



# A Woman's Second Spring

by Shoshanna Katzman

Chinese medicine views menopause as a natural transitional process - a powerful rite of passage uniquely distinctive to each woman and described as her "second spring." It is a change of life dictated by the innate wisdom of a woman's body and considered to be a homeostatic mechanism for slowing the aging process. There are many things a woman can do to ensure a smooth menopausal transition. Preventative measures are especially helpful in this regard. This includes preservation of qi (vital energy) and blood to sustain maximum nourishment and vitality. It is further essential to maintain balance between the dynamic energies of yin and yang.

The creation of an easier transition into menopause also rests upon maintain-

ing health of the kidney organ system, as it serves to oversee the aging process.

The kidneys maintain balance between kidney yin (water) and kidney yang (fire). This is particularly significant considering that hot flashes and night sweats are a common occurrence for many women in menopause. Whereby, kidney fire rages due to the depletion of kidney water. In addition, the kidneys are responsible for maintaining metabolic function - explaining why women gain weight and have difficulty losing it regardless of reduced food intake and increased exercise during the menopausal years.

The energetics of the kidneys naturally deplete as the body ages with the first signs being greying of hair, drying of skin and mucus membranes in addition to menstrual irregularity. Moreover, deficiency of kidney yin is at the root of insomnia.

Interestingly, 85% of American women experience unpleasant symptoms during their menopausal years, compared to only 10% of Asian women. This is believed to be related to differences in lifestyle, attitude about the aging process and dietary habits.

Therefore, keep in mind that high levels of stress, overwork and excessive grief damage kidney yin. Maintaining strong kidney yang is also essential as its depletion leads to unusual fatigue, low back pain, lack of libido as well as hair and bone loss. Prolonged fear and engaging in too much sex diminishes kidney yang, as does dwelling in a cold environment and consuming too many cold and raw foods.

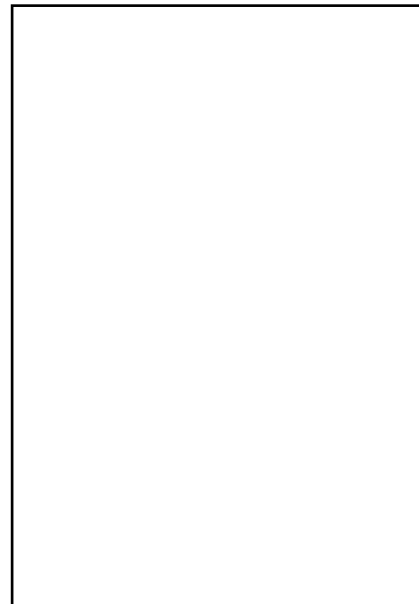
From this statistic it has been deduced that menopausal symptoms are reduced through following a more plant based diet and one with minimal processed foods and refined sugars. This also includes consuming foods and herbs that contain phytoestrogens. Furthermore, Chinese medicine

dietary therapy teaches us that bitter foods such as kale, arugula, watercress, turnips and asparagus are especially important during menopause due to their ability to disperse heat. In addition, foods such as spirulina, miso, sea vegetables, millet and dark green leafy vegetables nourish the kidneys. And dietary wisdom garnered from the Law of the Five Elements points to choosing foods



and drink that contain all five flavors to strengthen their associated organ system. Within this context, sweet nourishes the spleen, sour nourishes the liver, pungent nourishes the lungs, bitter nourishes the heart and salty nourishes the kidneys.

Acupuncture, Chinese herbal medicine as well as Tai Chi and Qigong exercise are additional ways to boost kidney energetics. Moreover, these ancient techniques nourish qi and blood deficiency, reduce excess, strengthen vital organs and promote balance between yin and yang. The results of a research study conducted at the Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center in Winston-Salem, N.C. were published in the journal Menopause. Its lead author Nancy Avis a professor of public health sciences, states: "Although acupuncture does not work for every woman, our study showed that, on average, acupuncture effectively reduced the frequency of hot flashes and results were maintained for 6 months after the treatments stopped."



These ancient techniques prevent and allay symptoms associated with every stage of menopause. They offer a holistic approach that addresses the whole person - meaning the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual aspects of one's being. This includes empowering a woman to better adjust to menopausal changes and accept her aging process. Being gentle and loving to oneself, while relaxing and having fun is another key to success.

The ultimate goal is to discover the joy and deep meaning that accompanies her second spring. This empowers a woman

to awaken to her true nature and move through her menopausal years with great vision and life purpose.

*Shoshanna Katzman, L.Ac., M.S. is an acupuncturist, Chinese herbalist and director of Red Bank Acupuncture & Wellness Center in Shrewsbury, NJ for thirty years. Shoshanna is author of Qigong for Staying Young: A Simple 20-Minute Workout to Cultivate Your Vital Energy and co-author of Feeling Light: The Holistic Solution to Permanent Weight Loss and Wellness (www.qigong4.us). For more information call 732-758-1800 or visit www.healing4u.com.*