

# Chinese Medicine



## For a Healthy Mouth

by Shoshanna Katzman

Chinese Medicine principles emphasize treatment of the whole person, whereby peak immunity of the body leads to increased immunity within the mouth leading to stronger, healthier teeth. This stems from the belief that when the energetics of the body are balanced and full of vital energy teeth will not decay or become diseased. Much insight can be gained by looking into these ancient principles and avowing oneself of its holistic treatment options to create and maintain optimal health of your teeth and gums for a lifetime.

According to the Five Element Theory, the energetics of the kidney, spleen and stomach meridians systems are the key energetic components involved with maintenance of excellent oral health. This is because the kidney is the organ system that nourishes teeth and bones, whereby healthy kidney energy leads to healthy teeth. The spleen has an impact on oral health because it nourishes the mouth and governs transformation and

transportation of food throughout the body. The stomach is important because it both governs digestion and rules the gums. In fact, gingivitis and other gum diseases are commonly diagnosed according to Chinese medicine as "Heat in the Stomach", a condition that can be prevented or rectified when caught at the early stages.

A detailed analysis of the tongue is utilized by Chinese medicine practitioners as a form of diagnoses to reveal information about the overall health of the body. In fact, Ted Kaptchuk stated in his well-known Chinese medicine text "The Web that Has No Weaver" that his teacher described the tongue "as a piece of litmus paper that reveals the basic qualities of a disharmony". In relationship to the teeth, examination of the tongue's color, shape and coating provides specific details about the energetic balance of kidney, spleen and stomach meridian systems. Knowledge about the energetics of

the kidneys is found by examining the root of the tongue and specifics about the spleen and stomach is found in the center of the tongue. The information gathered from viewing the tongue is combined with other symptoms and signs and used as a basis for Chinese diagnosis, treatment principal and treatment protocol. For example, acupuncture would be applied to strengthen the kidney energy if "Deficient Kidney Qi" was found. This would increase Kidney Qi (vital energy) flow and thus boost immunity within the mouth and strengthen the teeth.

Interestingly, every single tooth in the mouth is related to specific vital organs, endocrine glands, sensory organs and other structures of your body according to Chinese medicine teachings. There is a chart called the "meridian tooth chart" that provides an immense amount of information which is utilized by practitioners in terms of energetic diagnosis, treatment of the body and prevention of disease. For example, your first molar on the top, left side of your mouth is related to the health of liver, kidney, spleen and stomach; to the breasts, the tongue, as well as to the thyroid and thymus glands. Analysis and application of this information has become a particular specialty of holistic dentists in recent years, working to identify ways that treatment of the teeth and gums can work to treat the whole body.

Chinese medicine treatment to strengthen the health of your teeth and gums includes acupuncture, acupressure, Chinese herbs and specific foods to re-balance the flow of energy throughout the body. This includes consumption of a nutrient dense diet while avoiding refined sugar, preservatives, artificial flavors and colors, alcohol, caffeine and overly processed foods. For example, inflammation of the gums can be helped at the early stage through remedies and foods that are more yin and cooling making. They dispel "pathogenic heat" which is believed to invade the teeth and gums and cause inflammation. Chrysanthemum tea is a delicious and healing beverage precisely for this purpose. External applications of garlic, ginger, ginseng and salt water

may also help to alleviate inflammatory problems. In addition to rinsing your mouth with a combination of warm water and salt. Eating more alkaline foods is also recommended to improve oral health. This is because a predominantly acidic body leads to acidic saliva means a greater chance for tooth decay and gingivitis.

None of these suggestions are in lieu of seeking diagnosis and treatment from your dentist, especially due to the risk of potential of tooth decay or

bacteria. To be safe, It is also prudent to consult a Chinese medicine specialist to avoid aggravation of symptoms. For example, particular herbs and foods can potentially worsen inflammation or even lead to bleeding if taken when inflammation is already present. The best approach is to seek help from a Chinese medicine practitioner for holistic guidance, together with western medicine diagnosis and support from a dentist or physician. Therefore, be smart and eat a diet that is rich in nutrition to maintain your health,

but when signs and symptoms arise that may point to an imbalance always seek the help from a qualified health professional from both Chinese medicine and western medicine disciplines to ensure the healthiest mouth possible.

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