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Expats in Shanghai often explore Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) traditions and treatments for their own health, from reflexology and acupuncture to taking herbal medicines. Can these same treatments help your children? Are treatments safe and effective? How does TCM view and treat kids?

TCM'S VIEW OF CHILDREN

Traditional Chinese Medicine has a very specific understanding of children. First of all, Yin and Yang are out of balance in children. Yang is dominant; that is to say children are ruled by the active, hot and bright element. This translates into a tendency of being hyperactive and incapable of staying still and to have a body temperature which gets easily elevated. Also, in terms of health, they get sick easily but recover quickly. Children are mainly affected by acute diseases which, as opposed to chronic diseases, arise rapidly with fever and intense symptoms and then subside after a few days. Kids react easily to medication and recover more quickly than adults so they need gentle medical techniques and lower doses of medication.

According to TCM, children's organs are not yet complete and their organs are still fragile. They have a different constitution than adults: their Qi (vital energy) is weak and their organs, bones and muscles are soft and slowly maturing. Children are particularly disposed to:

UPPER RESPIRATORY TRACT DISEASES (such as cold, cough, asthma and bronchitis) because their lungs are weak.

SPLEEN DISEASES (vomiting, diarrhea, constipation) because their stomach is sensitive and their digestive system is not complete. They also tend to gain or lose weight easily.

LIVER DISTURBANCES because of excessive emotions. - In

TCM the liver is associated with the emotions. A Yang excess results in children being easily emotionally upset.

Among all the factors which can cause disease in children, the main cause is a non-adapted diet. Indeed, they have a maturing digestive system and cannot digest all types of food. Even though variety is important, forcing your children to eat food items they don't want to eat is not beneficial. Usually children naturally select the food items they know they can easily digest. Generally, try to avoid uncooked, frozen and spicy food and serve meals at regular times.

TCM TREATMENT FOR CHILDREN

A TCM doctor can effectively and naturally treat the above mentioned diseases within a short period of time. Those diseases are mainly treated with herbal medicine. It is difficult to practice acupuncture on children as they might be afraid of needles and may have difficulty staying still. The intake of Chinese medicine can be facilitated by mixing it with honey or apple juice to improve its taste. A good TCM practitioner will monitor the treatment and adjust it according to the child's situation and reaction.

Parents might consider TCM when looking for a natural option for disease prevention and treatment. The treatments can be effective, and without the harsh effects some western medical treatment may have on a young body. 🍵

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