

Qi Building at its Best

by Shoshanna Katzman



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Boosting qi (vital energy) of the kidney is a major component of maintaining health and longevity. This ancient holistic paradigm views the kidney as a yin organ system associated with the water element. As the body's water gate, the kidney rules water and provides the foundation for movement and transformation of all bodily fluids. It is the "root energy" governing health of the lower back, bones, knees, ears and hair on the head.

The kidney helps to regulate metabolism, excretion, immunity and sexual potency. It contributes to the production of marrow and creates spinal health, strong memory and mental clarity. When kidney energy is strong, so is willpower and ability to stay fully focused on a task at hand.

The kidney system is traditionally hailed as the "minister of power" and the most important reservoir of essential energy within the body. Maintaining kidney health is essential for establishing strong and balanced energy throughout the body, mind and spirit.

Chinese medicine is filled with recommendations for building and protecting kidney energetics – many based on the fact that it "loves warmth." To begin with, avoid walking barefoot on cold floors as the first energy point of the kidney meridian is located on the soles of the feet. Keep the lower back covered to protect the kidney from getting too cold. To activate kidney energy, place a hot water bottle or heated ginger tea compress over the lower back.

Chinese dietary therapy recommends warm foods and drinks for tonifying this organ system. The salty taste is associated with the kidney, therefore consuming an appropriate amount of salty foods is healthful. The kidney is associated with the color black with most black foods strengthening and protecting its energy. This includes black rice, beans, lentils, olives, sesame, seaweed, figs, raisins, grapes, plums, elderberries and blackberries. And blue food such as blueberries are known for their kidney building action.

Intense and prolonged fear or stress and excessive physical exertion places undue strain and stress on the kidney organ system. This includes standing for an extreme amount of time or walking a long distance while carrying a heavy load. Also, be cautious about

engaging in excessive sexual activity as it drains the yang of the kidney.

As "the root of qi," the kidney serves as the root of the eight extraordinary vessels which connect all organ systems and regulate, circulate and store qi and blood within the body. They provide support during "extraordinary" situations.

When energetically balanced these channels manifest the following:

- ▲ **Greater self-realization and renewed sense of purpose**
- ▲ **Stronger connection to one's authentic self, the truest aspect of themselves**
- ▲ **Enhanced consciousness & awareness**
- ▲ **Staying resilient and centered even in the face of adversity, high stress, trauma or emotional distress**

Acupuncture works to open and build flow of energy throughout the kidney meridian via needle insertion into acupoints located along meridian pathways. Tuina massage does the same through application of manual techniques. Chinese herbal medicine tonifies the kidney through ingestion and application of substances known to restore health of this "minister of power". And the practice of Taiji (Tai Chi) & Qigong activates, cultivates & preserves energetics of the kidney system through gentle, flowing movement.

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