



BEAT THE WINTER COLD & FLU

-Anna McMullen (MCM practitioner)

We have passed Winter Solstice, the shortest day and the most Yin time of the year. We now begin the journey back towards Summer, although it can seem like a long, slow and cold road. Winter, with its cold temperatures and short days, is here to stay in the meantime. With it, comes the inevitable cold and flu season.

Keeping your family healthy and strong at this time of year can feel like you're fighting a losing battle.

Chinese Medicine has a long history of treating cold and flu and supporting immunity. It is safe and gentle, and can be used by the whole family.

- During the acute phase of a cold or flu acupuncture can help to clear pathogens from the body, it can help to reduce headache, body aches and pain, ease sinus congestion, reduce cough and can even help to break a fever. In some cases, if a cold is treated at the very early stages it can prevent the cold from developing.
- Shonishin and paediatric Tui Na are needle free therapies which work beautifully for children.
- Therapies such as cupping and Gua Sha (scraping) can help the body to clear toxins and ease pain. Gua Sha is an effective tool you can learn how to use on your whole family. Ask your practitioner to show you how.
- Chinese Herbal medicine works to effectively clear pathogens from the body and to reduce the symptoms of a cold, with gentle and palatable options available for children.

Outside of an acute cold or flu attack, it is worthwhile working to support and strengthen the immune system. One of Chinese medicine's great strengths lies in its ability to maintain health. The main factors that weaken the immune system include poor diet, lack of exercise, poor sleep and stress levels. Your practitioner can help you identify any potential areas of weakness and build you up so you are less susceptible to catching bugs, and more able to bounce back after an illness.

Those who suffer from recurrent cold and flu tend to respond very well to Chinese medicine, with treatments focussed on clearing the pathogen during the acute phase, and by building up the body's defences between attacks.

If you are unlucky enough to fall ill this Winter there are some simple home remedies you can use to heal yourself and your family, using ingredients from your own kitchen!

We see cold and flu are having either hot or cold properties, the treatment will vary depending on whether it is a pattern of heat or a pattern of cold. We look at the symptoms to help us determine the type of pattern.

Heat patterns are characterised by hot symptoms: sore throat, fever, headache, thirst and a dry mouth and green or yellow mucous.

If you are suffering from a heat pattern you can drink peppermint in tea to help gently cool the body and clear heat. This can help ease the pain of a sore throat and clear the nose.

Cold patterns are seen with symptoms such as sneezing, clear mucous, stiff and sore neck and shoulders and chills more than a fever.

In these cases it is best to warm the body to clear the cold. A simple way to do this is to thinly slice a knob of fresh ginger and a couple of stems of spring onion, stir fry them in a small amount of water until soft and fragrant, and then steep in boiling water and drink as a tea.

Cold and flu can cause inflammation of the sinuses, throat and lungs. To protect the lungs we choose foods that are white in colour, as they are thought to nourish the lungs. Consider including foods such as onion, leek, garlic, cauliflower, zucchini and pear in your diet.

Stewed pears are particularly good for nourishing the lungs and stopping cough. You can add some manuka honey if the cough is dry, which has antibiotic and antiviral properties.



Fresh ginger is an excellent herb for supporting the body's natural defences, it is used in Chinese medicine to boost the Wei Qi, the body's defence Qi. Try to include it in your cooking whenever you can in soups, stews, casseroles and in desserts. It also makes a delicious addition to tea, simply slice some fresh ginger and steep.

Aside from eating a balanced diet, including lots of seasonal fruits and vegetables, it is important to pay attention to the way food is prepared. In Winter it is best to avoid excessive consumption of raw, cold or icy foods and drinks as this can damage the Yang Qi. In Australia we have a tendency to store fruit and drinking water in the fridge, however from a Chinese medicine perspective chilled foods and drinks can put strain on the digestion and allow cold energy in to the body. This depletes the Yang Qi and can compromise the immune system. Try allowing your fruit and drinking water to come to room temperature before eating. Your Yang Qi will thank you for it.

Choose foods that are lightly cooked such as steamed or stir fried foods, these are easy for the body to digest. Alternatively cooking foods for a long period of time helps impart a warming, nourishing energy. This helps support the digestion and boost immunity. Casseroles, soups, stews, roasts and slow cooked foods are perfect for this time of year.

While eating well is so very important, sometimes it can help to have some additional support in the form of vitamins and supplements. Probiotics are excellent for helping to strengthen the immune system. They work to improve the gut flora, the natural intestinal bacterial growth. This bacterial growth plays a key role in the immune system. Illness, antibiotic usage and stress are all factors that can affect the gut flora. You can include foods such as sauerkraut, kim chi and kefir in your diet or alternatively you may wish to include a probiotic supplement. Children respond particularly well to probiotic supplementation, with some probiotics being available in powder form which are easily hidden in foods.

Other supplements that can be useful in supporting immunity are zinc and vitamin C. Zinc is found naturally in oysters, beef, lamb, chicken, pork, liver, nuts (particularly cashews) seeds (particularly pumpkin), cacao, beans and mushrooms. Vitamin C is found in citrus fruits, berries and kiwi fruit among others. They are also readily available in supplement form. Be mindful of the zinc supplementation you choose, many zinc combinations also contain vitamin A which is contraindicated during pregnancy and should be avoided if trying to conceive. In the clinic we have a zinc and C combination in powder form, which is suitable for the whole family and is available in two different flavours.

It is possible to get you and your family through Winter with minimum fuss, just focus on eating well, keeping stress levels low, exercising and of course looking after your health with regular acupuncture treatments. To get you started with some Winter foods, I have included a recipe for my White Winter Soup. It is packed full of yummy white vegetables and is just the thing to nourish your lungs and support your immune system.

White Winter Soup

- 1 onion
- 1 leek
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- 3 sticks celery
- 1 large zucchini
- Half a head of cauliflower
- 1 potato (or sweet potato)
- 6-8 cups vegetable or chicken stock



Method – Chop vegetables. Sauté onions and leek with crushed garlic in olive or coconut oil until onions are soft and translucent. Add stock and the rest of the vegetables. Bring to boil and then reduce to simmer until all the vegetables are soft and completely cooked. Take off the heat and let cool slightly before blending.

This makes a beautiful pale green soup, it is delicious and nourishing and works to strengthen the lungs.

CONTACT US

CLINIC HOURS

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