



**NOURISHING HARMONY:
EXPLORING THE ROLE OF
TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE
IN MODERN NUTRITION**



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I M A 2026

EMERGING TRENDS IN MEDICINE

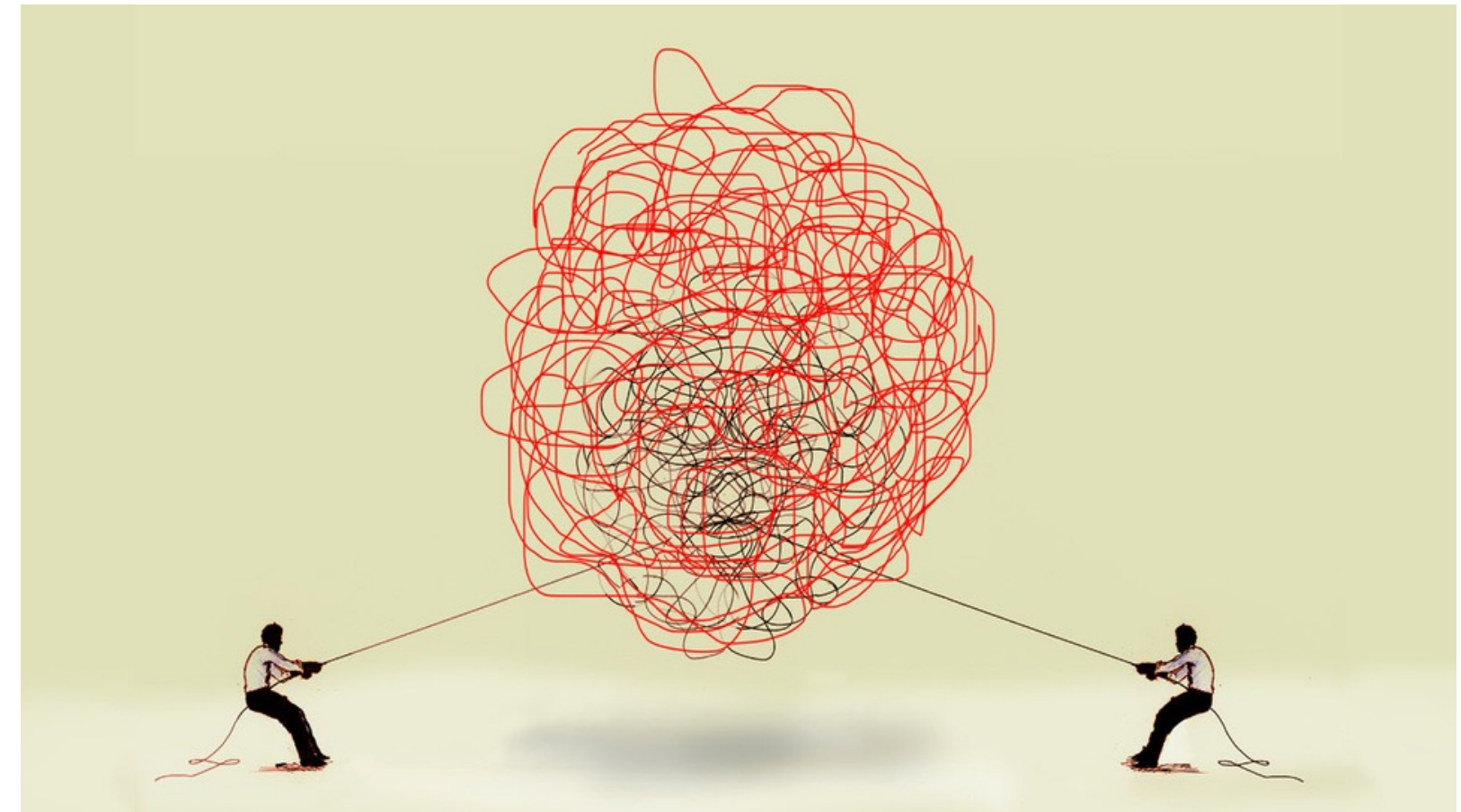
Nourishing Harmony

Exploring the Role of Traditional Chinese Medicine in Modern Nutrition

With

Dr. Adylle Varon L. Ac.

DAcOM, DIPL. OM. (NCCAOM),
AOBTA- CP, Senior Fellow



I have not been paid or sponsored for content on this lecture.

The only conflict of interest that will be declared is on the Standard American Diet.



The food you eat can either be the safest and most powerful form of medicine, or the slowest form of poison.

Ann Wigmore

quotefancy

On Today's Menu:



- **Review** the foundations of Traditional Chinese Medicine
- **Define** the pathogenic influences, diagnostic tools and modalities used in TCM
- **Understand** Traditional Chinese Dietary Medicine (TCDM) theory and its therapeutic nature
- Review Type 2 DM TCM perspective with TCDM nutritional recommendations

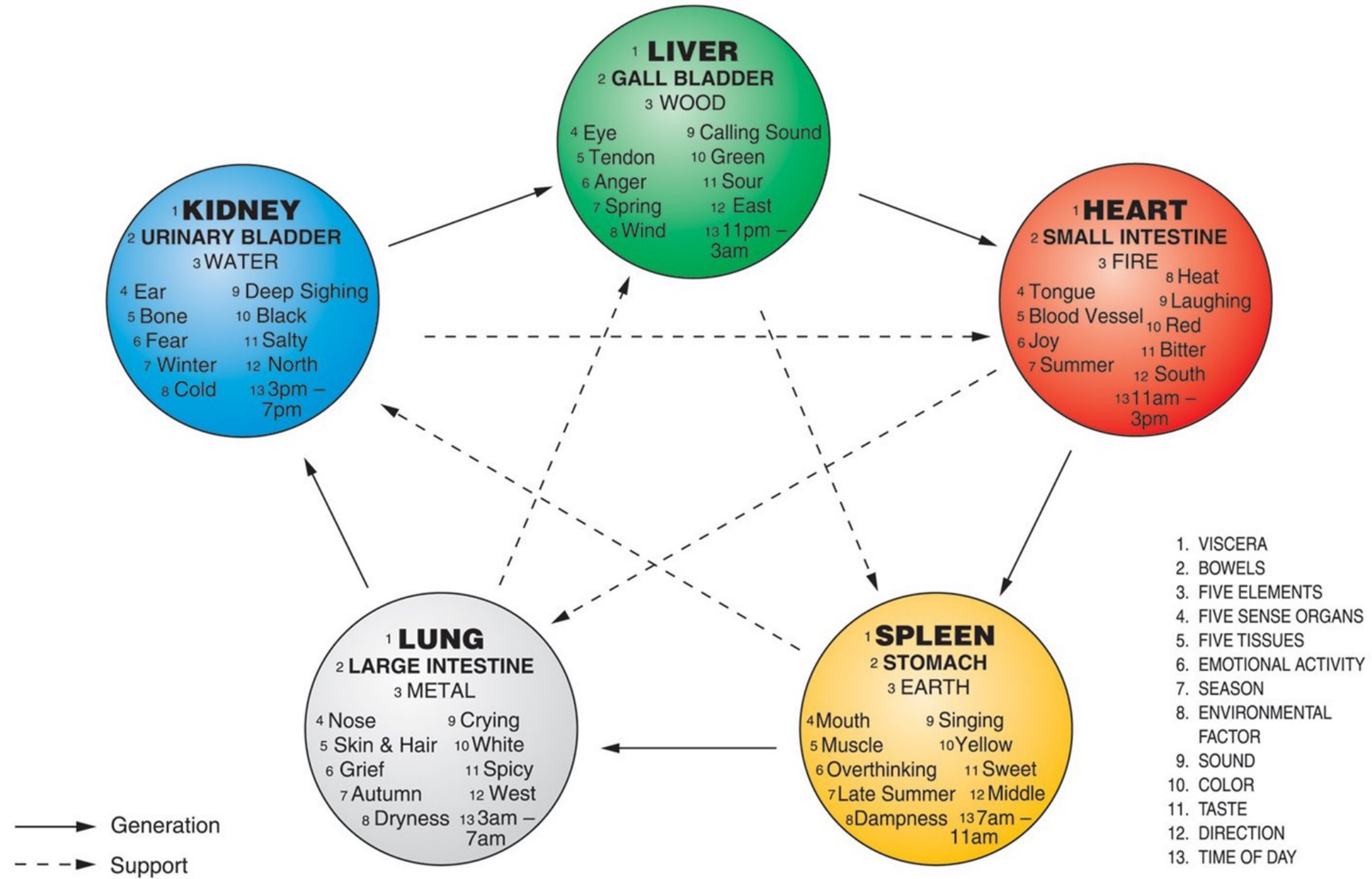
What is Traditional Chinese Medicine?

