



Getting the Point

The Women's Clinic @ Uxbridge Newsletter

January 2003

NEW YEAR, NEW YOU?

Many of us will have enjoyed the Christmas holiday, whether as a religious festival of hope or as a time to share and enjoy special meals and presents with friends and family in the darkest time of the year. For many of us, though, Christmas is a difficult time, when we can feel depression, panic and loneliness as we measure our own circumstances against the imaginary ideal. Christmas over, we are being bombarded with exhortations to shed excess calories and detox, and many of us, driven by feelings of guilt about having over-indulged, make ambitious resolutions to begin austere new diets and fitness regimes.

So how can we best look after ourselves as the New Year begins? In the traditional Chinese view, it is healthy for us to live as much as possible according to the seasons. This is difficult in our culture, where our work is sedentary and we can buy strawberries in the middle of the night in January! If we feel like hibernating, we should console ourselves that Winter is a time when it is healthy and natural for us to be less active, eat well and sleep longer. See the article overleaf for some warming winter recipes to sustain and nourish us through the cold days without piling on the calories.

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Gentle stretching and moving exercises like tai chi, yoga or qi gong will keep our energy flowing. If the weather is fine, why not try leaving the car at home and forgetting about late and packed buses and trains; wrap up and walk briskly to work as the sun comes up, letting the crisp air and early winter sunshine recharge your spirit. If you see an acupuncturist regularly you will know how treatment can keep you feeling at your best. If you haven't been for a while, or have never thought about it, why not make an appointment for a health check. Treatment will be directed to exactly what you need to get you through the dark days.



COUGHS AND SNEEZES

As temperatures dropped from relatively mild in November and early December to freezing in mid December around 6 million people were suffering from coughs and colds. More people were crowding together into smoky rooms as the Christmas party season got underway. As the stress level crept higher with every bout of Christmas shopping, so resistance to infection fell

We are exposed to viruses and bacteria all the time and normally they pose little challenge to the healthy person. But when conditions such as the above exist and make the person vulnerable, or when the pathogen is particularly strong, a fight begins between the pathogen and the person's defensive energy.

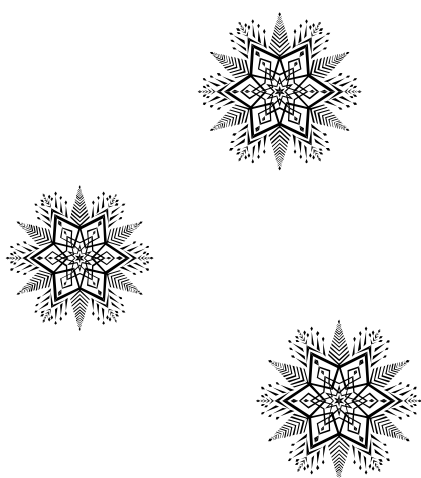
As most coughs and colds are caused by viruses, antibiotics are of no benefit to the condition, and conventional medicine can only offer some symptomatic relief without shortening the duration of the illness.

In Chinese Medicine there are two main types of cold: the "hot" type, which begins with moderate to high fever and a red sore throat, and the "cold" type, which begins with some fever but predominantly, chills, aches and pains and stiffness.

Traditional acupuncture is very effective in rapidly clearing up both types. Different techniques will be used to clear particular symptoms, such as sore throat, aches and pains, fever, dry or phlegmy cough. A warming herb, moxa, may be burnt on the skin, and glass cups may be used on the back.

Chinese dietary therapy would recommend for the "hot" type: mint or elderflower tea, lemon or lime drinks. A gargle of salt water or sage and honey tea will soothe and reduce inflammation in a sore throat. For the "cold" type, eat food with the warming properties of onions, garlic, cinnamon and ginger, and try a hot whiskey or brandy before bed.

If you are particularly vulnerable to coughs and colds, why wait until you have one before seeking treatment? A course of acupuncture before the winter can strengthen the body's defensive energy and cut down on the number and severity of attacks.



FOODS FOR ALL SEASONS – WINTER WARMERS



An essential feature of Chinese Medicine is the observation of the seasons. Ideally, our daily routines would vary with the transitions from season to season, helping us to live more harmoniously in the natural world around us. Practically, this means the hours we sleep, the foods we eat, and the way we spend our time will all vary according to what the current season is.

In our modern world, this is, of course, very difficult to do! And, in the breakneck pace of today's life, just knowing what is seasonal is a challenge. This is especially true of seasonal foods. Modern agricultural methods and massive supermarkets ensure that almost everything is available almost all the time. We have strawberries in December, salad vegetables the year round, and many winter vegetables in July!

In winter, when the climate is cold and damp, it is important to nourish and warm the body's energy. Food in winter should be warming and stimulating, and here are some guidelines for how to ensure that your food intake is appropriate for this season:

Eat sufficient proteins and starches: Although many fashionable diets call for the reduction or elimination of these food groups, they are essential for providing warmth to the body and supporting the Yang energy. Warming stews, soups made from meat and/or root vegetables, and baked potatoes are examples of foods appropriate for the winter season.

Eat cooked rather than raw foods:

Raw vegetables are challenging for the digestive system, and we use our body's energy to break them down. This calls on our Yang reserves, and cools us down in the process. Vegetables should be lightly cooked and raw salads should be kept to a minimum (if eaten at all). In winter, dried stewed fruits or baked fruits are preferable to raw fruits, and tropical fruits (such as bananas and pineapples) and unseasonable fruit (such as melon and strawberries) should be avoided.

