

A FREE GUIDE FROM LONGVILLE WELLNESS

Chinese Food Therapy

Nourish Your Body Through the Wisdom of Traditional Chinese Medicine

LONGVILLE WELLNESS
Eastern Medicine. Modern Wellness. Holistic Health.

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> **Food is more than nourishment. It is one of the most powerful ways we influence our health every day.**

In Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), food is viewed as an essential part of maintaining balance, supporting digestion, strengthening the body's natural functions, and promoting overall wellness. For thousands of years, Chinese food therapy has been used to guide food choices according to an individual's constitution, health concerns, the seasons, and the energetic properties of different ingredients.

Unlike conventional nutritional approaches that primarily examine calories, macronutrients, and vitamins, Chinese food therapy also considers the temperature, flavor, and energetic nature of foods and how they interact with the body's internal systems.

At Longville Wellness, we recognize that what nourishes one person may not necessarily benefit another. Understanding your body's needs and choosing foods accordingly can be an important part of your wellness journey.

Understanding the Five Flavors of Food

In Traditional Chinese Medicine, foods are classified according to five primary flavors: sweet, sour, bitter, pungent, and salty. Each flavor has a particular relationship with the body's organ systems and energetic functions.

SPLEEN AND STOMACH

Sweet

Naturally sweet foods, such as sweet potatoes, squash, carrots, dates, and certain grains, are traditionally believed to nourish Qi (vital energy), support digestion, and provide nourishment.

However, excessive consumption of refined sugars, sweets, and overly rich foods may contribute to Dampness and impair the digestive system's ability to transform and transport nutrients.

LIVER

Sour

Sour foods such as lemons, limes, vinegar, and fermented foods are traditionally associated with the Liver. Their astringent properties are believed to help preserve fluids and contain excessive loss of body fluids.

In excess, sour foods may be unsuitable for certain digestive patterns and may aggravate symptoms such as acid reflux in some individuals.

HEART

Bitter

Bitter foods such as bitter melon, dandelion greens, arugula, and certain leafy vegetables are traditionally associated with the Heart. Bitter flavors are often described as having clearing, draining, and drying properties.

They are traditionally used to address patterns involving excess Heat and Damp-Heat.

LUNGS

Pungent

Pungent foods include ginger, garlic, onions, scallions, radishes, and chili peppers. These foods are traditionally believed to promote circulation of Qi, stimulate digestion, and disperse Cold.

However, excessive pungent or spicy foods may aggravate internal Heat, dryness, or digestive irritation in susceptible individuals.

KIDNEYS

Salty

Salty foods, including seaweed, certain mineral-rich foods, and naturally salty ingredients, are traditionally associated with the Kidneys. In TCM, the salty flavor is believed to soften hardness and move energy downward.

Excessive dietary salt, however, can contribute to high blood pressure and place additional strain on cardiovascular health.

The Nature of Food: Warming, Cooling, and Neutral

One of the most distinctive aspects of Chinese food therapy is the classification of foods according to their energetic temperature.

This does not necessarily refer to whether food is physically hot or cold. Instead, it describes the effect a food is traditionally believed to have on the body's internal environment.

Warming Foods

Ginger, cinnamon, lamb, onions, and warming spices

Traditionally used to support individuals who exhibit signs of internal Cold, such as cold hands and feet, sluggish digestion, and a preference for warmth.

Cooling Foods

Cucumber, watermelon, mint, mung beans, and certain leafy greens

Traditionally used to help clear Heat and support individuals who experience signs such as excessive thirst, feeling overheated, or certain inflammatory patterns.

Neutral Foods

Rice, carrots, potatoes, and many whole grains

Neutral foods are generally considered less thermally extreme and are often used as dietary foundations.

The goal is not to eat exclusively warming or cooling foods. It is to understand what your body needs and choose foods that support balance.

Food and the Five Organ Systems

In Chinese medicine, the body's organs are understood through functional systems that extend beyond their anatomical roles. Food is selected not only for its nutritional value but also for its traditional relationship with these organ systems.

Liver

SMOOTH FLOW AND CIRCULATION

The Liver system is associated with the smooth flow of Qi and the regulation of emotional and physical balance. Green vegetables, sour foods, and foods with naturally pungent properties are incorporated into dietary approaches intended to support Liver harmony.