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), is a system of **ancient techniques** that have been used over millennia, to **treat** and **prevent** the pathological manifestations of various **diseases**. Within this diagnostic and therapeutic system, the body is seen as a unified arrangement of several **meridians** which energetically relay vital substances.

TCM defines a “healthy” individual, as that person that has regulated zang/fu organs, sufficient vital substances, and an equal balance of yin and yang. The classification of these vital substances **include Qi, blood, body fluids, shen and essence**. Modern day social discourse advocates health as a measure of functional capacity for any living being. Using this method of logic, the theory of **yin** and **yang** can be applied to further recognize the prominence of amalgamated **equilibrium** within the **body and mind**.



CLASSIFICATION OF THINGS ACCORDING TO THE THEORY OF THE FIVE ELEMENTS



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Five Elements Chart - Brief account of Relationships to Seasons, Mind and Body

Aspects	Wood	Fire	Earth	Metal	Water
Yin Organs	Liver (LR)	Heart	Spleen (SP)	Lung (LU)	Kidney (KI)
Yang Organs	Gall Bladder (GB)	Small Intestine (SI)	Stomach (ST)	Large Intestine (LI)	Bladder (BL)
Vital Substances	Blood (stores)	Blood (governs)	Blood (makes) Food-Qi (governs) Body Fluids (influences)	Qi (governs) Body Fluids (influences)	Essence (store) Body Fluids (influences)
Climate - EPFs	Wind	Heat	Dampness	Dryness	Cold
Seasons	Spring	Summer	Late Summer	Autumn	Winter
Sensory	Eye	Tongue	Mouth	Nose	Ear
Manifests	Nails	Complexion	Lips	Body Hair	Teeth & hair
Body Parts	Ligament/tendon	Blood Vessels	Muscles	Skin (& body hair)	Bone
Emotions (Long-held Deplete Qi)	Anger Resentment Frustration	Overjoy Worry	Overthinking Pensiveness Worry	Grief Sadness Worry	Fear Shock
Activity (Excess - Deplete Qi)	Reading (esp. blue screens)	Exercise e.g. walk, run → sweat	Sitting and lying	Lying down	Standing (esp. at night)
Qi Directions	Smooth Qi flow (all directions)	Ascends	SP Qi Ascends ST Qi Descends	LU Qi Descends & Disperses	KI Qi Descends

Please note: the Spleen organ in TCM includes the small and large intestines, the pancreas and the spleen.

EPFs - Exterior Pathogenic Factors which can cause illness (e.g. colds and flus, joint pain and other issues).

What causes disruption and leads to all ailments?

According to TCM there are 6 factors

- Wind
- Cold
- Heat
- Damp
- Dryness
- Summer-Heat

Honorable mention: Emotional disturbance and/or overwork

Pathogenic influences

- **Wind (风, Fēng):** Often considered the spearhead of diseases, Wind is associated with sudden changes and movement. It can bring other pathogens into the body and cause symptoms like fever, chills, headaches, and muscle stiffness.
- **Cold (寒, Hán):** Cold is associated with contraction and stagnation. It can invade the body and cause symptoms such as pain, stiffness, and chills. It often affects the exterior (skin and muscles) or the interior (stomach and intestines).
- **Heat (热, Rè):** Heat can cause inflammation and dryness. It is characterized by fever, redness, thirst, and irritability. Heat can be external (from the environment) or internal (from diet, emotions, or internal imbalances).

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Pathogenic influences Cont'd

- **Dampness (湿, Shī):** Dampness is heavy and sluggish, often causing feelings of heaviness, swelling, and lethargy. It can affect the digestion, leading to symptoms like bloating, loose stools, and a feeling of fullness.
- **Dryness (燥, Zào):** Dryness can deplete body fluids and lead to symptoms like dry skin, dry mouth, dry cough, and constipation. It often occurs in autumn or in dry climates.
- **Summer-Heat (暑, Shǔ):** This pathogenic influence is specific to the hot and humid conditions of summer. It can cause symptoms such as high fever, excessive sweating, thirst, and irritability.

The **origin** of the Methodology of **TCM**

Zhang Zhongjing's, a.k.a “Father of TCM”, main contributions to TCM are considered to be the pillars of TCM practice, which are based on the Shan Han Lun and the Huang Di Nei Jing¹:

Bian Zheng Lun Zhi – the clinical methodology, which focuses on the treatment based on the differentiation of syndromes and includes the Liu Jing Bian Zheng, Bagang Bian Zheng, and the Zang Fu Bian Zheng.

Eight Therapeutic Methods – *diaphoresis, emetic method, harmonizing, warming method, heat clearing, purgative method, tonification and sedation.* With addition to 269 herbal prescriptions, which are considered to be the “classic herbal prescriptions.”



The 8 Diagnostic Principles of TCM



ActiveHerb™

EIGHT Principles

- **Internal vs External**

- Where is the issue located?

- **Deficiency vs. Excess**

- Is something attacking the body or is there a lack of normal physiological response?

- **Cold vs. Hot**

- What is the temperature/movement?

- **Yin vs. Yang**

- What is the nature of the issue?

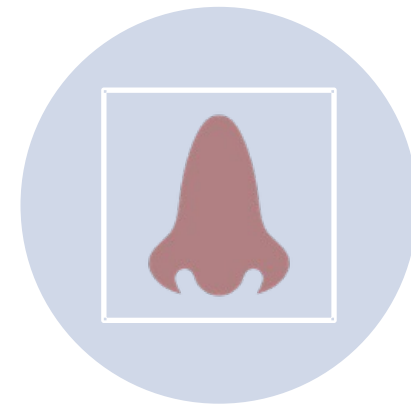
<u>Yin</u>	<u>Yang</u>
Blood	Qi
Material	Function
Zang	Fu
Yin meridian	Yang meridian

