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Nourishing the Yang: Ancient Healing for Men

by Shoshanna Katzman

Chinese medicine treatment for men's health concerns dates back well over 2700 years. Many of the common health issues men face are addressed holistically with acupuncture, Chinese herbal medicine, Qigong and/or Tai Chi exercises, Chinese dietary therapy, and lifestyle recommendations according to Chinese medicine principles. This is a specialty known as andrology (an Ancient Greek word) dealing with problems of the male reproductive and urological systems - also known as "the science of men".

Chinese medicine treatments provide an integrated view of the physical and energetic components of the body. Its diagnostic approach involves detection of a particular dysfunction through traditional analytical methods such as tongue and pulse diagnosis. A Chinese medicine practitioner also stays cognizant of various symptoms and signs, which are then woven together with other diagnostic information to establish a "pattern of disharmony" for each individual.

According to Yin Yang theory, a male is classified as exhibiting more yang qualities. Yang is associated with Qi (vital energy), predominance of heat, a more robust and loud demeanor, more external symptoms, and a harder and more outgoing nature. A major component of a Chinese medicine approach to men's health thus involves an analysis of these yang qualities to establish a baseline for treatment. The treatment goal is to ultimately bring the yin and yang energies of the body into harmony and thus restore homeostasis.

The most common energetic deficiency for males stems from Qi deficiency, especially within the kidney meridian. According to Chinese medicine, the kidney is an extremely important organ that provides vital energy to all organs - serving as a powerful reserve of Qi support for the entire body. In fact, it is commonly said "when kidney Qi is gone, so is life".

When the kidney fails to function at its optimal level, symptoms emerge which signify the need for treatment to

strengthen the energetics of the kidney. This necessitates a boost of kidney Qi, kidney yang and kidney essence – each being vital energies which naturally deplete with age and become unnecessarily squandered through unhealthy lifestyle habits. This requires caution and care to follow a consistent lifestyle regimen that includes healthful habits in terms of exercise, stress, play, rest, sleep, diet, emotions, sexual activity, and relationship patterns.

When a man lives with moderation and attention to right living habits positive outcomes are the result. Preventative Chinese medicine treatment sought before kidney deficiency progresses leads to ample energetic resources for a long healthy life. Alternatively when left untreated, kidney deficiency worsens and becomes the energetic root cause of underlying cardiovascular disease, lung problems, prostatitis, infertility, bladder issues, hair loss, sexual dysfunction and depression.

The kidney is traditionally said to nourish the lower back and is thus an integral aspect of Chinese diagnosis

for men in terms of symptoms such as weakness and/or pain. In fact, there is a Chinese saying that “the health of the lower back is very important for men”. Hair on the top of the head is said to be nourished by the kidney. Therefore, Chinese medicine treatments that strengthen kidney energy will help maintain a healthy head of hair. The same is true for issues with growth and development, as well as with sexual function and reproduction which are directly associated with the energetics of the kidney.

The Liver meridian is also important in terms of sexual dysfunction because the liver meridian flows through the genitalia. Balanced flow within the liver meridian stimulates increase of blood and Qi flow to the genital region to enhance sexual health. Furthermore, curtailment of excessive or repressed anger is also helpful to balance the energetics of the liver because anger issues suppress the flow of liver Qi.

Spleen meridian health is a key component for prostate health. This is because excessive spleen damp-

ness blocks the free flow of Qi and blood to this area. Ingestion of more warming food and drink is recommended to diminish the chance for development of damp accumulation of the spleen as well as Qi deficiency of the kidney.

Chinese medicine treatment is rich with preventative measures. It is a specialized approach taking into consideration an individual's full medical history, energetic background, and current physical complaints. This ancient paradigm for health and healing provides treatments and lifestyle recommendations which focus on disease prevention, natural immunity, and overall well-being achieved through maintaining ample levels of Qi to sustain optimal health for males of all ages.

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