



# Creating Healthy Children:

# Chinese Medicine Guiding Principles

by Shoshanna Katzman

Although not as yet mainstream in the United States, Chinese medicine treatment of children is more common place throughout the rest of the world. In fact, pediatric acupuncture has been considered one of Chinese medicine's greatest specialties since the Song Dynasty (960-1279). Based on this long standing tradition, a variety of holistic solutions are available for parents wanting to provide their children with the highest level of health possible, starting in their formative years and lasting the rest of their lives.

The choices parents make in terms of life style habits and medical treatment have a huge impact on the subsequent health of their children. Chinese medicine modalities such as acupuncture, herbs, food therapy and massage serve as both treatment and prevention of health issues. These provide proper flow, balance and strength of Qi and Blood to maintain health of a child's entire physical body.

Keen attention to stress reduction is essential as increased demands are placed on children and young adults at home, school, and extra-curricular activities such as sports and dance - or simply due to social pressures such as bullying or inappropriate social media behaviors. Eating meals in a relaxed manner with family at set times each

day, plentiful sleep with regularity, as well as ample play and rest periods - are all important lifestyle habits to instill for continued health and well-being.

Feeding children a balanced diet consisting of mainly cooked vegetables, grains, and fruit, and a minimal amount of raw foods, sugar, meats, and processed foods is highly recommended according to Chinese food therapy to ensure optimal nourishment and health to the body. In fact, a Chinese medicine practitioner investigates the state of a child's digestion first and foremost as the root cause of symptoms. This is based on the classic saying "xiao er pi bu zu" which translates as "children's spleen is often insufficient".

Weakness of Spleen Qi is especially the case for children up to the age of six because their digestive system is still developing and thus becomes weak and overworked as a result of unhealthy lifestyle or excessive medical treatments. For example, digestion is easily damaged by poor diet and too many antibiotics. When digestive weakness is evident, strengthening of the Spleen and Stomach becomes the prime focus of treatment along with balance and regularity of lifestyle habits. These meridians govern transformation and transportation of food within the body and when their

Qi is rebalanced symptoms become more quickly resolved.

The Spleen and Stomach meridians in turn directly impact quantity and quality of an essential vital essence for health and longevity known as Kidney Jing. This special essence governs growth and development of bones, teeth, hair, brain, sexual maturation, and reproduction. The ultimate Chinese medicine approach to health and healing is to maintain adequate volume and strength of Kidney Jing, as it can be easily diminished.

This is because insufficient, weak Kidney Jing is the root energetic cause of many aspects of the body, ones that can be rectified through Chinese medicine treatments received before a condition becomes too far gone. Such presenting symptoms might include failure to thrive, bone and teeth deficiency, low immunity, poor physical ability, excessive fear and anxiety, diminished will power, menstrual irregularities, insufficient hearing or tinnitus, chronic low back pain, weakness of the knees, and diminished mental capacity. Additionally, as a child approaches puberty they may exhibit menstrual problems which could end up being the basis for fertility difficulties later in life.

Kidney Jing levels are determined by hereditary factors before birth, as well as by lifestyle habits after birth. This includes the recommendations already mentioned such as ample sleep and rest, stress reduction, avoidance of overwork, eating warm and nourishing foods and drinks; in addition to optimal air quality, and protection from extreme environmental factors especially the cold - all done to conserve and build Kidney Jing. Attention to these straightforward and sensible Chinese medicine principles can make the difference between sickness and health for a child. With time, I am hopeful that this knowledge will soon become commonplace within the American parental mainstream consciousness.

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