Figure 1: Characteristics of Yin and Yang

Four pillars of TCM Diagnosis



Inspection



Auscultation & Olfaction



Palpation



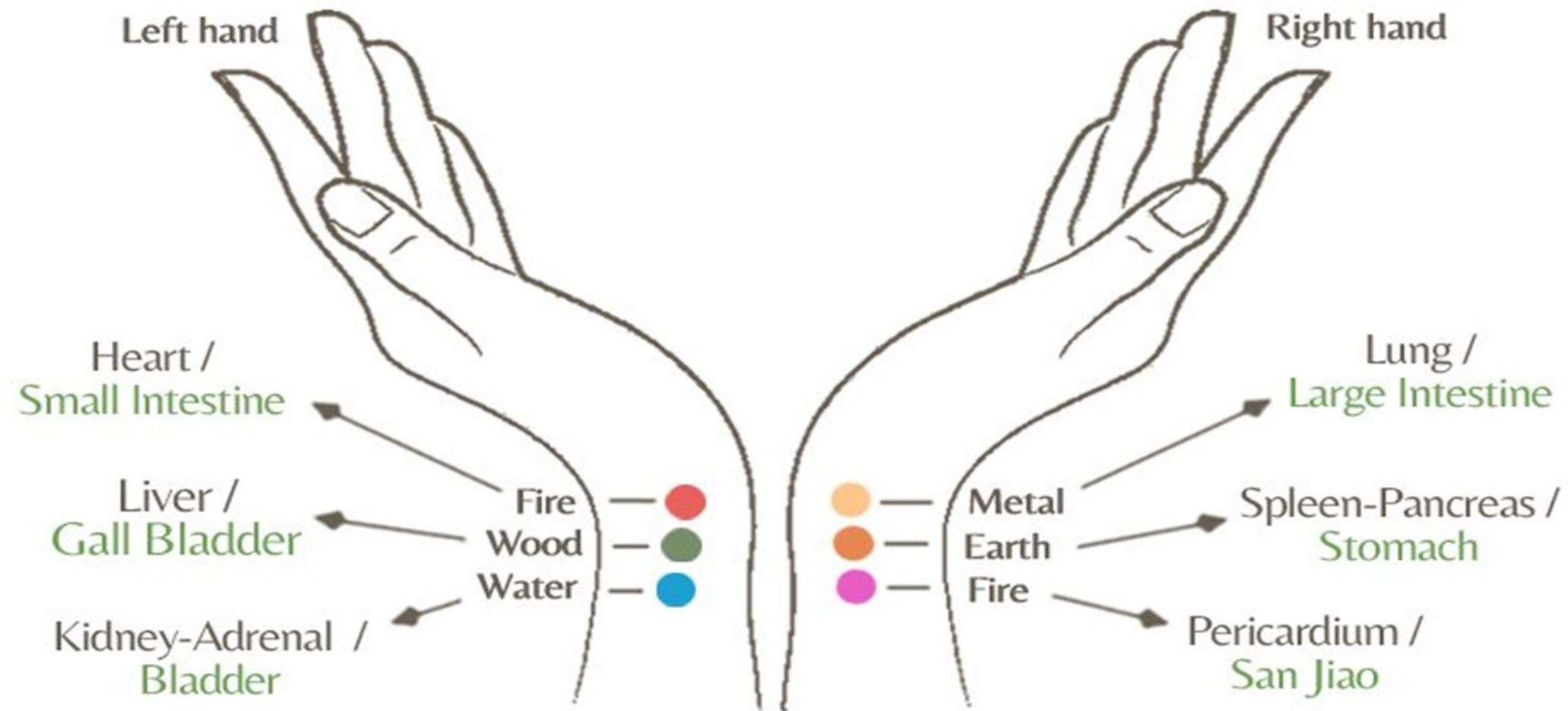
Inquiry

Which Tongue Are You?

Nine Common Syndromes & Possible Symptoms.
find out more at www.chinalifeweb.com

	<p>thin white coating teeth marks pale tongue with a few red spots</p>	<p>thin yellow coating red tongue</p>	<p>white greasy coating swollen tongue</p>	<p>black spots purple tongue</p>
<p>NORMAL</p>	<p>QI DEFICIENCY Fatigue, Poor appetite, Spontaneous sweating, Shortness of breath, Over-thinking and worrying...</p>	<p>HEAT Feel hot, Sweat easily, Thirsty, Constipated, Irritable and bad tempered, Skin problems...</p>	<p>DAMP RETENTION Bloating, Fullness in chest and abdomen, Feel heavy and lethargic...</p>	<p>BLOOD STASIS Cold limbs, Varicose veins, Painful legs, Headaches, Chest pain, Liver spots, Lack of skin lustre...</p>
<p>© AcuMedic Ltd 2008. All Rights Reserved. Unauthorised copying prohibited</p>				
<p>thin white coating red tip</p>	<p>yellow greasy coating red tongue</p>	<p>thick white coating pale swollen tongue</p>	<p>little/no coating cracks red tongue</p>	<p>little/no coating pale tongue</p>
<p>QI STAGNATION Stressed, Tendency to be depressed and upset, Unstable emotional state, PMT....</p>	<p>DAMP HEAT Skin problems, Urinary infections, Clammy skin, Angry and uncomfortable...</p>	<p>YANG DEFICIENCY Feel cold easily, Pale complexion, Back pain, Tendency to panic, Emotionally low, Impotence, Infertility...</p>	<p>YIN DEFICIENCY Hot Flashes, Sweat at night, Insomnia, Irritable, Ringing in the ears, Menopause...</p>	<p>BLOOD DEFICIENCY Dizziness, Fatigue, Palpitations, Poor concentration and memory, Insomnia, Women's problems...</p>

The Divisions of The Pulses



■ = Superficial Pulse Reading ■ = Deep Pulse Reading

COMMON MODALITIES USED

- **Acupuncture:** Involves inserting thin needles into specific points on the body to stimulate energy flow (Qi) and restore balance.
- **Herbal Medicine:** Uses herbs, roots, minerals, and other natural substances to address imbalances in the body. Herbal formulas are often customized based on the individual's specific symptoms and constitution.
- **Tui Na:** A form of Chinese therapeutic massage that involves various techniques such as kneading, pressing, and stretching to promote circulation and relieve muscle tension.
- **Cupping:** Involves placing cups on the skin to create suction, which helps to improve blood flow, reduce inflammation, and promote relaxation.
- **Moxibustion:** Involves burning the herb mugwort (moxa) near acupuncture points to warm and stimulate them, promoting circulation and relieving pain.

COMMON MODALITIES USED CONT'D

- **Qigong:** Combines movement, meditation, and controlled breathing exercises to cultivate and balance Qi (vital energy) in the body.
- **Tai Chi:** A mind-body practice that involves slow, gentle movements and deep breathing to promote relaxation, improve balance, and enhance overall health.
- **Gua Sha:** Involves scraping the skin with a smooth-edged tool to increase circulation, release toxins, and promote healing.
- **Electroacupuncture:** Similar to traditional acupuncture but with the addition of electrical stimulation applied to the needles to enhance the therapeutic effects.
- **Dietary Therapy:** Emphasizes the use of foods to maintain health and treat illness. Foods are chosen based on their energetic properties and their effects on the body.



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Now to something a little more palatable

Traditional Chinese Dietary Medicine (TCDM)



Holistic approach to health and well being



Brings balance and harmony within the body and relationship to their respective environments



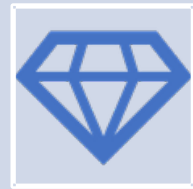
Subsection of Traditional Chinese Medicine

Concepts within TCDM

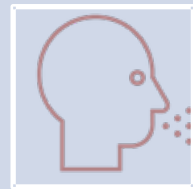
- Over 2000 years old
- Strengthen body constitution, prevent/treat disease
- Promote recovery
- Prevent signs of aging



Three Major Beliefs of TCDM



“Food is the cornerstone of life.”



“Some foods can be harmful or cause illness.”



“Undigested food becoming stagnant in the digestive tract can lead to chronic ailments.”









Zhang, Y., & Yao, Y. (2012). *Your guide to health with foods & herbs: Using the wisdom of traditional chinese medicine*. Better Link Press; Shanghai Press.

