

LIFE'S NEWS: A NEWSLETTER ABOUT CHINESE MEDICINE FOR WOMEN



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LIFE'S NEWS IS A NEWSLETTER FROM LIFE HEALING LIFE AN ACUPUNCTURE AND CHINESE MEDICINE CLINIC IN MINNEAPOLIS, MN SPECIALIZING IN WOMEN'S HEALTH & FERTILITY. WE HOPE YOU ENJOY IT!



A NOTE FROM NICOLE

Welcome! As the owner and practitioner at Life Healing Life I am excited to be sending out the first of many newsletters to come. It is the mission of Life Healing Life to educate and empower women through traditional healing. I sincerely hope this newsletter will be a powerful tool for reaching that goal. I hope you will enjoy it, learn from it and will share it with the women in your life!

OUT OF BALANCE: INFERTILITY IN A BUSY WORLD

Understanding Yin & Yang:

In Chinese medicine there are two opposing yet mutually enhancing types of energy. These two polar opposites are called yin and yang. Although these words may mean little to us and seem strange when compared to our western model of medicine they are actually useful concepts and fairly simple to understand.

Yang energy is associated with moving, action and “doing” and also with heat, speed, drive and force. It is the dominant energy in summer, daytime, and men.

Yin energy is associated with stillness, nurturing, and “being,” and also with coolness, tranquility, and with letting go. Yin is the dominant energy of winter, nighttime and women.

Yin Yang & Fertility:

One look at the world around us will show that we live in a culture that is predominantly yang. We eat and run, are

super moms, weekend warriors, jet setters, experts at multi-tasking and are proud of it! Even the idea of women’s liberation is largely based on the idea that in order to become empowered equals women could and should become the same and act the same as men.

But where is the yin and how does this all relate to fertility? Why doesn’t our culture value what is naturally yin and why isn’t true women’s liberation achieved when feminine qualities are valued equally to masculine ones?

Take a moment and picture a seed in the palm of your hand. Imagine what it would need to grow... sunshine (yang energy), warmth (yang), soil & nutrients (yin), water (yin), and patience (yin). Conception and a healthy pregnancy are no different than that small seed. If the environment within the body is balanced life will thrive and miracles happen.

Unfortunately, so many people are out of balance that fertility struggles are becoming commonplace. Recent studies show rates of infertility skyrocketing with one out of every six couples taking more than one year to conceive. Women

who were once took time to protect and cultivate yin energy now neglect it and consequently lack the yin necessary to nourish a new life. Many



women have worked so hard at being yang that they deplete their yang energies too! What's worse, the stress and urgency to get pregnant by any means necessary often lead to even more imbalance!

With these types of imbalance, infertility isn't the only problem. Other physical and emotional signs of imbalance often result. Feeling hot, hot flashes, night sweats, dryness, thirst, irritability, frustration and anger are all common signs of yin deficiency. While feeling cold, frequent urination, low back & knee pain, low energy, low sex-drive, anxiety, and worry are all signs of yang deficiency.



Restoring Balance:

Fortunately traditional Chinese medicine can rebalance the body and heal the underlying causes of infertility. Chinese Medicine, especially acupuncture and herbs, can help break old cycles, rebalance yin & yang and get the body back in balance. Chinese medicine also has many lifestyle suggestions to help preserve yang and nourish yin such as:

Eat well: avoid foods with artificial hormones and pesticides. Eat a balanced diet and eat in moderation. Eat slowly while sitting down. Enjoy your food. Incorporate foods that help treat your Chinese medical pattern.

Sleep Well: Try breathing or visualizations before going to bed. Establish a nighttime routine. Allow yourself enough time to sleep at least 7-9 hours.

Nourish Your Yin: Cultivate stillness and tranquility in your life. Go slowly and take time to relax. Do things that take time like gardening or reading a good book. Journal.

Breathe: Remind yourself to breathe deeply. Learn breathing exercises and allow yourself time to relax.

Meditate (practice yoga, tai chi or qi gong):

Embrace gentle exercises that cultivate yin and protect yang. Let go of unrealistic "yang" ideals of beauty and embrace the yin curves and beauty of the female body.

Enjoy Life: Do things each day that make you smile. Cultivate your relationships. Make conscious choices to live in a way that is true to your spirit. Laugh, Live & Love!



If you would like more information on Chinese medicine & fertility please feel free to contact Life Healing Life or attend one of our classes on finding fertility.

--Nicole Lange Lic.Ac. MA.OM.

QI GONG BREATH

This breathing exercise is from the ancient Taoist tradition. It is useful for slowing down and relaxing while bringing essential energy to the reproductive organs and promoting fertility and a healthy menstrual cycle. Do it as often as you like *except when menstruating or pregnant*.

Place the tip of the tongue just behind your front teeth

Inhale through your nose

Visualize the breath descending:

Down the front of your body

Down the mid-line

Between your breasts

Through your upper abdomen

Past your navel

Into your lower abdomen

Allow the breath to pool in your lower abdomen

Allow your abdomen to relax and push out

Contract your pelvic floor (Kegel exercise)

Release the Kegel

Begin to exhale slowly

Visualize the breath ascending:

Up the back of your body

Up the mid-line

Through the spinal column

Up the back of the head

Following the top of the skull

Back out the nose



Continue allowing the breath to become smooth & steady

HIBERNATION TIME!

Much of Chinese medical theory was established through careful observation of the natural world. An important concept is the idea of living in balance with the seasons. When you adjust your life and live in sync with the seasons you promote good health & prevent illness. Here are some suggestions for living in harmony with winter.



Be active during daylight hours and rest when it is dark: work, exercise and do vigorous activities while the sun is up. After sundown do things that are calm and quiet like read a book, meditate, take a bath, or journal about your day. Try to add an hour of sleep to your schedule by going to bed earlier.