Heart

BLOOD AND SHEN (SPIRIT)

The Heart system is associated with circulation, blood, and the Shen, or spirit. In traditional food therapy, foods such as red dates, lotus seeds, and whole grains may be used in dietary approaches intended to nourish the Heart and support calmness.

Spleen and Stomach

DIGESTION AND NUTRIENT TRANSFORMATION

The Spleen and Stomach are central to digestion and the transformation of food into Qi and Blood. Cooked vegetables, rice, oats, squash, and nourishing soups are traditionally recommended to support digestive function.

Excessive cold, raw, greasy, and overly sweet foods may contribute to patterns of Dampness and digestive weakness in susceptible individuals.

Lungs

QI AND RESPIRATORY HEALTH

The Lung system governs Qi and is associated with respiration and the body's protective functions. Pears, radishes, white fungus, and certain nourishing soups are traditionally incorporated into dietary approaches intended to support Lung Yin and respiratory moisture.

Kidneys

VITAL ESSENCE AND LONG-TERM RESERVES

The Kidney system is associated with Jing (essence), growth, reproduction, aging, and water metabolism. Black sesame seeds, walnuts, black beans, and certain nourishing foods are traditionally used to support Kidney health and nourish essence.

When Food Becomes Part of the Problem

In Chinese medicine, even nutritious foods can become unsuitable when consumed in excess, prepared in ways that do not agree with an individual's constitution, or eaten without regard to digestive capacity.

Some common dietary patterns that may contribute to imbalance include:

- **Excessive cold and raw foods:** May be unsuitable for individuals with weak digestive Qi or symptoms of internal Cold.
- **Excessive sugar and refined carbohydrates:** May contribute to Dampness and digestive sluggishness in TCM theory.
- **Excessive greasy and fried foods:** Traditionally associated with the accumulation of Dampness and Phlegm.
- **Excessive spicy foods:** May aggravate patterns of Heat and dryness.
- **Excessive salty foods:** May place additional strain on the Kidney system in TCM theory. From a biomedical perspective, excess sodium is associated with elevated blood pressure.
- **Irregular eating habits:** Skipping meals, overeating, and eating too late may interfere with digestive regularity.

> **The objective is not to label foods as universally good or bad. It is to understand how food choices, preparation, quantity, and individual constitution influence overall health.**

The Importance of Digestion in Traditional Chinese Medicine

In TCM, digestion is central to overall wellness. The Spleen and Stomach are considered the foundation of postnatal Qi because they transform food and fluids into the nourishment that supports the body.

When digestion is functioning well, the body is better able to receive, transform, and utilize nourishment.

When digestive function is compromised, a person may experience bloating, fatigue after meals, loose stools, poor appetite, or a sensation of heaviness.

Chinese food therapy emphasizes:

- Eating warm, freshly prepared meals when appropriate.
- Choosing foods that are easy to digest.
- Eating at regular intervals.
- Chewing thoroughly and eating mindfully.
- Limiting excessive greasy, processed, and overly sweet foods.
- Adjusting food choices according to the seasons and individual constitution.

Food Therapy Is Personal

There is no single diet that is appropriate for everyone.

A person experiencing signs of internal Heat may benefit from a different dietary approach than someone experiencing Cold, Dampness, or Qi deficiency. Age, activity level, digestion, constitution, seasonal changes, and existing health concerns all influence dietary recommendations.

This is why Chinese food therapy is individualized rather than based on restrictive universal food lists.

At Longville Wellness, we appreciate the relationship between nutrition, Traditional Chinese Medicine, and whole-body wellness. Food therapy can complement acupuncture, herbal medicine, and other integrative approaches to support your health goals.

YOUR NEXT STEP

Nourish with Intention. Restore Balance Naturally.

Your daily food choices can become an important part of your wellness routine. Learning how to select foods based on their flavors, energetic properties, and relationship to your body's needs can help you develop a more thoughtful relationship with nourishment.

Discover how the wisdom of Traditional Chinese Medicine can inform the way you eat, nourish, and care for your body.

Explore individualized wellness and dietary guidance at Longville Wellness.

Book an Appointment | **Visit longvillewellness.info**

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Important: Chinese food therapy is a traditional dietary framework, not a substitute for medical nutrition therapy or treatment. Food choices should also account for allergies, medical conditions, medications, and individual nutritional needs.

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