



# Wellness Review June

## My Top Cold and Flu Busting Tips!

Well winter is finally here. As we know this is the peak season for colds and flu so I thought it very timely to share with you some of my top tips to keep you and your family healthy this winter.

The ancient Chinese believed that human beings should live in harmony with the natural cycles of their environment. The cold and darkness of winter urges us to slow down. This is the time of year to reflect on our health, replenish our energy, and conserve our strength. Unfortunately, with our temperate climate in Sydney most of us carry on with our busy schedules. However, for the sake of your health, I encourage you to take on some of the Ancient Chinese wisdom.

According to the Chinese winter is Yin in nature; it is inactive, cold, and damp. As a result we see lots of lung and upper respiratory complaints during this season. The dominant emotions of winter are fear and depression or melancholy. Hence it is time for self-reflection and introspection, for adequate time to rest, recuperate and consolidate your chi or energy and prepare for the outburst of new life and energy in the spring.

In Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) winter is ruled by the water element, which is associated with the kidneys, bladder, and adrenal glands. According to the philosophy of traditional Chinese medicine, the kidneys are considered the source of all energy (chi) within the body. They store all of the reserve chi in the body so that it can be used in times of stress and change, or to heal, prevent illness, and age gracefully. Unfortunately, in our modern societies with our high pressure and busy schedules our kidney and adrenal glands are constantly under enormous stress.

During the winter months it is important to nurture and nourish our kidney chi. It is the time where this energy can be most easily depleted. Our bodies are instinctively expressing the fundamental principles of winter – rest, reflection, conservation, and storage.

## Foods for Winter

In TCM the predominant taste for winter is salty. This does not mean add or consume lots of salt laden processed foods, nuts, potato chips or added iodised salt, but rather include salty foods like miso, tamari and seaweed and use good quality Celtic or Himalayan salt in cooking to draw out flavours.

Avoid raw foods during the winter as much as possible, as these tend to cool the body. Also avoid foods which create damp and mucous in the body such as dairy products, wheat and especially sugar which also reduces the activity of your white blood cells.

During winter you should emphasize warming foods such as s:

- Slow cooked Soups and stews, especially bone broths
- Root vegetables
- Legumes and pulses
- Miso and seaweed
- Onions, garlic and ginger

Eating warm hearty soups, root vegetables such as sweet potato, pumpkin, parsnip, and activated or roasted nuts help to warm the body's core and to keep us nourished.

## Staying Healthy This Winter

Seasonal changes affect the body's environment and with the wind, rain, and snow (not such an issue in Sydney) comes the colds, flu, aches, and pains. According to TCM, stress, frustration, and unresolved anger can work together to throw your immune system off, allowing pathogens to affect your body.

Here are a few tips to staying healthy this winter:

- **Wash your hands regularly.** Studies have shown that one of the main reasons that we catch colds and flu in the winter season is that we are indoors and in closer proximity to others in cold weather. Protect yourself by washing your hands regularly and try not to touch your face. Use a natural chemical free hand sanitiser.
- **Get plenty of sleep.** The Nei Ching, an ancient Chinese classic, advised people to go to sleep early and rise late, after the sun's rays have warmed the atmosphere a bit. This preserves your own yang energy for the task of warming in the face of cold.
- **Reduce stress.** Find a way to relax and release stress on a daily basis. Such methods may include yoga, meditation, biofeedback, simple relaxation therapy, or whatever method you use to release the stress and pressures of modern life.
- **Take immune boosting vitamins and minerals** such as vitamin C, bioflavonoids selenium, vitamin A and zinc to support your immune system and protect your mucous membranes and lungs.
- **Essential oils** used in diffusers, as inhalations or nasal sprays can be extremely effective to boost immunity and reduce eucalyptus, Oil of Oregano, Peppermint, Cloves and Thyme.
- **Herbal medicines are particularly effective during winter to support and build up our immune system.** Some of my favourites include:
  - Echinacea and Astragalus are our top herbs to build up your immune system and prevent colds and flu viruses;
  - Mushroom Extracts such as Reishi, Shitake, Cordyceps and Chaga have many health benefits not only do they build up and balance the immune system they also tone the adrenal glands and kidneys making them a welcome addition to your winter regime;
  - Elderberry is one of my all-time favourites to not only strengthen the immune system but is also highly effective against cold and flu viruses if taken in high doses in combination with vitamin C and zinc at first signs of cold and flu;
  - Andrographis and Cats Claw are my other favourites for immune support and balance;
  - Lung infections and coughs can be a lingering problem during winter and some of my favourite herbs for coughs include Plantain, Marshmallow, Elecampagne, Licorice, Mullein, Ginger and Wild Cherry Bark.
  - For upper respiratory complaints like sore throats, and sinus congestion or mucous I use Eyebright, Fenugreek, Horseradish, Cloves, Calendula, Golden Seal, Elder Flower and Wood Betony. These are best used in combination to get the best results.

I love using my liquid herbal concoctions for all winter complaints but there are also many good tablet and powder options available for all ages. For product recommendations or tailor made immune solutions please do not hesitate to contact me. Remember take the time to stay well this winter!

