

The Energetics of Foods for Body-Mind Health and Healing Part II

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Traditional Asian, Chinese and Macrobiotic Medicine practitioners often stress that to achieve and maintain good health one needs to tend to one's physical, emotional and spiritual well being as well as caring for others. Treatments of various forms such as shiatsu/acupressure, acupuncture, energy healing, etc. can help greatly and at times are deemed necessary. Yet, they are meant to be conjunct with daily fundamental practices of healthy eating, regular movement, exercise, and active work. These comprise a personally and socially interactive life.

Dietary guidelines and recommendations are devised on the basis of Traditional Chinese and Macrobiotic intake and diagnosis for general use and/or for one's specific and personal health needs of body/mind. Food Energetics and Diet therapy involve the removal of foods that perpetuate the imbalances at hand, and supplementation with food types which help heal and correct the imbalance.

Chinese Medicine and Macrobiotics liken the body's environment to that of nature. The practitioner observes and assesses the possibilities of phenomena manifesting within the body. Phenomena include cold, damp, wind, heat, dryness, and yin and yang harmony, along with the synergistic emotional and spiritual manifestations. When these present themselves in what is termed either "excess" or "deficient" amounts, the mind, body, and spirit can be adversely affected.

Each food type is understood to have warming, cooling, drying, moistening, descending/ascending, and yin and yang qualities. Some foods act with more than one energetic influence. A simple example is that if an individual is seen to have internal heat, the practitioner is likely to choose foods that balance and create more internal cooling in order to help disperse the heat appropriately for that person's condition. The guidance includes foods for the particular health concerns if any, the season, emotional needs, and energy needed for daily work and life. The practitioner assesses the person's ability to understand the recommendations and to practically implement them into their lives.

Through the lens of the 5 Elements, looking at the whole person and their environment, we apply the way food is chosen, prepared, and consumed, and how this impacts the type of energy—Qi—that the body produces. The effect of food on the state of well being is paramount.

An understanding of Food Energetics plays a vital role in creating harmony and is a powerful and very useful tool towards restoring balance. Self-empowerment should be encouraged and inspired to be a goal for the person receiving guidance and treatment.

Food Energetics and Diet therapy are not necessarily concerned with weight loss, although it is known to help tremendously. It brings about internal organ balance and strengthens the underlined organic weaknesses so that the foods ingested are transformed with the least amount

of strain on organ/energy output, while providing the maximum dietary benefit to build essential body essences as Qi, Fluids, and Blood.

While looking at the 5 Elements (a magnificent and thought provoking study containing easy and complex insights) and their relationship in health, nutrition, and healing we need to be cognizant of the reality that there is no fixed or static method to understand others and ourselves. We need to be flexible with our knowledge and to continually activate and be in touch with our intuition and spiritual higher selves for solving problems and for creating the most value from them.

*"Bearing and nurturing,
Creating but not owning,
Giving without demanding,
This is harmony." Quote from the Tao DeChing*

Recommendations for Nourishing the Elements:

A preferred time to nourish an element is considered to be through the nourishing/parent element, which is the preceding element/season.

Wood-Spring-Wind

Spring is when living things begin to grow and express expansive yang qi. The external influence of wind may invade a person making one vulnerable to colds, flu, or a relapse of a past illness.

The sour taste in moderation nourishes the strength of liver Qi as in citrus, lemon, pickles, sauerkraut, yogurt, plum, umeboshi, liver, leeks, barley, wheat, chicken, and leafy greens with especially the sharp taste such as watercress and scallions.

If liver Qi is stagnated the emphasis is on lightly cooked foods with more sharp and pungent tastes and less dense foods as dairy, meat, and baked flour products. Some recommended foods include lemon, pickles, dandelion, spinach, corn, celery, onion, lettuce, mustard greens, yam, barley, wheat, sesame seeds, dates, peanuts, onions, cilantro, bamboo shoot, mushrooms, and quinoa.

Emotions, negative—anger, resentment, frustration, irritability, bitterness, "flying off the handle". There may be a tendency for unresolved frustrations to emerge in inappropriate ways as arguments, negative expressions towards others, and impatience with oneself often related to unfinished projects or perceived failures. From a Buddhist or psycho-spiritual view what we feel are failures are potentially great opportunities to re-establish our self-confidence, to see the benefits of the experience and to create new seeds and goals for our future.