Pay attention to cooking methods:

Foods that are roasted, baked, or stewed, ideally as slowly as possible, will be more warming. They will be deeply imbued with warmth, and these cooking methods are preferable to micro-waving, which perhaps surprisingly is not warming to the body's energy.

Use herbs and spices to add warmth to foods:

Spices such as cinnamon, ginger, cardamom, and clove are stimulating and add an extra warming power to foods – as well as tasting delicious.

Watch what you drink, and how much you drink.

The temperature of what we drink will make a great deal of difference to our energy, so avoid cold drinks. It is also important to moderate the quantity we drink. Too much liquid, especially taken at mealtimes, will swamp the digestive system and weaken it.

Here is a recipe for a warming winter infusion, which can be taken as a tea as required. It is particularly helpful for those of us who are very sensitive to the cold.

Take 5 peppercorns, 5 whole cloves, 5 cardamom pods, a stick of cinnamon, a knob of fresh ginger and place in a litre of water. Bring to the boil and simmer gently for 10-20 minutes. Drain off the resulting liquid. You can drink this on its own, or with honey and/or lemon. You can also pour it over a teabag (perhaps Earl Grey), and drink as a tea.

Try adapting your food habits to accommodate some of these guidelines, and observe what changes occur. Eating according to the season can result in increased energy, more vitality, and more enjoyment of life itself!



YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Can anyone have acupuncture?

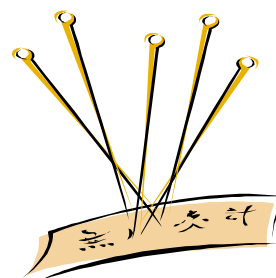
People of any age can be safely treated with acupuncture, from small babies to the very elderly.

Can I have acupuncture as well as still going to my GP and hospital appointments?

Acupuncture is a complementary therapy. Acupuncturists encourage patients to tell their doctor if they are having acupuncture. They also ask for information on any treatment someone is having from their doctor, especially any drugs which have been prescribed. This is so they can take into account any side effects the drugs are having in making their diagnosis. Acupuncture can also help minimise the side effects of some strong drugs.

I'd like to try acupuncture, but I'm really scared of needles.

For most of us, needles used therapeutically mean ones attached to a syringe to inject drugs or withdraw fluids. These are inserted intravenously or intramuscularly. Acupuncture needles are much finer, more like a thin fuse wire, and are inserted very superficially, just below the surface of the skin. Some patients don't feel needles being inserted at all. Very commonly, there is a tingling sensation or dull ache. Occasionally patients do experience a sharp twinge when acupuncture needles are inserted.



How long will treatment take?

In some cases, such as an acute condition like a bad cold, a single treatment can make a great difference. However, if you are prone to colds, the acupuncturist may want to investigate the underlying cause, and strengthen your system to reduce the number or intensity of any future infections.

Generally, the longer a patient has had a condition, the longer the series of treatment needs to be. People will feel a gradual improvement, rather than an instant cure.

What sort of conditions can acupuncture treat?

Acupuncture is probably best known for pain relief. Being a holistic therapy, in theory acupuncture can treat imbalances which manifest as illnesses and diseases. Being holistic, acupuncture also acknowledges the close links between mind and body; some acupuncturists treat people with mental health problems.

Why did an acupuncturist ask me all sorts of irrelevant questions when I'd gone to her about my frozen shoulder?

Acupuncture is a holistic therapy, which treats the whole body, not just the symptom. The answers to apparently irrelevant questions give useful information in diagnosing the underlying cause of the problem. In the same way, acupuncture treatment will often improve other aspects of a patient's life, such as sleeping better and feeling more energetic.

This newsletter is brought to you by: Maggie Bavington, Liz Cook, Beverley de Valois and Nancy Passmore. We are a group of practitioners who trained together at the College of Integrated Chinese Medicine. We are all members of the British Acupuncture Council. We practice both the Five Element and Traditional Chinese Medicine styles of acupuncture. We are all committed to ongoing supervision and training and sharing insights from our particular specialities in the interest of better care for our patients. These currently include women's health, pain relief, musculo-skeletal conditions, addiction and detox and acupuncture research.

SMOKING – HAD ENOUGH?



In the depths of Winter we look forward to Spring, when our energy will rise and new growth spring up everywhere. In Chinese medicine, this is the energy of the Wood element, which gives tiny seeds the strength to break rocks apart in their need to grow into the light. Spring is often a time when many of us feel a strong urge to make changes in our lives.

If you have been thinking about giving up smoking, why not choose the time when we are surrounded by energy for new growth? National No Smoking Day is on 12th March.

Giving up is undeniably tough, as you will know if you have already done it several times! It is worth thinking about a course of acupuncture to help you in your resolve. Acupuncture can reduce the craving for nicotine, which is a big part of the need to smoke. Your acupuncturist will also explore your own particular reasons for smoking, and will tailor your treatment according to what you need, which could be to feel more relaxed or confident, or to feel more energetic, for example.

The Women's Clinic @ Uxbridge

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For appointments, information on clinic hours,
or information about treatment call:

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now
to discuss how The Women's Clinic
can help you**

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