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Recharge Your Battery this Winter with Acupuncture

If you feel tired and drained, you are not alone. "Lack of energy" is one of the top five complaints that doctors hear in their offices. According to Oriental medicine, the cold months of winter are the perfect time to recharge your battery and generate vital energy – Qi - in order to live, look, and feel your best.



The ancient Chinese believed that human beings should live in harmony with the natural cycles of their environment. The cold and darkness of winter urges us to slow down. This is the time of year to reflect on health, replenish energy and conserve strength.

Winter is ruled by the Water element, which is associated with the Kidneys, Bladder and Adrenal Glands. The Kidneys are considered the source of all energy or "Qi" within the body. They store all of the reserve Qi in the body so that it can be used in times of stress and change, or to heal, prevent illness, and age gracefully.

During the winter months it is important to nurture and nourish our Kidney Qi. It is the time where this energy can be most easily depleted. Our bodies are instinctively expressing the fundamental principles of winter – rest, reflection, conservation and storage.

The *Nei Ching*, an ancient Chinese classic, advises people to go to sleep early and rise late, after the sun's rays have warmed the atmosphere a bit. This preserves your own Yang Qi for the task of warming in the face of cold.

Eating warm hearty soups, whole grains, and roasted nuts help to warm the body's core and to keep us nourished. Sleep early, rest well, stay warm, and expend a minimum quantity of energy.

Seasonal acupuncture treatments in winter serve to nurture and nourish kidney Qi which can greatly enhance the body's ability to thrive in times of stress, aid in healing, prevent illness and increase vitality. Call now for more information or to schedule your seasonal tune-up

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Kidney Qi Boosting Black Bean Soup



From an Eastern perspective, black beans are warming in nature. They are thought to tonify the Kidney Qi and nourish Yin and Blood.

From a Western perspective, black beans are rich in antioxidants and an excellent source of protein, folate, iron and fiber.

Kidney Qi Boosting Black Bean Soup

Ingredients

- 1 pound black beans
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 large onion, sliced
- Salt to taste
- A few cloves of chopped garlic
- 1 teaspoon dry mustard powder
- 1 cup dry sherry (not cooking sherry)

Here are some dietary suggestions that can lead to an increase in vitality and radiant health.

Water - The Kidneys are associated with the Water element. Drink ample water, at room temperature, throughout the day.

Kidney Shaped Foods - Black beans and kidney beans are excellent examples of kidney shaped foods that nourish and benefit Kidney Qi.

Blue and Black Foods - The colors blue and black correspond to the Water element of the Kidneys and are thought to strengthen the Water element. Include blueberries, blackberries, mulberry and black beans in your diet.

Seeds - Flax, pumpkin, sunflower and black sesame seeds relate to fertility and growth which is governed by Kidney Qi.

Nuts - Walnuts and chestnuts have been found to be especially effective for increasing Kidney Qi.

Vegetables - Dark, leafy green vegetables are the best choice for Kidney Qi. Other Kidney Qi boosting veggies include asparagus, cucumbers and celery.

Natural Options for the Flu

Did you know that tamiflu, a drug used to treat flu symptoms, is derived from star anise, an anti-viral plant that has been used by Oriental medicine herbalists for centuries? When it comes to staying healthy during the flu season, Oriental medicine has a lot to offer.



Acupuncture for Prevention - Acupuncture and Oriental medicine can prevent colds and flus by building up the immune system with just a few needles inserted into key points along the body's energy pathways. These points are known for strengthening the circulation of blood and energy and for consolidating the outer defense layers of the skin and muscle (Wei Qi) so that germs and viruses cannot enter through them.

Acupuncture to Get Better Faster - If you've already happened to catch that cold, acupuncture and herbal medicine can also help with the chills, sniffles, sore throat or fever in a safe, non-toxic way that doesn't bombard your body with harmful antibiotics.