Balanced wood energy is reflected in our ability to manifest patience and compassion, foremost towards ourselves while reaching out to help others from a base of a smooth-unfettered life force to create peaceful, affirming dialogue, relationships and environments.

Also See Water.

Fire- Summer-Heat

In the summer heat is rising and in order to maintain good health it is important to restore and maintain normal levels of yang as well as to balance one's health with yin, cooling influences and foods.

The bitter taste nourishes the heart Qi as in dandelion root and greens, sesame seeds, celery, quinoa, scallions, asparagus, alfalfa, citrus peel, wine, lamb, and apricots.

If heart Qi is overly yang the emphasis is on lighter grains and cooking styles, cooler foods as salads with dandelion, lots of alfalfa tea, light leafy greens such as nishimeki, sprouts, tofu, natto, and less or no spices, baked foods, or alcohol.

The daily diet should contain more cooling preparations, salads, vegetables, and fruit to stimulate the appetite and provide fluids. One should avoid heavy, oily, and very salty or sweet foods. External influences of summer heat and dampness are common in summer causing people to be sweeter, thirstier, and more irritable and tired.

Emotions, negative—lack of enthusiasm and vitality, mental restlessness, depression. There may be a lack of lightheartedness or ability to laugh and enjoy life; or, the opposite-constant laughter and incessant chatter.

Balanced fire energy is reflected in the ability to emanate joy and to experience and show a love of giving and receiving for oneself and others. The more we honor and put love and joy into our own lives, like a magnet the more love is available to come to us—from various people and sources.

Also see Wood.

Earth-Late Summer-Damp

In late summer yang is still prevalent while yin qi begins to predominate as we are cooling from summer. Nature is in its central position of balance as it quiets the fire and moves deeper within, preparing for autumn.

The sweet taste nourishes spleen and stomach Qi as in pumpkins, cooked onions, squashes, sweet potato, peach, dates, apple, cherry, beef, millet, almonds, coconut, and cooking with mirin or maple, barley, or rice syrup. One may increase animal foods as the climate begins to cool.

If spleen Qi is deficient the emphasis is on more root vegetables and longer cooking styles, using easy to digest yet strong dishes such as Oden Stew or Congi with brown rice or millet. Avoid dairy and damp, heavy foods such as cakes and ice cream. The movement of fire-active foods will help replenish. Chewing food and eating smaller meals will strengthen earth energy and therefore our digestion. One should be conscious that eating excess fruits and oils in the summer may give rise to mucus, phlegm and discomfort in the late summer affecting the stomach and lungs.

Emotions, negative—worry, dwelling or focusing too much on a particular topic, excessive mental activity, and work. Sitting for long periods of time can deplete earth Qi. The negative splenic disposition can be one of suspicion, that is, lack of trust in oneself or others. The flip side of this is a tendency to be overly sympathetic and to easily become co-dependent on others.

Balanced earth energy is manifested by reliability, composure, empathy, and an inner sense of self-value, all which help create trust of and from others in our environments.

Also see Fire.

Metal- Autumn-Dry

Things begin to fall and mature in autumn; yin qi continues to predominate and yang qi to wane.

It is advisable to eat more food with pungent, salty, sour, and sweet tastes.

The pungent taste nourishes the lung Qi as in raw or lightly cooked onions, mustard greens, daikon radish, ginger, less oily fish, mustard, soy beans, lotus root, cloves, cayenne, basil, mint, tofu, rice, salads or steamed veggies with lots of greens, wheatgrass juice, pear and an increase of sea veggies such as hiziki, wakame, and kombu which will strengthen the blood, and circulation of qi.

If lung Qi or large colon are sluggish or congested a remedy is a ginger or mustard compress on the back shu point area-between the shoulder blades-of the Lungs or for the colon on the lower back or Hara-lower abdominal-area. (Use compress only if you know it is safe at that time or if recommended by an experienced guide.)

