

Nutrition as Chinese Medicine

Chinese medicine teaches that food is medicine. There are five flavors that contribute to food's effect on the body: sweet, salty, sour, bitter and pungent. These flavors each correspond to organ systems and acupuncture points as well as a season, phase, color and emotion. The flavor and nature of particular foods are combined to ensure your diet is balanced to your constitution, the season or climate, and corrective for any acute symptoms.

Phase	Flavor	Season	Color
Fire	Bitter	Summer	Red
Earth	Sweet	Late Summer	Yellow
Metal	Pungent/Spicy	Autumn	White
Water	Salty	Winter	Black/Blue
Wood	Sour	Spring	Green

Guidelines for Healthy Eating – Generally speaking, eat only organically grown foods as they will decrease exposure to pesticides. Eat until you're about 70 percent full, consuming mostly fresh vegetables and whole grains. If you like to eat, there is less restriction on the amount of food you can eat when eating whole foods. The recommended foods listed in the following sections are only examples, and a detailed nutrition plan should be a collaboration between you and a qualified health care provider. Ask your acupuncturist today if you would like to develop a customized diet.

Vegetables – Steaming vegetables improves the availability of the food's nutrients better than baking, frying or boiling, and helps the gut to repair itself by reducing strain during digestion. Keep raw vegetables to a minimum, as they can be difficult to digest. Eat a variety of any and all vegetables that you enjoy, but attempt to include vegetables in all five of the elemental colors and flavors. Eat at least one serving of green vegetables daily, such as asparagus, broccoli, cabbage, Swiss chard, cucumber, endive, lettuce, mustard greens, spinach, green beans, Brussel sprouts, chives, collards, leeks or kale. Root vegetables such as beets, radish, rutabagas, turnip, parsnip and carrot are excellent for tonifying the digestion and constitution. Artichoke, green peas, squash and yam also tend to be easily digestible.

Grains – Eat one to two cups of cooked, unrefined grains per day, unless you have indications of high insulin, high blood pressure, high cholesterol or diabetes (in which case you should consult with your health care practitioner on the appropriate amount of grains for your diet). Recommended grains include: amaranth, barley, buckwheat, millet, oatmeal, quinoa, basmati or brown rice, and rye.

Legumes – Eat a variety of any beans or peas (legumes) that do not cause any digestive problems for you, such as bloating or constipation. Legumes are most digestible when soaked for 48-72 hours and cooked slowly. Legumes include kidney beans, pinto beans, mung beans, garbanzo beans, split peas and lentils. You can also use fermented soybeans in the form of tempeh and miso.

Seeds and Nuts – Grind flax, pumpkin, sesame or sunflower seeds and add to steamed vegetables, cooked grains, etc. You may also eat nut and seed butters, such as almond, cashew, sesame, etc.

Fruit

- Minimize fruit intake by only having 1-2 servings of fruit per day.
- Eat fruit that is in season and with a variety of color: cantaloupe, rhubarb, strawberries, melons, apricot, blackberries, cranberries, papaya, peach, plum, raspberries, kiwi, apple, blueberries, cherries, grapes, mango, pear, pineapple, pomegranate and banana.
- To aid digestion, try cooking your fruit, such as apple or pear baked or lightly sautéed with spices.

Poultry and Meat – Bake, broil or steam free-range, organically fed animal products. Eat only the meat and not the skin. Slow cooking on the bone will increase the nutritional value.

Fish – Poach, bake, steam or broil fish. If prone to digestive problems, avoid shellfish such as shrimp, lobster, crab and clam.

Butter/Oils – Extra virgin olive oil is a high quality oil found in dark jars and always labeled "extra virgin." Seek out organic oil and use for all salad dressings, light sautéing and dressing of vegetables or grains. To help reduce butter intake, substitute a mixture of one pound of softened butter mixed well with one cup of extra virgin olive oil. Store in the refrigerator.

Sweeteners – Occasional use of maple syrup, rice syrup, barley syrup, raw honey or stevia is recommended, and only with meals. Avoid consuming refined sugar, NutraSweet, or any other artificial sweetener, as they contribute to low-grade inflammation in the body.

Spices – To add a delightful flavor to your food choices, add whatever dried or fresh spices you enjoy.

To Drink – Drink a minimum of 6-8 glasses of filtered water every day. Sip the water, trying to drink one glass per hour.

What to Limit or Avoid

- Excessive consumption of animal milk and cheeses
- Processed wheat and corn products
- Food to which you are sensitive. Common sensitizing foods include: eggs, wheat products, citrus fruits, peanuts/peanut butter, caffeinated beverages (soda, teas, coffee)
- Fried foods / raw foods
- Alcohol
- Artificial food additives and colors



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