



Chinese Medicine Tips for Late Summer

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By [Dr. Melissa Carr, B.Sc., Dr.TCM](#) • September 8th, 2012 • 4373 Views



Most of us only think of four seasons. In Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), we have five seasons, the fifth one being "late summer".

Late summer is most related to the TCM element of Earth and it acts as a turning point for the hot, active, Yang energy of the spring and summer into the cooler, storing, Yin energy of the fall and winter. This season often starts out quite hot, but calms into cool, and in the northern hemisphere it usually lands in August and September.

If you have ongoing—or even occasional—digestive troubles, this time of the year is particularly important for you, as it is the

season that the TCM digestive organs, the Stomach* and Spleen*, are most active. The Spleen is the TCM equivalent of the physical organ, the pancreas, which produces digestive enzymes and helps regulate blood sugar levels via the secretion of insulin and glucagon.

When the hot weather hits and you want to sit back with an icy cold sweet drink, don't overdo it. Too much cold and sweet can impair your digestive system, leaving you feeling even more lethargic and foggy-headed. Try something lightly sweet with lots of moisture, like watermelon, melon, or cantaloupe. Check out other fruits and vegetables that are locally, seasonally available in your area. Fruits like peaches, cherries, apples, apricots, and plums are nice and sweet, without overloading your sweet tooth. Beets, cucumber, corn, and zucchini can also be lightly sweet and juicy.

As the weather cools, you might want to incorporate some warming foods that support the Earth elements. Foods like ginger, squash, pumpkin, fennel, and mustard greens help your digestive system.

This is also a great time of the year to start or restart a meditative practice. Most of us spend a lot of time "in our heads"—planning, organizing, thinking, and worrying. This constant mental processing can impede digestive function, as the Earth element is our processing centre. A weak digestive system can make us feel foggy-headed, and an overanalyzing, worrying mind can impede our assimilation of food. Spending time outside of our mind chatter-chatter can help us to become more nourished, both literally and figuratively.

Because of the Earth dual processing role—of thoughts and of food—make sure to focus on eating when you are eating rather than multitasking work, TV, or deep emotional conversations (light and enjoyable talk is fine) with mealtimes.

The Spleen energy also relates to the muscles. Muscles need to be...

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