

# Traditional Chinese Medicine & Weight Loss

BY DORIS RATHGEBER

*Controlling your weight can be a frustrating process, especially when there are so many different weight loss plans with conflicting information about what works and what doesn't.*

There are many differences between Western weight-loss strategies and the Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) approach. The biggest difference between the two is that Western methods focus almost exclusively on external factors such as weight and food. TCM addresses the origin of weight conditions. From a TCM perspective, it is essential to identify and treat the cause of any condition in order to truly heal it.

According to TCM theory, a person must have sufficient Qi (energy) and their internal organs must work in harmony with each other. If there isn't enough Qi, one or more organs can become imbalanced and develop energy function disorders. When this happens, bodily functions such as metabolizing food and ridding the body of excess water and fat become imbalanced. Very often, physical problems like headaches and allergies, and emotional difficulties such as depression, precede a weight gain. These are all signals that the body is having functional difficulties. Frequently the relationship between the Spleen and Liver Systems – both key to proper digestion – becomes imbalanced. In the practice of TCM, it is believed that a balanced body does not have weight problems. When a person's Qi is strong and balanced, weight will be lost naturally and normal weight maintained.

Every food, according to TCM understanding, carries a specific essence that resonates energetically with one or more organs. Cravings are signals that an organ may be imbalanced and in need of additional Qi. If you crave sweets, for instance, chances are that your Spleen System is out of balance (sweet is the taste associated with this organ). Often, TCM practitioners prescribe certain foods to their patients. Food is just one of many healing resources used in TCM treatment, along with herbs, acupuncture, and acupressure. Food recommendations are always made with the intention of healing the issue related to



your specific health condition. Nutrients used in this way (as medicine) are for the purpose of healing one or more particular organs to restore overall health.

In TCM, acupuncture is a common therapy for weight loss. It is effective in making it easier for a person to lose and maintain weight – providing the patient is willing to change their lifestyle. Acupuncture needles inserted into specific points on the body release endorphins that have a calming and relaxing effect. This can make it easier for a person to deal with stress, frustration and anxiety, which are often triggers for overeating and bingeing on fattening foods. Endorphins also affect the digestive and hormonal systems. Acupuncture can help rebalance the organ systems that are running too fast or too slow.

Different therapeutic approaches such as acupuncture, herbal remedies, lifestyle counseling and massage may be used singly or in combination. Physicians who use these therapies have their own particular therapeutic modalities and will determine what works best for their patient. The use of herbal preparations and food therapies are the most common approaches. The Chinese have applied and refined these techniques for thousands of years with consistent and outstanding results. However, it is important to note that it is impossible for most people to lose weight and keep it off without eating less and exercising more. Both TCM and Western medicine agree on this point. ✍️

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