

Staying Healthy During Flu Season with Acupuncture & Traditional Chinese Medicine

By Toni Eatros, MS, Dipl Ac, AP

It is that time of year again, flu season. Our news is inundated with talk about virulent strains of viruses and bacteria. Many people get the annual flu shot, and then cross their fingers and hope they do not catch the flu. The good news is, you do not need to just leave getting sick to fate. Acupuncture and Traditional Chinese Medicine offer a variety of treatment strategies to build your immune system so you are not susceptible to these pathogens.

The theories of Chinese medicine suggest that each season relates to a different organ system. Fall, is the season of the Lungs. It's the time of year when people are easily affected by environmental influences, such as cold, windy, and damp conditions. This is a time of transition in the plants and the weather. Many refer to this time as the "flu season."

The lungs are called the "delicate protective organ" because they are the only organ that comes into direct contact with the external environment. This makes the lungs more vulnerable than other organs to environmental influences leading to catching colds, the flu, and/or developing allergies.

According to Chinese Medicine, the lungs are involved in the production of Wei Qi. Wei Qi is a similar concept to what Western medicine refers to as the immune system. Wei Qi provides the body with an "immune system-like" barrier that protects the body from harmful viruses and bacteria, and which may eventually lead to illness and/or disease.



Healthy and strong lungs can enhance the proper functions of the entire body. The Lungs extract "pure essence" from the air we breathe, and combines it with the food we eat to produce the Wei Qi. This intricate, immunity-like system is then circulated throughout the entire body, providing it with a first line of defense against pathogens.

When the lungs are functioning correctly, we remain healthy, and potentially free from illness. But when our lungs become weakened or imbalanced, our body may not have the capacity to produce the correct amount of Wei Qi. When this occurs, the stage for "catching" a cold, the flu or developing allergies is set. Weak lungs and weak Wei Qi can also lead to asthma, eczema, chronic or frequent illness, dry skin and other problems.

The lungs are negatively affected by many factors, such as an improper diet, digestive dysfunction, emotional stress, unexpressed or long-held grief or sadness, environmental exposure, inherited constitution, smoking, bad air or pollution.

To help boost your Wei Qi, consume dark green and golden-orange vegetables. They are high in beta carotene and appear to protect the lungs against illness. Carrots, winter squash, pumpkin, broccoli, parsley, kale, turnip, mustard greens, and blue green algae are foods to consume this time of year. Adding the above foods to your daily diet may help bolster your immunity and support the health of your lungs. In general, cook with less water, and at lower heat, for longer periods of time.

The ancient classic text, Zhen Jing, states, "If the lungs function well, it can activate the flow of Qi, and nourish the whole body with Wei Qi, as rain nourishes young crops." Proper lung function is necessary to keep us healthy and to help ward off illness and disease.

If you suffer from any kind of chronic lung issues, acupuncture and TCM have a variety of therapeutic modalities that can strengthen your lungs, help you to breathe better, reduce the number and severity of upper respiratory infections contracted, and reduce the use of pharmaceuticals by treating the root cause of the imbalance.

A comprehensive treatment plan including acupuncture, vitamins, herbs, home treatments including dietary modifications, hydrotherapy, acupressure, and essential oils will be discussed. It is best to start to build the immune system before you catch an acute upper respiratory infection. Prevention is always easier, and less expensive, than treatment of a severe illness.

Make the decision to get stronger this cold and flu season instead of spending weeks ill. We can get started on an individualized treatment plan based on your individual diagnosis. Visit my website, www.AcupunctureSolutionsOnline.com, for answers to frequently asked questions, and to schedule an appointment online, or you can call, 239-260-4566, and start on your road to building a strong and healthy immune system and body.



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