

# The Heart of Summer

by Shoshanna Katzman



Summer is a time when our consciousness and spiritual awareness peaks. The primary element of summer is fire which rules the heart. Nourishing and balancing the energetics of our heart during this season can impact regulation of blood circulation, sleep quality, and sharpness of our memory.

Putting our heart into activities and relationships which bring joy into our lives is a must. Seize the opportunity to laugh, run, jump, and play regardless of our age. Seek ways to spread positive energy. Keep oneself cool, calm and collected by “going with the flow” of summer heat.

Eating less and more lightly on hot, bright days is certainly a healthy practice. Chinese food therapy informs us of the benefit of lemons, limes, celery, cucumber and lettuce for cooling the body. Drinking lots of water and dangling our feet in water helps to balance the heat of summer and prevent many common summer ailments. The color associated with summer is red, meaning that it is a good idea to include apples, watermelon, strawberries, red potatoes and goji berries into our diet. Moreover, add in some foods with a bitter taste such as radishes, dandelion, parsley, kale, arugula as well as collard and mustard greens for their cooling effect and nourishment of the heart.

Refraining from indulging in greasy, fried and heavy foods along with excessive consumption of sweets is also recommended to reduce the tendency for “damp heat” developing within the body. And, keep in mind iced drinks while cooling to the body, hinder proper digestion, metabolism and contributes to excess dampness leading to abdominal bloating, pain and sometimes diarrhea along with a sense of heaviness within the head. It is also essential to always remember that the biggest key to healthier digestion is to eat just enough, rather than overloading oneself with too much food and drink.

Summertime draws us to eating brightly colored fruits and vegetables. It is also the perfect opportunity to match the dazzling colors of summer flowers by wearing bright and vibrantly colored clothing. Awakening early and taking a moment to go outside and perform a Qigong exercise brings summer nourishment inward from the sun is another method for enhancing our energetics during this season.

*Simply stand with feet turned out wider than your shoulders with arms by your sides. Take a deep breath into your lower belly and upon exhalation arch backward, gaze upward toward the sun and draw your arms upward, outward and then back behind to the sides of your body. Open your heart to the sky and draw its yang nourishment inward to your body. Then come upright and bring arms upward and back so relaxed by your sides once again. Take a moment to then reflect on how you feel before proceeding with your day.*

The goal is to live in harmony with oneself and the changing rhythms that summertime brings. Making time to see your acupuncturist for a seasonal tune-up is another way to ensure that our energetics stay balanced and ready to handle the increasing temperatures and required lifestyle adjustments. And don't forget to spread love within yourself and those around you in the true spirit of the compassionate heart. Enjoy and make this year's summertime one of the most memorable as it fills you with genuine love, playfulness and creativity.

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