

Healing Chronic Illness with Congee Part II

Supporting Our Blood Through Food

By Toni Eatros, MS, Dipl Ac, AP

Every day in my clinic, I see people with a wide variety of chronic illness. Regardless, of the type of illness, all of these people have one thing in common, they are deficient in Qi and sometimes blood. What does deficient mean? Deficient means that there is not enough raw material to make the body systems work properly. When this is occurring for a length of time, chronic illness sets in.

Last month, I wrote about Qi deficiency, see that article for more information. For the purpose of this article, we are going to focus on blood deficiency and how we can nourish our blood. The concept of blood in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) is not the same as our medical system's definition of the blood that flows through the vessels. The TCM concept of blood deficiency includes our actual blood, but it is also a dense form of energetic qi that nourishes and moistens the body and anchors our emotions and mental function.

The quality of our blood is a measure of the available nourishment circulating in our body. Blood nourishes our muscles, organs, brain, every part of us. Its quality depends on the quality of the food we eat and our ability to absorb nourishment. In other words, it depends on the strength of our digestive system.

As well as being the source of nourishment for physical activity, the blood is also said to house the mind, to provide the physical root of our consciousness. Body and Mind are integrated in the blood. The blood enables our thoughts and emotions to be grounded in the body. Its quality helps keep body and mind together.

When our blood is strong, we tend to feel vigorous, well-nourished and alive. When our blood is weak, we may feel under-nourished and not fully in touch with who we are. We may experience separation, as if our mind floats, loosening its anchor. At night the mind may float so much that we cannot sleep.

"A good broth resurrects the dead."

--South American Proverb

Symptoms of General Blood Deficiency may include:

- Pale lips, tongue, face and fingernail beds
- Dry skin and hair
- Dizziness or Light-headedness when standing up
- Cracking and Popping of Joints
- Muscle Spasms
- Anemia
- Nervousness & Anxiety
- Heart Palpitations
- Insomnia
- Blurred Vision
- Floaters in the Visual Field
- Infertility
- Fatigue

Our ability to produce blood is strengthened by maintaining a balance between rest and physical activity. Physical activity strengthens the digestive systems ability to convert food into blood and helps the heart circulate it around the body. Rest, especially in the early afternoon, enables the liver to renew the blood during the day.

Blood is very easily improved through diet. A diet rich in fresh vegetables is essential. In particular, dark green leafy vegetables and chlorophyll-rich foods are helpful, especially when combined with grains, seeds and nuts. Adequate protein is also necessary. All meat and fish, many beans and several seafoods will strengthen the blood. In severe cases of blood depletion, organs meats such as liver can be helpful.

As all food forms the basis of blood, we may simply say eat well and widely. The overuse of fatty foods, denatured, processed foods and sweetened or salted foods will tend to weaken the blood.



Some of the foods that are especially beneficial for nourishing blood are:

- Aduki, black soybean, and kidney beans
- Apricots, cherries, dates, figs, grapes, and longan fruit
- Beets, dandelion, kale, dark green leafy greens, parsley, spinach and watercress
- Kelp, microalgae (E3 Live), and seaweed
- Beef, bone marrow broth, chicken eggs, liver, mussels, octopus, oysters and sardines
- Sweet rice and tempeh

Properly prepared stock, is extremely nutritious, it is full of minerals from bone, marrow, vegetables, and cartilage. Just in case you thought you'd skip the good stuff and buy the canned broth, know that the stuff you find in the store has little of the nutritional value that a homemade broth does. Trust me, learning to make a good broth is worth your time and money. There is much that I can tell you about with broth, but we have to save that for another day. Enjoy the recipe!



Grass-fed Beef Bone Broth (Vital Essence Elixir)

Makes: 5-6 quarts

Ingredients:

- about 4 pounds grass-fed beef marrow bones and knuckle bones
- 1 calves foot, cut into pieces (optional)
- 3 pounds meaty rib or neck bones
- 1 or more gallons cold filtered water
- 1/2 cup organic apple cider vinegar
- 3 organic onions roughly chopped
- 3 organic carrots roughly chopped
- 3 organic celery stalks roughly chopped
- 3/4 to 1 ounce fresh organic thyme or 1 Tablespoon dried organic thyme
- 1 teaspoon ground peppercorns
- 1 strip Kombu (optional) found in the seaweed section
- 1 bunch organic parsley

Instructions:

1. Place the marrow bones, knuckle and calves foot in a large stock pot with the vinegar and cover with the gallon of filtered water. Let stand for one hour.
2. Meanwhile, place the rib bones in a roasting pan and brown at 350 degrees in the oven. When well browned, approximately one hour, add to the stockpot along with the onions, carrots and celery. Pour the fat out of the roasting pan, add cold water to the pan and bring to a boil stirring with a wooden spoon to loosen any sediment. Add this brown liquid to the stockpot.
3. Add additional water, if necessary, to cover the bones; but the liquid should come no higher than within one inch of the rim of the stockpot. Bring to a boil. A large amount of scum will form on the top. It is important to remove this scum with a spoon. Then reduce heat and add the thyme, pepper and Kombu.
4. Simmer stock for at least 12 but preferably for 72 hours for optimum results. Just before finishing, add the parsley and simmer for ten minutes more.
5. Allow broth to cool enough for safe handling.
6. Remove bones with tongs or a slotted spoon. Strain the stock into a large bowl.
7. Let cool in the refrigerator; remove the congealed fat that rises to the top and put the broth in glass containers for storage in the freezer.

Directions for Use:

Drink 8 ounces each day as a supplement or use it as the base for many other recipes.

Notes:

** Lucky's Market on East Tamiami Trail usually carries the marrow bones. Whole Foods sometimes carries them as well, but they sell out quickly. You can also check with your butcher or local farms.

** There are a variety of online sources for the entire variety of bones that the recipe calls for. The more diverse the bone selection in your broth, the more nutritious it becomes. I have used White Oak Pastures, <http://www.whiteoakpastures.com> to purchase bones before.

** Leg bones cut in 3" pieces work well for the marrow bones.

**The number of servings depends on the size of your stockpot and the amount of water you use. The minimum size stockpot for this recipe is 8 quarts however I strongly recommend using a 10-12 quart pot. Add water to one inch below the rim. You will have 5-6 quarts, or 20-24 cups, using an 8 quart pot.

Secrets to making good bone broth:

Use the highest quality bones you can find. Bones from grass fed animals are best.

Add vinegar to the water to draw the minerals out of the bones into the broth.

Roast & brown the bones in the oven before adding them to the stock.

Be in the moment when you are making it - and see the process as a therapy in and of itself.

Also, a word of wisdom... with the first batch I made, I was constantly coddling the broth, just making sure it was "okay" and this led to more stress than was needed. The second batch, I just let it be. In my opinion my second batch has been the best so far, mainly because I didn't worry too much and let the food work for itself. Also, if your broth is gelatinous when cold, you did good. Gelatin acts in aiding digestion (it has been used to treat all sorts of intestinal issues: IBS, Crohn's, colitis, hyperactivity...). So, no worries if your soup jiggles a little, it's good for you!

If the idea of working with food to nourish your body appeals to you, consult your acupuncturist or TCM practitioner for assistance in customizing a recipe that meet your health care needs. If you need a new provider, I will be happy to assist you on your path to wellness. Call 239-260-4566 or schedule online at www.AcupunctureSolutionsOnline.com.



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