Si Qi

The Four (*but really five*) Natures of Food

- **Cold**
 - Reduces (strong) heat
- **Cool**
 - Reduces (mild) heat
- **Warm**
 - Increased (mild) warmth
- **Hot**
 - Increases (strong) warmth

Five Energies of Food in Tradition Chinese Medicine

	Energy 	Food Examples 
Yin	Cold 	Bamboo, bitter melon, watermelon, tomato, banana, seaweed, kelp, lettuce, sprouts, salt
Yin	Cool 	Cucumber, celery, apple, coconut, oranges, mango, Chinese tea, soy milk, cheese, yogurt
Balanced	Neutral 	Rice, sweet potato, potato, turnips, carrot, cabbage, soybeans, adzuki beans, many nuts and seeds, shiitake mushrooms, sugar
²³ Yang	Warm 	Onion, leeks, chives, cilantro, cumin, fennel, garlic, ginger, glutinous rice, pumpkin, dates, walnuts, coffee
Yang	Hot 	Black pepper, cinnamon, dried ginger, chili peppers, mustard seeds

*Bonus category: **Neutral** foods – rice, potatoes, milk, figs, egg, Mu Er (Wood-ear mushrooms)*

“Warm the cold, Cool the heat”

Cool, cold: heat pattern, yang pattern

Warm, hot: cold pattern, yin pattern

Neutral: any condition

寒

COLD

Banana
Watermelon
Bok Choi
Turnip
Celery
Califlower
Crab
Bean Sprouts
Asparagus
Eggplant
Cucumber
Grapefruit
Pineapple
Tangerine
Zucchini
Seaweed
Tofu

涼

COOL

Pear
Peppermint
Green Tea
Oolong Tea
Bitter Gourd
Cooked Lettuce
Green Apple
Snow Pea
White Corn
Oranges
Cabbage
Soybean Sprouts
Apples
Cooked Onion
Strawberries
Cheese
Cherries
Mushrooms
Miso

溫

WARM

Rice
Noodles
Bread
Pork
Chicken
Turkey
Broccoli
Green Pepper
Green Beans
Egg Whites
Yellow Corn
Egg Yolk
Fish
Pepper
Ginger
Garlic
Cooked Tomato
Spinach
Black Tea
Nectarines
Milk

熱

HOT

Nuts
Grilled Foods
Avocado
Lichee
Turtle
Chocolate
Cocoa
Raw Onions
Coffee
Lamb
Duck
Eggplant
Red Pepper
Venison
Deep Fried Foods

“Warm the cold, Cool the heat”

Cold	Cool	Warm	Hot	Neutral
Watermelon	Orange	Cilantro	Garlic	Figs
Mung Bean	Wheat	Ginger	Chive	Grapes
Cucumber	Banana	Chicken	Mustard	Apples
Celery	Eggplant	Beef	Mutton	Pumpkin
Pork	Duck	Lychee	Durian	Rice
Salmon	Sardine	Longan	Sorghum	Corn
Bitter gourd	Pear	Mango	Liquor	Carp fish

Huang di Nei Jing states..

“The five grains are used to nourish”

“The five animals are used to fortify”

“The five vegetables are used to fulfill”

“The five fruits are used to assist”



The Food Groups and Their Properties

















Food Group	Includes	Flavor/Nature	Major Fx
Grains	All whole grains, beans, nuts and seeds Pulses and other legumes	Mostly bland, sweet, neutral	Nourishing, tonifies SP and qi, resolves dampness, stops diarrhea, moistens
Animal Products	Land animals, fish and shellfish, eggs, dairy	Mostly sweet, neutral to warming. Some fish/shellfish are cool/cold	Nourishes qi/blood, reinforces ST/SP, LV/KD
Vegetables	Land vegetation, alliums, fungi, sea vegetation	All flavors/natures Alliums are warming	Detoxification, clears heat, promotes BM, nourishes
Fruits	All land and tree fruit	Sweet and sour Cool to cold	Clears heat, hydrates, dissolves phlegm, detoxification
Condiments	Salt, natural sweeteners, tea, alcohol, vinegar, herbs, spices and fragrant flowers	Varies	Improves taste and absorption, can harmonize and activate, relieve spasms, moistening fx

Goldsmith, E., & Klein, M. (2017). *Nutritional healing with Chinese medicine: +175 recipes for Optimal Health*. Robert Rose Inc.



The Five Flavors

Five Flavors of Food in Tradition Chinese Medicine

Flavor 	Element 	Organs 	Effects 	Food Examples 
Sour	Wood 	Liver & Gall bladder	Helps to control qi and blood, retains body fluids to stop heavy sweating, helps relieve loose stools; dries mucous and dampness	Lemon, lime, oranges, tomatoes, pineapple, olives, pomegranate, loquat, apple cider vinegar 
Bitter	Fire 	Heart & Small intestines	Clears heat, dries dampness, helps detox, stimulates appetite, helps with urination and bowel movements.	Bitter melon, tea, asparagus, celery, parsley, dandelion; many leafy greens such as, kale, arugula, lettuce, broccoli 
Sweet	Earth 	Stomach, Spleen & Pancreas	Nourishes qi; helps with dryness and lubricates body, helps with constipation. Too much sweet creates dampness.	Many grains, fruits, and vegetables: rice, apples, corn, carrots, pumpkins, soybeans, sweet potato, potato, peas, peanuts, honey, dates 
Pungent/ Spicy	Metal 	Lungs & Large intestine	Promotes blood and qi circulation. Stimulates appetite. Warming and drying. Too much creates excess heat and dissipates qi.	Onions, leeks, scallions, chives, garlic, fresh ginger, chili peppers, cinnamon, wasabi 
Salty	Water 	Bladder & Kidneys	Dissolves stagnation, softens stool (relieves constipation), nourishes blood, detox the body. Too much creates excess dampness.	Anything from the sea, such as seaweed, kelp, and sea salt. Miso and pickles are also salty.  Foods that are a little salty include millet, barley, parsley, celery 

Foods with yang movement tendency:

