from the extreme cold during winter.

Another way to be attuned to your body, according to TCM each organ system has a time of the day when its energy predominates. For the Bladder it is between 3:00pm and 5:00pm and the Kidney is between 5pm and 7:00pm. Fatigue during this time can indicate energy deficiency in these organs.

During the winter months, all things in nature wither, hide, return home and enter a resting period. This resting period is an integral part of the natural universal cycle. TCM philosophy states, "When nature rests, so should we". Following nature's lead allows our energy to emerge balanced and harmonious in the springtime.

Some foods to consume to support Kidney Qi:

Walnuts, cinnamon, black beans, sesame & walnut oil, and black sesame seeds, Shellfish: including shrimp, lobster, clams, squid, soups.