

REST, RESTORE, REVITALIZE

In nature, winter is the season where all living things slow down, conserve their energy and prepare for the outburst of new life and energy in the spring. Our bodies are instinctively expressing the fundamental principles of winter – rest, restoration and revitalization.

The *Nei Ching*, one of the earliest surviving medical books on acupuncture, advises: *“During the winter months one should refrain from overusing energy. Retire early and get up with the sunrise, which is later in winter. Desires and mental activity should be kept quiet and subdued, as if keeping a happy secret.”*

Eating warm hearty soups, dressing warmly, and refraining from cold and raw foods is also recommended.

Element: Water

Nature: Yin

Organs: Kidney, Urinary Bladder, Adrenal Glands, Ears and Hair

Emotion: Fear and Depression

Flavor: Salty

Seasonal acupuncture treatments in winter serve to nurture and nourish kidney Qi (the organ associated with winter) which can greatly enhance the body's ability to thrive in times of stress and aid in healing, preventing illness, and increase vitality.

De-stress this winter with Acupuncture

While optimal health and well-being in the winter season calls for rest, energy conservation and the revitalization of body and spirit, your holiday activities may have a different agenda. This year can be filled with a mad scramble of visitors, family get-togethers and frantic shopping trips. Compound the usual seasonal pressures with the constant barrage of bad economic news and you may find this to be one of the most stressful times of the year.

Stress, frustration and unresolved anger can cause a disruption in the flow of qi or energy through the body. These energetic imbalances can throw off the immune system or cause symptoms of pain, sleep disturbances, mood changes, abnormal digestion, headaches, and menstrual irregularities, and, over time, more serious illnesses can develop. Acupuncture treatments can correct these imbalances and directly effect the way you manage stress.

Studies on Acupuncture and Stress

Numerous studies have demonstrated the substantial benefits of acupuncture in the treatment of stress.

A 2008 study published in *Anesthesia & Analgesia* found that acupuncture point alleviated preoperative anxiety in children while a 2003 study conducted at Yale University showed that ear acupuncture significantly lowered the stress level of the mothers of children that were scheduled for surgery.

A German study published in *Circulation* found that acupuncture significantly lowers both systolic and diastolic blood pressure. The extent of the blood pressure reductions by acupuncture treatments was comparable to those seen with antihypertensive medication or aggressive lifestyle changes, including radical salt restrictions.

Another study from the University of New Mexico measured the affects of acupuncture on 73 men and women with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The researchers found the acupuncture treatments to be as helpful as the standard treatment of cognitive behavioral therapy.

Needless to say, if the stress in your life is throwing you off balance, consider acupuncture therapy to regain peace of mind, regulate your immune system and stay healthy.

Miso Soup with Scallions

Did you know that Miso Soup with Scallions is actually an ancient herbal remedy for colds?

In 300 AD famous herbalist, Ge Hong, writes about Miso Soup with Scallions in a book called, *Bei ji zhou hou fang* or *Emergency Formulas to Keep Up One's Sleeve*.

The soup is indicated for the onset of a cold when a person is just beginning to feel a headache, stuffy nose and a slight fever. So, the next time you feel a cold coming on, be sure to have your miso!

Miso Soup (Serves 4)

Ingredients:

- * 6 cups water
- * 3-4 Tablespoons Aka Miso or red soy bean paste (usually sold in the refrigerated section)
- * 3-5 green onions stalks, chopped

Directions:

- * Dissolve the miso in a little bit of boiling water (about 2 tsp.)
- * Bring water to a boil in a saucepan and add the miso & scallions.
- * Simmer for 5-10 minutes.
- * Remove from heat top with green onions and serve.



Variations: you can add various other ingredients to make a more substantial soup, such as tofu, seaweed, fresh mushrooms, cooked shrimp, snow pea sprouts, cooked rice noodles, or paper-thin slices of fresh ginger.

Stress Busting Foods

The foods that you eat play a crucial role in your overall well-being as well as your ability to handle stress.

Over 1400 chemical changes occur as stress hormones, such as cortisone, sap important nutrients such as B vitamins, vitamin C and magnesium from the body.

Here are three foods that can replenish your supply of these nutrients and enhance your ability to manage stress:

Cauliflower – Cauliflower and other cruciferous vegetables, such as broccoli, cabbage, and kale are chock full of stress-relieving B vitamins. Cauliflower is also one of the very best sources of vitamin B5 or pantothenic acid.

Pantothenic acid helps turn carbohydrates and fats into usable energy and improves your ability to respond to stress by supporting your adrenal glands. Fatigue, listlessness, numbness and tingling or burning pain in the feet are all indications that you may need more vitamin B5 in your diet.

Salmon – Salmon is a healthy and delicious way to get your dose of B vitamins and omega-3 fatty acids. Vitamin B12 supports production of red blood cells, allows nerve cells to develop properly and is essential to the synthesis of the “happy” brain chemical serotonin.

Among the many benefits of omega-3 fatty acids, a 2003 study published in *Diabetes & Metabolism* found that a diet rich in omega-3 fatty acids significantly reduced the stress response and kept the stress hormones cortisol and epinephrine in check.



Blackberries – Blackberries are jam packed with Vitamin C, calcium and magnesium. Vitamin C has shown to be a powerful stress reducer that can lower blood pressure and return cortisol levels to normal faster when taken during periods of stress.

Magnesium and calcium act together to help regulate the body's nerves and muscle tone. When there is too little magnesium in your diet, nerve cells can become over activated and can trigger muscle tension, muscle soreness, muscle spasms, muscle cramps, and muscle fatigue.

Blackberries have more than double the amounts of vitamin C, calcium and magnesium than their popular cousin, the blueberry.