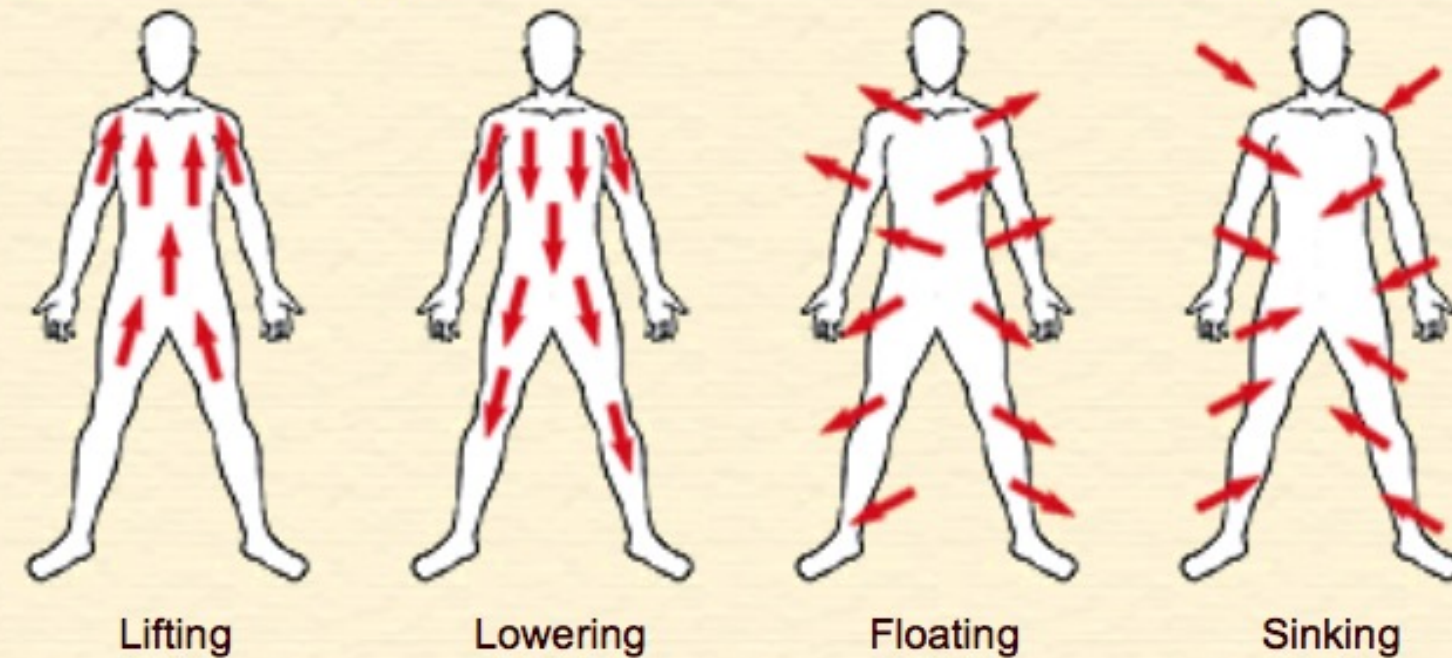
- Ginger
- Garlic
- Cilantro
- Mint

Foods with yin movement tendency:

- Plum
- Lotus seed
- Apricot seed
- Wax gourd

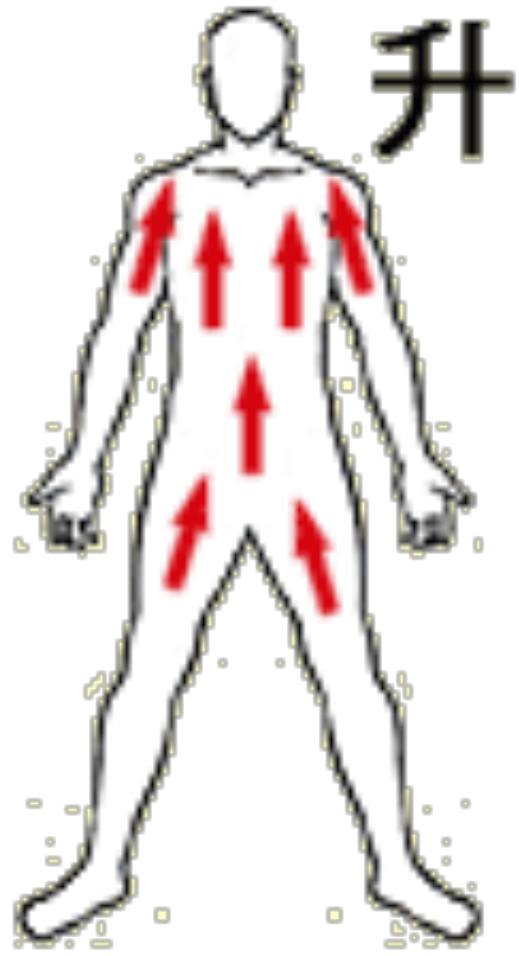
TCM has classified the movements of foods into four aspects.

TCM food movements	Actions	Effects	Food samples	Associated properties of food
Lifting	To move from lower region towards upper region	The upward movements arrest diarrhea, and hold internal organs in their proper places (to prevent them prolapse or sinking)	Wine	Warm or hot in energy, pungent or sweet in flavor.
Floating	To move from inside towards outside	The outward movements induce perspiration and dissipate body heat	Ginger	
Lowering	To move from upper region towards lower region	The downward movements relieve vomiting, hiccupping, coughing and panting	Salt	Cool or cold in energy, sour or bitter or salty in flavor.
Sinking	To move from outside towards inside	The inward movements slow down bowel movements and relieve abdominal distention	Vinegar	

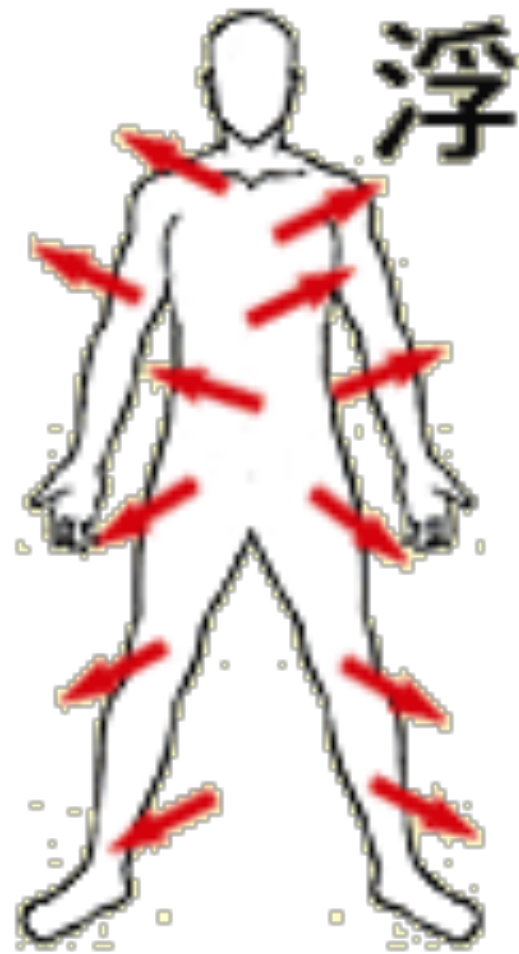


The four movements of food: upward, downward, outward and inward.

Movement and direction



Liquor

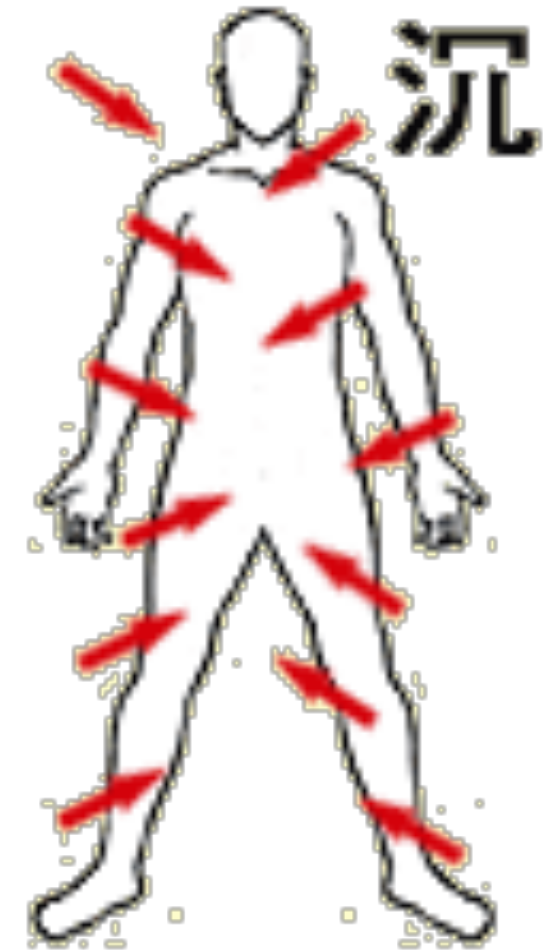


Ginger

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Salt



Vinegar

Yang Property

Yin Property

To Tonify or Eliminate?

