



Love your Liver: The Chinese Medicine Way

by Shoshanna Katzman, L.Ac., M.S.

The energetic system of the liver is related to the element of wood and the season of spring according to the “Law of the Five Elements.” The wood element enhances the experience of new growth and expansion during this season. This manifests as a time for moving into new arenas and stretching limits, just as the first flowers open and grow as they reach upward toward the sun. Maintaining balanced liver energy is essential to strengthening such ability along with the numerous other benefits that this important organ provides to the body, mind and spirit.

Chinese medicine teaches us that the liver is responsible for the smooth flow of qi (vital energy) and blood throughout the body. It serves to store blood and maintain proper blood levels, which helps boost energy levels, nourish body tissues and support gynecological health. These combined liver energetic effects are a major key for the creation of overall health as

blockages and deficiencies of qi and blood are traditionally said to be the underlying cause of illness, dysfunction and disease.

Free and balanced flow of liver energy also leads to balanced emotions, especially that of anger. It is thus not unusual to experience increased levels of anger and erratic emotions during the spring season. The liver is also the organ system most easily impacted by excessive amounts of stress. It is thus helpful to manage stress levels and avoid engaging in situations that produce heightened emotional states. Practice of internal forms of exercise such as tai chi, qigong and yoga is also productive as they balance liver energy and help one maintain an overall sense of peace and tranquility throughout the day.

Interestingly, the wood element is also related to healthy function of the eyes according to the “Law of the Five Elements.” This means that treatment of this element is the first step to rectify vision or other prob-

lems such as eye blurriness, dryness, itching or twitching. In turn, the state of one’s eyesight serves as an indicator of an individual’s energetic liver function. Moreover, Chinese medicine teaches us that a healthy liver leads to increased recognition and ability to see precisely what is happening in one’s life as it provides a strong connection between oneself and physical reality.

Acupuncture is an excellent method for strengthening the energetics of the liver, especially when received during the spring as a so-called tune-up for the wood element. Such treatment also helps to strengthen the tendons of the body, as the wood element is directly associated with them. More specifically, tendon health is dependent on the nourishment derived from ample amount of liver blood. This ensures that the tendons continue to provide agility, flexibility and strength as well as ability for smooth and continuous body movement.

Gentle forms of exercise such as swim-

ming and leisurely walks are also excellent choices for maintaining flexibility and proper qi and blood flow within the tendons.

In terms of food, the wood element is associated with and nourished by the sour taste according to the “Law of the Five Elements.” Sauerkraut, pickles, sour cherries, cranberries, lemons, limes and grapefruit are some of the foods that fall within this category. Eat plenty of green foods as they too support liver energetic health. And the addition of an herb such as dandelion root is an excellent way to detoxify the liver, along with elimination of coffee, sugar, alcohol, dairy and fried or fatty foods for spring body cleansing.

This can be properly supported through decreasing food intake in the spring, as compared to the wintertime when the body needs extra warmth through heavier foods. Also, cook foods a shorter amount of time and add some cooling, raw foods such as salads, versus the predominance of warming, cooked foods during the winter months.

Following these directives provide wonderful ways to love and nurture the energetics of the liver. This has far reaching benefits in the way the body functions and provides proper nourishment of blood and bountiful energy to get through the day, to know oneself on deeper levels and to grow in creative ways.

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