

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



SUMMER, 2007 ISSUE 3

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!

THE CATCH 22 OF CONTROL Why Letting Go Promotes Fertility

As a fertility specialist I work with patients with many different concerns. From the frustrating diagnosis of unexplained infertility to the clinical sounding PCOS, MFI, and endometriosis to the hopelessness of advanced maternal age I work with it all. And, although every patient is different and every treatment customized to individual needs there is one pattern of imbalance I see time and time again. This one pattern is the most common imbalance I see and it is no wonder...our whole culture is ideal for creating it!

This type of imbalance is called qi stagnation (also called qi constraint or liver qi stagnation). And while this diagnosis is completely foreign to most Americans, it is a type of imbalance that has been recognized by Chinese medicine for thousands of years. In essence, it is when the energy within the body does not flow smoothly. This means the qi (or energy) tends to get stuck in some areas while leaving others without enough.

Symptoms of qi stagnation include:

- Frequent sighing and/or yawning
- Frustration and/or depression
- Irritability and anger
- Difficulty expressing oneself
- Being rigid, controlled, scheduled
- Dull achy pains (headaches, cramps...)
- Vivid dreams and/or restless sleep
- Visual or eye symptoms
- PMS (physical & emotional)

- Erratic BBT temperatures
- Breast nodules, distention, pain
- Brown or dark purple menstrual spotting
- Cold hands and feet (energy can't get there)
- Cramps with bowel movements
- Painful bloating

Here's the catch 22...the desire to control, frustration, structure and rigidity are both an outcome of AND the cause of liver qi stagnation. This means there is often a, "which came first the chicken or the egg?" aspect to this pattern: does a woman want to control because her energy (qi) is stagnant or is her energy stagnant because she wants to control? There really is no way of telling, but that's okay!



What is important is this: If you can change one aspect, you will change the other. So, being less structured, controlling, and rigid allows your qi to move AND moving your qi (I'll tell you how to do this in a bit) allows you to feel less structured, controlling frustrated, and rigid. This means there is lots YOU can do!

But, why does this all matter when it comes to fertility? Simple. When the qi stops flowing smoothly it causes immediate reproductive issues and imbalance as well. Hormone levels become unstable, the body temperature becomes erratic

(and in-conducive to developing healthy follicles), the endometrial lining receives inconsistent nourishment to grow properly, ovulation becomes hesitant, an egg cannot move smoothly through the fallopian tube, the menstrual flow becomes erratic...and the list goes on and on. All of which decrease a woman's overall fertility and make a pregnancy not only difficult to achieve, but difficult to maintain. Not to mention how the woman feels both physically and emotionally!

PMS has a connection to qi stagnation too. As the blood and energy increase each month (in preparation for a pregnancy or a period) it means there is a lot more to get stuck. This explains why women often have more obvious signs of qi stagnation right before their period and fewer stagnation signs after their period is done! So, what can you do? Awareness is first...

Begin to take notice of how often your hands and feet are cold. If they are cold frequently, you can bet your qi is stuck and that your ovaries and uterus are not getting qi to them too!

This makes sense from a Western anatomical perspective as well. Blood flow to the reproductive organs is not direct. It must go to your kidneys and your legs first and then to your reproductive organs last (making them like an extremity). And, when the qi is stagnant, even less gets to your reproductive organs. Not good if you are trying to conceive (or just have a healthy menstrual cycle).

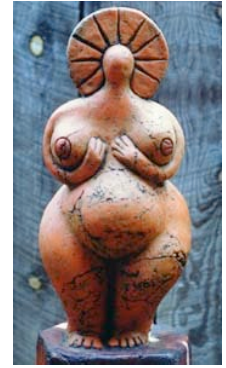
What can you do? There are lots of ways to get your qi moving. Here are some places to start:

Deep breathing exercises: Create more internal movement by deepening your breath. Next time your hands and feet are cold try this: do just one minute of focussed deep breathing and see how much they warm up. It really is amazing!

Emotional Movement: creativity and expression are two important ways to get your qi moving. Journal, sing, talk with a friend, draw a picture of your body and fill it with words or pictures that show how you feel, write out your goals, write out your fears, get out what's making you sad, mad or angry. Express yourself! You do not need to be positive all the time. You just need to express what you are feeling.



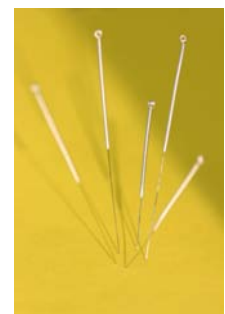
Physical movement: gentle physical activities like qi gong, tai chi, yoga, walking, swimming, etc. are great ways to get the qi flowing. Be careful not to overdo it though. If you do, you may be moving your qi, at the expense of your qi, blood, yin and yang, which can lead to different (but equally unhealthy) patterns of depletion. Women are supposed to have curves...just look at the fertility goddesses!



Let go: it is easy to want to control especially when something is so important and we are desperate to succeed: BBT charts, ovulation predictor kits, special diets, sex on a schedule, spending time and money on things that stress you out...in short spending your days being consumed with doing everything in your power to control your fertility... The bad news is, these things all create major qi stagnation and actually hurt your chances of getting pregnant. This is a hard concept for many women to grasp, and it is not how the Western world looks at fertility (or life for that matter), but what I tell my patients is this, "has it been working for you so far?" This seems harsh, but it can ultimately become a wonderful revelation because it is so freeing! Throw out the BBT thermometer, have sex when you want to (not when you should), eat healthy, but enjoy what you like too, and let go! I can't say how much of a difference this one shift in perspective can make!