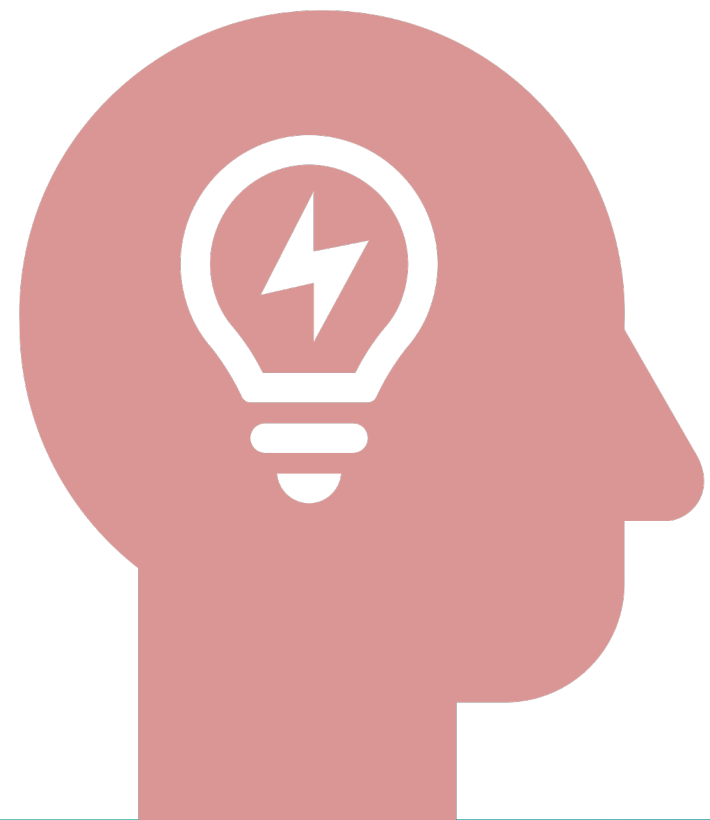
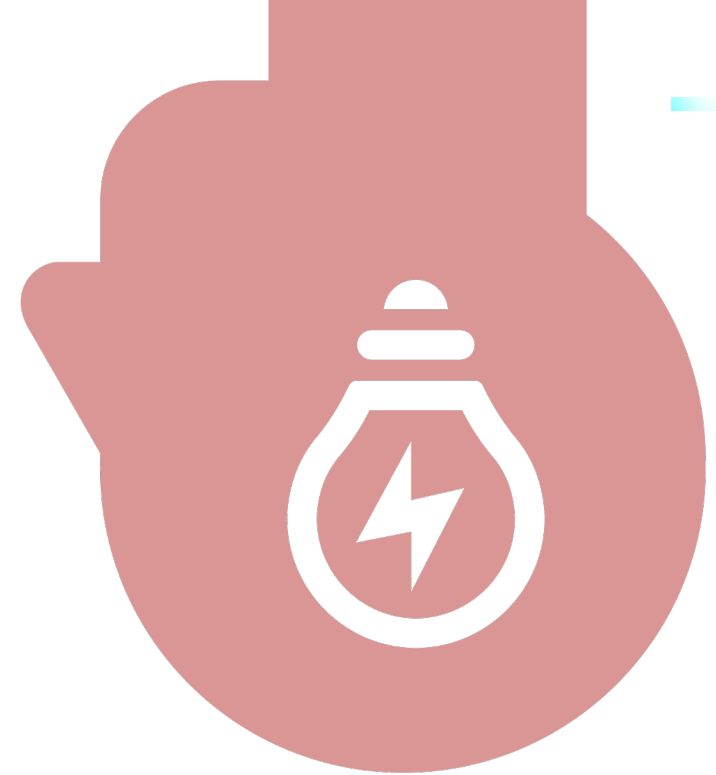
Tonify

- **Strengthen** qi or yang
- **Nourish** yin or blood
- Promote body fluids, lubricate the body
- Activate qi and blood circulation

Eliminate

- **Clear** heat
- Dry dampness
- Promote urination
- **Detoxification**
- **Eliminate** blood stasis

There are more eliminating foods than tonifying foods!



General warnings

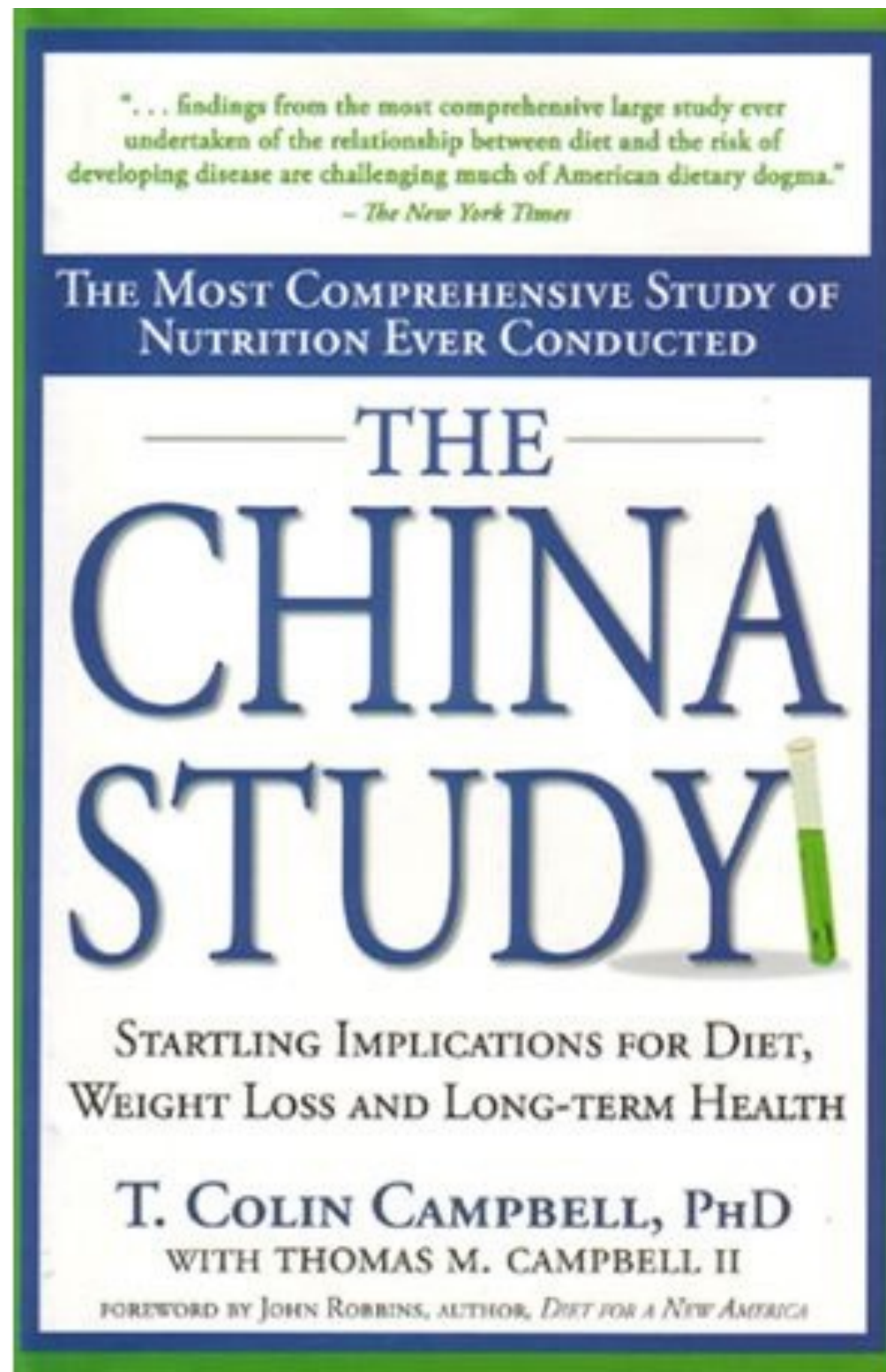
Disease, RX and pregnancy



- Depending on course of herbal or pharmaceutical interventions, some food may act as an antagonist. Please consults with a TCM practitioner.
- Forbidden during disease: Raw cold food, greasy foods (fried, dairy), spicy
- During pregnancy: easy to digest food, not cloying food, less salty, more moving towards late stage



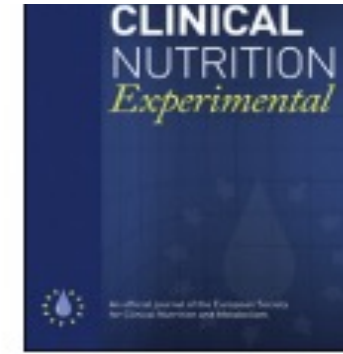
UHM, YES, I'D LIKE TO ORDER SOME
DATA ANALYTICS...