Pungent foods assist the lung Qi to disperse. Sour flavors are cool in energy and tend to move downward benefiting the lungs' descending function. Salty foods are necessary in moderation all year and at this time they can be increased to assist the oncoming winter/water season. A focus is to moisturize internal dryness caused by lack of body fluid from dry heat and/or a dry climate, and thus help restore normal lung function.

Emotions, negative—grief, sadness, detached. There may be a tendency to suffer loss and not feel able to let go when it is time to move on from a challenging situation.

Balanced metal energy is manifested in an openness to life's experiences, being flexible, able to forgive, and to truly let go of past painful attachments, to create, and to accept new people and experiences, prosperity, and abundance in one's life.

Also see Earth.

Water- Winter-Cold

This is the time when yang qi becomes latent and yin qi dominates and we need to conserve energy and build strength to be ready for spring. Storing our reserves is vital for the strength of our kidneys. It is advisable to eat more food with salty, sour, and bitter flavors. Eating excess glutinous, uncooked, and cold food damages the kidneys, spleen, and stomach, and should be taken in moderation. Foods with more oils help to retain warmth.

The salty taste nourishes kidney Qi as in sea veggies, sea salt, aduki beans, black soybeans, burdock, pork, fish, walnuts, black sesame seeds, dark leafy greens, figs, kombu tea, shiitake, cucumber, reishi, and daikon. If kidney Qi is deficient nourish with combined sea and land vegetable dishes such as dried daikon in stew or dark leafy greens in fish stew.

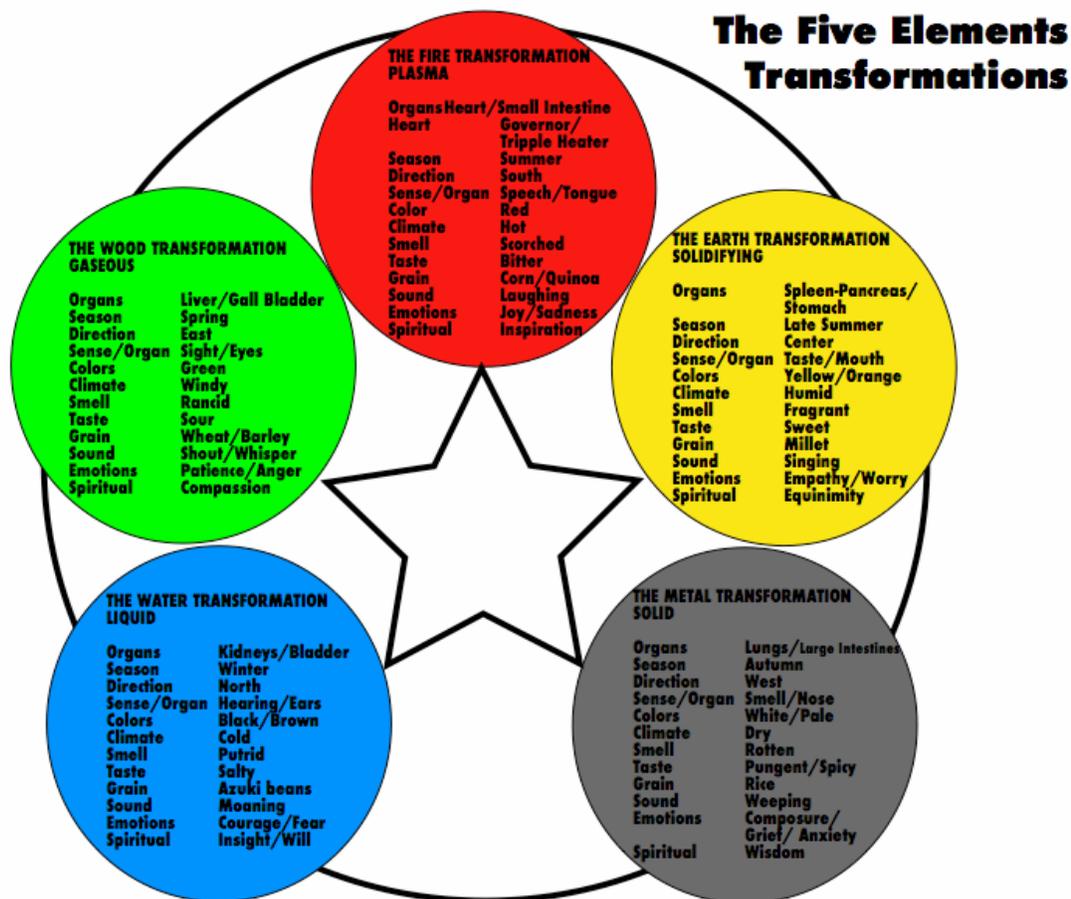
Nourishing kidneys, which are highly active in winter, strengthens their storage function helping to preserve their essence, which means preserving core life energy.