Enjoy life: of course you want to live a healthy life and use moderation, but this means just that...moderation. You do not need to live a life of deprivation (unless you are also trying to become a saint). An occasional drink, some chocolate, a pajama day... these are chances to enjoy life...not causes for guilt.

Break the habit: Sometimes your qi is so accustomed to being stuck it is difficult to start to change it without a little help. This is where Chinese medicine can help. Acupuncture and herbs can start shifting your energy and make it easier for you to start making some changes of your own. It can also help you change your pattern faster.



SUMMER SUN

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 comfortably in summer.



Be active during daylight hours and rest when it is dark: Take advantage of the extra “yang” activating energy of the summer months. Wake earlier and spend some time in nature benefiting from the extra sun!

Eat foods that will keep you cool: Foods with high water content like cucumbers, watermelon and bean sprouts are a great way to prevent overheating in summer. Eat them regularly to help stay cool even on the hottest days.

Avoid catching a chill: As strange as it sounds it is especially easy to catch colds in the summer. Sleeping with a fan blowing on you, air conditioning, swimming in cold water, and eating too many frozen foods and iced drinks can all leave you feeling ill.

Get a boost: All the extra sunlight and energy make summer a time to cultivate extra energy. Try doing qi gong in the morning or breathing exercises at sunrise and take in all the extra energy summer has to offer.

RECIPE: BEAN SPROUT NOODLES

Summer is the season of heat and abundance. Care should be taken not to overheat and the diet should counterbalance the summer heat. We should replenish our inner reserves of liquid and salts while being sure not to overdo it by eating smaller easier to digest meals.

- 1 medium onion
- 3 1/2-4 cups mung (or other) bean sprouts
- 3 scallions
- 1 lb. noodles*
- 2 T oil
- a little ground white pepper
- a pinch of salt
- 1 t. sugar
- 2 T light soy sauce
- 2 T oyster sauce

*rice, wheat or egg noodles will all work well

Peel & half the onion then cut into thin slices

Clean the bean sprouts and remove any brown ones

Trim the roots off the scallions and cut into 1 1/2” bits

Boil plenty of water in a large pot, add the noodles and stir to separate, turn off heat, cover and leave stand for a few minutes. The noodles should be soft, pliable and the same color all through when you break them in half.

Drain noodles and rinse with cold water then drain well

Cut drained noodles into 6” sections to make easier to eat
heat a wok, add 2T oil and coat the surface

Add onion and stir fry

Add the noodles

Add the bean sprouts and scallions and stir thoroughly

Sprinkle with white pepper, sugar and soy sauce

Finally add oyster sauce and stir

Plate, serve & enjoy

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

Nicole's Note: This recipe is quick, easy & delicious!

Fresh air impoverishes the doctor.
~Danish Proverb

ASK AN ACUPUNCTURIST

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



Dear Nicole, Can acupuncture help with unexplained infertility? --Longing for Hope

Dear Longing for Hope,

First, let me say how sorry I am to hear of your frustrations and difficulties conceiving. The desire to become a parent is such a powerful thing and a diagnosis of unexplained infertility can be extremely frustrating. The good news is, Chinese medicine can often help...

Because Chinese medicine is based on holism, every factor of your health is equally important in making a diagnosis. So, while reproductive factors can be telling (elevated FSH, PCOS, low estrogen, endometriosis, etc.) it is no more or no less telling than all your other signs and symptoms: Do you get headaches, have digestive concerns, chronic pain or allergies? Are you always too hot or too cold? Do you struggle with anxiety, depression or irritability? Do you exercise too much or too little, have a high stress job, or a poor diet? Do you feel supported and able to express yourself? All of these factors help a traditional Chinese practitioner make a holistic diagnosis, so (you guessed it!) there is never an instance of unexplained infertility!

What does this mean for treatment and prognosis? In my experience, the prognosis for unexplained infertility is very good! When everything is viewed all together and a holistic diagnosis is made, not only do the treatments result in improved fertility, they lead to improved overall health and a better quality of life.

If you are interested in finding out more about the holistic model of health, check out the [Spring 2007 issue of Life's News](#) on the Life Healing Life website. If you are interested in learning more about holistic medicine and unexplained infertility or other fertility diagnosis I'd also recommend "The Infertility Cure" by Randine Lewis.

I hope this gives you not only hope for your fertility journey, but also for your overall quality of life! --Nicole

Hi Nicole, Could you suggest some resources for someone who is struggling with fertility concerns? --Searching

Dear Searching,

There are so many wonderful resources...here are just a few of my personal favorites:

Books*: [The Infertility Cure by Randine Lewis](#), [Conquering Infertility by Alice Domar](#), [Full Catastrophe Living by Jon Kabat-Zinn](#)

CDs*: [Guided imagery for fertility by Anji](#), [Mindfulness for Beginners by Jon Kabat-Zinn](#)

DVDs*: [The New Medicine](#), [The Fertile Soul Qi Gong](#)

Others^: [Dr. Jeanette Truchsess' Mind/Body Program](#)

*Note: I am in no way affiliated with or connected with these products and benefit in no way from the sales of them. They are simply resources I have enjoyed and use in my practice!

^I do teach a section in week eight of this ten week course

If you would like to share your favorite supports I welcome them! [Email Nicole](#)

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. If you would like to stop receiving this newsletter please do the same.

The information in this newsletter is based on classical Chinese medical theory and was written by* Nicole Lange 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)

* unless otherwise noted.

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