

# Spring Healing Begins in the Gut

by Shoshanna Katzman



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of nutrients and to act as a barrier against harmful substances. Let's not forget about how crucial it is for our body to produce digestive enzymes. This begins by slowly and mindfully chewing food to aid proper breakdown into absorbable nutrients.

*In combination, this approach determines the best nutritional strategy for improving long-term digestive and mental health.*

To begin with, the Five Elements Theory teaches that sweet foods nourish the spleen, and sour foods nourish the liver. Sweet foods refer to those that are “full-sweet” like rice, carrots, or fresh fruits not “empty-sweet” like sugary desserts. Sour foods include lemons, pickles, sauerkraut as prime examples. As such, be mindful of nourishing these organ systems with a balanced amount of sweet and sour foods. Moreover, maintaining a healthy blood sugar balance is essential for regulating



**W**e learn from Chinese medicine wisdom that the transformation and transportation of food is governed by the spleen organ system. As the root of life, the spleen enhances overall health by providing an optimal level of nutritional substance throughout the body. This supports Hippocrates statement “*all disease begins in the gut*”. The Five Element Theory shows us that digestion is additionally affected by the liver as it controls energetics of the spleen. Moreover, overthinking and worry injures the spleen, while excessive anger injures the liver thereby highlighting the connection between one’s emotional or mental state and health of their digestive system. This provides an ancient rationale for what is commonly known today as the gut-brain connection which is shedding new light on what Chinese medicine has always known to be true about the mind-body connection.

From a western approach, a more recent nutritional recommendation for maintaining a healthy gut microbiome revolves around a diverse community of microorganisms (microbes) playing a crucial role in digestion, immune function, and overall health. Additionally, it is important to maintain integrity of our gut lining to ensure efficient absorption



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energy, balancing hormones, and preventing metabolic issues.

Chinese medicine wisdom also recommends predominantly consuming cooked and warming foods, as the spleen is hampered by an overabundance of raw food and cold drink. So, begin drinking water at

room temperature. And choose a warming hearty soup for lunch instead of inundating the spleen with a huge salad.

### Here are further recommendations for foods that support digestive function.

**Bone Broth:** Can be consumed warmed up or used as a soup base. It's high in protein, helps produce digestive enzymes, anti-inflammatory, and rich in collagen which helps repair and maintain the gut lining.

**Ginger Tea:** Supports digestion, helps gastro-intestinal motility, and has an anti-inflammatory effect on the body.



**Kale, Spinach, or Bok Choy:** Rich in nutrients and fiber that support the microbiome. They support transit of waste through the digestive tract.

**Black Beans:** An excellent source of protein and fiber that provide proper nutrition and support for microbiome health.



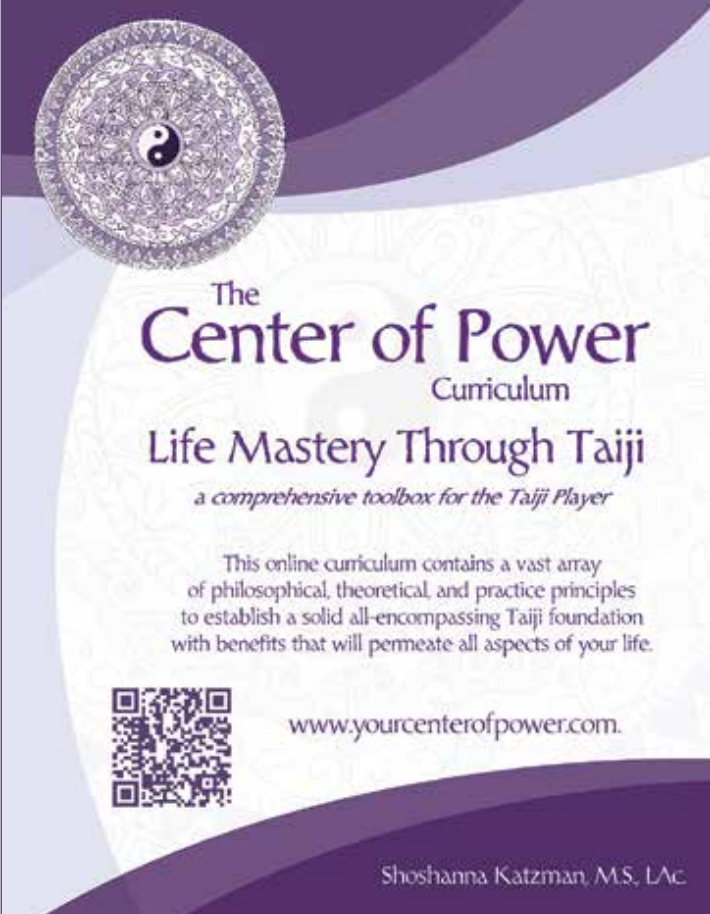
**Blueberries:** Full of antioxidants which reduce inflammation and oxidative stress within the digestive system along with supporting the microbiome.

**Sweet Potatoes:** Support gut lining integrity and nutrient absorption. They are filled with antioxidants that reduce inflammation and oxidative stress within the gut.

In addition to food and drink, digestive health is strengthened through practicing meditative and mindfulness techniques and exercises. Calming the vagus nerve is also recommended as it transmits nerve impulses in both directions along what is known as the gut-brain axis. The Chinese exercises of Taiji (Tai Chi) and Qigong are helpful in this regard along with receiving acupuncture treatment. Making simple changes can procure huge health results. Do your best to restore and maintain digestive health one day at a time.




Shoshanna Katzman, L.Ac., M.S. has been director of Red Bank Acupuncture & Wellness Center ([www.healing4u.com](http://www.healing4u.com)) for 35 years in Shrewsbury, NJ providing acupuncture, Chinese herbal consultation along with Taiji and Qigong private and group classes. She is author of "Qigong for Staying Young: A Simple 20-Minute Workout to Cultivate Your Vital Energy", co-author of "Feeling Light: The Holistic Solution to Permanent Weight Loss and Wellness" and recently released "Center of Power: Life Mastery through Taiji" a comprehensive online curriculum ([www.yourcenterofpower.com](http://www.yourcenterofpower.com)). For more information call or text 732.758.1800.



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