

# Living Healthy in Summer Time

Shanghai is a city where the seasons change quickly. After a long and cold winter, there is only a short spring before the high temperatures of the summer season start. Shanghai summers are a challenge for our health. With hot temperatures and high degrees of humidity outside and cold AC-conditioning inside, many people cannot avoid suffering from an illness that is associated with these extreme conditions.

According to TCM, high temperatures promote heat-related illnesses. The obvious illnesses are dehydration, heat cramps and heat exhaustion or even heat stroke. But also other heat-related diseases like high blood pressure, cholesterol, migraine or menopause symptoms often worsen in summer time.

Especially children (but also adults) often suffer from summer heat when they experience loss of fluids and salt through heavy sweating. Heat illnesses usually start with the symptoms of dehydration. Kids might face the same symptoms as adults, e.g. they are overly thirsty, have little and dark yellow urine, are tired and complain about headaches. A cool place and enough water or unsweetened tea will improve the kids' or adults' situation fast. When doing exercise in warm weather, kids and adults alike can be afflicted with heat cramps. Heat cramps are heavy muscle pain or muscle spasms during or after exercising in the heat. It is recommended to stop doing sports directly, go into the shade and drink several cups of water or sports drinks. Also,

light stretching and massage will help. In general, doing sports outside by over 28°C can be dangerous to the body. Intensive loss of fluids and heat exposure can lead to heat exhaustion and heat stroke. Symptoms are pale skin, fast breathing, headaches, nausea, fainting, and vomiting. A doctor should be consulted instantly. In the meantime, cooling down the body with fans or cold towels is helpful. When the person is not vomiting and does not feel nauseous, cool drinks can be given as well. In general, following some advice can hamper heat-related illnesses easily. Drinking a lot of water (although avoiding ice-cold drinks) and resting sufficiently is essential. When being outdoors, reduce the time of working or exercising and avoid direct exposure to sunlight. The body can already be cooled down by the right clothes: loose-fitting, light colors and light weight.

In summer time, not only the heat makes us suffer a lot but also the humid weather. When humidity attacks the body, it often leads to dampness in the spleen-organ and results in stomach and digestion diseases. Common symptoms are nausea, diarrhea, constipation, and loss of appetite. To relieve the dampness and the heat from the body, eating the right foods usually helps a lot. Particularly in summer, greasy and fried foods, spicy foods, alcohol, sweets and milk products lead to dampness in the digestion system. Also, cold beverages, fermented foods and vinegar compound the symptoms. Good food items are onions, basil, rosemary, dill, oregano and parsley as they clear the

heat and the dampness from the body.

Carefully selecting the right combination of foods for the daily diet can prevent stomach illnesses and strengthen the digestive system right from the beginning. By looking at the local traditions, the Chinese change the nutrition according to the seasons. In summer, their diet consists of lightly cooked or lightly fried foods. The Chinese eat more summer fruits, fish, salads (pasta or rice) and a lot of vegetables. Preferred veggies are white mushrooms, tomatoes, spinach, carrots, asparagus, broccoli, bamboo, lemon, soybeans, and eggplant. Highly recommended in summer are watermelon, cucumber and strawberry as these foods clear heat and generate fluids. These items also strengthen the digestion, have anti-inflammatory properties and reduce swellings. A very popular Chinese summer dish with a cooling effect on the body is mung bean soup which can be served cold or warm. Other cooling vegetable soups are also healthy and delicious in summer time.

Summer is a great season of joy and happiness, in Chinese medicine it is the season of the heart. It is a time for our bodies to nourish, collect power and spirit. Enjoy this special season in a healthy way together with your families and friends.

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For more information go to:  
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