

Acu News

"A smile will gain you ten more years of life." -Chinese Proverb



The Many Dimensions of the Liver

Planning, visioning, growing, expanding. **Anger, headaches, frustration, pain.** What do these words mean to an acupuncturist?

THEY MEAN WE ARE TALKING ABOUT THE LIVER.

Now, when an acupuncturist talks about an organ, they aren't talking about just the physical organ sitting in your abdomen, but an energetic system in your body tasked with certain physiological, mental, and psycho-spiritual functions.

In Traditional Chinese Medicine, the liver is related to the wood element, which is the energy of springtime.

Think of the universal energy present in the spring - new buds bursting forth, new life beginning, new sprouts pushing their way through the soil and up towards the sun. This is the energy of the liver, and it is at play in our bodies as much as it is found in the world outside.

In our bodies, the liver system controls the "smooth flow of Qi." Qi is a life-force energy that flows through specific meridians - when Qi is flowing optimally, we are in a state of health. But when Qi flow is impeded, pain and sickness can occur. The liver is in charge of making sure this Qi flows properly - when it doesn't, something called Qi Stagnation occurs.

On a physical level, Qi stagnation may lead to symptoms such as neck and shoulder tension, headaches and migraines, menstrual cramps or rib cage pain. On a mental/emotional level, Qi stagnation leads to frustration, anger or rage. A good example of this is road rage - you are stuck in your car, not moving as you are expecting to be moving, and anger overtakes you. This is Qi stagnation building and building until it explodes.

The spiritual aspect of the liver is called the Hun, or ethereal soul. The Hun is closely associated with sleep, and dreams. It is said to live on in some capacity after death. It is also closely associated with visioning and planning. The Hun resides in the Liver system during our lifetime - like so many other things, it relies on the smooth flow of energy throughout the body to keep it nourished and anchored.

NOURISH THE LIVER THROUGH FOOD

Food can be used as a front line form of treatment in Chinese Medicine, as foods have specific actions in the body, and affinities for particular systems, just like herbs or acupuncture points. **Common liver-nourishing foods include liver, mustard greens, goji berries, beets, broccoli and sprouts.**



Perhaps the most important thing to remember about a liver-nourishing and liver-cleansing diet is that it should be **free of heavy, greasy and fried foods. Limit sugar, caffeine, alcohol and dairy, as well.** Pay attention to your **posture while eating, and avoid any tense or stressful conversations** during mealtimes, as these can impede the smooth flow of liver Qi.

Herbal teas can be a good addition to your diet when you are focusing on your liver - one of our favorite teas for the liver energy is mint tea. Mint gently circulates liver Qi, promotes relaxation, and calms an over-busy mind.



NOURISH THE LIVER THROUGH YOUR HABITS

The liver loves to move, so be sure you get some sort of daily exercise - the intensity depends on your constitution and what feels good.

Stretch: the liver's sister energy system, the gall bladder, controls our tendons and also the sides of the body, so stretching is very therapeutic for both the liver and gall bladder. You can create your own stretching routine, or go to a yoga class or a stretching class at your local gym.

Bend and Twist - these motions are particularly helpful to coursing liver energy effectively throughout the body.

Nourish your Hun's ability to vision and plan by creating a dream board, taking part in a goal-setting session and creating a concrete plan of how to get to those dreams and goals.

Your liver will thank you!

TCMWORKS

87 Spadina Avenue
Ottawa, ON K1Y 2B9
613-729-6678
www.tcmworks.com

© 2020 Copyright Acupuncture Media Works/AcuDownloads, All Rights Reserved. The information contained within the AcuNews newsletter is only used to educate and inform. This newsletter is not a substitute for the advice of a licensed and registered health care provider. Seek prompt attention for emergencies. Consult a health care provider for specific health concerns, and before starting a diet, cleanse or exercise routine.

Photo Credits: ©iStock.com/Solovyova, ©iStock.com/yodyim, ©iStock.com/jrkaejc, ©iStock.com/portishead1