Acupuncture does not interfere with Western medical treatment. On the contrary, it provides a welcome complement to it in most cases, and with its emphasis on treating the whole person, recovery time for illness is often shortened.

Herbal Medicine - There is a one thousand year old Chinese herbal formula that forms a handy complement to these immune-boosting treatments and it is elegantly entitled *The Jade Windscreen Formula*. It is made up of just three herbs: Radix Astragalus, Atractylodis Macrocephalae, and Radix Ledebouriellae. These three powerful herbs combine together to tonify the immune system and fortify the exterior of the body so that you can fight off wind-borne viruses and bacteria.

Instructions

1. Pick over beans to remove any dirt, stones or foreign objects. Wash well, then soak for 8 hours in ample cold water.
2. Drain beans and cover with a generous amount of fresh water. Bring to a boil over high heat in a large saucepan with the bay leaf. Skim off foam, lower heat, and simmer, partially covered, until beans are just tender, about 1 hour.
3. Add onion and continue to cook until onion becomes extremely soft, about 1 more hour.
4. Add salt to taste and garlic. Continue to cook, adding a little boiling water if necessary, until beans are very soft, about 1-2 hours more.
5. Remove bay leaf and turn off heat. Ladle beans in batches into a blender or food processor and puree, or use an immersion blender and puree soup directly in the saucepan.

6. Add dry mustard powder and dry sherry. Correct seasoning. Reheat and serve, adding any garnishes you wish, such as slices of lemon or freshly chopped herbs.

Coping with Holiday Stress: 5 Essential Tips

The holidays can be a time of joy, love, family, and friendship; the holidays can also be a time of stress. Between the physical demands of traveling and socializing, and the emotional aspects of being with family, the holidays can potentially be very taxing. For example, at family gatherings during the holidays, emotions from the past often come up between family members. The abundance of sugar and alcohol, paired with the insufficient daylight of short winter days can further heighten emotional reactions and stress.

Without the proper outlook and adequate time-outs for relaxation, our nerves get wound up in a tight ball, leaving us tense, drained of energy and merriment, and in the wrong frame of mind to enjoy our loved ones.

Follow these five tips to bring the joy back into your holiday celebrations:

1. Slow Down and Lighten Up

Most of us make holiday plans first and then figure out how to manage the logistics later. Realize your limitations and don't attempt to please everyone else. Do fewer things and you'll enjoy them more.

2. Be in the Present

Start off your day with an intention of being aware and in the present moment throughout the day. Take some time in the morning to meditate or pray to get yourself into the spirit of the season.

3. Naptime: Not Just for Children

How many of us feel guilty when we are not in constant motion? Most parents understand the effects of stress and fatigue on their children. Unfortunately, most adults are unaware of the effects of stress on their emotional lives. Rest and relaxation are crucial for renewal and balance, and never more than at holidays when we are often constantly on the go. Just as children need time to nap and rest, adults benefit from structured relaxation times. Even a 15-minute nap or meditation can invigorate you.

4. Be Thankful

Sometimes when you are in a bad mood, it helps to put your life in perspective. If your basic needs are being met, be thankful. If you are surrounded by friends and loved ones, be thankful. Add up all the things you are thankful for and see if your mood doesn't improve.

5. Try this Breathing Exercise

For thousands of years meditation has been practiced in the East as a tool for inner peace and spiritual development. Meditation is a great way to decompress and melt tension away. And it only takes a few minutes. Try this breathing exercise, adapted from Chinese Qigong meditation. Slow down and deepen each breath you take. With every exhalation, say the word 'calm' and breath out the tension from each part of your body, beginning from the top of your head and working your way down to your feet. Release the remaining tension through your toes and bottoms of your feet. Continue with deep, slow breaths until you feel more relaxed.

I hope you have a joyful holiday season!

I invite you to visit our website at www.pittsburghacupuncturecenter.com for more information about acupuncture and traditional Chinese medicine. Please feel free to call or email with any questions.

To your good health,

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