- Certain groups of diseases tend to occur in similar geographic and economic areas
- Diabetes and coronary heart disease occur most frequently in geographic areas where cancer rates are also high, while pneumonia and peptic ulcer appear with TB and rheumatic heart disease in other areas
- Socioeconomical impact!



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect
Clinical Nutrition Experimental
journal homepage: [http://
www.clinicalnutritionexperimental.com](http://www.clinicalnutritionexperimental.com)



Opinion Paper

Food therapy and medical diet therapy of Traditional Chinese Medicine

Qunli Wu, Xiaochun Liang*

Department of Traditional Chinese Medicine, Peking Union Medical College Hospital, Peking Union Medical College and Chinese

Asia Pacific J Clin Nutr (1993), 2 91–95

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Principles of diet therapy in ancient Chinese medicine: ‘Huang Di Nei Jing’


Ho Zhi-chien

Department of Clinical Nutrition, San Yat-sen University of Medical Sciences, Guangzhou, PRC.

The American Journal of Chinese Medicine | Vol. 44, No. 08, pp. 1579-1594 (2016)

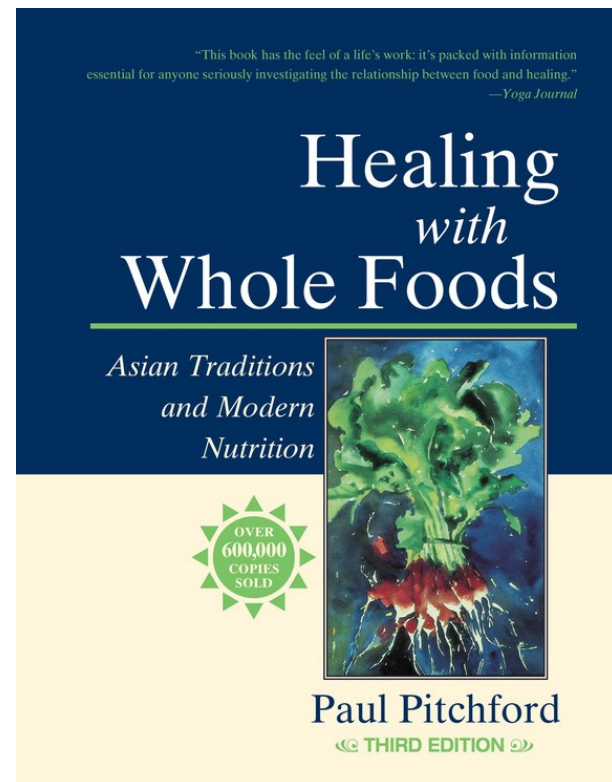
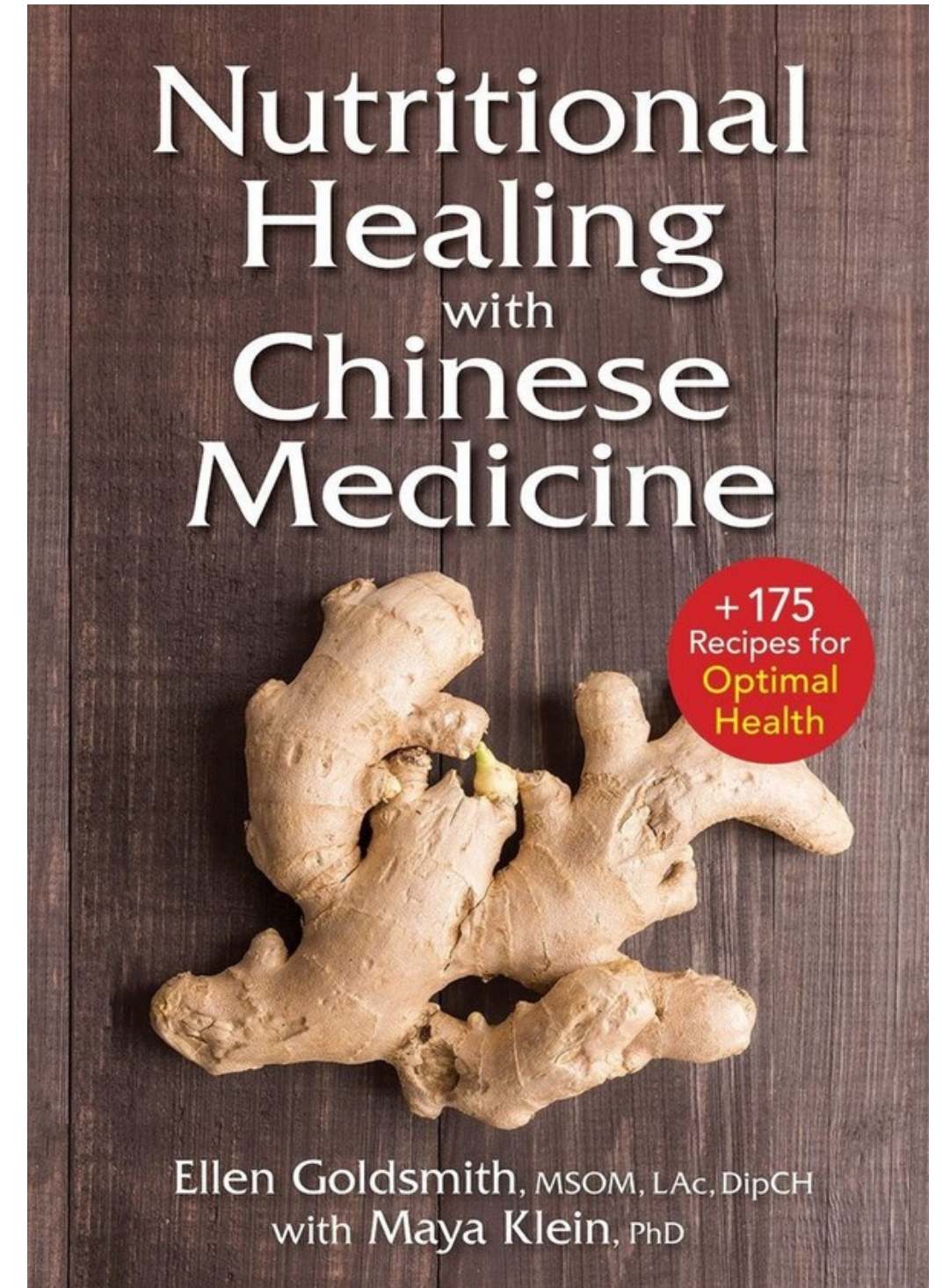
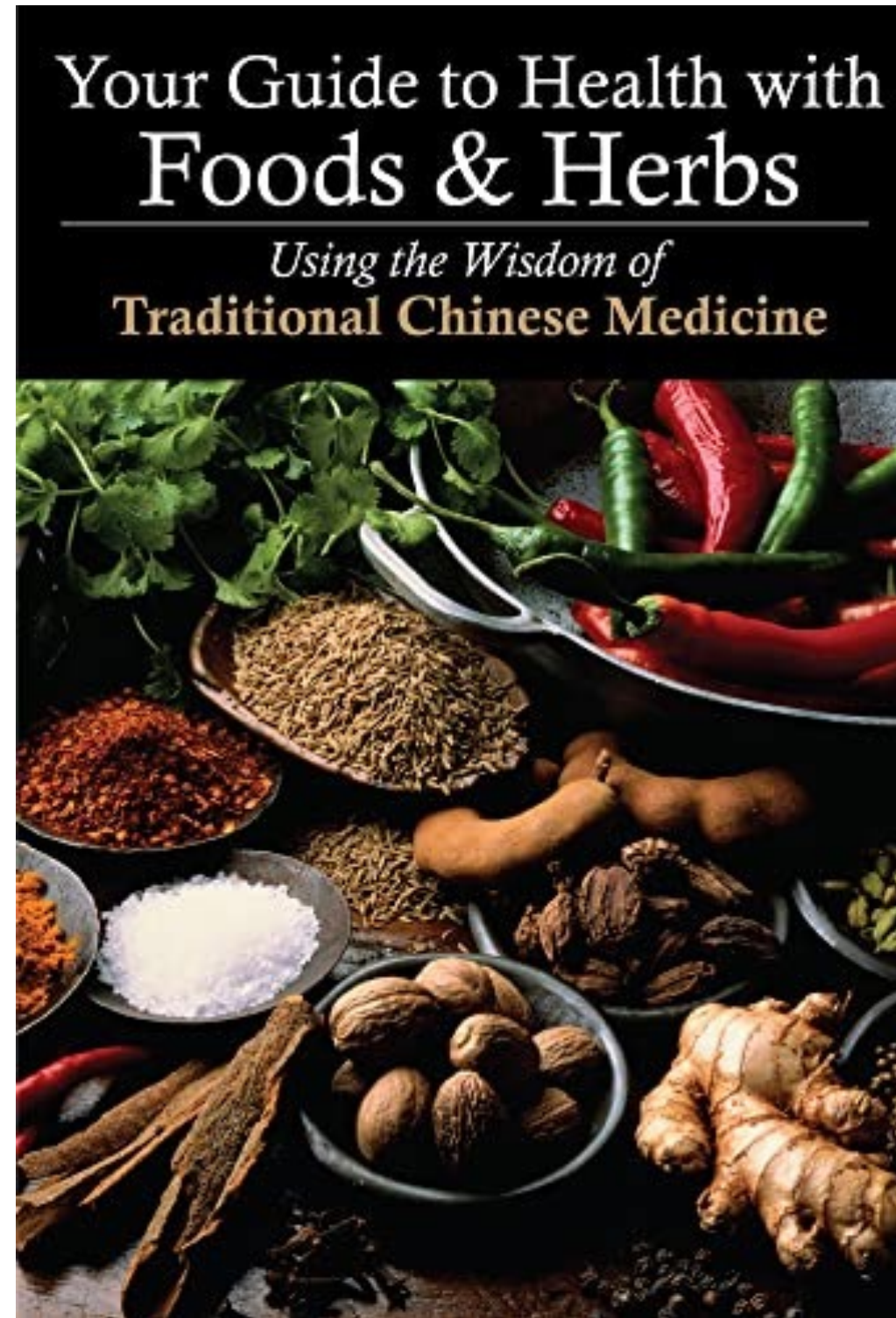
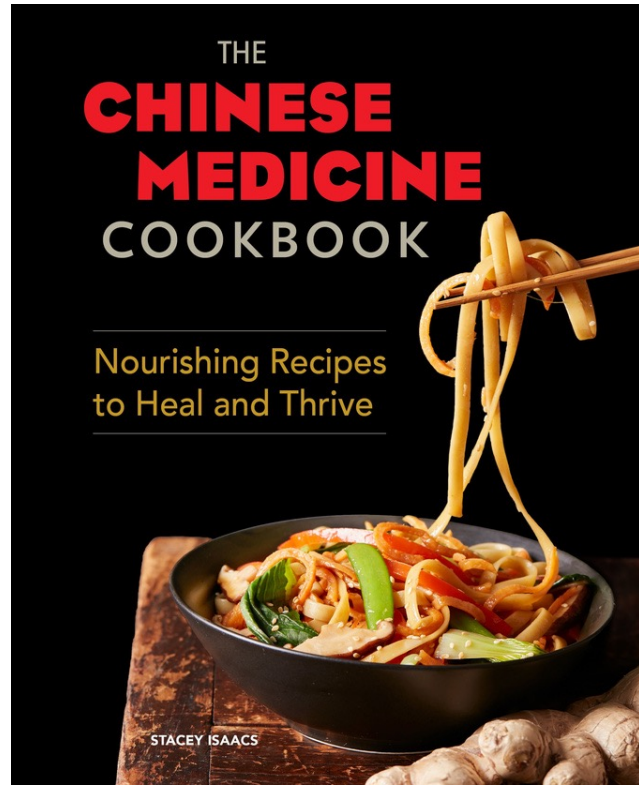
 No Ac