Although individual sea vegetables can be targeted for nourishing each element this rich source of minerals is highly important for nourishing and strengthening the kidneys, bones, and blood. Use hiziki, kombu, arame, wakame, dulse, nori, black fungus, kelp and more.

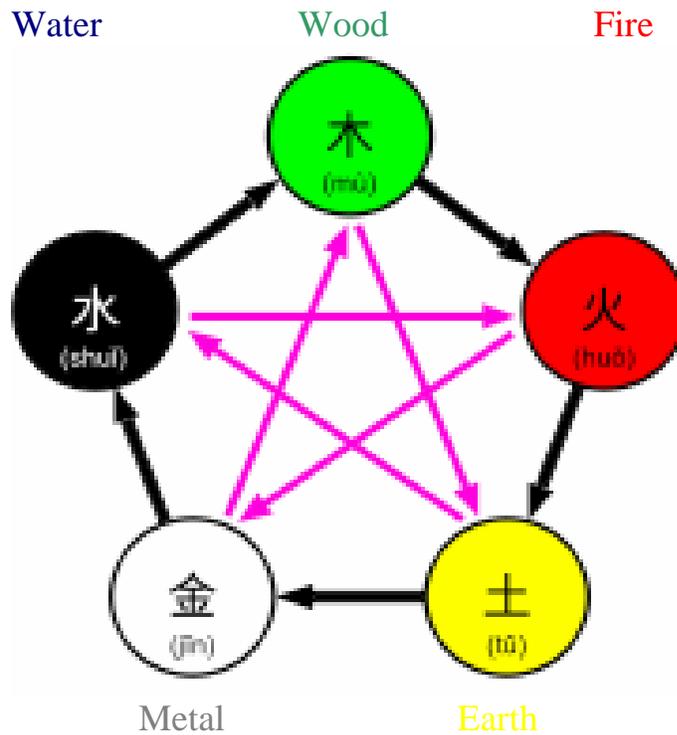
Emotions, negative—fearful, weak willpower, insecure, aloof, and isolated. There may be a tendency to hold in one's dreams and goals, to withhold sharing with others, and to have little faith or confidence in one's ability to make things happen in life.

Balanced water is manifested when the desire, will, and courage to manifest movement and changes in life are prevalent. Self-confidence is known to be housed in and reflected by our kidney Qi which becomes strong from foods, exercises such as qi-gong, and spiritual growth, as well as the courage to find, believe in, and move towards our higher goals and dreams. When we positively activate and direct water energy the planning and manifesting stages of wood and fire become active and the spiral of change continues to flow.

Also see Metal.



**The Nourishing cycle shows around the circle
The Controlling cycle shows inside with arrows**



**Wood=Green/Liver/Gall Bladder=Parent-Nourishes Fire=Child of Water
Controls Earth**

**Fire =Red/Heart/Small Int.-Ht Gov./T.Heater=Parent-Nourishes Earth=
Child of Wood Controls Metal**

**Earth=Yellow/Spleen/Stomach=Parent-Nourishes Metal=Child of Fire
Controls Water**

**Metal=White/Lung/Large Int=Parent-Nourishes Water=Child of Earth
Controls Wood**

**Water=Blue/black/Kidney/Bladder=Parent-Nourishes Wood=Child of
Metal Controls Fire**

"The Five Elemental Energies of Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal and Water encompass all the myriad phenomena of nature. It is a paradigm that applies equally to humans."

The Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine (second century bc)



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May we all be fully nourished with abundant health and blessings.