Eat warm foods so your body doesn't get cold: this means eating foods that are cooked, stewed, steamed and stir fried as well as eating foods that have a little spice (like ginger, onions, garlic, basil, etc.). Avoid cold foods like ice cream, iced drinks, raw foods, etc.

Keep your thermostat a few degrees lower and dress warmer: this is more natural than keeping your heat turned up and dressing cooler. You will get fewer colds and it is good for the environment and your pocketbook.

Regenerate: follow nature's lead and take this time to be still and grow from deep within!

RECIPE: HOT & SOUR SOUP

This tasty winter recipe follows the concept of eating with the seasons. It will warm you up and can help with stuffy noses and colds.

1 small dried wood ear mushroom*
1/4c frozen peas
1/2c frozen shrimp
1/2c canned bamboo shoots*
1/8c tofu cut into cubes then sliced thinly
1/4lb char siu (Chinese BBQ pork)*^
2 eggs
1 small fresh red chili
1T dark soy sauce*
1t cornstarch mixed with 1T cold water
2T red rice vinegar*
ground pepper to taste
*Can be found at an Asian grocery store
^You may substitute ham or other BBQ pork

Soak the dried mushroom in cold water overnight to re-constitute. Squeeze out the excess water and cut into small pieces.

Defrost peas & shrimp and drain them.

Drain the bamboo, rinse and slice thinly.

Thinly slice the char siu.

Break eggs into a bowl and whisk them.

Wash the chili, and slice finely (wash your hands after or wear gloves to avoid irritating the skin).

Bring 2 1/2 cps water to a boil in a pot.

Add the pork, shrimp, bamboo shoots, tofu, peas, wood ear, soy and some of the chili (to taste) and cook 2 minutes over medium.

Slowly pour in the egg while continuously stirring (it should cook into flaky strands).

Add the cornstarch & stir to thicken slightly.

Turn off the heat and stir in the vinegar

Transfer to a bowl & serve.

From The Feng Shui Kitchen: The philosopher's guide to cooking & eating By Master Lam Kam Chuen

*Bear with things as the earth bears with us:
by yielding, by accepting, by nourishing
-I Ching*

ASK AN ACUPUNCTURIST

If you have a question you'd like answered please email it to nicole@lifehealinglife.com



*Dear Nicole,
I suffer every month with horrible PMS. Is there anything Chinese medicine can do to help? --puffy, mad & sore*

Dear PMS,
While PMS is something many women in the West have been taught is “just part of being a woman,” in Chinese medicine it is a clear sign of imbalance and can be completely resolved with proper treatment. Signs like cramps, back aches, breast tenderness, irritability, crying and changes in bowel movements are all caused when blood and energy in your body do not move smoothly and become lodged in specific locations (like a traffic jam). Because there are several underlying reasons that may cause blood and energy to become stagnant the best long term results and specific advice will be gotten by seeing an acupuncturist and having your individual case analyzed.

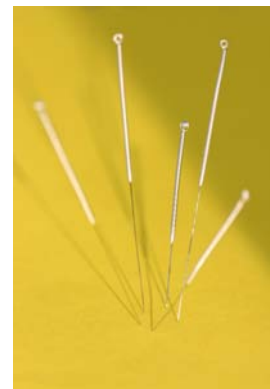
The best general advise for reducing signs of PMS involve making specific lifestyle changes that create more movement and reduce congestion of blood and energy. By making simple changes you can start to decrease symptoms and improve not only PMS, but also your general health. *Try doing the following starting from day 15 of your cycle and see what a difference they can make:*

- ~Eat foods that are aromatic (herbs, spices, etc.)
- ~Wear loose clothes (especially around the abdomen)
- ~Take warm baths
- ~Gently massage your lower abdomen
- ~Do gentle physical exercises
- ~Practice deep breathing exercises
- ~Rest and get good sleep
- ~Allow for emotional movement by journaling, creating art, talking with friends, or even watching a favorite movie and having a good cry.

I hope you will give these a try and see what a difference they can make.

*Hi Nicole,
I've heard a lot about acupuncture lately and I'd like to try it...only one problem...I hate needles! Is there any hope for me? --Not a Pin Cushion*

Dear NAPC,
I'd like to commend you for asking and assure you that there is hope! How do I know this? First off, as an acupuncturist I've treated many patients who weren't too keen on needles (honestly, who *is* keen on needles?) and I like to stress is that although acupuncture is what most people think of when they think of Chinese medicine, it is actually only one tool that a Chinese medical practitioner might use. Imagine a tool box full of tools. Acupuncture may be one of the main tools (like the hammer), but there are always reasons to use other tools and always multiple ways to get a job done.



The second thing I would stress is that acupuncture needles do not feel like the needles that are used in Western medicine. The thickest needle used in acupuncture is still significantly thinner than the needles that are used for shots or to draw blood (sorry if the mere mention makes you squeamish!) Acupuncture needles are also solid (not hollow), so they don't have as much surface contact with the skin. Many patients can't even feel an acupuncture needle going in and like the sensation once the needle is in place. I hope you'll give it a try and find out for yourself!

If you have received this newsletter through a friend and would like to be added to the mailing list or would like more information on treatments, classes or public speaking events please contact Nicole Lange.

The information in this newsletter is based on classical Chinese medical theory and was written by a board certified, licensed acupuncturist. It is intended for use as general information and should not replace individual care or be used in place of a medical diagnosis or specific treatment (by an acupuncturist or western medical doctor).

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Life Healing Life Acupuncture for Women's Health & Fertility
2917 Bryant Avenue South Suite No. 5, Minneapolis, MN 55408
nicole@lifehealinglife.com www.lifehealinglife.com
612.423.9986