



Cooling Down in Summertime

By Doris Rathgeber



The summer in Shanghai is characterized by extremely high temperatures and high humidity. Almost everyone, Chinese or foreigner, has to suffer from these conditions, some more, some less. Chinese ideology and TCM can explain the reasons why the body reacts to these hot and humid conditions the way it does and can give us specific (although often simple) tips about how to cool down and enjoy this season more.

The Ancient Chinese spent a lot of time examining the seasons and

relating them to their theories and methodologies. According to Chinese understanding, Yin and Yang are linked to seasonal change. Yin symbolizes the darkness and cold and therefore the winter indicates the peak of the Yin cycle. Yang is related to brightness and warmth, therefore summer is the peak of Yang cycle. Also, the five elements theory associates each with a season – fire with high summer, earth with late summer, metal with fall, water with winter and wood with spring. In Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), the summertime is linked to the heart

and small intestine as well as to the tongue. During this season it is good to take a closer look at these organs and understand how to take good care of them. Emotions in summer are mostly related to joy, happiness and laughter.

The summer heat is one of the pathogenic (external) factors in TCM that causes diseases (others are wind, dampness, dryness, cold and fire). Chinese physicians explain the phenomenon of summer heat and its effect on the body as follows: High temperatures and heat attack the body and increase the Yang energy. In this state, people notice head-

aches, red faces, and high fevers. The body tries to counterbalance the heat and starts sweating. Thereby, it consumes Yin energy (water) and reduces the amount of body fluids, which often results in a deficiency of them. At the same time, dampness often affects the body (through consuming sugared and icy foods and drinks) and usually leads to gastrointestinal disorders such as diarrhea, nausea, vomiting and loss of appetite.

In general, it can be said that summer heat promotes specific illnesses such as hot flushes, headaches, anger,



We cannot change the weather but we can adapt to it, in order to enjoy this time of the year the most. Small changes in our habits and behavior can give us huge benefits in the summertime.

heat cramps and exhaustion. Especially vulnerable to these high temperatures are men (with high internal heat because they are Yang), pregnant women or women in menopause (imbalance of Yin and Yang). Also, heart-related illnesses such as agitation, palpitation, heartburn, or skin disorders often get worse in the summer months.

We cannot change the weather but we can adapt to it, in order to enjoy this time of the year the most. Small changes in our habits and behavior can give us huge benefits in the summertime.

Clothing: Light colors are recommended for the hot months. Loose fitting and light-weight materials help

the body to cool down. Natural fabrics such as cotton and linen are a good choice, to avoid additional sweating.

Work-and-rest-balance:

Originally, the Chinese got up and went to bed with the sun. In some Mediterranean countries, people still organize their work-rest-cycle according to the sun cycle. Work is done early or late in the day, whilst at lunchtime people rest. When the temperatures are high, it is not advisable to engage in exhausting activities, during the peak of the day. It is better, when possible, to relax during the midday and get up earlier in the morning when it is cooler outside.

Exercise: Summertime should not be accepted as an excuse for stopping regular exercise. The early morning or late evening hours are perfect times to do light exercise. When the temperatures are over 28 degrees Celsius or 82 degrees Fahrenheit, it is better to do indoor sports or go to the swimming pool.

Diet (Food & Drinks): Food is a wonderful medium to cool down the body from the inside. There are foods that are naturally cold and have a

cooling effect on the body. In general, the summer season is the right time to eat fresh raw foods, lightly-cooked vegetables, and fish. Recommended fruits and vegetables are those that grow naturally in summertime, e.g. white mushrooms, tomatoes, spinach, dill, asparagus, broccoli and eggplant.

Top cooling foods are watermelon, cucumber, strawberries and mint. Those foods nourish the body fluids, clear heat from the body, reduce swellings and strengthen the digestive system that is often weakened by dampness and heat in the summertime.

The body loses a lot of fluid through sweating in the hot months and therefore needs new supplies. Drinking sufficient water is crucial to stay cool. Unsweetened teas such as peppermint, green, chrysanthemum or lemon tea are good alternatives. Ice-cold drinks promote dampness in the body, and damage the digestive system. ■

Doris Rathgeber OMD (Oriental Medical Doctor) is Founder, Owner and General Manager of Body & Soul Medical Clinics

Try this simple and refreshing drink recipe to chill down in summer. It consists of 'cooling' fruits, helps with constipation, and strengthens the digestion.

Ingredients: 100g white pear, 100g apple, 50g banana, 1 teaspoon honey and fresh water.
Preparation: Wash and peel the pear and the apple, peel the banana. Cut everything in pieces. Mix the pear and the apple in a blender with some water. Add the banana and the honey to the mixture and add some more water according to your taste.

There are many ways to cool the body in summertime. Natural methods such as food are more preferable than artificial ones such as the excessive use of air conditioning. Staying cool and avoiding the exposure of the body to summer heat helps to prevent diseases and simply makes you feel better.