Traditional Chinese Medicine, Food Therapy, and Hypertension Control: A Narrative Review of Chinese Literature

Ping Zou 

<https://doi.org/10.1142/S0192415X16500889> | Cited by: 74 (Source: Crossref)

Despite the lack of English literature about Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) food therapy, there is abundant Chinese literature about the application of food therapy for hypertension control. This paper summarizes basic concepts of TCM, the principles of food therapy and its application for hypertension control according to Chinese



Xiao Ke - Wasting and Thirsting Disorder

Let's discuss TCDM and Type 2 DM

Xiao Ke

Type 2 diabetes

TCM most common
differentiation

Yin deficiency pattern which
can give rise to heat
syndromes with cause
damage to qi, yin and yang.



Bitter Melon

- Bioactive compounds that help regulate blood sugar
- Cold nature and bitter flavor
 - Clears heat from underlying yin deficiency

AVOID IF YOU ARE TRYING TO GET PREGNANT, ARE PREGNANT OR NURSING



 **NIH Public Access**
Author Manuscript
Endocr Metab Immune Disord Drug Targets. Author manuscript; available in PMC 2009 June 1.

Published in final edited form as:
Endocr Metab Immune Disord Drug Targets. 2008 June ; 8(2): 99–111.

Traditional Chinese Medicine in Treatment of Metabolic Syndrome

Jun Yin, Hanjie Zhang, and Jianping Ye*
Pennington Biomedical Research Center, Louisiana State University System, USA

NIH-PA Author Man

Goldsmith, E., & Klein, M. (2017). *Nutritional healing with Chinese medicine: +175 recipes for Optimal Health*. Robert Rose Inc.

Xiao Ke

Dietary Therapy

Avoid

- Overeating
- Poor quality fats, fatty, greasy and creamy foods, processed meats and refined carbs, sugars, alcohol and all artificial flavorings and sweeteners
- High spiced, sweet and salty
- Reduce intake of raw foods

Encourage

- Regular intervals between meals
- Cooling or slightly warming foods, including spinach, turnips, millet, fresh corn, tofu, mung beans, Chinese yam, Silkie, duck small amounts of fermented soy and dairy (if tolerated).
- Eat the five flavors in healthy variety
- Lightly cook veg and fruits

Goldsmith, E., & Klein, M. (2017). *Nutritional healing with Chinese medicine: + 175 recipes for Optimal Health*. Robert Rose Inc.

Some Food for Thought

Education

Accessibility

- Financial
- Location

Integration

Determination

Medicine is
not healthcare.
Food is health care.
Medicine is sick care.
It's time we see it
for what it is.





Thank you

For more medical education visit
www.IMAhealth.org

